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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1994–95

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5 December 1994

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-THIRD YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 251**

SECOND VOLUME OF SESSION 1994-95

House of Commons

Monday 5 December 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Delivery of Benefits

1. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are his objectives for the delivery of social security benefits.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): My principal objectives are: to focus benefits on the most needy, to improve incentives to work and save, to encourage personal choice and, not least, to bear down on fraud and abuse.

Mr. Shaw: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply, but will he confirm that we are doing enough to incentivise those who are registered as unemployed to take work when it is available? Are we really encouraging, people to come off the unemployment register? Why are some of my constituents concerned that people who are capable of work are claiming to be unemployed, despite the fact that, in some cases, employers want to employ them?

Mr. Lilley : We are taking several important steps forward to enable and encourage people to return to work. The jobseeker's allowance, which I announced in the White Paper a few weeks ago, will give people an incentive to return to work and will certainly ensure that they fulfil their commitment to the taxpayer by actively seeking work, making themselves available for it and taking jobs when they are available. In addition, in the Budget and the social security statement last week, we announced a £600 million package of work incentives to help to make it more rewarding for people to return to work and for employers to take them on.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the pay of the head of the Benefits Agency is linked not only to his effectiveness in combating fraud—the whole House is against fraud—but to ensuring that those who are genuinely eligible for help gain the help to which they are entitled?

Mr. Lilley: We do not give the details of the terms of employment of heads of agencies, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the head of that agency and all its employees aspire to achieve both those objectives.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, while the objectives that he just stated are necessary, there are tensions between them? What assessment has he made of the effects on pay and skill levels, as well as on public expenditure, of the policy of subsidising low pay through family credit and the new in-work benefit for childless people? Has he compared the consequences of the Government's policy of thus nationalising employers' social responsibility with the consequences of the Labour party's policy of privatising it through the minimum wage?

Mr. Lilley: I believe that employers' primary responsibility is to satisfy the desires of consumers and to provide remunerative employment for their employees. Where the productivity of employees in the marketplace does not lead to rewards commensurate with what they could get on benefit, however, it is reasonable that we should offer them some help to supplement their incomes. I am glad, therefore, that we announced last week a £10 a week increase in family credit for those working full time, the importance of which should not be underestimated.

Child Support Agency

2. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the Child Support Agency.

8. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to reform the Child Support Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): The Government have kept the operation of the Child Support Act 1991 under close review for some time. We are now considering carefully the recent report of the Select Committee on Social Security and expect to be in a position to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister agree that the words "inept", "incompetent", "unfair" and "diabolical" would all be fair descriptions of the Child Support Agency? Can he think of any other Government Department that has so quickly discredited what was a good idea? Will he now tell the House how much money has been saved for the Treasury and compare it with the amount of new money that has been passed from the absent to the caring parent to look after children as a result of that legislation?

Mr. Burt: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman still recognises that the principles behind the CSA are good, as the House was united on them. I remind him that one of those good principles was relieving taxpayers of the burden of supporting children whom they should not otherwise have to support. The House will be interested to hear whether the hon. Gentleman is now reneging on that principle.

Savings to the taxpayer amounted to about £418 million last year, and the hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that this year the agency has collected about twice as much maintenance as last year. It is endeavouring to improve its activity in all ways.

Mr. Kirkwood: Does the Minister accept that he has been reviewing the work of the CSA for too long, and that people's patience is now getting exhausted? Second marriages are still breaking down, and people are still leaving work because they cannot afford the CSA's unreasonable financial demands. Will the Minister assure the House that when he introduces proposals he will allow it fundamentally to reconsider the operation of the Act and not just to tinker at the margins of change?

Mr. Burt: I am extremely and genuinely grateful to all hon. Members for the patience that they have shown. They recognise the responsibility that we have because the legislation was supported by both sides of the House. The House will recognise, therefore, that it has a responsibility in relation to the Act and those whom it involves, including parents with care of children, parents who do not currently have care of children, the children themselves and the taxpayer. I assure the hon. Gentleman that our proposals will cover the operations and policy of the agency. The Select Committee on Social Security investigated a whole range of the CSA's activities, which it backed in principle. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is as pleased as I am that the Committee had that opportunity to look carefully at the CSA.

Sir Dudley Smith: I welcome my hon. Friend's original reply, but is he aware that far too many men are still being subjected to unfair financial imposts that they cannot possibly hope to counter? In the circumstances, will he do something about the times allowed for appeal and revisions, which are, in many cases, many months overdue?

Mr. Burt: Extra staff have been allocated to appeals and reviews. Changes were made to the formula last February to take into account the number of requests made by absent parents for amounts to be reduced. The Select Committee and the Government will consider whether further changes to the formula are necessary.

Mr. Tredinnick: Does my hon. Friend accept that the new chief executive of the CSA has performed very well in making it more efficient, and that that has gone some way to solving the problems? Will he ensure that his proposals include a reference to clean-break settlements and to travel-to-work costs?

Mr. Burt: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments about the performance of the new chief executive. I hope that all colleagues have noticed that improvement, particularly in relation to correspondence, because the chief executive has made that a very important part of her role. Particular considerations such as travel-to-work costs and clean-break settlements are mentioned in the Select Committee report, but it would be unfair of me to suggest at this stage precisely what the Government are considering.

Mr. Ingram: Notwithstanding the Minister's answers, does he accept that—following Treasury pressure on the Conservative members of the Social Security Select Committee—the recommendations of the report fell far short of what are seen as the major shortcomings of the Child Support Act 1991? Is he now prepared to state that he will recommend fundamental changes to the Act to ensure its wider acceptance by those affected by it? Will he confirm that the Government will not sneak out their response to the report during the Christmas recess?

Mr. Burt: The Select Committee's report was almost unanimous—only one member of the Committee dissented—so we must assume that it carries the weight of the Committee.

As soon as the Government have concluded their review, we will announce, as we did before, precisely what we intend to do. I hope that, among all the concerns that have been expressed about the agency and its working, it will be noticed that, of this year's group of cases, some 77 per cent. of people have not previously been paying maintenance, and 96 per cent. of all cases involve people on benefit. The agency has traced some 49,000 absent parents who would not have been found under the previous system. All that suggests that the principles are right, and that if the House continues to act together we will have a workable child support policy and agency.

Benefit Payment (Post Offices)

3. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether benefits will continue to be delivered through post offices.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. James Arbuthnot): Yes, customers will continue to be able to choose to receive their pension or other benefits at the post office. We have three clear objectives for the delivery of benefits: to give our customers the choice of where they receive their benefit, to reduce the cost of delivering that service and to eliminate fraud.

Mr. Hawkins: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Will he confirm that his Department has given a firm commitment that it will need a nationwide network of post offices? Will he also confirm that that commitment has been widely welcomed by sub-postmasters, one of whose national officers is in my constituency?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I confirm that that is the Government's policy. In May, Mr. Colin Baker, General Secretary of the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, said: "The promise of automation"—by the Government—

> "on this scale indicates to us that our future . . . is more secure and that our contribution is valued."

He was right—it is.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister confirm whether the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) receives his invalidity benefit through a post office? Does he agree that, if the hon. and learned Gentleman is entitled to it, he deserves to get it, but that his comments on other claimants who also deserve their benefit reek of prejudice and hypocrisy?

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's question. As he well knows, it is not the Government's practice to comment on individual cases. He seems to suggest that he favours means-testing the disability living allowance. If so, it is a pretty peculiar suggestion.

Disability Bill

4. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had with regard to the proposed disability Bill.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. William Hague): The legislative and other measures that I announced on 24 November have been widely welcomed.

Lady Olga Maitland: I warmly welcome my hon. Friend's proposals in the new disability Bill, which has my personal support. Will he confirm that the consultation process on the Bill goes far wider than the process proposed in the summer and that, moreover, the proposals are widely welcomed by disabled groups and their representatives?

Mr. Hague: Yes, I can certainly confirm that. It is a comprehensive package to tackle discrimination across the board, including wide-ranging legislation. We have put the proposals together in recent months with the constant encouragement of my hon. Friend and many other people around the country.

Mr. Corbett: The Minister will know that we have broadly welcomed the Bill, although we want to see the detail of it. In that spirit, will he place copies of the responses to his consultation in the Library? Will he pay particular attention to those who argue strongly for incorporation in the Bill of a commission to ensure that those denied rights under the Bill will have some machinery to try to secure them?

Mr. Hague: I certainly intend to publish an analysis of the responses, which will be placed in the Library when it is available. I am not sure whether that will include the entire text of all the responses, which would be a document of enormous weight, but the hon. Gentleman and others will be welcome to read those responses if they so wish. There is no difficulty about that. The Government intend that the legislation will be enforced, will mean something and will be effective. We should prefer to ensure that that is achieved through the routes of conciliation procedures and other means of redress that I have outlined. We are determined to ensure that the legislation works and changes once and for all attitudes towards disabled people in our society.

Unemployment Benefit

5. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what incentives to work will be included in his reform of unemployment benefit.

Mr. Lilley: Restoring work incentives has been a central theme of my review of social security. Last week, I announced a £600 million package of work incentives, which included extra financial support for people as they move back into work, £10 a week extra on family credit to make people better off in full-time work and incentives for employers to take on the long-term unemployed and to boost jobs.

Mr. Luff: Will my right hon. Friend assure me that his policy on incentives to work and ensuring that unemployed people approach interviews constructively will be a great deal more consistent than the approach of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who cannot even make up his mind on the simple question of whether interviewees should be clean and tidy?

Mr. Lilley: I have noticed a certain inconsistency in the remarks attributed to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) in the press. On Sunday, he was reported as saying:

> "I do not believe the employment service should be in the business of ordering short back and sides haircuts"

but, when he responded to my statement on the jobseeker's allowance—after, in his characteristically accurate way, reading out the actual text of our proposals from the White Paper—he said:

> "If it is simply a matter of dress"

and

> "deportment . . . no one could object."—[*Official Report*, 24 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 635.]

Perhaps he will make it clear today which of his two views he currently holds.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Secretary of State recognise how nauseating it is that those who have been punished as a result of Government policy and who find themselves jobless should now be the subject of attacks time after time from Tory Members? Does not the Secretary of State know that it is a lie—a notorious lie—that the unemployed do not want to work? They are desperate to work, and the current Government have undermined their right to work. That is what Opposition Members are so angry about.

Mr. Lilley: Despite the hon. Gentleman's intemperate language, I actually agree with him that it is untrue that the vast majority of people do not want to work; the majority of people do want to work.

It is obvious from the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question that his disagreement is with the shadow social security spokesman, the hon. Member for Garscadden, and he should pursue it with him on the days when they are not in accord.

Mr. Winnick: Hypocrites.

Madam Speaker: Order. I must ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw that last remark.

Mr. Winnick: I retain the view that I expressed but, as I always observe the rulings of the Chair, I have no other alternative but to do what you, Madam Speaker, have just said.

Mr. Wolfson: Will my right hon. Friend continue to keep under review the situation whereby large numbers of people are now getting back into work on a temporary basis, and provide encouragement for that to happen?

Mr. Lilley: Yes, indeed. We introduced the employment on trial rules and liberalised them in the statement on the jobseeker's allowance. They will allow people to take work for a brief period to discover whether they are suited to it. If they are, they stay on; if, after, I think, three weeks, they find that the work is unsuitable and they leave, they do not permanently lose benefits, as they might otherwise have done. That has proved very successful in helping people back into work.

Mr. Bradley: Most of the measures announced by the Government apply to people who have been unemployed for more than two years, although we shall have to wait at least another year before anything is implemented. I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that ex-carers who have been claiming invalid care allowance will not have been registered as unemployed or receiving unemployment benefit. However, many of them have often been out of the job market for more than two years. Will the Secretary of State therefore ensure that all the measures will apply to former invalid care allowance recipients as well as those to who have been registered unemployed?

Mr. Lilley: I shall certainly look into the point that the hon. Gentleman makes about carers.

On the hon. Gentleman's first point, it is not correct to say that most of the measures in the work incentive package apply only to people who have been out of the labour market for two years. That is true of only one of the major measures, which requires primary legislation and which will take effect in April 1996. All the others, by and large, will take effect from April 1995, including the reduction in national insurance contributions for employers and the various other work incentives that will often help people who have been out of the labour market for only a short period.

Mr. Sykes: Will my right hon. Friend ignore the carping of Opposition Members? Are not many decent, hard-working families fed up to the back teeth with financing the life styles of scroungers who have no intention of working? Will not the jobseeker's allowance put an end to the "something for nothing" mentality that infects so many parts of our towns and cities?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. I know that he is providing jobs for people, which is a good deal more constructive than much of the hot air that we hear from Opposition Members who have never been responsible for a payroll in their lives. We are encouraging the creation of more jobs, and encouraging and enabling people to take them.

Housing Benefit

6. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review the present payments that can be claimed under housing benefit.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Roger Evans): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in his uprating statement a wide-ranging package of measures which will stem the growth of public spending on housing benefit while at the same time improving work incentives.

Mr. Cox: Has the Minister yet read Shelter's observations about last week's Budget? Are not the problems of housing benefit a direct result of the Government's policy of increasing rents in both the private and public sectors? That is what has caused the escalation of housing benefit.

In the light of oft-made comments about tenants and landlords negotiating a rent, can the Minister give any concrete examples of that?

Mr. Evans: The Government believe—and this has been the policy—in shifting the burden of public support from bricks and mortar, which means a very open-ended and unfair system, to a much more targeted system related to the individual and his individual housing needs. My right hon. Friend has announced a limitation of above-average rents in certain circumstances for new tenancies in the private sector after October 1995. The effect of that will be to curb the excessive expenditure and target it better.

Mr. Jenkin: Is not the important feature of the reforms in housing benefit, and of announcements about other benefits, the fact that we are responsible enough to point out that social security cannot continue to grow at a faster rate than the economy can sustain? Is it not clear that Labour would just spend, spend and spend, to a point that we cannot afford?

Mr. Evans: The answers to my hon. Friend's last two points are yes and yes. The figures for housing benefit are startling. It has doubled since 1988, and will amount to £10 billion in 1994-95—12 per cent. of all social security spending, half of which goes to the private sector.

Mr. Dewar: I refer to the Minister's closing cadenza, and ask him: whose fault is that? As my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) pointed out, it is directly related to the Government's policy on rents.

If rent ceilings are to reflect rent levels for different types of property in an area, will the Minister explain how "an area" is defined? Is it coterminous with the boundaries of housing authorities? Is there not a danger that, once the ceiling levels are defined and established, they will drag rent levels up and the ceiling will become the minimum, to everyone's disadvantage?

Finally, may I ask the Minister about the other side of the package—mortgage interest payments? Is there not a danger that the restrictions that have been announced will set back any prospect of real recovery in the housing market? Will the Minister comment on the Building Societies Association's view that the Government are baling out, that their proposals are offensive and that they remove a safety net, as a result of which many vulnerable groups will suffer?

Mr. Evans: Let me take that omnibus series of questions one by one.

Yes, of course the shift from bricks and mortar to individual housing needs means a shift where public expenditure takes place. The question that has arisen is—is that targeting suitable and appropriate? As for the definition of average rents for areas, the Government will consult the Institute of Rent Officers on how the areas should be drawn.

The purpose of, and the justification for, the scheme is that there must be some form of cap to prevent matters getting out of control. For example, even in the Greater London area, 95 per cent. of private sector rents are under £85 a week. Some of the larger figures that have been quoted in the press have rightly given rise to public concern. The hon. Gentleman asked about income support.

Mr. Bradley: Speech.

Mr. Evans: I am attempting to reply.

Madam Speaker: Order. The Opposition spokesman's questions would have been more suitable during a statement than at Question Time. However, as he asked them, the Minister must be given an opportunity to respond.

Mr. Evans: I am grateful for that ruling, Madam Speaker.

The last topic raised by the hon. Gentleman was income support mortgage payments. Again, I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that the amount of public finance being spent in that sector, in a fashion that was increasingly seen as indiscriminate, had to be brought under reasonable control. Therefore, the Government first introduced a cap of £125,000, and we have now reduced it. I suggest that no one can seriously argue against that. Theoretically, the hon. Gentleman is right that, at first blush, its impact on the housing market may give rise to some concern, but at the end of it all, we are confident that the private sector will come up with insurance arrangements to protect people.

Madam Speaker: Perhaps we can get back to Question Time. Hon. Members should ask just one question each. I call Mr. Marshall and ask him to set an example, please.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that insurable risks should be insured by the individual rather than fall into the lap of the taxpayer?

Mr. Evans: Yes.

Industrial Injury Benefit

7. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how he intends to replace industrial injury benefit, and when.

Mr. Hague: Under the long-term review of social security expenditure, every part of the social security programme is being examined. If and when there are any firm proposals to put forward, an announcement will be made.

Mr. Jones: Before making his announcement, will the Minister consider the case, in my constituency, of Mr. Keith Cox, a father of five, who four years ago fell from some scaffolding and is now tetraplegic? Under the industrial benefits system, Mr. Cox is in receipt of £200 a week, which is not a considerable amount in view of the extent of his injuries and of his family circumstances. For the past four years, he and his union have been fighting a case for compensation. That is extremely expensive and perhaps has a diminishing chance of success.

Madam Speaker: Order. Will the hon. Gentleman please ask a question?

Mr. Jones: Reducing or getting rid of industrial injury benefit will mean that people such as Mr. Cox will be considerably worse off and will have nowhere else to turn.

Mr. Hague: In our review of social security expenditure, we shall of course consider expenditure as a whole. Any review of industrial injuries benefit will cover precisely the hon. Gentleman's points. The Government are right to review the social security system, and that is what we must continue to do.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend look at legal aid in conjunction with the Minister who deals with that? Many people who would be able to take a case through the courts and get compensation and be able to pay back the social security industrial injuries benefit from that court benefit, which might mean that the Exchequer would end up with more money, are prevented from doing so because they cannot get appropriate legal aid.

Mr. Hague: Yes, I shall look at my hon. Friend's points.

Habitual Residence Rule

9. **Ms Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many British citizens have been denied access to benefits under the habitual residence rule; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: One thousand and fifty-three British citizens have not satisfied the habitual residence test when claiming income support in the three months from 1 August. Figures for housing benefit refusals are not yet available.

Ms Jackson: Is it not time to scrap this singularly ugly little piece of legislation when the reality for only one of my constituents, who is six months pregnant, is to find herself without any money or home at all, as the Euston Benefits Agency office which serves my constituents takes anything up to a month to see an initial applicant and more than two months to process an appeal? If the Government will not scrap this legislation, will they at least allow British citizens to claim under the extreme hardship arrangements so that more women and children are not put on our streets without homes or food?

Mr. Evans: The answer to the hon. Lady's first question is no. Without knowing the details, I cannot comment on the particular circumstances of her constituent. However, if she gives me the details of the case, I shall look into it. British citizens in extreme circumstances would be entitled to apply to the social fund for a crisis loan.

Dr. Spink: Is my hon. Friend aware that my constituents are singularly sick of people from abroad coming here and scrounging off our social benefits system? If we had more support from Opposition parties for our immigration and asylum legislation, we could resist that phenomenon.

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend undoubtedly speaks for the country.

Mr. Donohoe: Is the Minister aware that a large percentage of the people who are refused are British citizens, not people from abroad? Can he explain why every DSS office in the country has to send every refusal file to DSS headquarters?

Mr. Evans: It is implicit in the answer that I gave that the 1,053 people to whom I referred are British citizens. There is no disputing that. However, whether they are British citizens in the sense— [HON. MEMBERS: "They are."] No, that is not so because in many cases they have no immediate connection with this country and are not in any real sense habitually resident. My right hon. Friend saw fit to introduce that salutary measure to curb what would otherwise become a public scandal.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Would it not be true to say that a number of such people would be economic immigrants, and it is that to which people object?

Mr. Evans: No doubt that is one example. Another involves Canadian or Australian teenagers on backpacking holidays to Europe, who happen to be patrials within the meaning of British citizenship and who previously were entitled to obtain income support.

Bronchitis and Emphysema

10. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to amend the regulation prescribing chronic bronchitis and emphysema in relation to deep-coal miners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: We have no such plans at present. The terms of prescription recommended by the independent Industrial Injuries Advisory Council were accepted and implemented in full by the Government. The Government will, of course, consider carefully any future recommendations that the council may make.

Mr. Clapham: I am extremely disappointed by the Minister's reply. He will be aware that, over the year between September 1993 and September 1994, there were 43,827 claims, of which 39,358 were turned down—13,995 on X-ray evidence. He will also be aware that there is great concern because X-rays, especially where routine X-rays are taken at hospitals, tend to be overexposed, thereby preventing the detection of simple pneumoconiosis. Will he therefore ensure that the 13,995 cases turned down on X-ray evidence are reviewed? Will he further ensure that an instruction goes down the line requesting that X-rays taken for the detection of bronchitis and emphysema should be of the soft exposure type?

Mr. Hague: The hon. Gentleman is right about the figures—they show that the success rate has been about 11 per cent. However, that is in line with the success rate of claims for prescribed diseases in general. We have corresponded previously on his point about soft exposure X-rays. The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council remains confident that the International Labour Organisation standard classification X-rays are the appropriate means of measuring coal dust retention in the lung.

Of course, the Government must have regard to the council's advice. It is an independent, not a partisan, body, which includes trade union representatives. It is there to give impartial advice to the Government. We will have regard to its advice in the future just as we have in the past. Appeal procedures are in place for disappointed claimants, as matters currently stand.

Retirement Pensioners

11. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of retirement pensioners; what the total was 10 years ago; and what estimate he has made of the number in the year 2004, assuming no change in eligibility criteria.

Mr. Arbuthnot: At 31 March 1994, 10.25 million people were receiving a state retirement pension. The equivalent figure for 31 March 1984 was 9.5 million. It is estimated that, by 31 March 2004, the number of pensioners will have increased to about 11.25 million.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As the ever-increasing number of pensioners will place enormous burdens on the Treasury, is there not a danger that taxes will rise all the time unless we can save cash elsewhere? Will my hon. Friend the Minister ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in the interests of the pensioners of tomorrow, to raise in the Cabinet the subject of the horrendous and also ever-increasing contributions that the country is making to the European Union?

Mr. Arbuthnot: What a surprise. The two issues have nothing to do with each other. The United Kingdom has taken the lead in cracking down on fraud in the EU, in reforming the common agricultural policy and in pensions— which is why it has more money put away in occupational pensions than has the whole of the rest of Europe.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Crown Prosecution Service

30. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement regarding the Crown Prosecution Service providing the reasons for non-prosecution of offences to individuals who have been the victims of crime.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): The Crown Prosecution Service must provide the police with sufficient information to enable them to inform victims why a case has not been prosecuted.

Mr. Cunningham: Although the Attorney-General says that it is up to the police, many victims of crime believe that that should be the responsibility of the CPS. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman do something about that? Often, victims are utterly bewildered when prosecutions are not brought.

The Attorney-General: I well understand that point, and I sympathise with victims. The hon. Gentleman will be aware from the victims charter that it was decided that the most sensible and usual way to communicate with a victim should be via the police. It is for the CPS to provide the police with appropriate information so that they can assist the victim. If a victim is in court, the CPS will often give the appropriate explanation.

31. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Attorney-General what steps he has taken to improve co-operation between the Crown Prosecution Service and the police.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): The Crown Prosecution Service and the police continue to work together closely. A number of initiatives include a pilot scheme in which Crown Prosecution Service lawyers will hold regular advice surgeries for police officers.

Mr. Robathan: I had the opportunity to visit my local CPS in Leicester in the summer, when I was made aware of how vital is close communication between the service and the police. Can my hon. and learned Friend assure me that he will keep pressing both parties to work together, so that there is no repeat of embarrassing incidents recently reported in the press?

The Solicitor-General: I can assure my hon. Friend of that. I also had the benefit of visiting the CPS in Leicester. As my hon. Friend discovered, good communication lies at the heart of sound prosecuting. With that much in mind, the police and the CPS are taking forward joint monitoring of their performance nationally and have developed national charging standards for a variety of assaults, ranging from common assault to murder.

Mr. John Morris: I thank the Attorney-General for his replies to me in respect of the Wimbledon common trial. Does the Solicitor-General accept the trial judge's view that some aspects of the handling of that case were thoroughly reprehensible? Does the hon. and learned Gentleman also accept that there were two grave failures? One was reliance as expert evidence on the testimony of only one psychologist, who was also involved in assisting the police with the gathering of evidence. The other was failure to appreciate that the evidence of the undercover officer would almost inevitably be ruled inadmissible because of the inducement offered.

Is the Solicitor-General aware that the stand since taken by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, by the Director of Public Prosecutions and by the Attorney-General—that there was nothing to suggest that anyone acted other than properly—has caused anxiety? Will he assure that House that, to avoid repetition, the Attorney-General himself will be involved with directors at the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure that there will be guidelines—not whether there will be guidelines—in those vital matters?

The Solicitor-General: Not for the first time, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is being wise after the event. It is easy to speak with the benefit of hindsight. The case was taken in front of an experienced metropolitan magistrate. It lasted for about 11 days, during which time there was a thorough preliminary inquiry. The magistrate ruled that there was a case to answer. The case was also advised on by senior Treasury counsel. As the case passed both tests, the right hon. and learned Gentleman's idea that there is anything to apologise for is misconceived.

32. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Attorney-General what steps have been taken in the past 12 months to reduce the burden of paperwork required by the Crown Prosecution Service in relation to guilty pleas.

The Attorney-General: Since 1 October this year, the police and the Crown Prosecution Service have been participating in a pilot study in six police force areas, including Croydon, on the production of abbreviated files in cases where a guilty plea is anticipated.

Mr. Congdon: I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's answer. Does he agree that the use of information technology could further reduce the burden of paperwork? Does he intend to encourage that?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend makes a good point. When, a year ago, my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General and I went through, with the police, the detailed forms that they use in the preparation of a case, it was plain that the writing out of names, addresses and other details was dreadfully time consuming. Obviously, one of the best ways in which to help them is to get information technology to perform the task, as that cuts down a great deal of the burden of the paperwork.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Can we nevertheless be assured that, in the gathering of information, victims will be closely communicated with about charges? Can we be assured that if, as happened in a horrendous murder case in my constituency, half way through a trial in which there is a guilty plea there is a change in the charge from murder to manslaughter, at least the family of the victim are given an explanation about why that has happened and why the subsequent sentences will, therefore, be very much lighter than they would expect them to be?

The Attorney-General: The hon. Lady makes a point with which I have a good deal of sympathy. It is important to try to keep in touch with victims. Obviously, the victim cannot determine what the charge should be; that must be determined carefully and independently. However, a proper explanation to the victim or his family—for example, when a charge changes from murder to manslaughter—is highly desirable and is, indeed, in accordance with best practice, unless there are very special reasons for doing otherwise.

Mr. Brazier: Are not two of the best ways in which we can reduce paperwork in those matters, first, by extending to a number of new charges the provision whereby people can plead guilty by post and secondly, by allowing some of the lesser cases to be prosecuted directly by the police or by local solicitors instead of by the Crown Prosecution Service?

The Attorney-General: I know that my hon. Friend is a great enthusiast for both points, which he has made before. I am not quite so enthusiastic, although I am looking for constructive ways in which to reach the same goal.

Asil Nadir

33. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent discussions the Serious Fraud Office has had on ways to deal with the Asil Nadir case.

The Attorney-General: A warrant has been issued for the arrest of Mr. Asil Nadir. The Crown is ready to proceed when he returns, or is returned, to the jurisdiction. Interpol has been informed of the warrant.

Mr. Skinner: Why is it that the Attorney-General and the Government seem to have written off the chance of getting Asil Nadir back into the country? This Government, who are so adept at rounding up social security claimants, new age travellers and anti-foxhunters, cannot lay a finger on that man. Is not the truth that millions of people out there believe that the Government allowed Asil Nadir to escape, especially because he gave more than £400,000 to the Tory party? When will the money be handed back to those who finished up with the debts round their necks?

The Attorney-General: I do not think that millions of people out there believe anything of the sort, just as they do not believe very much that the hon. Gentleman says at most times.

Lenient Sentences

34. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Attorney-General how many cases he has referred to the Court of Appeal on having an unduly lenient sentence in the past 12 months.

The Solicitor-General: During the past 12 months, the Attorney-General sought leave to refer 50 cases to the Court of Appeal. Of the 38 cases decided to date, 32, or 84 per cent., have resulted in an increase in sentence.

Mr. Hendry: Is not the most effective way of ensuring that criminals should be punished more severely than their victims—as highlighted by the case of the 82-year-old pensioner in Derbyshire last week—through my right hon. and learned Friend's right to ask the Court of Appeal to review lenient sentences? Is it not a shame that the Labour party continues to oppose that policy?

The Solicitor-General: My hon. Friend may find on closer analysis that, in that sector, as in so many others, the Labour party has changed its ground somewhat over the past two or three years. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 will give my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary power to extend the scope of the present power to refer to serious fraud. I understand from him that he will be doing that in the near future.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Pergau Dam

37. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the replenishment of Overseas Development Administration funds following the court case on the Pergau dam.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): The Government have yet to receive and study the written judgment. Until we do so and have decided for or against an appeal, we cannot decide on the implications for the aid programme. No decision has been taken on those points. The House will be informed when the Government have decided whether to appeal against the judgment.

Sir David Steel: I well understand that the question of whether there is to be an appeal has still to be decided. However, that should not prevent the Government from making it clear to the House, and giving an undertaking, that if they do not appeal, or in the event of an appeal going against them, the ODA budget will be reinstated in full. Is the Minister aware that the courts decided that the World Development Movement could go back to the courts if the £230 million was not reinstated? Surely the Minister should give the House that long-overdue assurance now.

Mr. Baldry: As I have said, we have yet to receive the court's written judgment. Until we have studied that judgment and decided for or against an appeal, we cannot decide on the implications for the aid programme of the money already spent or the funds likely to be required in future. However, the right hon. Gentleman and the House can be assured that, as soon as we have decided whether to appeal, the House will be informed.

Sir John Stanley: Does my hon. Friend agree that, should the present legal position be sustained, and the Government be found to have used aid money for non-aid purposes, there would in those circumstances be the clearest possible moral obligation on the Government to make good the appropriate sum to the aid programme and, at the very least, to make an appropriate public expenditure survey transfer from the Department of Trade and Industry to the ODA?

Mr. Baldry: That is all hypothetical. As my right hon. Friend is aware, having been a Minister, no responsible Minister would answer a hypothetical question like that.

Miss Lestor: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that many people, including myself, believe that this talk about studying the written judgment is really a means of avoiding the question because we all know what the judgment was? Will he make it clear that his Department is not working on a scheme designed to subvert the court's judgment? Is he also aware that the Foreign Secretary and the Foreign Office are in danger of appearing very churlish in looking for loopholes in that judgment? Why will the Minister not refund the money, as that is what many hon. Members feel should be done, and direct it to the poorest countries, particularly where the freeze in the aid budget means a cut of 17 per cent. in aid to the African continent?

Mr. Baldry: I think that I have already answered the hon. Lady's first point very fully. This is a matter in respect of which the court has made a ruling and it must be right for the Government to consider whether to appeal. Until we have decided whether to appeal, what might happen to the aid budget is hypothetical.

As for the hon. Lady's other point, she is severely mistaken. Let me help her: if she considers the figures shown on this board, which were announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer last week, she will see that he has increased the aid programme. It is a plus programme—*[Interruption.]* Let me help Opposition Members as they are having some problems. The figures for the coming year are up nearly £50 million.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. Points of order are taken after Question Time.

Mr. Baldry: For the following year, they are nearly £100 million more than now, and, for the next following year, they are nearly £150 million more. Those are plus, plus, plus figures. For each of the three coming years, including this year, more money will be spent than in the previous year. We are the sixth-largest aid donor world wide, and our aid budget is £2.2 billion. Indeed, last year, the United Kingdom was one of only seven countries to increase its aid in real terms. The hon. Lady's suggestion about cuts in aid is total bunkum. They are plus figures throughout.

Poland

38. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have been held recently concerning assistance to Poland.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development visited Poland from 7 to 10 November. Polish Ministers expressed appreciation for know-how fund assistance, particularly its speed and flexibility, and made suggestions for future assistance.

Mrs. Gillan: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Have not the tearing down of the Berlin wall and the disintegration of the Warsaw pact countries been some of the most significant events this century? Is it not essential to help newly emerging central European countries to have a secure democracy, and essential that we continue to support them through the excellent method of our know-how fund?

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend is right. It must be in our interests to help to pump-prime communist Europe's transformation into free enterprise democracies. That is exactly what the know-how fund helps to achieve. The key aims of the know-how fund are financial services; privatisation; the marketing of small businesses; improving management, agriculture and health services; and promoting good government. The fund is well targeted and flexible. It offers assistance in sectors in which we have expertise and experience. President Walesa recently said that the British do not say much but they do a lot. It is a much-appreciated programme.

Arms Sales

39. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the linking of aid with arms sales.

Mr. Baldry: There is no link between British aid and defence sales.

Mrs. Roche: Given the large amounts of aid to countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Oman, which are hardly among the poorest countries of the world, is it not clear that the links between British aid and British arms sales are rather more than the brief entanglement to which the Foreign Secretary referred in the Pergau dam scandal?

Mr. Baldry: There is no link between our aid programme and defence sales, and there never has been. It is absurd to suggest that our aid flows are determined by prospects of defence sales. All of our 10 biggest aid recipients are low-income countries—seven in sub-Saharan Africa and three in Asia. Nearly 80 per cent. of our bilateral aid to developing countries goes to the poorest countries. A recent OECD report recognised that our aid focuses on poor countries, and it acknowledged the quality of our aid to those countries.

Mr. Waterson: Is my hon. Friend aware that more than 400,000 jobs in this country depend on defence industries and that the people who work for companies such as Computing Devices in my constituency are becoming heartily sick and tired of left-wing pacifist Opposition Members attacking our arms industry and trying to produce a bogus link between arms sales and our aid policies?

Mr. Baldry: It would seem that the Opposition suggest that we should never contemplate defence sales to any country to which we give aid. That is a somewhat bizarre approach. How many employees of companies such as British Aerospace, GEC, Rolls-Royce, Racal, Perkins Engines, Vickers and hundreds of other United Kingdom defence exporters would accept losing their jobs for such a spurious policy?

Africa

40. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of the United Kingdom's total aid budget goes to Africa.

Mr. Baldry: We estimate that 39 per cent. of total bilateral aid allocatable by country went to Africa in 1993-94. Africa is also a major recipient of multilateral assistance, to which Britain makes a significant contribution.

Mr. Merchant: Will my hon. Friend confirm that Africa must benefit from the fact that, as he said, Britain is among only a handful of countries that have increased their overseas aid budgets this year and that, apart from development aid, Africa will benefit from the fact that Britain is among the lead countres in encouraging debt relief measures for the most indebted—the poorest—countries as long as they pursue sound economic policies?

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend is absolutely right: we are increasing our aid budget. He is also correct in that Britain continues to take the lead in promoting debt relief to the world's poorest, most indebted countries. Our priority is to achieve implementation of the full Trinidad terms through the Paris Club, but we recognise that that will not be enough for a few countries.

That is why my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has called upon the international financial institutions to consider what more they can do for their poorest, most indebted members. He has proposed that the International Monetary Fund should improve access to, and the concessionality of, its loans to the poorest, most indebted nations. That would be financed by the sale of part of the IMF gold reserve. The UK is persistently in front in trying to relieve the burden of debt on the world's poorest nations.

Mr. Enright: Does the Minister agree that, in spite of his ludicrous cardboard cut-out, the amount of money going to Africa does not tackle in any way whatsoever the huge problems of that continent? Does he further agree that aid which should be going to Africa is going to central and eastern Europe? Is it not about time that we stopped the poor paying for the poor? Will the Government take a lead multilaterally, unilaterally and bilaterally?

Mr. Baldry: I wish to make a number of points. Firstly, some of the aid lobby take the somewhat perverse position that, whereas aid to Afghanistan is virtuous, aid to Albania is not. Secondly, the amount of money allocated to Africa has been increasing and we have been focusing much of our aid programme on Africa, with considerable success.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will recognise that 10 years ago Uganda, for example, was in ruins. It has now been rebuilt. In the past six years, its growth rate has averaged more than 5 per cent. per annum. That is an excellent example of how Africans can help themselves with outside support. We have been a leading donor to Uganda: we disbursed £38 million in 1993-94.

The position is similar in Ghana, which has pursued a programme of economic reform and returned to democratic rule. We actively supported the Ghanaian Government's efforts with aid of nearly £15 million in 1993-94. We are committed to providing £100 million in aid to South Africa.

Of course, following the public expenditure survey outcome, we are now deciding the allocation of resources. I assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that aid to the poorest countries of Africa and Asia will be a clear priority in that process.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wonder whether you are aware of the announcement today of the loss of 2,500 jobs by Mercury Communications and also the decision to dismantle all 2,700 of its pay kiosks. That has enormous implications for the future of our communications industry, for employment and also for competition policy. Will the Government make a statement about the matter? I hope that the dismantling of the pay phones will be accompanied by as much ministerial hype as was their erection.

Madam Speaker: I have no responsibility for seeing that a statement is made about that matter. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that I have not received an application from any Minister to make such a statement today.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. At the weekend there was a very serious announcement about the possible voting position in the House of Commons. That announcement resulted from the suspension of Nottingham's Labour party. Surely we should refer the matter to the Committee of Selection so that it can determine whether there are enough Labour Members from Nottingham in the Labour Whip, or whether there is a serious problem of a shortage of Labour Members.

Madam Speaker: I have heard some bogus points of order in my time, but that really takes the biscuit.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have noted during Question Time an incident at the Dispatch Box when the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs made what can only be described as an idiot of himself by holding up a handwritten sign showing misleading statistics on overseas development. Are you happy with such conduct at the Dispatch Box, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: I am not happy with conduct whereby any Minister or any Member brings such diagrams or explanations into the Chamber. I believe that all Members of the House and particularly Ministers should be sufficiently articulate to express what they want to say without diagrams.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. May I support what you say, but also say that Members and Ministers should be literate and numerate? The Minister managed to hold the idiot guide upside down, which made it even more confusing for those of us who were trying to follow what he was saying.

Madam Speaker: I am glad that I was not sitting opposite the Minister, so I did not have to read it upside down.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. With regard to the vote tomorrow on VAT on fuel, I have a list of 14 Conservative Members of Parliament who have said that they are against the increase in VAT on fuel. If they vote in favour of that increase in the Division tomorrow, how will we be able to find out whether they have been bribed or battered into submission?

Madam Speaker: That is too hypothetical for me to attempt to answer at this stage.

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming debate on Question [29 November].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply, acquisition or importation;

(b) for refunding any amount of tax;

(c) for varying any rate at which that tax is at any time chargeable; or

(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—*[Mr. Kenneth Clarke.]*

Question again proposed.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

Madam Speaker: Before I call the Minister, I have to announce that I have imposed a 10-minute limit on speeches between 6 and 8 o'clock this evening.

3.35 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): Last Tuesday my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer delivered a Budget that was good for Britain and good for the national heritage. I applaud it on both grounds. I should like to begin by examining its direct effect on the national heritage. I shall then examine its broader effect on the economy. The one cannot be entirely divorced from the other because it is important to see the heritage in its full economic perspective.

Let me begin by looking at the national heritage as a narrow aspect of our wider economy. Since my appointment as Heritage Secretary, I have sought to make two things clear about the way in which I intend to discharge my responsibilities. First, I want to see the national heritage sector for which I am responsible expand. It is a huge sector. It includes everything from ballet to boxing. I want to see all those different sectors grow and derive greater strength and possibilities of expansion by securing greater public support. That is true of the theatre sector, of our film studios, of sporting activity throughout the country, of art galleries and museums and of broadcasting companies; I believe that we have in Britain the opportunity to exploit the growth of broadcasting opportunities throughout the world.

I regard all those different sectors as important. They are important in themselves because they create job opportunities. They create growth within the wider economy. They are also important because they express our identity as a nation. They express our aspirations as a nation and they express our confidence in our future as a nation.

I believe that the national heritage in all those different characteristics and forms should express a commitment that we should all feel in all parts of the country, to excellence, to seeing standards rise and to seeing our aspirations for the future fulfilled. That is why I disagree so fundamentally with the views attributed at the weekend to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw).

I have no disagreement with the hon. Member for Blackburn about the desirability of having a debate, if he wants to have one, on the future role of the royal family. Indeed, I am sure that all my hon. Friends would welcome such a debate with the hon. Member for Blackburn. I have no doubt that, in the court of public opinion, it is a debate that we shall win hands down.

However, I disagree profoundly with what Labour Members have said in the course of the debate. It is not only the hon. Member for Blackburn. The debate started in the summer with the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), who wanted to move the royal family out of its present palaces and put it in a designer palace designed, as she saw it, to represent her political viewpoint for the next century.

At the time, the Labour leadership sought to distance itself from that idea and said that it was merely an aberration—something dreamt up in fevered imagination in the heat of the summer. It was something for which the wider party was not responsible. That defence was blown to smithereens at the weekend.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): Was that in the Budget?

Mr. Dorrell: No, that was not in the Budget and nor was any cash provided in the Budget—nor should there be—to build a new designer palace of the type that the hon. Member for Redcar envisaged. The budgetary implications of putting the royal family in a different sort of palace are not the least of the reasons why the House should reject that idea unanimously. It would seem to be an absurd use of resources. The Opposition Front Bench and the hon. Member for Redcar, however, support the use of resources for taking the royal family out of its traditional palaces and putting it in designer palaces.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Dorrell: Gladly.

Mr. Skinner: Why does not the Minister understand that when hon. Members talk about the royal family and the future of the monarchy, they do so against a background of people talking about that subject outside this place? The truth is that the veneers of mystery that have been stripped away from the royal family were stripped away by its members. They became engaged in their self-destruction course. It is no wonder that people out there want to talk about their future and it is therefore likely that others will want to take part in the argument. People want to discuss the matter and there is probably a majority in favour of this monarch being the last. That is not because of the growth of republicanism per se—I wish it was—but because of the shenanigans that have been taking place in Buckingham palace which, incidentally, is a council house.

Mr. Dorrell: I started off by saying that I have no difficulties with having such a debate, and the hon. Gentleman has just illustrated why I am so keen to have one—

Madam Speaker: Order. I have great difficulty in having a debate on the matter as it is not at all relevant to the Budget. I hope that the Minister will now revert to his speech on the Budget.

Mr. Dorrell: As I was seeking to demonstrate, the Labour party argues that we should include in the Budget an expenditure line to provide a new people's palace for the royal family. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Labour Members say no, but that is what the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman argued for in the summer, and the shadow Home Secretary reinforced that argument over the weekend, so I hope that Opposition Members will not try to distance themselves from their Front Bench.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) was in some difficulties with the subject on the radio this morning. He was put up to defend the views of the shadow Home Secretary, but he did not do so. He defended a different view—that the Opposition espouse the abolition of the royal prerogative. It was pretty unclear what he meant by that.

Conservative Members believe that the monarchy works well and that it is a vital part of our constitutional stability. We deplore Opposition attempts to distort economic priorities to change the monarchy in a way that they find politically correct. They are the high priests of political correctness and they want to impose that straitjacket on the royal family.

When I became Secretary of State for National Heritage, I said that I wanted a heritage and respect for our traditions that expressed this country's identity and its commitment to and confidence in its future. That is something to which I attach great importance.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): On the budgetary aspects of royal palaces, as my right hon. Friend's Department is responsible for the maintenance of Hampton Court palace in my constituency, will he ensure that it goes from strength to strength? It is being improved, doing extremely well and attracting more visitors, and is a precious national asset. As it is not fully occupied, however, does not it make it all the more absurd for foolish Labour Members to suggest building any new royal palaces?

Mr. Dorrell: I agree with every word and can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. The Government will continue to provide the resources that are necessary to ensure that our monarchy and the palaces in which they live reflect the confidence that this country and its people have in their future and in their capacity to excel.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Dorrell: I shall make a little more progress.

When I became Heritage Secretary, I set out two objectives. The first was a heritage sector that expressed our commitment to excel and confidence in our future. The second was to make it clear that the growth of that sector should not, and could not, be solely or primarily a function of growing public expenditure programmes.

Culture, heritage and all the different activities for which my Department is responsible are not things that are done to people, or things from which the nation derives strength if they are the creation of an official committee divorced from its support within the community. Culture and heritage derive their strength and legitimacy from the direct support of individual citizens supporting those activities, and paying when they get there for the cultural excellence that they witness. Culture and heritage also derive strength from the support of the business community and the voluntary sector.

In short, culture and heritage draw support from a wide network of sources throughout the community, and it is right that the resources available to the national heritage in the broadest sense should be linked to the capacity of that sector to generate direct support in the community at large. That is why I unambiguously embrace the principle of plural funding; the principle that the sectors for which I am responsible should secure some revenue from the Exchequer certainly, but should also be encouraged to look for a wide range of cash support from a wide range of different sources throughout the community that they are there to serve.

Mr. Enright: Will the Secretary of State explain therefore why Heritage plc—the company run by his hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth)—received huge subventions from the Treasury when it went bust at a time when it was showing a royal fashion display?

Mr. Dorrell: That is an example, as my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) would be the first to say, of the dangers that the public sector gets into when it seeks to make judgments better made by the private sector. That is a view that my hon. Friend has himself put on record.

The key to the success of the Department of National Heritage is to recognise that public expenditure has an important role to play in the sectors for which it is responsible, but that the Department is about a lot more than simply disbursing public expenditure. The policy of the Department, and my objective as Secretary of State, is to create a framework that will allow the heritage sector in the broadest sense to grow in the way in which I have described, by drawing support directly from the community in its various forms.

The Budget that we announced last week gives several examples of how I intend to carry that process forward. In the first place, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor announced last week the extension of the reduction of pools betting duty, which is a means by which the public sector catalyses private sector support into the sports and arts sectors. Each £1 of tax revenue forgone has generated an extra £2 from the pools companies, so for every £1 of extra PSBR cost, £3 of benefit is going into the sports and arts sectors. The total value of that to those sectors last year was £68 million, but the public finance cost was little more than £20 million. That is one example of using the state as a catalyst to gather more support into the heritage sector.

Another example announced last week was the extra resources that I have provided for the different business sponsorship schemes that operate within the Department.

[Mr. Dorrell]

I announced last week an increase of £750,000 in public funding to the business sponsorship incentive scheme, which generates support for the arts sector. Experience has shown that £1 of public money used in that way once again will generate £2 of private money from the business community, so £750,000 of public money should catalyse over £2 million into the arts sector.

Exactly the same principle works behind the sportsmatch scheme, which has secured an extra £400,000 of funding. Exactly the same principle will also work in the new business sponsorship incentive scheme that I have announced for the heritage sector. Once again, the public sector—in the form of the Department of National Heritage—is using public money to catalyse private support for a growing heritage sector. All that is in addition to the direct expenditure increases that I announced last week of £5 million for the Arts Council and £1.6 million for English Heritage. Those are all important policy developments. It is important that we are increasing money for the Arts Council and English Heritage and using public money to encourage those sectors to generate a broader base of public support throughout the community.

However, those policy commitments are dwarfed by the two key priorities that the Department of National Heritage has been following up in the past few months. The first is our commitment successfully to bring on stream the national lottery, an imaginative initiative that is the personal responsibility and success of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The national lottery fills gaps in traditional funding arrangements for the heritage sector. It is important because it is a new source of funds for the sector on a scale that could not have been envisaged from any other source under a Government of any other complexion.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I share many of my right hon. Friend's thoughts about the success of the national lottery. However, my constituents in Rye and surrounding villages do not have the same feelings about it because they still cannot buy tickets. Will my right hon. Friend put further pressure on the national lottery to cover the whole country as soon as possible?

Mr. Dorrell: I assure my hon. Friend that Camelot is committed to covering the whole country as quickly as possible. It has made a commitment to expand the total number of outlets to 40,000. My hon. Friend will agree that it is a considerable achievement for a business that did not exist more than some six months ago to have opened on the first day of trading with more than 10,000 outlets, and now to be adding outlets to its chain at a rate of 1,000 a month. I shall ensure that my hon. Friend's concern is brought to the attention of Camelot and I hope that the 1,000 outlets to be opened in the near future will include outlets in her constituency.

My hon. Friend's concern to ensure that her constituents participate in the lottery serves to underline the lottery's success in generating public support and enthusiasm and in generating a substantial increase in funds available for sport, heritage, the arts community and arts buildings, the Millennium Commission and the charity sector.

Mr. Miller: Does the Minister now agree that the prediction made by some hon. Members, particularly those from the north-west, that the introduction of the national lottery could result in a loss of pools jobs, has proven to be the case? What is the estimated cost of the loss of those jobs as a result of the added burden on social security payments?

Mr. Dorrell: I do not accept the direct cause and effect described by the hon. Gentleman. A product that is typically sold in a supermarket or newsagent is more likely to be in direct competition with the purchase of cigarettes or confectionary than with money spent on football pools or charities, which is the other sector that has alleged a direct competitive effect.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many shopkeepers and post offices in the north-west are delighted at the increase in revenue, which has enabled them either to maintain their staff or to increase it?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend makes an important point in her own way. *[Interruption.]* I entirely agree with it. I simply did not want to bore the House by repeating less well the important point that my hon. Friend made.

I said that there were two key priorities. The national lottery is one; the other, as the House may be aware, is the responsibility that lies at the heart of the DNH to develop the tourism sector. I make no apology for stressing the importance of tourism in the discharge of DNH responsibilities. The reason why I place so much stress on it is twofold. First, it is an important economic sector in its own right, which has been growing fast and has, in the process, created more than 30 per cent. more jobs than existed in the sector 10 years ago. It now accounts for 5 per cent. of gross domestic product and employs 1.5 million of our fellow countrymen. It is, by any definition, a key British industry. That is the first reason why I attach so much importance to it. The second reason is that it is a growing sector, which attracts support specifically into the national heritage sector.

Why do tourists come to this country? What do tourists do when they stay in this country? Overwhelmingly, when one asks them, the answer is given that they come and stay here in large part because they want to participate in, and derive benefit from, our heritage sector. Therefore, growing tourism not only creates jobs in the economy at large, but creates the opportunity for expansion, specifically in the heritage sector. It is, in a direct sense, an investment in the audience for our national heritage.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the reasons why tourists come to the United Kingdom from overseas is to see our royal family, its palaces and all the pageantry for which it is well known? Would not the Labour party policy on the royal family, if carried through, damage that tourist trade? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head, and he is absolutely right. If I may pick up the point that predictably came from the Labour Benches, that is not to present the royal family as a tourist attraction. The royal family has an importance in our national life that goes far beyond that, but my hon. Friend is right to say that, if the pageantry were scaled down, as the hon. Member for Blackburn argues that it should be, among the first things to be hit would be our tourist earnings—never mind our self-respect and our respect for our past.

Therefore, the Budget is important because it advances the interests of the tourist industry alongside the rest of the economy. It advances them specifically and it advances them because tourism is a key part of our wider economy.

Let me discuss the specific aspect first. Last week, I was able to announce a new initiative to promote tourism in London. We shall provide £4 million of public money during the next two years, to be matched, once again, by £4 million originating from the private sector. That money will be used to develop a tourist promotion initiative centred around London as a key destination, to compete with cities elsewhere in Europe and the world.

It is one of the facts of our national tourist life at the moment that London's share of the big city tourist market is declining. I want that decline to be reversed, partly because that is important to London, where it will create jobs, and partly because extra visitors to London will create an audience from which, in turn, the rest of the country can recruit tourists. London will benefit, and the rest of the country will benefit as London is turned into a gateway through which more tourism enters the rest of the United Kingdom.

Tourism is best promoted by regarding it in the context of the wider economy. The Budget should be welcomed as the right way forward for the whole economy for three key reasons. The first is the continued drive, which the Budget represents, in the direction of more flexible markets, and of ensuring that the responsibility for creating growth, for creating jobs and for improving living standards in the British economy rests firmly with the people best able to discharge that responsibility—the managers of British business.

There is no better illustration of that principle in practice than the package that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor announced on work incentives. That was an imaginative package, which will create jobs throughout the economy, improve living standards and demonstrate in practice the capacity and the commitment of the Government to continue the decline in unemployment which our policies have put in train, and which is jeopardised by the stance of the Labour party.

Let us look at the elements of that package. We are committed to reducing the cost of recruiting unskilled workers. That comes next April when, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor announced, there will be a reduction in employers' national insurance contributions—substantial assistance targeted at that part of the labour market where recruitment prospects are most difficult. That is the first element.

The second element is an incentive that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor plans for employers to take on people who have been unemployed for a long period. I believe that the holiday on national insurance contributions for people who have been unemployed for more than two years is an imaginative step forward in generating movement in the part of the labour market that we all know is the most difficult to target, and for which it is most difficult to create jobs.

Thirdly, my right hon. and learned Friend rightly emphasised the need to ease the transfer from benefit to work, announcing important steps to speed payment and ease the move from family credit, housing benefit and council tax benefit. That is not the kind of headline-grabbing, multi-billion-pound scheme that commends itself to the Labour party, but it is a practical scheme that will address the real concerns of people who are considering moving from benefit into work: it deals with their practical problems in a practical way, and is therefore very welcome.

The new scheme announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, allowing people to build up credits to create bonuses for themselves when they move from part-time to full-time work, is another example of an accurately targeted measure that will have a practical effect, encouraging people off benefit and into full-time work. It is a real measure targeted on a real problem, rather than a headline measure that looks good in the shop window and uses a lot of taxpayers' money, but delivers no serious policy gain.

The purpose of the package announced by my right hon. Friend last week is to reduce the costs of unemployment and to ease the path of the unemployed back into work. It contrasts starkly with the stance of the Labour party, which is committed to a minimum wage—committed to not reducing but increasing the cost of employment. How can Labour Members believe that we can increase the prospect of employment and the number of jobs in the economy by raising the cost of employing people? That is a "cause and effect" that defies every law of economics that I have ever read.

The minimum wage, however, is not the only job-destroying policy to which Labour Members are committed. They are also committed, through the social chapter, to the labour market practices that have been so successful elsewhere in Europe—in France, which has an unemployment rate of 12.7 per cent.; in Italy, which has an unemployment rate of more than 10 per cent.; and in Spain, whose unemployment rate is over 24 per cent. Our unemployment rate is less than 9 per cent., and falling.

My right hon. and learned Friend's Budget demonstrates that the Conservative Government will return people to work, because they pursue accurately targeted policies that will deliver such a result rather than slogans that impede it—which is the commitment of the Labour party.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Budget allows his Department enough money to provide a plaque for the London Oratory school in west London, featuring the names of sons of famous parents? Will the plaque also have enough room to include the statements that those parents made about education policy?

Mr. Dorrell: That is an interesting idea, but I think that the school's capacity to recruit pupils from wherever it pleases is more important than my hon. Friend implies. I do not want that aspect to be confined to a plaque; let me encourage my hon. Friend to draw the attention of a wider national audience to the school, its success in recruiting pupils and the arguments advanced to explain that success. We shall then be able to ask the Leader of the Opposition why his party wants to deny other parents the right to choose that he has exercised.

[Mr. Dorrell]

I said that there were three key reasons for my view that the Budget is a success. I have mentioned one—

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Why does not the Minister defend his Department's record?

Mr. Dorrell: I am not ashamed of my Department; I am demonstrating how it takes its place in the national economy. I have shown how it will generate extra support for a growing national heritage sector in the context of a growing economy. I shall now deal with the other two reasons why the Budget will deliver a growing economy.

The second reason is that the Budget maintains an uncompromising commitment to the three key principles of public finance to which the Government are committed. The first is that today's public services must be paid for by today's taxpayers.

We all know that borrowing fluctuates according to the economic cycle and that it rose during the recession. The Government absolutely accept the priority that stares us in the face, which is to ensure that the borrowing total is reduced as the economy pulls out of recession. The Red Book shows how that borrowing is being reduced, and shows the stark contrast between our record in office and that of Labour. During five years of Labour in office, the PSBR as a percentage of gross domestic product was 7 per cent. Under this Government, it is 2 per cent. and the Red Book shows how it is to be eliminated before the end of the decade.

A Conservative Government will not mortgage future tax revenues to pay for an unrealistically large public expenditure programme today. That is the first principle of public finance.

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): Is not it true that the public sector borrowing requirement has been reduced every year since 1979 by means of the sale of nationalised industries, and that that is shown in the accounts? What will the Government do when there are no more public assets to sell?

Mr. Dorrell: Public spending plans and PSBR plans are set out in the Red Book. Privatisation proceeds are a small element of that in the later years. The Government are committed to reducing public borrowing, because to fail to do that would be to mortgage the nation's future to try to sustain insupportable public expenditure today.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): Why are the Government the first in history who have borrowed to fund revenue expenditure?

Mr. Dorrell: I will not accept any lectures on borrowing from a party which, during five years in office, delivered an average PSBR of 7 per cent. of national income. That was the rate at the bottom of the recession under this Government, and we accepted that it was too high. Presumably the Labour Government did not because they did not reduce it. We plan to eliminate it over the rest of this decade.

Our second principle on public finances is that not only are we determined that today's public services should be paid for by today's taxpayers, but that we should return to our tax-cutting agenda. In one of the interesting debates this year, it emerged that there are apparently some latter-day Opposition converts on that subject. The House would do well to remember where we have come from in terms of cutting taxes.

In 1979 when the Government took office, the top rate of income tax on savings was 98 per cent., and on earnings the top rate was 83 per cent. We have more than halved both those figures to 40 per cent. The Opposition say that they are interested in investment, but there was scant evidence of that during their period in office. In 1979, corporation tax was 52 per cent. We have cut it to 33 per cent.

Our record speaks for itself. We are committed to delivering reduced tax rates. Needless to say, we gladly accept Opposition pressure to improve even more on our record as a tax-cutting party. That brings me neatly to the third element of public finance policy. The Opposition like to push us towards being even more ambitious in reducing tax. A commitment to reducing tax and to responsible borrowing policies requires discipline on public expenditure. It requires Ministers to face up to choices about which public expenditure programmes are important and which can be afforded. That is why in the previous Budget the Chancellor announced total public expenditure reductions over the plan then in prospect of £15 billion, and why my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary is to be applauded for securing a further reduction on top of that £15 billion of £28 billion. That public expenditure has been avoided because he encouraged the Government to make the choices that were necessary to avoid it. That is set out in the document.

The contrast between this Government's record and that of the Labour party when it was in office could not be more stark. Public expenditure, as a share of national income, averaged 46.5 per cent. during Labour's years in office. Under this Government, even in the depths of recession, it peaked at 44.5 per cent. The Labour party dresses itself in the clothes of a tax-cutting or tax-limiting party, but it has a huge burden of history and a huge credibility gap to overcome. Until the Opposition can demonstrate that they will deliver disciplined public expenditure, choices between priorities and a limit on the total, nobody will believe that they can succeed in limiting the tax burden.

That brings me to the most important reason why the Budget is good for Britain and therefore for the national heritage as part of Britain. It reaffirms this Government's commitment to sound money. That is good news for households, for savers, for wage earners, for businesses and for all of us. The fact that inflation is now under better control than it has been for 30 years is not an arcane statistic of interest to some economics professor and calculated on some abstruse formula; it goes to the heart of why the economic outlook for Britain is better than it has been since the 1960s.

In Britain today, shoppers know that they do not have to accept price rises. They have not been educated to accept price rises week by week, month by month. They know that they can choose. That is why we hear a great deal about retail competition—stories that I warmly welcome. Secondly, and perhaps even more important, savers know that their capital will retain its value in Tory Britain. Inflation under the Labour party was a pernicious tax on the unsophisticated for the benefit of the sophisticated. The fixed-interest saver lost out while the wide boys gained. It was Robin Hood in reverse. This

Government have re-established a commitment to sound money—no more back-door taxes on the unsophisticated, organised by the wide boys on the Labour Benches.

Thirdly, wage earners know that in Tory Britain pay increases must be earned; they must be paid for by productivity. I remember putting that proposition on a radio programme about 12 months ago. I had considerable correspondence asking when it would end. It is not going to end because the proposition that pay increases must be paid for by productivity is no more than the truth. It is fair and right.

Fourthly, businesses know that they now have a stable background against which to plan their affairs. *[Interruption.]* We hear a great deal about short-termism—the tendency of British business to plan for short-term horizons. A major cause of that over the past 30 years has been the exaggerated boom-bust cycle, which resulted from our incapacity to deliver proper, sound money and proper inflation control. Businesses need stability so that they can plan their affairs for proper long-term horizons. The Government and the Budget give that commitment.

The message of the Budget is that the outlook for Britain is better than it has been for 30 years— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am becoming exasperated by the comments from sedentary positions. Such constant barracking does not improve the quality of debate in the Chamber.

Mr. Dorrell: At last, Britain has a Government who have secured honest money. It has a Government who have put their own finances in order. The public have the assurance that public expenditure will be restrained in order to allow the tax burden to fall. Britain has a Government who have committed themselves to ensuring that business will be allowed to deliver growth and improving living standards. The results are there for all to see. Manufacturing output has risen by 5 per cent. a year; and growth by 4 per cent. a year; and unemployment has fallen by 350,000 in the past 12 months. Living standards have improved also for the family on average earnings—£80 a week higher in today's money than in 1979.

That is the shape of Tory Britain, and this Government and this Budget will safeguard that shape for the future.

4.14 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): When the Chancellor sat down last Tuesday, there was a muted waving of Order Papers by Conservative Back Benchers, many of whom had been asleep the previous 84 minutes—but there were few cheers anywhere else. I was astonished that the Secretary of State for National Heritage had the effrontery to talk about the end of boom-bust economics—that from a Government who in the course of the past 15 years produced the two biggest busts and the largest unsustainable boom since the war.

This is a tinkering Budget. It attempts to trumpet a success that no one in the country really feels. It does practically nothing about low levels of investment and little about high levels of unemployment. It leaves in place seven imminent tax rises, stubbornly there for the people of Britain to put up with. The Budget looks more to the fortunes of the Tory party in 18 months' time than to the needs of the British economy now.

Of more significance than that which the Chancellor said last Tuesday is that which he did not say. He said nothing at all about tax rises already built into the system. He left firmly in place the reduction in mortgage interest tax relief, new taxes on insurance that are about to be implemented, air travel tax and, above all, the rise to 17.5 per cent. in value added tax on domestic fuel.

The Chancellor himself has stopped trying to claim, as other Ministers have tried in the past year and a half, that VAT on domestic fuel is necessary for environmental reasons. The Prime Minister was not so circumspect. In Prime Minister's questions last Thursday, he was at it again. He said that VAT at 17.5 per cent. was needed to meet our Rio commitments. That is patent nonsense. Even on the Government's own figures, the carbon dioxide that will be saved by imposing VAT on domestic fuel will total less than 1 per cent. of Britain's overall output. There will be minimal environmental gain for maximum social pain.

Those who can afford the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel will continue using the same amount of energy. Those who cannot afford it will save energy. They will not instal condensing boilers, extra lagging or home insulation—they will go cold. The Government will achieve a tiny reduction in overall energy production and will put the entire burden on the backs of those least able to bear it. That is why we will seek tomorrow night to take the first step towards rolling back the Government's retrograde action.

The real story behind the Budget is not what it will achieve this year but what it puts in place for next year. The Government's Budget agenda is wholly and utterly driven by the Tory party's electoral needs. The Tories believe that income tax cuts in November 1995 will bring them electoral victory in 1996 or 1997. They are wrong, because the people have rumbled them.

People know that taxes were brought down with a great flourish immediately before the 1992 election and that, 11 months later, after the Government had been safely voted back into office again, taxes went back up. Election bribes are never permanent. People know that, over the past two years, they have had the biggest tax rise in history. Last year and this year, there was the equivalent of 7p in the pound on income tax, yet the Government have the gall to think that 2p, 3p or even 5p off income tax in an election year will somehow compensate in people's minds for the tax-rising story that the Government have imposed on us all in the past couple of years. That will not take VAT off domestic fuel and it will not make our pensioners any warmer; voters will not be fooled again.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): The hon. Gentleman has been clear and open in saying that he wishes the second stage, at least, and probably the first stage of VAT on fuel to be removed. Will he, therefore, be equally open with the House by telling us exactly how the revenue from that tax would be replaced? Would he take the money from the extra £1.3 billion that has been given to the national health service? Would he raise the tax by some other means or would he add to borrowing? Which of those three choices would he make?

Mr. Smith: None of them. As we have spelt out on many occasions in the past few months, I would look first to tax loopholes which the Government, only two weeks ago, told us did not exist. They said that tax loopholes were entirely a figment of the Labour party's imagination.

[Mr. Smith]

At least they have had the decency in their Budget to admit that there is £1.5 billion of tax loopholes, and there is more of that to come.

The second part of the answer to the hon. Gentleman is that we should look at some of the windfall profits that the privatised utilities have made. The third part of the answer is that we should look at the executive share options from which the people who now run the privatised utilities are gaining benefit, which are undertaxed at the moment. People would rather that we looked fairly at taxing those who can well afford to pay—those who are evading and escaping tax at the moment—than looked at taxing pensioners by putting VAT on domestic fuel.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): The hon. Gentleman sounds positively loopy and windy about the completely phoney taxes which he suggests can be introduced. Surely he is aware that all Governments, of whatever political colour, always endeavour to close loopholes, just as my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer did this year. There is no possibility of gaining from closing loopholes the sort of bonanza that the Labour party suggests. As for share options, surely the hon. Gentleman is aware that they are taxed already.

Mr. Smith: This is a remarkably different tune from the one that the right hon. Gentleman was playing just a couple of weeks ago. He told us then that there were no more tax loopholes left. He now tells us the same, yet the Government have found £1.5 billion of tax loopholes in the meantime. Share options are taxed at their value when they are given. When they are taken up, a substantial additional profit is often made by the person who holds them and that needs to be looked at.

Mr. Dorrell: I have the advantage over the hon. Gentleman of having been a member of last year's Finance Bill Committee. It introduced proposals to close a number of tax loopholes, the most important of which roused some controversy among my hon. Friends and which Labour voted against. I refer to the decision we took, which was unpopular in some parts, to close the tax loophole that was attached to capital gains tax loss indexation relief. If Labour wants to be taken seriously on tax loopholes, it should vote with us when we close them.

Mr. Smith: My colleagues, who were members of the Standing Committee which considered the Finance Bill, debated that matter very fully. They argued clearly that their opposition on that matter related not to the principle of what the Government were doing but to the way in which they were doing it.

I must tell the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Secretary of State for National Heritage that if the idea of taxing share options rather more fully than they are taxed at the moment is such a lunatic idea, why is the vice-chairman of the Tory party now recommending precisely that course of action in the famous Maples memorandum? I am surprised that they are not leaping to their feet to defend the Maples memorandum.

In his Budget statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had the effrontery to refer to what he called the danger of

"the emergence of a deprived underclass".—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1079.]

Where has the Chancellor been living for the past 15 years? Deprivation is not in danger of emerging; it has emerged. Indeed, it has been created by the policies put in place by this Government. It is prevalent up and down the country and it hurts.

Has the Chancellor not seen the evidence? Thousands of homeless families have been deprived of the most basic of human requirements while unused capital receipts, which could be used, lie idle and thousands of building workers are on the dole. We have a stockpile of bricks sufficient to build a town the size of Derby. The measures in this Budget, cuts in housing association funds and crude market capping of housing benefit payments are simply going to make the problem of homelessness worse.

Not content with hampering local authority efforts to tackle the issue of homelessness, we now know from the announcement by the Secretary of State for the Environment on Thursday that the Government are intent on clobbering local authorities across the board. Let me give the Secretary of State for National Heritage one example of the impact of that from his own area of responsibility—the future of our public library service.

The public library service is essential. It is valued and cherished and it is regarded by people as a vital public service. However, as a result of year after year of council cuts, forced on local authorities by the Government and now redoubled in this year's settlement, libraries around the country are suffering grievously.

Fewer than 40 libraries in the entire country are now open for 60 hours a week. Most of those are in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. We are now told that a consultant's report has arrived on the Secretary of State's desk which states that the library service is ripe for privatisation. Well, I give the Secretary of State a clear warning today: the Opposition will resist root and branch any attempt by him or by anyone else to sell off our public libraries into private, unaccountable and undemocratic commercial hands.

Instead of spending money on consultants, the Secretary of State should be ensuring that there are enough books, that the roofs are not leaking and that the opening hours are convenient for the public. While we are at it, perhaps he can tell us where libraries go, if anywhere at all, if they want to bid for national lottery funds. Unless they are in an historic building, what category can libraries qualify for, or are libraries just going to be told that it is hard luck and they have fallen between five different stools?

Let us consider for a moment what has happened to the Department of National Heritage in the Budget decisions. On the day of the Budget statement, the Secretary of State for National Heritage proclaimed that the Budget was a triumph for his Department. In fact, it is nothing of the sort. If we take out the extra amount for the British library over the next two years, the Department of National Heritage is the second-biggest loser among Departments.

Yes, the Arts Council has a £5 million increase, and that is better than was intended a year ago, but it still has not made up last year's cut in real terms and this year's inflation. The Arts Council is still worse off than it was two years ago, and the implications for orchestras and regional theatres in particular, which are struggling to survive at the moment, are severe. Perhaps the Secretary of State will tell us also what on earth the British museum has done to deserve a £1 million cut in cash terms next year.

What about the Sports Council? It was noticeable that the Secretary of State mentioned sport only briefly. The Sports Council is on a standstill cash budget. That is particularly hard to fathom, given the Prime Minister's ringing declarations about the importance of sport in his speech to the Conservative party conference. Is the standstill cash budget for the Sports Council by any chance connected with the Government's intention to reduce the Sports Council's purview to a core list—a restricted list—of sports, leaving a vast range of sporting activity, from rambling to dance, out in the cold? Opposition Members regard any such limitation on Sports Council activity as wholly unacceptable.

Mr. Pike: Is it not true also that, in addition to the cuts affecting the Sports Council and the Arts Council nationally, the decisions that were announced on Thursday with regard to standard spending assessments will mean that many local authorities will have to attack their recreation, sports and arts budgets?

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is not just the library service, which I outlined earlier, that will suffer when local authorities are forced to cut their budgets. It is noticeable that even Lord Gowrie, a former Conservative Minister who now chairs the Arts Council, has said strongly that he regards the best public support for the arts over the past few years as having come from Labour-controlled local authorities, especially in the north of England. He is absolutely right. That work is now at risk because of the settlement which was made on Thursday.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Does the hon. Gentleman say that public spending must increase and that, if there is any scope for tax cuts next year, rather than do that, the Labour party would spend the money on heritage, local government and the other issues which he raises?

Mr. Smith: No. We have a series of cuts in real terms in the budgets for essential sections of Government expenditure. If the Government's agenda is to make cuts in sectors of vital Government spending this year to sweeten the way for tax-cutting bribes to the electorate next year, that is a disreputable political activity.

Mr. Dorrell: That was not the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald). The hon. Gentleman seeks to argue that we should spend more on different aspects of public expenditure, from local authority capital receipts to individual bits of the heritage budget. Does he argue that we should spend more, in which case how should it be financed, or does he accept those budgets and the tax consequences that go with them?

Mr. Smith: I am not accepting the budgets that have been put in place by the Government, because they involve a series of cuts in expenditure on vital aspects of Government spending. The Secretary of State mentions capital receipts. He is clearly unaware that capital receipts exist and that they are not being used at the moment. Our argument is that they should be released.

Mr. Heald: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: No. I must make progress. I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman.

Let us consider what is happening to the British Tourist Authority. The Secretary of State rightly said that tourism was extremely important. He said, "I want to place so much stress on the importance of tourism." A special £2 million a year initiative for London was announced, which is all well and good, but the English tourist board is financially far worse off than it was two years ago. It has seen the steady erosion of its funding year by year—this Ministry is not the first to reduce its funding— and the substantial cuts have not yet been made good.

This funding cut occurs at a time when the British tourism market is declining as a share of the growing global market in tourism. We could, and should, be making enormous progress in the industry, but we are falling behind the rest of the world. Our position will not be helped by the Chancellor's decision—little noticed until now—in the Budget that the zero rating of passenger transport will be confined to public passenger transport in the generally accepted sense.

At face value, that may seem fine and reasonable, but one should consider the consequences of the decision, especially for the tourist industry. The Budget's exclusion of non-passenger public transport will mean that the foreign visitors who come to enjoy our heritage—the people about whom the Secretary of State spoke so warmly—and who travel on preserved steam railways and take canal and river trips, the schools taking coaches to sports matches and the pensioners on days out to the seaside will have to pay value added tax on their trips. That will hit some crucial areas of the British tourist industry very hard.

Before the Secretary of State starts trumpeting the Budget's willingness to help tourism, he ought to look very seriously at what that VAT decision will mean for the industry. He should have a word with the Chancellor of the Exchequer because we will want to do something about the situation in Committee.

Overall, the Department of National Heritage faces a spending decline year by year. That is not all due to British library funding finally concluding in 1996; real funding cuts are in store and the figures prove it. The Department's budget will fall from £957 million this year to £837 million in 1997. I do not think that the Secretary of State should be proud of that.

The Government are already betraying their lottery promises. They said that the introduction of the national lottery would not lead to cuts in core funding of the arts, sport and heritage, yet that is precisely what we face in coming years. We also remind the Chancellor that the lottery has provided him with substantial benefits. In the past three weeks, the Chancellor has made about £18 million from the lottery. Where is that money going? In light of that fact, it is even more inexcusable for him to take an axe to the Departments that are at the heart of the national lottery's appeal.

It is claimed that the Budget will be good for the environment. Spending on the home energy efficiency scheme has increased. Of course that is welcome, but it is a paltry increase of £10 million which will bring the scheme's budget to a total of £80 million. There is a long waiting list of people who need work done, and the Government have allocated an extra £10 million for insulation work. But the Chancellor will receive an extra £1.5 billion from VAT on domestic fuel and the energy utilities are making substantial profits from advance bill payments that people have made in order to avoid VAT.

[Mr. Smith]

In light of that, £10 million is a tiny sum. Let us not forget that all that the home energy efficiency scheme is allowed to do is insulate doors and windows and lag roofs—no cavity wall fill, no condensing boilers, no secondary glazing. People would be hard put to save 17.5 per cent. of their heating bills by doing only home energy efficiency scheme work.

Above all, the Budget was a Budget of missed opportunities. There was an opportunity to abandon the rise in VAT on fuel. The Government did not take it. We shall offer the House that opportunity tomorrow night. The Government had the chance to do something of major significance to tackle unemployment, but a scheme that will be introduced only in a year and a half and that is a pale shadow of what Labour proposed is hardly up to the task.

The Government had a chance to launch a real national programme of energy conservation work. All we got was a miserly £10 million, trumpeted as a grand advance. There could have been a chance to make strides in the work of the National Heritage Department. One supremely important example is the future potential development of a nationwide information superhighway—a world of new interactive communication that could revolutionise the way in which we work, do business, learn, shop or relax. A surgeon in Aberdeen could carry out an operation under the step-by-step guidance of the world's leading expert in New York. A schoolboy in Dudley could tap into the entire resources of the British library from his schoolroom. In order to achieve it, we ought to aim at a truly nationwide network reaching every part of the country, going into every school, every public library, every hospital and every GP's surgery. It could be done at no cost to the taxpayer, provided that the Government put the right framework in place. They have not done so.

The President of the Board of Trade last week simply continued the uncertainty for both British Telecom and Mercury, ensuring that ultimately Britain will lose out on some of the benefits that could flow. Another wasted opportunity. The Budget, like the Government, is a catalogue of wasted opportunities. The Budget is exactly the same as the Queen's Speech. There is nothing in it. It does as little as possible. What there is is not worth it. The Government are a do-nothing Government paralysed by their own divisions and lack of direction.

If the Government do not want to govern, they should make way for someone who does. If they cannot see the problems, they should make way for someone who can. If they cannot hear what the people are saying, they should make way for people who do. Britain cannot wait for two years of a won't-look, won't-listen, won't-govern Tory Government. We need a Labour Government to put it right.

4.42 pm

Sir Norman Fowler (Sutton Coldfield): I welcome many features of the Budget and the public spending round that has gone with it.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage on his excellent speech. It demonstrated at the outset the clear embarrassment of the Labour party on the issue of the monarchy, which it properly raised. We look forward to a much fuller debate on that issue, and in particular to hearing the views of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), which he has already given in an intervention today. All that I should say is that in no sense or shape does the hon. Gentleman speak for the people of Britain.

I agree with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about tourism. As Secretary of State for Employment, I was the sponsoring Minister for tourism, responsibility for which has moved around Whitehall from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Department of Employment. I hope that it will now remain with the National Heritage Department.

I particularly welcome the extension of family credit, which my right hon. Friend mentioned today. When we examined the matter in the mid-1980s, we faced a familiar problem: should we try to deal with the problem of people with children in relatively low-paid work by means of the general benefit of child benefit or by directing resources to those most in need of benefit? We decided to introduce the new benefit of family credit, and I am delighted that more than half a million people now benefit from it. I am sure that directing resources is the right way of tackling the issue of employment and creating employment.

Before going further into the challenge of the Budget, I should say that, apart from an Adjournment debate in July, this is the first debate in the House in which I have spoken since standing down as chairman of the Conservative party. There are certain re-entry problems when one ceases to be a paid spokesman of the Government or, as in my case, an unpaid spokesman.

Let us take an entirely hypothetical case. No one would be impressed by an ex-Minister if he suddenly started to advocate policies that were the exact opposite of what he had proposed in Government. He would lack all credibility, because there would always be that unworthy suspicion that his views had more to do with the nature of his departure than the issue itself. His undoubtedly well-publicised statements might be regarded not so much as a cry for help as a scream for attention.

Fortunately, that is an entirely hypothetical case. I know that in the Conservative party all ex-Ministers—I see a distinguished one behind me—and certainly all ex-party chairmen remain sturdy supporters of the Government's policies and their previous statements. It would be less than honest, however, if I did not acknowledge that there were certain re-entry difficulties. One has to find the ground between being a creature of the Whips and not having a Whip at all. I do not think that textual analysis of my statements will be required to find out where I stand.

I remain a firm supporter of Government policies. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister deserves much more credit than he has received for the undoubted strength of the economy, which we are debating in this Budget debate, and a series of other policy initiatives, in particular the initiative on Northern Ireland. I also believe that other policies can be developed further. I was one of those who was disappointed that the Government did not proceed with the privatisation of the Royal Mail. As I shall make clear in a moment, I believe that there is further potential for reform of both the tax and the welfare systems.

In this spirit of—how shall I put it?—friendly frankness, let me say one thing to my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who will reply to the debate. In my last weeks as party chairman, I was asked to sum up the results of the European elections. They were not good, although they were not as bad as some had predicted: they were certainly nothing for the Liberal Democrats to crow over. One part of my explanation was that, although economic recovery was strong, there was an absence of a feelgood factor because taxes had taken a toll on public support. I should have thought that that was a reasonably uncontroversial diagnosis of where we were.

Extraordinarily, the Treasury press office took my remark as a call for immediate tax reductions and ran round—how can I put it?—briefing against me. Let me make it clear that I never called for a reduction in tax irrespective of the strength of the economy. That would be absurd. The Treasury, which complains readily enough, as I remember from my ministerial experience, about other Departments' leaky habits, should take care not to follow that same path. If it is in any doubt, it should do what ordinary mortals do and use a telephone and check.

So let me set out my views in a way that even the most obtuse member of the Treasury press office can understand. The Budget is good because my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has wisely made the goal of sound public finances the first priority. That must be the first aim. The economy is strong, we have low inflation and low interest rates and exports are increasing. The Chancellor has repeated his aim of achieving a balanced Budget, which I very much welcome.

With hindsight, it would have been better to have introduced the increase in value added tax on fuel at the same time rather than in two instalments. That fact is generally recognised, although many economic commentators at the time advocated the two-part policy. At this stage, we cannot do a U-turn on that policy and I found that part of the speech of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) totally unconvincing.

I agree entirely with what Lord Lawson said in the *Evening Standard* on Friday:

> "This is not an optional extra. Its loss would hole the Government's entire fiscal strategy below the waterline, undermining the credibility of the Chancellor's resolve to hold the line on public spending and putting into serious doubt the Government's ability to govern. The reaction on the world's financial markets would be immediate and dire."

Those words of an ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer should be heeded.

I do not believe that we should simply leave it at that. The time has come for us to reconsider income in retirement and to find out what options are open to improve the economic position of pensioners. Fortunately, the position of those retiring has improved steadily as more and more people retire with some form of pension in addition to the basic state pension. That is an extremely good trend and 60 per cent. of pensioners now have some form of occupational pension, which is to be welcomed and developed.

Pensioner policy is, by definition, a slow burner; it takes time for policies to work their way through. We should not exaggerate the effect that any policies introduced in the past few years can have on the present generation of retired people. Many people are still without occupational pensions and the average income of pensioners—even those with such pensions—is modest. For example, after the Budget a widow will receive a pension of £59 a week. If she is covered by an occupational pension of, on average, an extra £53 a week, she will have about £5,800 a year. By most standards, that is a modest income, given the problems that may be faced in retirement, yet that modest income is still subject to tax.

In spite of the fact that age-related allowances have increased over and above statutory indexation, which I welcome, we must grasp the fact that modest incomes are still made subject to income tax. To my mind, that, almost more than anything else, emphasises the importance of the Government returning to their aim of reducing the burden of direct taxation. I very much welcome what my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor said on that subject.

I have no quarrel with the Chancellor's judgment. The strength of the economy must undoubtedly and unquestionably come first. Obviously, when that has been achieved, the Chancellor will have an opportunity to consider improving the tax position, which must include the position of retired people. The reduction of income tax must remain a priority for the Government. We said that in our manifesto at the last election: we took pride in what we had achieved and promised more. The case for further income tax reductions remains overwhelming. Too many people pay too much tax, and too many people still pay tax.

Another group of pensioners pay no tax at all, or, if they do, it is very little. Those are the pensioners who rely on the basic pension, which brings me to my second argument. No reform of the tax system will help them; help will have to come in some other way. One option is to increase the basic pension for everyone. For example, we could increase pensions in line with earnings, which has been the expressed policy of the Labour party for the past two or three elections. One has only to read the report by Sir Gordon Borrie and his colleagues, however, to understand that that flagship Labour policy is being quietly scuttled. If the commission's report is adopted, as I believe it will be, there will be no chance of that being Labour party policy at the next general election. Even if it were, I am not at all sure that it would deal with the group of people with whom I am most concerned.

The problem is that, through no fault of their own, a group of retired people have been unable to build up an occupational pension. That might be due to a variety of reasons—perhaps their firm had no occupational pension and there were no alternatives. They might have been members of a scheme, but were deprived of the true value of the pension because of the scandalous early-leaver rules that used to exist. We should not forget the toll that those provisions had on occupational pensions. They may have been caught by historic employment practices, such as the pre-war rule in some local education authorities that married women teachers had to give up work. Whatever the reason, they have ended up depending absolutely on the basic pension, with little or nothing more.

Here, my argument comes full circle. We introduced family credit because we were unable to help the families we wanted to help through the general child benefit. We can now help pensioners through a pension credit system—in other words, by adding to the basic pension of those whose income most urgently needs supplementing. Rather than relying on general increases in the basic pension, we should direct resources where they are needed, although, clearly, the basic pension would remain price protected. For those who do not have the benefit of

[Sir Norman Fowler]

other retirement income, or who have a limited amount only, pension credit would come in as an additional weekly payment, in a similar way to family credit.

I freely concede that we examined that plan closely when carrying out my review of social security. We took the view then that family credit was the financial priority and I could not be more pleased that that view is now so well accepted by the Treasury. I am not sure that that was always so, but I am delighted that it is so well accepted now that the Treasury is advocating its extension. I hope that it will go to the next stage.

What we need most is fresh consideration of the incomes of retired people. A combination of tax reductions and the pension changes that I have advocated would create an enormous advantage for pensioners.

I welcome the strong economy and the improvements that the Government have achieved. I welcome low inflation, low interest rates and growth in the economy and I certainly agree that we must not put any of those at risk, but we have a duty to guard the interests of retired people and to ensure that they too share in the general improvement in the economy.

4.57 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I am happy to be able to take part in this debate. First, I must comment on a meeting that I had last Friday in my constituency with the North West Society of Chartered Accountants. Unlike the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), the society was not convinced that we are seeing positive signs of an economic recovery that is here to last. Its members spelt out two messages that they wanted me to convey to the Government and to Eddie George at the Bank of England.

First, the society thought that an increase in interest rates would destroy any economic recovery that was beginning to start. Its members said that it would clearly be a great folly for the Government to move in that direction. The society also believes that the Government and the Bank of England have failed to recognise the importance of small industries. The Government will say that that is not true, but the society believes that the Government have failed to have proper consultations with people such as chartered accountants on the changes that they are making and on the implications of those changes.

The problem with the Government is that they always say that they are going to have consultations, but they take note only of those that yield the result that they want. If people do not come forward with the conclusions that the Government want, they just disregard them. They take note only of those people who respond to consultations along the lines that the Government want to underline, and they do not have anything like a genuine consultation at all.

One of the points that I made in an intervention to the Secretary of State was about the proceeds from the sale of nationalised industries, proceeds that, since 1979, have totalled £77 billion. I accept what the right hon. Gentleman said about all of that being shown in the Red Book, but those proceeds have nearly always been used for revenue expenditure, not capital expenditure. We have disposed of assets to prop up the accounts of the nation.

The Government originally estimated that the total proceeds from the sale of nationalised industries this year would be £5.5 billion, but that figure has increased to £6.3 billion. The original Government forecast for next year was £1 billion, but the total will now be £3 billion. What will happen when they have no more assets to sell? There can be only two conclusions—the Government will have either to put up taxes to replace the income from the sale of nationalised industries or to reduce expenditure. The Government are caught in a cleft stick in the matter, as the number of assets left to sell reduces year by year. I am totally opposed to that policy, but that is the policy with which they are proceeding and it will get more difficult for them every year.

Since the former Chancellor—the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont)—introduced VAT on fuel, concern about that has been the item that has featured most consistently in my mail, week after week. One must recognise that it is a problem, whatever the Government may say about the compensation that they have given to the most vulnerable and to the poor. The fact is that the compensation is not sufficient.

The Government must take into account the fact that their use of an average amount means that there will be some losers and some gainers. I do not believe that the compensation is sufficient, but if one accepted that on average it was sufficient, some people would still lose. My constituency, which goes into the Pennines, is colder than average, and it will certainly lose.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) referred to the people whom this tax would hit hardest—the people who must decide at what time they put on their heating or when they can have a gas fire. People in my constituency must decide whether they are going to have a hot meal every day or have the heating on. That is the stage we have reached after 15 years of Conservative rule.

In its briefing, Shelter deplores the measure, which it says

> "can only lead to increased fuel poverty for everyone on a low income—poor households spend a greater share of their budget on fuel."

That is absolutely true, and the briefing goes on to say:

> "increased benefit rates will not compensate people on low incomes for the losses this will cause".

I hope that those Conservative Members who are expressing concern about the issue will choose not to abstain tomorrow, but will seize the opportunity that has been given by the Opposition to vote to have a rethink on the issue and to axe the next phase of the VAT increase.

My constituents who have written about the issue feel that, at this juncture, it is particularly obscene that the chairman of British Gas has received a pay increase of over 70 per cent. We all know that many of the chairmen of privatised industries have, through pay increases and share options, done extremely well out of privatisation, but that does not go well with the Government saying that it is not a matter for them and that they will not intervene in the matter. The Government must show concern, because such pay increases are not acceptable, and they do not go well with those on low pay. Since the abolition of wage councils, levels of pay have fallen and the number of people on low pay has increased. What a scandal it is that, in 1994, we see people on low pay.

The Budget imposes a 14 per cent. cut in training and in help in finding the unemployed jobs. The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield referred to the extension of family credit to those without children, but that will help only about 20,000 people. I do not begrudge those people who have children and who are getting help through family credit, nor do I decry those people who will get help as a result of the new move, but the fact is that family credit will be paid for, not only by income tax payers, but by industries which are already giving their workers fair pay. It is nonsense that we should ask them to subsidise those industries which are low payers. There is no doubt that low pay is not an incentive for people to work well and to produce well. Therefore, it is time that we had a national minimum wage and did away with the scandal of low pay and poverty pay.

The Budget also imposes a £1 billion cut in housing for next year, half of which will come in housing investment. At the same time, local authorities are once again not allowed to use their capital receipts. What a welcome there would have been if the Chancellor had provided another year—as was done in 1992—in which capital receipts could be used. Local authorities are not able to build any houses, and they cannot even meet their statutory commitments for mandatory grants. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who is sitting on the Front Bench, is a former housing Minister, and he knows that many councils now have a queuing system for people waiting for grants because they do not have the money available.

The Chancellor said that he was going to cap housing benefit for the private rented sector. It has been said many times that the private rented sector would, if left to market forces, collapse and wither away. It would obviously not die, but the sector is underpinned by the benefit system, because it depends on the benefits which enable people to go into the sector.

People do not choose to go into high-rent homes—they go because they have no alternative. As a result of the Government's policies since 1979, we do not build council housing. It is true—in Burnley, in every other local authority in Lancashire and throughout most of the country—that, if council houses were available and councils were able to build houses, people would go into council housing. The Government would therefore not even have to contemplate capping housing benefit, a move that will solve no problems and will create additional problems for them.

I have mentioned using capital receipts. What nonsense it is that the Government will not allow councils to use their capital receipts when doing so would not only help to solve the housing crisis which exists throughout the country but would help to get people back to work and to improve the economy. Not only would the building industry improve but, as people who move home buy carpets and curtains, other markets would be encouraged.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Gentleman will recall the Financial Secretary to the Treasury telling the House last week that any council that had paid off its debts could use its capital income as it pleased. Would the hon. Gentleman's objections to the Government's privatisation policy have been lessened if the Government had applied exactly the same policy to the sums which they received from privatisation, and paid off the national debt rather than used them for revenue purposes?

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. The point that I was making earlier was about the difference in how the Government had used those sums for revenue purposes. There may have been some merit in using them for capital investment because it would have solved some of the country's long-term problems. As I have said many times before, I could have a good holiday by selling my house and going on a world cruise but when I returned I would have no house in which to live. By selling nationalised industries and using the money for revenue purposes, the Government have got rid of their assets. So the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) makes an extremely valid point.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pike: I shall make one further point before giving way.

Housing associations are always pointing out that they cannot build affordable housing to rent. Last week's *Housing Associations Weekly* said:

> "A cut of £300m for the second year running in the approved development programme announced in the budget will lead to a 40 per cent. slump in new starts . . . New rented starts will fall from 25,000 to 15,000 next year . . . while low-cost home ownership/shared ownership plunges from 20,000 to 12,500.
>
> The number of construction jobs lost . . . will be 4,000 next year and 7,900 the following year".

Mr. Marshall: The hon. Gentleman was discussing the revenue impact of privatisation. Does he accept that, in 1979, British Steel, British Airways and Rover were a substantial charge on the Exchequer but that, today, they all contribute to the Exchequer through corporation tax?

Mr. Pike: I could answer that in many different ways. Had many of the industries that have been privatised been free of some of the shackles imposed on them, they could have been run profitably and viably. The problem with the water industry, for example, was not its ownership but lack of investment. Had the Government opened it up and allowed private investment and different controls, the industry could have overcome some of the problems to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

I shall make two final points, the first of which refers again to what the Association of Metropolitan Authorities said on housing capital. The *Local Government Chronicle* of 2 December said:

> "hundreds of thousands of council homes would become unfit to live in because of the cuts."

That underlines the problem of housing grants to which I referred.

In its bulletin, the Trades Union Congress refers to the Chancellor's stated priority of creating jobs. He said that his second priority—the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield referred to his first priority—was a Budget to cut unemployment. The TUC says:

> "there is no overall assessment of his measures on employment or on the level of employment. As shown above, the jobs package is minimal and many of the measures are delayed until 1996 even on a pilot basis. The TUC's analysis is that any favourable impact of these measures will be more than offset by the cuts in capital spending and the cuts in general government expenditure."

[Mr. Pike]

What we saw last week and shall vote on tomorrow is a bad Budget for jobs and for tackling the country's problems. It is another good reason why the Government will go when we get a chance to remove them at the next election.

5.13 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): I hope that the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) will forgive me if I do not follow him. In many ways, I should have liked to follow the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith). I did not catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at that time but I was aghast when I heard him make a speech that seemed to add up to his solution to the problems of the British economy. He wanted to do something about tax loopholes but also about the salaries of people in top positions in public utilities. With respect to him—he knows that I have a great deal of admiration for much of what he says and does—he needs to spend a little more time studying the problems of the economy before coming to the House with solutions of that sort.

I wish to make a few comments on the Budget based on comments that I made in March 1993 during the debate on the Budget of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), the then Chancellor. At that time, I was horrified at reading how the prospective British economy was likely to go in the years ahead, particularly up to 1997-98. I was immensely anxious about the high levels of public borrowing proposed over the five years to that date. I ended my speech by pointing out that the cost of servicing the national debt on the figures produced 18 months earlier in the Red Book was scheduled to rise from about £17 billion a year in 1992-93 to some £30 billion in 1997-98. I said that we could not leave such an inheritance to future generations and that something had to be done to reduce public borrowing and hence the massive sum paid out each year in servicing the public debt. I estimated that the increase in debt servicing alone was equivalent to putting about 4 per cent. on VAT or 5 per cent. on income tax.

I urged the Government to work on three separate fronts: first—I was prompted by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) on this—to look closely at public spending; secondly, to be prepared to increase taxes; and, thirdly, to be prepared to do everything possible to stimulate the economy. Those are the only three means available to Governments to try to cut back on increases in the national debt, which were envisaged at that time. So that is the background from which I approach this year's Budget.

The problem of public spending, as any Chief Secretary would agree, is the most difficult task of all. The Chief Secretary has one of the most difficult jobs in the Cabinet. When I was Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, my most uncomfortable times, apart from facing the farmers, were facing my colleagues in the Star Chamber to explain why I should resist massive cuts in my Department's budget. I found defending my Department's budget extremely difficult and seemed to find myself in the Star Chamber virtually every year at the time of the Public Expenditure Survey Committee round.

For Governments, it is difficult enough to get Departments to accept cuts in public spending, but for Government managers it is also extremely difficult. I remember my days as Chief Whip and the fact that one nearly always had a small group, some of whom—I stress the words "some of whom"—were mere populists who absolutely refused to support the Government when they were forced to take harsh but essential steps to cut Government spending or impose new taxes. Every party always has those.

I have enormous sympathy with the current Chief Whip in the task that he seeks to fulfil. I have always said that it is a great deal easier to be Chief Whip during the first four years of an Administration, with a majority of 45, than it is to be Chief Whip after an Administration has been in power for 15 years, with a majority of 14 or whatever it is.

Against that background, I very much want to congratulate the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on the result of the Public Expenditure Survey Committee round—on cutting public spending by £24 billion in three years, as the Chancellor announced in the Budget. I know how difficult that has been. I guess that it will cause a good many difficulties in the House, but it has to be right. It is a courageous decision, which has my support.

I spoke about the three things that the Government must do. Being prepared to increase taxes was one of those things. In that respect, I think that the Chancellor has been enormously courageous in doing what any Conservative Chancellor absolutely hates to do—to increase taxation. In my view, it was essential, given the massive increase in public debt that was foreshadowed. I am enormously pleased that it has been reduced, and the fact that the Chancellor has been prepared to put up taxes has contributed to the good news that we had about borrowing in the process of the publication of the Red Book and the Chancellor's Budget speech. I think that it is fair to pay tribute to the Chancellor for the progress that has been made in the past 18 months in controlling public borrowing, which I regard as the biggest economic problem that has confronted the Government in the past two years.

Of course, it was right for the Government to do what virtually all Governments throughout the world have done in the midst of a worldwide recession—increase public spending. One could say that Keynes still lives. That policy has been entirely correct. We are not entirely through that phase of heavy and excessive public borrowing. Looking at the Red Book, one sees the rather daunting figure that the public sector borrowing requirement for the years 1993-94 to 1997-98 is likely to increase by no less than £120 billion, but the really good news is that, in the years after that, the prospects are that it will go from a negative situation to a positive one as we approach the end of the century, which is excellent news indeed.

I return to the central issue, to which I drew attention at the beginning of my remarks. Eighteen months ago, when I last spoke in a Budget debate, it was possible that in 1997-98 the cost of servicing the public debt would be about £30 billion a year. It is a great credit to the Chancellor that that figure has now dropped, in that same year, to £26 billion. Although that increase is serious, it was inevitable that the cost of servicing the public debt would increase, in view of the world recession and the amount of money that we have had to put into the economy to try to get ourselves out of recession. I hope that the Treasury will continue, in the next year and beyond, to do more to reduce the public debt. That is good news. According to the forecasts, it is possible that borrowing will not be necessary after 1997-98.

However, the really good news in the Budget was the progress of the economy, largely as a result of the steps that I mentioned. The news of the growth of the economy and its prosperity is even better news—that is only just possible—than the blessed relief from the interminable major structural realignments of the tax system with which we seem to have been burdened almost every year in recent years. I heard what my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) said, and that was one of the few things that I questioned in what he said, because I thought that he was hell-bent on yet another major change in taxation. I thought that he was moving back in the direction of the tax credit system, which was proposed at the end of the Heath Government. I have always thought that it was rather a pity that we dropped that suggestion a good many years ago.

The Chancellor's policy has given us as sound a prospect for the economy as I have known for a long time. The prospects of expansion with minimum inflation are immensely encouraging and, as unemployment continues to fall, as exports show such healthy growth and as interest rates run at a historically low level, we are correct to have the confidence that the Chancellor expressed last week.

If someone had told me 18 months ago, when I last spoke in a Budget debate, that there would be such excellent progress on all the three priorities that I asked for, I confess that I should have been very glad indeed to take a substantial bet against it. However, I am delighted to have been proved wrong and I hope that the Treasury, and the Chancellor especially, will continue the good work.

5.25 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) said in his early remarks that the cut in public spending may cause difficulties in the House. I am not especially concerned about difficulties that may arise for members of the Conservative party, but I am very worried about the effects that some of the public spending cuts will have on the people.

I was interested to listen to the remarks of the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler). It was especially interesting, given the number of his hon. Friends who seemed to be queueing up to have the Whip removed from them, to hear at least one Back-Bench Conservative Member who was obviously very keen indeed to have the Whip. Given what he said about the re-entry problems that confront him, perhaps he is desperately seeking to get back into his old job. He demonstrated today that, if he does so, he will at least bring something new to it—the ability to produce catchy slogans for the Budget. I am sure that all hon. Members were incredibly impressed with his totally open and honest statement about the Budget—that catchy slogan, "The Budget is good." At least there was no room for misinterpretation or misunderstanding of that. It means that it is easy for me to say that I fundamentally disagree with what he had to say about it.

I was also interested in the way in which the middle part of the Secretary of State's remarks was reserved for repeating the now oft-heard mantra that we hear from so many members of the Government when they stand at the Dispatch Box and speak about the economy. We hear the standard list of improvements that have taken place. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House welcome some of those improvements in our economy, not least the reduction in the number of people who are unemployed. Many people in my constituency welcome the reduction in unemployment there, although they continue to be worried that it remains true that approximately 15 per cent. of adult males are unemployed there.

The problem with the mantra is that we hear only one side of the story. We hear only part of the description of the economy. For example, Ministers standing at the Dispatch Box never mention the gap between the rich and the poor. There is clear evidence that, during the past four years, the gap between the rich and the poor has continued to grow. In fact, during that four years, the average income of the top 5 per cent. of the country has increased by 4 per cent., whereas for the bottom 10 per cent. it has decreased by 7 per cent.

There is also clear evidence that, although there is a drop in unemployment, fewer people are in employment. If one uses seasonally adjusted figures, it can be clearly demonstrated that the number of people in employment has decreased by 640,000 since the spring of 1991. Equally, we are all worried about the problem of long-term unemployment and welcome some of the modest measures that have been proposed to try to resolve the problem. We should not forget, however, that there is clear evidence over the past four years that those who are out of work remain unemployed for longer. Those who have been unemployed for six months and longer are a significantly larger group as a percentage of the unemployed. The nation needs to be told that when jobs are created, they are more likely than ever before to be temporary. They are also likely to be part time. The past four years have provided clear evidence that temporary and part-time employment has increased.

As I said, I fundamentally disagree with the description of the Budget that was presented by the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield. It is not a good Budget. It can be said, however, that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was entirely honest in his presentation this year. Last year, I described the right hon. and learned Gentleman as being rather like a magician, with many of the cards hidden up his sleeve. At least all the cards were laid out on the table this year for all of us to see.

It was clear from what the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that we have a paving Budget for Tory tax bribes before the next general election. Seven new taxes have been introduced this year in the desperate hope that before the next election the Government will be able to introduce tax cuts. The Budget is putting party before country. It is tax today for tax cuts tomorrow.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer should have introduced a Budget for the longer term. It should have contained proposals for investment in jobs, infrastructure and industry. Most important of all, we need investment in the skills and talents of the people. If we are to survive in an increasingly global economy, it is crucial that we invest in our resources. Coal, oil and natural gas, and mineral wealth generally, are, of course, crucial resources, but our most important resource is the people. Investment

[Mr. Don Foster]

in the people is something that we should have seen in the Budget. It is disappointing that no such provision has been made. We do not see the increased investment that is so desperately needed. Indeed, we see exactly the opposite.

Some of the measures that are set out in the Budget are welcome, but they are often too little, too late. An example is the employers' national insurance contribution holiday, but that will not take effect for 18 months. It will be of little help to the long-term unemployed—for example, those who have been out of work for longer than two years. The minimal expansion of the workstart scheme is welcome, but it will help only about one in 200 of the long-term unemployed. In any event, it will run for only one year.

There are other areas of concern. For example, it cannot make sense to cut the road-building programme without using the money so saved to invest directly in improvement in public transport.

I would be failing in my duty to represent my constituents if I did not express my concern about the Government's proposal for value added tax on fuel. Thousands of my constituents have signed petitions against the Government's plan. Despite the increased compensation that was announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it is clear to me, to my constituents and to many others that the package is inadequate and that many people will lose out.

Only today, Help the Aged announced that it estimates that many pensioners will face a significant increased cost as a result of VAT on fuel. If they cannot meet the increased cost, they will have up to 19 days without fuel. Given the way in which the Government have chosen to raise money—they could have adopted other means—it is becoming increasingly clear that we are engaging in a political debate, not an economic one. I urge Conservative Members seriously to consider the way in which they vote tomorrow night. To vote against the Government tomorrow would lead to far greater popularity than any that might be gained by pre-election tax cuts and bribes. I hope that some Conservative Members will oppose the Government's proposals tomorrow.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer likes to pretend that VAT on fuel is an environment tax. The evidence demonstrates clearly that it is not. Instead, it is another attempt to rake in additional moneys at the expense of some of the poorest in our society to help pay for the tax bribes that will come later.

Too many people will lose out as a result of the Budget. The long-term unemployed will suffer because of the failure to take decisive action to help them. The poor and the elderly will lose out because of the Government's proposal on VAT on fuel. The homeless will lose out because of cuts in the housing budget. The greatest losers will undoubtedly be young people, who constitute future generations. That is the result of the failure of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Government generally significantly to boost investment in education and training, which is desperately needed.

The Budget offers us interesting reading when it comes to education, especially if we compare it with what the Chancellor of the Exchequer said last year. We are spending £100 million less on education than the sum that the right hon. and learned Gentleman predicted in his Budget last year. I accept that that spending represents a 1 per cent. increase in real terms, but the Chancellor has said that over the two subsequent years there will be real cuts in the education budget. That means that in two years' time, the budget will be less in real terms than it is this year. So much for long-term investment in education.

The headline figure of an increase in the education budget of 1 per cent. belies some worrying trends. For example, there was the recent announcement of the revenue support grant settlement. It is clear from that settlement that education's share of gross total standard spending for next year will be £600 million less than the gross total of local education authority budgets for this year. Nothing could be clearer. It is obvious that there will be real cuts in the education service in both schools and colleges. No account has been taken of the known increases in pupil numbers and the likely teachers' pay award.

The Secretary of State for Education is aware of the problems. In a letter dated 1 December to the chairman of the pay review body that represents schoolteachers, the right hon. Lady makes it clear that the proposals within the settlement will mean that most local education authorities will be able to increase expenditure on services as a whole by 0.5 per cent. as set against their adjusted base budgets for 1994-95. In other words, they will be facing cuts in real terms.

Was that a problem for the Secretary of State for Education? Apparently not. Later in her letter she explains how the problem can be solved. She refers to new pressures and the

> "scope that local education authorities have for making efficiency gains."

The right hon. Lady clearly believes that a real-terms cut in spending can be offset by efficiency gains. Every hon. Member knows, however, that following the year-on-year squeezes on local authority budgets, those efficiency gains are nothing short of cuts in both budget and services. Undoubtedly, pupil-teacher ratios will worsen and class sizes will continue to grow; books and equipment will be in even shorter supply; and support for children with special educational needs will diminish.

Hon. Members need not take my word for that. Many organisations are now making similar predictions, and many schools are already beginning to write to Members of Parliament explaining their anxieties. Just one of the many letters that I have received came from Darland high school in Wrexham. The chairman and vice-chairman of the governors wrote to many hon. Members as follows:

> "As you can see the impact of the cuts over the past two years has been to put at risk the education of a whole generation of our pupils. We are reliably informed"—

now, of course, they know—

> "that further cuts are being planned for next year. Any further reduction in our budget will bring about a massive reduction in our staffing levels, both teaching and ancillary . . . We cannot see how we could possibly absorb any more cuts and still produce a curriculum of any kind, let alone deliver the new National Curriculum."

That reflects concern felt throughout the country about the impact of the Budget on education and schools.

Many other parts of the education service have experienced the same problems. There has been a modest increase in the capital programme, but it will barely scratch the surface of the estimated £4.3 billion backlog of repair and maintenance in our schools, the £1.3 billion backlog of repair and maintenance in our further education colleges and the estimated £2 billion backlog of repair and maintenance in our higher education institutions. Those backlogs take no account of the desperate need for new building to accommodate the significantly increased but underfunded expansion of both further and higher education.

Only one feature of the education budget was welcome—next year's £110 million cut in planned recurrent expenditure on grant-maintained schools, a 57 per cent. cut from the levels predicted in last year's Budget. That cut constitutes the Government's first clear public admission that their grant-maintained schools policy has failed and is—as many of us predicted—a busted flush.

I have demonstrated that the Budget fails to invest in our most important resource, our young people; but it fails in many other ways. It is a Budget that fails the nation, from a Government who deserve to fail in tomorrow's vote and beyond.

5.42 pm

Sir Rhodes Boyson (Brent, North): I am pleased about a number of aspects of the Budget. First, provided that we can keep it up, the growth rate of between 4 and 5 per cent. will inevitably raise standards of living for all our people. Secondly, we have low inflation. Under the Labour Government of 1974 to 1979, inflation ate up half people's savings. We are all concerned about the implications of the tax on fuel, but I remind the House that in those five years inflation burnt away half of old people's money.

Thirdly, there is the decline in unemployment. Unemployment destroys the people's mind and spirit. Finally, there is the reduction in borrowing, which was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). It will be very nice if we can reach the point at which we can stop borrowing and build up money, rather than living on our forebears on one hand and our successors on the other: we want to be able to leave something to those successors, as a tribute.

I am concerned about the size of Government expenditure, and how that money is raised. I consider that a state in which more than 40 per cent. of income goes to Government—whatever party is in power—is a socialist state. Between 40 per cent. and 50 per cent. is the break point. We are still a socialist state, irrespective of which party is in government and which in opposition.

Mr. Don Foster: Absolutely.

Sir Rhodes Boyson: Even the Liberal Democrats agree. Obviously, I must not mention the hon. Gentleman who has just spoken. It is clear, in any case, that we are a socialist state: nearly half what we produce is controlled by the state.

Let me give some rough historical figures. In Gladstone's time, 9 per cent. of production went to government; exactly the same amount is going to government in Hong Kong now, and that probably has much to do with an actual rise in productivity and living standards there. In 1914, the figure was 15 per cent; in the 1930s it was 25 per cent; in 1979 it was 44 per cent. In 1990, it fell to 39 per cent., but it then returned to 44 per cent. I consider that far too much has been going to government, and that government is too big.

Even the number of people in government is too big. In 1900, the great Lord Salisbury—who was Prime Minister and Foreign Minister—had only one Under-Secretary, at a time when we controlled a quarter of the world. Now we have six Foreign Office Ministers, and we can hardly control the Isle of Wight. We now have 60 Ministers outside the Cabinet; there were 17 then. Obviously, the increase in the size of government costs money. As *The Economist* said last week, the increases of last year and this year have added £6 billion to the burden of the people.

How should tax be raised? On that point I disagree to some extent with my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), with whom I served as a social security Minister. I believe that basic commodities should not be taxed at all. That was the philosophy of the mid-19th century; perhaps I am a throwback. At the time of the abolition of the Corn Laws, one of the great arguments was that there should be no tax on basic foods. Now, because of Europe and so forth, we have turned our backs on that, but I do not believe that food, housing, basic clothing, light, water or heat should be taxed. Taxes should be raised when we achieve a higher standard of living.

What will happen if we tax all those commodities and we then try to put the money back in different ways, as we are doing this year? A convoluted Government, with more civil servants, are taking the money in a tin and then spending it on another tin. I should like to return to the days when basic necessities were not taxed. Tax should be raised through income tax and spending on higher-value items, as was originally envisaged.

I consider VAT on fuel a bad tax—a tax on basic living standards. I know that a good deal has been put in—much more has been put in this time and I am thankful for that—but it hurts the old, single people and mothers at home. I fear that, whatever we do, it will be resented. Eventually, the 17.5 per cent. fuel tax may be the equivalent of the community charge. The charge became unpopular; we poured money in. It became more unpopular, and we poured money in again. I warn the Government that they are on dangerous territory.

To exempt old people from the tax, which we should always do, there must be a simpler system. I was told this morning that all NHS trusts have VAT exemption certificates which they quote on ordering supplies and do not have to pay VAT. Why should not an old person be able to put his pension number on his gas bill and pay just the cost of the fuel? Perhaps that is too simple and I live in a different world. No doubt the brains on the Treasury Bench will say why such a simple method could not be used. If six people were locked in a room and told that they had to stay there until they had devised a simpler method, they would be able to do so. Perhaps the Minister will answer that and destroy my argument for future debates.

I am also concerned about the removal of part of the married couple's allowance. We either believe in the family or we do not. There is no point in engaging in slogans, because it is reality that matters and once again we are taking money from the wife who stays at home to look after the children. If we are supposed to believe in the family, how can we legislate in that way?

[Sir Rhodes Boyson]

I have already spoken about high taxes. The Conservative party, of which I am proud to be a member, fought the last election on low taxes, but the Government have put taxes up. It is not surprising that people do not like that, and we do not need media consultants to tell us that. We have been promised lower taxes next year, but next year never really comes. Those reductions will be close to the general election and the party and the Government will have to make some very fine speeches if they want people to believe that taxes will not be raised again later. If we intend to reduce taxes they should be reduced now. Instead of reducing them this year, we should simply get rid of the 17.5 per cent. tax on fuel to show that the promised land is coming. That would be the first item in the bonanza which I have no doubt will arrive before the next general election.

The Government have to be careful in their attitude to middle-class people in my constituency and those of other hon. Members who will now have to take out insurance against unemployment so that their mortgage payments can be covered for a number of weeks. That will certainly be unpopular and I suggest that it could be as unpopular as the Child Support Agency. The Government had better watch that as well.

My last points before I make a brief resumé so that I may remember what I have said, because that is always difficult and I need help from time to time, are about London. I am a London Member. I have lived more than half my life in London away from my native Lancashire and I am proud of London, which is one of the six great capitals of the world. Too much money is taken out of London and given to the rest of the country. A first-class underground system is needed if London is to remain one of the world's six great capitals. The Government should think about that. If London were allowed to keep the money that its people have paid out instead of that money being moved elsewhere, the capital could have one of the best transport systems in the world.

I shall sum up what I am saying, or what I believe I am saying. It is difficult to speak and listen at the same time, however interesting the topic. I welcome the fact that we have reduced unemployment and that inflation is down, because that eats up the savings of our people. Similarly, we are not taking on more debt but will be able to pay off existing debt in future. I hope that something can be done to simplify VAT along the lines that I have suggested in my simple way. Whatever happens it will continue to be resented. If the Government can overcome that while continuing their policy, and provided that we get tax cuts in good time—that is important—we can without doubt look forward to victory at the next general election.

We must also have a stable economy and a 5 per cent. growth rate so that at the next election our people will not look back at a plateau or a depression but forward to an increase in the standard of living.

5.54 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) gives the impression of a man torn between his undoubted high principles and his realistic view of performance. I shall deal later with some of the aspirations that he held out.

The Chancellor set himself three priorities in the Budget: to keep the economy on track, to create more jobs and to strengthen the economy in the long term. We shall have to judge how well he has aimed his measures at those priorities. First, while the economy may be returning to the track of sustainable growth, it is not yet on it. Unemployment is 8.9 per cent. and the borrowing requirement is 5 per cent. of national income. Inflation has certainly fallen to 2 per cent. and the current balance has fallen to a deficit of only 0.5 per cent. of national income in 1994. Those figures are not expected to deteriorate significantly next year. The borrowing requirement is expected to fall to 3 per cent. next year.

Chicken counting is a dangerous occupation for Chancellors and Governments, but certainly the prospects are such as to require no further tightening of fiscal policy beyond that previously announced this year. The projected growth of national income of 3.25 per cent. in 1995 after the growth of 4 per cent. this year need not cause alarm.

Judged by the test of the short-term prospects for economic constraints and forgetting about unemployment, the economy can be said to be getting back on track. Furthermore, looking two years beyond 1995 and beyond the end of the published Treasury forecasts, the panel of independent forecasters sees growth continuing on average at more than 2.5 per cent. a year, unemployment falling to 7 per cent. and inflation giving the Government cause for concern as it edges up close to the top end of the Government's target range of 4 per cent.

To judge the wisdom of Government measures, it is necessary to look at the longer-term considerations and to balance them against the short term. Is the economy heading for an impossible balance of payments or income distribution? Will debt income ratios go to unsustainable extremes, and so on? Such questions are asked on the various national economy models such as the National Institute, the London business school, Oxford Economic Forecasting and the Treasury models in what is becoming a useful annual exercise in which the Treasury should participate. Without Treasury participation, I have to operate the Treasury model myself and, as I well know, that is no substitute for the Treasury participating publicly.

This year, no immediate changes of plan are called for, but the question is asked, what are the Government after in the longer term and how do they see the economy achieving that? Can an electioneering reduction of the standard rate of income tax to 20 per cent. in next year's Budget be justified by any credible budgetary arithmetic? Objectively speaking, it is on the margin. It would take the borrowing requirement to near the 3 per cent. Maastricht condition in 1996-97. Can and will Britain then seek to adopt the single European currency at the same time as Germany, France and the Benelux countries, if they try to stick to the Maastricht timetable? The Chancellor said nothing about that, given the state of war in the Conservative party. My view is that Britain can and should adopt the single European currency, but that to do so it needs further to strengthen the economy and to build up a sufficiently strong position, which on present prospects would not allow major tax cuts next year.

We must consider the Chancellor's other two priorities—reducing unemployment and strengthening the economy in the longer term. To create jobs, the Government are offering modest carrots to employers and carrots and sticks to employees. Some of the measures are welcome in so far as they go. However, by concentrating only on the incentive side, they fail to deal with the underlying causes of long-term structural unemployment and the measures needed to deal with them. The causes lie in changing technology, work organisation and international trade. The Government, because of their doctrinal position, are precluded from examining the problems. They believe that the market will deal with the problems and that any attempt to improve its working can only make matters worse.

It is not necessary to be a Luddite protectionist to believe that the market can be helped along. The problems will not be solved merely by improving competitiveness. There is a strong argument for doing so, but for job creation the benefits of improved competitiveness lie in what it enables one to do rather than in what it does in itself. For example, a more competitive manufacturing industry may or may not employ more people. What is needed is a more efficient labour market better matching demand and supply. For better or worse, there has been a change to more contracted-out services, temporary ad hoc teams formed for a particular task, changing demands for skills, varying work loads and varying order books.

We have a vast and expensive market machinery of wholesaling, distribution and retailing for matching the supply and demand of goods, but we have only horses and carts for the labour market. What would happen in a supermarket if the only cornflakes on offer were either a year's supply or a single packet of a brand never seen before and with no guarantee of its being available next week? Yet that is the nature of the job market. Professions and firms existed to package and regulate the supply of work and while they did so it was possible to maintain full employment. Now that they have ceased to do so, we have a problem.

The Chancellor was inconsistent on the question of market intervention. I welcome his landfill tax proposal, for example, if it will help to deter sharks such as Paterson's at Greenhead Moss in my constituency, which has repeatedly breached mere planning conditions and keeps coming back asking for more. It must be hit in its pocket and better waste disposal methods must be found. However, the legislation will need careful drafting if it is not to handicap the reclamation and redevelopment of derelict industrial sites.

British Steel is in the process of demolishing its Ravenscraig works in my constituency. It has 1 million cu m of contaminated materials to dispose of—somewhat larger than a cube with Big Ben as one edge. That waste cannot be dumped at sea and there is no landfill site in Europe large enough to take it. The only practical solution is to store it in a sealed and capped landfill storage site, and to blend it permanently into the landscape and land use of the local community. British Steel must pay the full cost, but that money must go into the redevelopment of a community that has lost its livelihood—not into the Exchequer through a grossly unfair tax on industrial regeneration.

The Chancellor said that in some cases taxes do some good by helping markets work better and by discouraging harmful or wasteful activities. I agree. Yet he said nothing about the conclusion reached by the Royal Commission on environmental pollution—that motor fuel duty should increase by 9 per cent., not just the 5 per cent. a year that was the Government's previous target and to which the Chancellor stuck in his Budget.

On the long-term strength of the economy, it is necessary to see Britain within the global economy. We are in a period of world development with immense potential as rapidly developing countries demonstrate their capacity to produce the highest-technology goods at a fraction of the labour cost of industrial countries while still needing immense infrastructure developments, thus creating the possibility of balanced trade throughout the world. However, that requires enormous adaptability in the developing and industrial countries alike.

The reduction in ECGD premiums is welcome, but action is called for on a very broad front, from an untrammelled overseas aid budget to a secure science base in Britain. On the question of the science budget, which is the deepest foundation of Britain's competitiveness, the Government have still not woken up to the fact that level funding in real terms means a decline in the share of national income, in the quality of Britain's contribution, in the importance of its role in world science and in industrial competitiveness.

The Budget does not make any contribution to the changes in business culture needed to sustain a high level of industrial competitiveness. The measures needed are relatively low in cost, but high in the understanding required. The Government, in their successive Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry, show no signs of achieving that.

The Government cannot take Britain into a single European currency against the background of solid strength in the economy, while at the same time fulfilling the electioneering hopes of the Tory party. No doubt the Government's position as the 1996 intergovernmental conference approaches will be, "We shall not go in unless", but Britain's interest is to go in if the system is managed in the interests of Europe as a whole and Britain's economy is strong enough to sustain it. Therefore, Labour should say, "We shall go in if". I do not envisage the Tory Government being able to go into the 1996 intergovernmental conference with a majority in the House of Commons, so the signs are that there will be a 1996 general election, triggered as a single-issue campaign effectively for or against Europe, but, like the 1974 election campaign, soon broadening out into all the issues concerning the British people. Roll on 1996.

6.8 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I listened to the speech of the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) with great interest. Half way through it, he referred to the need to reduce unemployment. In fact, unemployment has fallen by almost 500,000 during the past two years and the fall is now faster than it was last year. I understand that in October alone the number dropped by 45,000. That is one reason why I support the Budget strategy in general, which will bring about real growth in our economy, an increase in employment and a fall in unemployment, coupled with holding down inflation.

I served in the Royal Navy for several years, as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson). You, Madam Deputy Speaker, have close traditional links in your constituency with the Royal Navy. The Navy has a saying, "Steady as she goes." That means that there is no need to change the speed or direction of a ship. If the ship is our national economy, I say, "Steady as she goes."

[Mr. Toby Jessel]

I welcome the £5.5 million increase in the Arts Council grant announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage. Of course, the value of the arts is not just financial—they enrich and fulfil people's lives. Nevertheless, they have a financial and commercial value and, as my right hon. Friend said, visitors come to Britain to experience our heritage, our arts and our traditions. They do not come for the British weather.

Our traditions include the monarchy. It is without doubt a principal tourist attraction. It entails having a grand, splendid and majestic monarchy—not, as proposed by Labour Members, a bicycle-riding Scandinavian monarchy or even the abolition of the monarchy. That would damage not only our cherished institutions but our budgetary position. If one belittles the monarchy, one damages the tourist trade; employment in hotels, restaurants, shops and internal travel; the tax yields to the Government from those activities; and the Budget. I should be obliged if Labour Members would be kind enough to listen. May I wait, Deputy Madam Speaker, until those hon. Gentlemen start to listen?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The Chair cannot guarantee that they will listen. As the hon. Gentleman has only 10 minutes, I suggest that he pursue his arguments.

Mr. Jessel: I am prepared to sacrifice one minute out of 10 so that Labour Members may extend the courtesy of listening to me. Their policy would damage the monarchy and destroy the Government's tax yield from the tourist trade, which is largely dependent on the success and importance of the monarchy. The Opposition would kill the goose that lays the golden egg, and they would be unutterably stupid and foolish to do so. I am sure that the British people would never allow Labour to attain power, to do any such thing.

I wish that the tax on tobacco products had been made much higher. Three different taxes apply, but the net effect of the proposed increase will be to raise the tax on tobacco by 5.5 per cent. A larger increase in tax would reduce the number of horrible premature deaths from lung cancer and other appalling diseases.

Some people view the purpose of the Budget as only financial, but there is no reason why it should not have other aims. That happens when differential rates of duty are imposed on leaded and unleaded petrol for environmental purposes or when mortgage tax relief is given to promote home ownership. There is no reason why fiscal laws should not be used to promote health.

The Royal College of Physicians states that, since 1962, 4 million people in the UK have died from smoking-related illnesses—mainly lung cancer, heart disease, strokes and emphysema. Currently, 110,000 deaths a year, or one in six, are from smoking-related diseases. Although the incidence of smoking has fallen in the past 10 years from 35 per cent. to 28 per cent. of the population, among 15-year-olds the figure has dropped only from 25 per cent. to 24 per cent., which is hardly significant.

A typical constituency has 1,300 15-year-olds. If one quarter of them smoke, on present trends 100 of those 300 youngsters will die from smoking sooner or later. I wish that we could use the Budget to increase tax on tobacco steeply, to deter with much greater force the number of young people who start smoking. If anyone proposes an amendment to impose a higher rate of tobacco tax, I, for one, will support it.

Finally, London art auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's comprise an internationally famous and important market for the United Kingdom. If anything is done to damage that market or to make it less attractive, it will be tilted away from London towards New York. That would be bad for London, Britain and the European Union.

The Budget proposes the adoption of the EU's seventh value added tax directive, which will for the first time impose VAT on works of art imported into this country for auction. If a Japanese or American person sent an object to London to auction, VAT would be imposed—although it could be reclaimed if the object were resold to someone outside the European Union.

The tax is expected to start at 2.5 per cent. Complicated negotiations on the subject went on for years. It is not clear how the new scheme will work, when it will be introduced or whether the 2.5 per cent. will be imposed only on the auction price or on that plus the auctioneer's premium. More importantly, the tax must not be increased in a future year, such as 1999, so that it tilts the market from London to New York. There is a grey area as to how the tax will work. It is introduced at the behest of the European Union—the British Government did not really want it. We ought not to give into the Union, and I hope that Treasury Ministers will have something to say and that the tax can be stopped.

6.15 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Today, the Secretary of State for National Heritage predicted that everything will be rosy in the economic garden in the run-up to the general election. Why should we believe him, when he comes from the same Government who ruled out any recession, entered the exchange rate mechanism at an unsustainable level and ignominiously exited from it, damaged the economy with high interest rates and pledged that there would be no tax rises? More than that, the Government said that there would be no need for tax rises after the 1992 general election.

The Government now predict a self-sustaining, non-inflationary recovery with tax cuts. They have some brass neck if they expect British people to believe them. Their credibility has been irrevocably damaged by their economic record. I have never before known the deep anger that has been expressed over the imposition of value added tax on domestic fuel. When a petition was circulated in towns and villages in my constituency, people queued to sign. The impact of that tax on ordinary families will be most damaging. Considerable fear surrounds it. Public anger was exacerbated by news that the chief executive of British Gas is to give himself a big pay rise, and that a new regime for paying gas bills will prejudice customers who do not have a bank account.

All those issues have created deep anger, which the Government and every Conservative Member will feel in rich measure at the next general election. I hope that the Government will be defeated in tomorrow's vote and that increased VAT on domestic fuel will be stopped.

The Chancellor is right to say that the economy has entered a new phase. The country is emerging from recession as part of the economic cycle, but that itself produces problems. The recovery is the product of Government failures, not successes. The UK's withdrawal from the ERM, which the Government resisted, allowed our exporters to become more competitive.

The purpose of the present Chancellor's Budget is twofold: he seeks to prepare the ground for pre-election income tax cuts and to create sustained non-inflationary growth. I contend that the two are inconsistent. The economy is rushing out of recession, helped by a low and perhaps undervalued exchange rate and by recovery in other economies. Growth is running at 3 per cent. and may reach 4 per cent. or 5 per cent. in the coming year.

The problem is capacity. Tremendous damage was done to the industrial base in the first Tory recession of 1980-81, as we know in the west midlands. Without North sea oil, the nation would have been devastated. It enabled a recovery to occur in the late 1980s. The second Tory recession of the early 1990s inflicted further severe damage. Although capacity limits in this recovery have not been hit yet, if growth continues they may begin to be hit next year.

The extent of the damage done to the British economy in the 1980s can be shown by, for example, the output gap. Professor Christopher Johnson has shown that taking 1977 as the base year and suggesting 2.2 per cent. a year as the potential average growth rate which the economy should be able to achieve, Labour sustained that growth rate easily in office. The Conservative record has been erratic and generally well below par, and it remains below par. Today's output gap in gross domestic product is an overall 4.1 per cent. this year, although falling from 5.7 per cent. last year. It is well below what we should have been able to achieve.

Professor Johnson shows that from 1983 to 1993, increased investment in capital stock in manufacturing was among the worst. Only mining showed a worse performance. The investment change in manufacturing is only 20 per cent. compared with 45 per cent. in finance, 33 per cent. in trade and tourism and 40 per cent. in other services. The weakness of the British economy remains its manufacturing capacity, or lack of it.

The recovery so far has created little full-time employment. All the economic advisers to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee agreed on one thing when we spoke to them the other day—that there is no evidence so far that the recovery has created any net increase in full-time jobs. Indeed, there is some evidence that less full-time male employment is generated than is lost. That is why it feels like a jobless recovery. The records of the Department of Employment show that there is no real pick-up in employment, especially in male employment. The Department has turned to the labour force survey, but that also has its deficiencies as an instrument of measurement.

If the recovery is to survive, we need either to slow growth or to boost investment substantially. Growth of 4 per cent. is sustainable only if there is substantial spare capacity in the economy and, as the Chancellor would claim, a genuine supply-side improvement in recent years, or if there is massive new investment which can create new capacity quickly. If that does not happen, the capacity buffers will be hit and inflation will follow. Treasury complacency about inflation and about the problems of capacity is worrying. Tax cuts next year by the Government will have exactly the same effect as they did during the Lawson boom. Tax cuts may look affordable in public sector borrowing requirement terms, but they would be appallingly damaging to the whole concept of sustainable, non-inflationary recovery.

I have one point about the PSBR to which I hope the Minister will reply. Table 4.9 on page 73 of the Red Book suggests that the PSBR is to be part-funded by £10.2 billion from sales of commercial bills by the Bank of England. Can the Minister confirm when he replies that that is to happen? If that is the way in which the PSBR is to be part-funded, it will be an interesting development.

Tax cuts in the next year would create a further stimulus to the economy which, I suspect, would leave the economy struggling; the key failure of the economy—lack of manufacturing investment—would then become apparent. The markets knew that after the Budget. In the week following the Budget, the *Financial Times* 100-share index fell 16 points, and gilts and sterling showed little response to the Budget. The very markets that were supposed to be reassured by the anti-inflation package know that the Budget has placed a great and dangerous temptation in front of the Government. They know that any hard-won economic gains could easily be frittered away by a whopping tax cut from a Government terrified of losing the next general election.

The markets do not believe paragraph 3.34 of the Red Book which predicts that investment will be at 2 per cent. this year, but will surge to 11 per cent. next year. Such a rise in investment is not credible. Even if there were an 11 per cent. surge in investment, the likelihood would be that the financial institutions would look to the Pacific rim for a higher return rather than to the United Kingdom.

How can the Government predict that investment can fill the capacity gap when they are cutting their own fixed investment, with a 10.8 per cent. cut in public investment, a 17 per cent. cut in general Government investment and a 16.6 per cent. cut in local authority investment? The Government have no clear, long-term investment programme. There is no investment in skills and no investment in industry. The Government claim that they will get £5 billion from the private sector to make up for their public investment cuts, but they have got only about £0.5 billion over the past two years. In the Chancellor's previous Budget, even he admitted:

"the flow of private finance projects to date has . . . been disappointingly small".—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1994; Vol. 233, c. 932.]

The City knows the reality of recovery. The industrial base is weak, a surge in investment is not available to remedy that and large-scale tax cuts would slam us into the buffers of lack of capacity. The result would be higher inflation, higher interest rates, higher sterling exchange rates, reduced exports and a bust to follow any pre-election boom. The economy does not have the scope for large tax cuts. The recovery would be like the previous Tory one. The economic cycle is playing in the Government's favour. The basic problems of the economy are being ignored and a lot of fanciful and wishful thinking is being indulged in by the Chancellor. The Tory record of economic failure will continue to leave our economy even further behind. This Budget is not really about Britain's future—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

6.25 pm

Sir Thomas Arnold (Hazel Grove): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) as we serve together on the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. I am sure that he will not be surprised, however, that I take issue with the general thrust of his remarks.

This Budget builds on the excellent work of the two 1993 Budgets in paving the way for the sustained recovery towards which the Government and the Chancellor are working. The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North, to put it mildly, overstated his case.

The medium-term financial strategy set out on page 14 of the Red Book is clear. I believe that the Government have struck the right balance between monetary policy and fiscal policy. I said in the debate on the Gracious Speech that I was impressed by the transparency with which our economic policy was now made. That transparency is reflected in this year's Red Book and, indeed, in the Treasury's briefings.

In our modern world, with transparency should also come accountability. I invite the Government to consider one or two matters concerning the arrangements for debating the Budget. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary may prefer not to deal with these points this evening, and I quite understand that, but I urge him to pass my remarks to the Chancellor so that he and other Ministers can consider the import of my speech.

Is the timing of the Budget, just before Christmas, right, or should we take a fresh look at the new arrangements? For the second year running, we have had a bunching of economic debates. It is unrealistic to believe that the Opposition will ever forgo the opportunity of a full day's debate on the economy during our discussions on the Queen's Speech, notwithstanding the fact that that debate is likely to be followed soon by the Budget debate.

Some more serious issues arise from the present timing. As I understand it, there is little time for representations to be made, either by individuals and other interested parties or by organisations, between the Budget statement and the start of the Finance Bill. That point needs to be looked at carefully. Perhaps ways can be found to deal with the problem; it is a real problem of which the Government should take note.

The Government are perfectly entitled to take a robust—almost authoritarian—view of their own responsibilities and they are entitled to ask their own supporters and, indeed, the House to back them up in the new arrangements for a unified Budget. I make it clear to the Government that I am not opposed to bringing together in one statement both public spending and the revenue-raising side of economic policy—far from it; I always felt that it needed to be done—but the Government's view needs to be set alongside the view of the House. Hon. Members on both sides of the House should take an interest in what are likely to prove to be rather truncated arrangements for the future debate on economic policy. It is slightly odd that last year—and I believe that I am right about this—seven months passed without the Chancellor taking part in a major economic debate. That is puzzling and it has meant that the regular appearances of the Chancellor and the Treasury team before the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee have been altered somewhat in character. We must consider that and take account of it in planning for the future.

I welcome the arrangements that have been made in recent years for debates on the estimates because they allow for certain specific items of public spending to be considered very closely. However, I should like to register my support for the proposals of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins), one of my predecessors as Chairman of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, a former Treasury Minister and now Chairman of the Liaison Committee, for time to be set aside during the parliamentary year for debates on the annual reports of individual Departments.

Those reports are a new feature of government and are a result of many other changes that have taken place in the House and in the Treasury in recent years. They provide us with an opportunity, Department by Department, to debate and perhaps amend—at any rate, to consider in great detail and, I hope, constructively—the spending plans of individual Departments.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing has proposed that four days should be set aside, with half days given to individual Departments. That would enable the annual spending plans of eight Departments to be examined in one full parliamentary year and would represent an excellent compromise in respect of what I fear at the moment is an unsatisfactory situation.

I should like the Government to consider those points very carefully. As I said at the outset, I welcome the transparency with which policy is now being made but the House must reconsider accountability, on which I hope the Government will recognise that the views of the House are important and that they can help, not hinder, the Government in the formulation and execution of public policy.

6.32 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): The hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) illustrated for us very vividly how dangerous it is to change the long-established procedures of the House, because when we do so it usually ends in tears. Not many voices were raised in objection when we decided to change the Budget from spring to autumn, but it was not long before voices began to question that change.

Given the time at my disposal, I regret that I cannot refer to many of the points that have been made today. Instead, I will have to gallop through what I have prepared because some of the things that I want to say I really just want to get on the record.

The Budget contains a long list of items that are helpful to small businesses and they are welcomed by my party. The Chancellor is well aware of the hopes that we in Northern Ireland have for an expansion of business activity over the coming months and years. We have a lot of catching up to do after the quarter of a century that we have just spent fighting terrorism and we need all the help we can get. We would hope to see investment as a result of the Prime Minister's initiative in calling an investment conference in Belfast next week and we are particularly interested in investment in manufacturing industry.

We have a problem, however, as our electricity prices are higher than elsewhere, mainly because so much of our generation is provided by oil-fired stations. That problem may be relieved in future with the gas pipeline, but that is some years away. The Chancellor will be aware that Northern Ireland burns just over 1 million tonnes of heavy fuel oil each year. I am told that that means that Northern Ireland pays about 25 to 30 per cent. of the heavy oil excise duty in the United Kingdom. That duty amounts to some £11 million to £12 million a year and it is a heavy impost on the Northern Ireland consumer.

It will be argued that this is special pleading, and it is, but it is special pleading in a special circumstance. This problem must be dealt with, and the sooner the better. It can be dealt with satisfactorily only by the removal of the tax on that fuel. I echo the call made by my party leader, my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux), in the debate on 23 November when he asked for all of Northern Ireland to be made an enterprise zone. The line on the map defining such zones has created many anomalies which can be easily removed in respect of that small economy and territory only by the policy that he advocated.

Much has been said about the Government's decision to go ahead with their proposal to impose VAT on domestic fuel. My colleagues are, as has so often been the case, in the very happy position of being able to take a rather more dispassionate view of the Government's proposal than supporters of the main Opposition parties. Those right hon. and hon. Members feel duty-bound to voice the most strident attacks on the proposal and, in turn, to repel those attacks with whatever verbal weapon comes to mind and tongue.

We, like most hon. Members, recognise the need to raise revenue to meet Government obligations. We also believe in a balanced Budget, and I will return to that point if I have time. We well understand that VAT on domestic fuel is a tax on spending, which is, I am told, a tax beloved by Conservatives in particular. I suspect that taxes on spending are popular with all Chancellors since, once imposed, folk pay without really questioning where the money is going. Therefore, they grumble less about Government impositions in the long run.

However, VAT on domestic fuel falls into the category of taxes that have been from their inception almost universally disliked, not least because in this case it has been very successfully portrayed by its opponents as a tax that bears more heavily on the aged and the poor. That is as true of that tax as of all universal taxes.

The Government's recognition of the unpopularity of the tax is confirmed by the cushioning measures they have introduced, which would not be needed if the proposal had that measure of acquiesence that most taxes enjoy and which means that the citizen simply pays up after a few grumbles.

Sadly for the Government on this occasion, our view of the tax has not changed. However, will the cushioning measures announced survive a defeat for the Government on the issue? How does the Chancellor intend to raise the deficit in his revenue which will result from a Government defeat? If the Chancellor is to maintain confidence in the City, he will have to give that information to the House and to the country.

Our view on the issue is slightly different from that of the main body of Conservative opinion in the United Kingdom. We have that different opinion because we were not counted as members of the Conservative grouping by the then leader of the Conservative party in the first election in 1974, whereas previously we had been so counted. Since then, we have developed a number of basic principles about how the nation's finances should be managed.

Not least among those principles is that one should never try to fix the exchange rate. One should not tax the basic essentials of the ordinary man or woman. I was very happy to hear the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) go back to the last century in order to find a Conservative justification for that. We also believe that one should continue to seek a balanced budget and if one seeks long enough and hard enough, no doubt one will find it.

The spotlight of press publicity has been directed on the issue of VAT on domestic fuel, but another tax increase is of greater importance and it has passed largely unnoticed in our debates so far. The one redeeming feature of VAT on domestic energy is that it is levied on the ultimate consumer and therefore the consequences are evident and they finish at that point. That does not apply to the tax on vehicle fuel.

It is said that the only people who suffer as a result of tax on vehicle fuel are car owners, but that is a very misleading perception. In fact, hon. Members know that increases in the price of transport fuel feed through to every single item that we purchase. For producers, that places pressure on their profits, because they are expected to fund some of the tax.

Car ownership is treated by some sections of the population as a bad thing because of its environmental consequences. We are told that we should not use cars as much as we do and that we should use public transport or bicycles, or walk. That aim might be praiseworthy and possible for urban and suburban dwellers who have access to a comprehensive, high-frequency and cheap—that is, highly subsidised—transport system. Such a system might exist somewhere, but hon. Members have not discovered it.

When it is realised that many millions of our citizens simply do not have a transport system that is worthy of the name, the green agenda hits a blank wall of harsh reality. That simple harsh reality is that, for many millions of people, there is no alternative to a car for personal transport and that, without a car, social activity would vanish for every age group. It is also a fact that increasing the cost of travel to work would limit job opportunities for many people. Time does not permit me to pursue that point.

In the light of those facts, the concept of doubling the real price of vehicle fuel within a few years can only be nonsense that no sensible Government could long pursue. The Chancellor has committed himself this year, but will he have the good sense to reconsider the matter before his next Budget?

The Chancellor and the Treasury team will no doubt recall that the consistent position of the Ulster Unionist party has been that the public sector borrowing requirement should be eliminated as soon as possible. As was evident when the deficit took off for the clouds a few years ago, the PSBR could be diminished only by increased taxation and reduced public expenditure. Those two aspects have advanced over the past two or three years, and the resultant pain is evident and vocal, but so are the rewards, about which people are less vocal. Part of the reward is, of course, to be attributed to the fact that,

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at the moment, we have a competitive pound, which is a result of the market restoring the pound's true worth in September 1992. We also have low interest rates and low inflation. I cannot see very much change in the policy since September 1992, despite the change of personnel at No. 11.

Lord Lawson was the first Chancellor for a long time to reduce the burden of debt that he inherited. Regrettably, that false spring has vanished, but his successor is on the way to achieving that happy position once again. I hope that the Treasury team will succeed, for it is a very worthwhile objective. It will take time, but I hope that it will involve a shorter time scale than that envisaged a year or two ago. We should temper our hope with caution, for the increase in employment, the consequent saving in Government expenditure and the fall in inflation have done much to improve the PSBR this year.

I must put it again to the Treasury team that the best way to deal with a sudden and drastic rise in the Budget deficit is to be honest enough to increase income tax. The effect on revenue is instant, the pain is immediately felt—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman has had his 10 minutes.

6.42 pm

Mr. James Cran (Beverley): I am grateful to be called. Making this speech is inevitably a dispiriting affair, because my hon. Friends usually make exactly the speech that one would have wished to make. That is my position this evening, because my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) did exactly that. I did not agree with everything he said, but I agreed with much of it. Therefore, against that background, I welcome the Budget, not entirely without reservations, but my reservations are well outweighed by my support for what is contained in this set of measures.

I particularly support the fact that the Government are taking the long view. Throughout my lifetime, I have found that politicians—I do not regard myself as a politician particularly—always take the short view. The Government are rightly attempting to put public finances back into order again. In the past year or two, I wondered whether that would happen. I am delighted that public finances will be back in order a few years hence. Of course, that will not yield immediate benefits—nor should it—but benefits will undoubtedly come. That is why some Opposition speeches have been made in sorrow—because in 1994, we had 4 per cent. growth, which, historically, is very difficult to achieve in this country, and there will be 3.25 per cent. growth in 1995.

It is fascinating that all that has been achieved without those magical letters, which kept being flung at me a few years ago, ERM. No more than three years ago, every Government and Opposition Treasury spokesman spoke about the ERM, and every Confederation of British Industry publication which I read flung those letters and what they meant down my throat. The ERM was proffered as the universal panacea for every economic ill in the country. By contrast, everyone is now embarrassed to mention ERM. Those letters seem to have been expunged from the vocabulary of many of my colleagues and from that of Opposition Members who used to believe in them. "CBI News" never talks of them these days, and, happily, nor do Ministers. The lesson has been learnt that we do not require artificial devices to substitute for the internal discipline which Ministers and, indeed, politicians of all parties must show in economic management. That is what the Budget and its two predecessors are all about.

I was going to say that I am relatively pleased with the Budget, but I must say more than that. I am delighted with it from two points of view. First, the key to the economic policy of any Government, which is shown by the Budget, is that there is a need to control public expenditure within that which the country can afford. Secondly, the Government have a prime responsibility to control inflation. They are doing both.

I mention ERM not to embarrass those who originally supported it but merely to allow me to refer to EMU—full economic and monetary union. It is unworkable. I do not want it. I am not closed-minded enough to say that some countries in the European Union may not band together and pursue it. I say to them "bon voyage." Let them get on with it if that is what they want to do, but I hope that EMU is off the Government's agenda. It probably is, because I have listened carefully to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said. I read his Leiden speech containing references to the subject, and I could not disagree with much of it. I heard him, in particular, a few weeks ago, in answer to a question about EMU from my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold), say that there was no appetite for such a development. That is exactly what I believe. Therefore, I am relatively sanguine at the minute.

Without ERM, we now have what I regard as the beginning—perhaps it is more than that—of a successful economic policy. As I have said, fundamental to that is controlling public expenditure. All Governments spend far too much, but Conservative Governments spend less. Labour Governments tend to spend much more. We have seen the statistics. I refer back only to the turn of the century, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North referred back to Gladstone. We both agree that Governments spend too much.

We cannot insulate every citizen from every eventuality. Of course, the Government must provide services that citizens cannot provide for themselves, such as roads, education, defence and so on, but, by definition, there must be a limit because resources are limited. Clearly, social security must have a safety net, but it is a big spender and must attract the attention of those of us who want cuts. When I was elected to the House in 1987 the social security budget was about £37 billion. I have discovered that it will be not far short of £100 billion next year, and clearly the taxpayer cannot bear that financial burden. I support the Government and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security in their examination of housing benefit, for example. I am no expert on the subject, but I have talked to those who are and they tell me that it simply forces up rents.

I support the Secretary of State in his efforts to limit support for mortgage interest. I am very happy to report that I no longer have a mortgage, but when I had one I did not look to my neighbour to bail me out if I got into difficulties. I took out mortgage insurance and the Secretary of State suggests that everyone should have that cover.

My right hon. Friend is also correct to intensify the Department's efforts to combat fraud. I know, as everyone else does, that the majority of people are absolutely honest; there is no doubt about that. But, human nature being what it is, some people are dishonest. Therefore, I am delighted that the Government are urging us to rethink the social contract—the relationship between the individual on the one hand and the Government on the other.

I am very pleased that the Government have recognised that bureaucracy is too big. The decision to cut spending by about £24 billion in the next three years is a painful one, but it is the correct decision and not before time.

The Government recognise that they must not spend very much beyond their tax revenues—although occasionally Governments will do so, especially during recessions.

I believe that high taxation is intrinsically wrong. I think that we should leave as much money as possible for the individual and he should decide what to do with it. I am not entirely happy with the Government's decision to impose VAT on fuel and other services. I wish the Government had applied a sharper knife to public expenditure before now, but because of the deficit problem I am forced, kicking and screaming, to face the fact that I must support the Government in the vote tomorrow evening. I see no other alternative.

I look to the Chancellor to use the revenue that I believe he will have to cut taxation next year. I leave him with one thought: of course we would all be delighted to see a cut in direct taxation, but in my constituency I am finding resistance to indirect taxation and the amount of money that is collected from it. Perhaps we should have future cuts in indirect taxation—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order.

6.52 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I was interested to hear the hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) conclude his remarks by referring to the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel. It is hardly surprising that that issue, more than any other, has dominated the debate about the Budget both in the community and in this place. VAT on fuel is certainly the Government's most unpopular budgetary measure—which takes some doing because there is a lot of competition. My constituents queued up to sign a petition opposing 17.5 per cent. VAT on fuel, and pensioners took the petition around the neighbourhoods to demonstrate how they felt about the issue.

However, I do not wish to address my remarks to VAT today. Instead, I turn to the subject of housing and how it will be affected by the Budget. As we approach a new century, one might have thought that there would be a consensus among the major political parties about the importance of everyone having, as of right, a roof over his head and a decent home. All hon. Members would say that they agree with that aim in theory. However, that objective has not been translated into Government policy and the problem was certainly not addressed by last week's Budget.

The scale of the housing problem is frightening. The right hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) and I attended meetings with Birmingham council in his former role as Minister for Housing and he has praised the city council's record on housing and housing management. Despite Birmingham city council's good record and the councillors' best efforts, they face frightening problems.

There are 17,000 people on Birmingham council's housing waiting list. There are 24,000 people on the transfer list and 10,000 of the households on the list are overcrowded. Even though 6,000 tenants a year achieve a housing move, the wait for decent accommodation is far too long.

In Birmingham—just one city, albeit a large one—48,000 private homes have been considered unfit for families to live in and 80,000 are borderline cases. Some 40 per cent. of the private housing stock needs urgent repair and 24 per cent. of private rented stock is considered unfit for human habitation. The council needs an investment of £1.3 billion to bring its housing stock up to scratch.

That is the scale of the problem that we face. There are 15,000 inter-war council homes awaiting modernisation and 4,500 homes still have outside toilets. Against that background, Birmingham city council has lost 27,000 homes in the past 10 years—most of them family homes which are in greatest demand.

The city council has put in a bid for £71 million under its housing investment programme for the next financial year—not because that is all the money it needs, but because that is all it is allowed to ask for under the rules imposed by the Government. People in my constituency think that it is crazy that in Birmingham we need housing investment of £200 million, but we are allowed to ask to spend— not actually receive— under £100 million. Last year the council's allocation was £49 million, which was less than the year before.

What impact will the Budget have on those terrifying figures? The Department of the Environment's housing budget will be down by £770 million next year and £700 million the year after. Housing investment was cut by £500 million in 1994-95. According to figures published by the National Federation of Housing Associations, there will be a £300 million cut in housing association investment next year and a £320 million cut the year after.

How will those cuts impact on real families who are homeless or who are living in unmodernised, overcrowded, damp, cold conditions in Birmingham and elsewhere? The Government's 1992 autumn statement included plans for some 34,000 new rented home starts. This year's Budget has reduced the figure to 15,000—a reduction of 55 per cent. According to figures produced by the National Federation of Housing Associations, 124,000 affordable rented homes are needed each year—that is more than 300 a day—just to keep pace with demographic and labour market changes. Those new homes will not come from the figures projected by this Budget or from the policies pursued by the Government. It makes no sense from an economic point of view and it makes no sense for families who are in need of rehousing.

Budget cuts to housing will result in the loss of about 4,000 construction jobs next year and about 7,900 by 1996-97. Lost tax revenues and high benefit payments will cost the Exchequer £35 million next year and £70 million the year after.

There have been some new housing policies. The Government have said that they will act to address problems with housing benefit. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have drawn attention to the spiralling

[Mr. Richard Burden]

housing benefit bill. But the Government have responded by blaming and attacking low-income families who often have no choice but to put up with the housing market that the Government created through their deregulation of rent and rent controls. We need investment in bricks and mortar. We need the new homes that people require and deserve. It is utterly appalling to blame and attack in the way that the Budget proposes those people least able to afford to pay.

Just last weekend a gentleman came to see me at my constituency advice desk. He is a housing association tenant. Housing associations are supposed to provide low-cost homes for people who need them. He had already faced in the past two years a 25 per cent. increase in his rent. He has now been told that there will be another 25 per cent. increase. According to the usual definitions of affordability of housing, people should not be expected to spend more than about 20 per cent., perhaps 22 per cent., of their income on housing costs. Yet that pensioner will pay roughly 50 per cent. of his income simply to keep a roof over his head. That is in the rented sector.

Things do not look much better for owner-occupiers with the changes to assistance with mortgages for those on income support. Perhaps the construction worker who will lose his job next year as a result of the housing cuts will have difficulty paying his mortgage. What will be the consequence of that? He will not even receive assistance with his mortgage for the first nine months. He could end up with his home repossessed and becoming yet another appalling statistic.

The Budget is a disaster for housing. It is a disaster for the homeless—the 160,000 households quoted in the statistics. It is a disaster for people living with their families in tower blocks who want to get out and should be able to do so. It is a disaster for people who are forced to pay rents that are far too high following the deregulation of the rented sector. The Budget is a disaster for the economy because it will cut the number of home starts. Although we talk about the recovery in the Chamber, if one asks people in the construction industry about the recovery they will say, "What recovery?" It is not happening in the construction industry or in housing.

The Budget will mean thousands of lost construction jobs. It will mean lost revenue to the Exchequer. The Budget is a disaster, but it could have been so different. It could have allowed local authorities to use their capital receipts to invest in housing. It could have allowed housing associations to do what they can do best and what they are meant to do best, which is to provide low-cost housing to people who need it.

7.2 pm

Mr. William Powell (Corby): As I have only 10 minutes available to me, I shall have to truncate what I wanted to say. It is my strong belief that my constituents are over-taxed at present and that the sooner my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor is able to reduce the general burden of tax on my constituents the better. One detects a note of fear beginning to creep into members of the Opposition parties when they tackle the subject of lower taxes. They are obviously beginning to become a little nervous about the potential consequences.

Of course, my constituents would welcome lower taxes. Many of them would be divided as to precisely which taxes they would wish to have lowered. The general burden must be lowered. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will bear it in mind that low interest rates are also in the interests of my constituents. I should hate us to be in a position in which lower taxes brought higher interest rates. There is no question but that we need both low interest rates and low tax rates, not low interest rates with high taxes or low taxes with high interest rates.

Today's debate has inevitably come to be dominated by the issue of VAT. I shall direct the remainder of my remarks to that issue. I have never made any secret of my anger that my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) introduced in his Budget of March 1993 proposals to extend the VAT base in the way in which he did. To my mind, that was a breach of principle and a breach of promise. The principle was that when VAT was introduced in 1972 it was agreed, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said, that it should not be extended to essential items. Clearly, heating and fuels are essential items. I resent and regret the fact that some of those who were in the House in 1972 did not defend in March 1993 the agreed settlement of the VAT base, under which essential items such as food, housing, transport and fuel should be left outside the scope of VAT.

The extension of VAT was a breach of an election promise. There is no escaping that fact. Sometimes it is necessary to do that. Sometimes one has to have the courage to recognise that there are higher considerations. Pledges given in good faith—I believe that ours was given in good faith—sometimes have to be broken. Clearly, that can be the case. The consequence for the Tory party of the Budget of March 1993 has been disastrous, as hardly one of my right hon. and hon. Friends would not concede in private. To introduce a tax delayed and in two stages was surely a tactical error of the first dimension. We have already paid a high price for that decision in by-elections, European elections and council elections. I fear that that will continue. I have never for one moment sought to disguise that.

However, I must also recognise some other important factors. I do not regard VAT at 8 per cent. as acceptable. The only rate of VAT on fuel that I regard as acceptable is 0 per cent. That is no longer possible. To restrict VAT to 8 per cent. is wrong in principle. Then we would have three rates of VAT rather than two.

The original settlement was zero VAT and standard rate VAT—now 17.5 per cent. As soon as one introduces a third rate, what other items must be subject to that third rate? If one has a third rate, why not a fourth, fifth and sixth rate, as so many other countries of the European Union have? If we restrict VAT on fuel to 8 per cent., we will breach some fundamental principles.

I regard any tax that is implicitly accepted as one which some of our fellow citizens are unable to pay and requires us to compensate them so that they can pay it as highly undesirable in principle. Therefore, the compensation package has never been of the greatest interest to me, although I pay tribute to my right hon. and hon. Friends who have campaigned so tirelessly to ensure that a compensation package was provided for the elderly and those on social security. Inevitably, it is a leaky colander.

I pay tribute to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor for drawing the sting of VAT on fuel to some extent. It was to raise £2.3 billion, not £2.3 billion net, and it is now to raise only about half that sum. That shows how generous he has been with the compensation package. I must recognise that if the Government lose the vote it will put in peril the arrangements that have been put in place.

I hate the tax. It was profoundly misguided to introduce it. I shall never be reconciled to it, but I do not set out from there. I set out from where we are now. I would not have wished to be in this position, but I recognise that if the Government lost the vote tomorrow they would find themselves in a fairly chaotic position.

Tomorrow's vote is procedural and there is no disguising that fact. The vote would not alter the rate of value added tax, but merely allow the issue to be discussed further, which would prolong much of the uncertainty. Although I recognise that my constituents hate the tax as I do, do I regard further uncertainty as being in their interests? I do not. Therefore, this is a real mess and there is no escaping that fact.

Where does that leave us? It leaves me having to ask where the Conservative party is going. There is no doubt that in recent months it has been badly off the rails. I think that it is still off the rails and I want some corrections to be made. Is that more likely if I make a heroic gesture, which I know to be a piece of personal self-indulgence, which would not necessarily be in the best interests of the country and, if it were, in the best interests of my constituents? I have not yet resolved that question.

I bitterly regret the fact that I am here for this purpose. We should never have landed ourselves in this situation and we must never do so again. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will have to pull the Conservative party together, if he is to complete the work that he has been elected to do, some of which is of the utmost importance, not least in Northern Ireland, as the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), among others, suggested.

My goodness, how on earth did we get here? How on earth can people who supposedly have experience have got us into this mess? I have to do my best to get us out of it and I will do so tomorrow.

7.11 pm

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): The House listened with care to the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell). He has made himself the target of much attention from the Conservative Whips tomorrow. Regardless of the intellectual inconsistency of his argument—most of us would accept the careful way in which he put it together—I doubt whether people would agree that it would be an immutable transgression of the laws of taxation for value added tax on domestic fuel to remain at 8 per cent., rather than be extended to 17.5 per cent., and I have little doubt what advice they would give him.

This is the third time that I have spoken in a Budget debate and the third time that I have been caught by the 10-minute limit. I am sure that the rest of the House will be delighted to learn that, but I will push ahead none the less.

The Budget was a carefully crafted piece of work and was presented in a crafted way—I have got my praise out of the way first. Although hidden, its objective was clear. The fair sprinkling of soporific tedium that it induced in the House was simply an artistic embellishment on the Chancellor's part. Since the final statement by the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), Budget statements have been about the next Budget rather than the present one and this one was constructed in a similar vein. As I said, the objective, although hidden, was pretty obvious. It was a gamble on what next year's Budget will contain and do to contribute to Tory party fortunes at the general election thereafter.

Much of the language of the Budget seemed to have absorbed the advice that my predecessor, Mr. John Maples, offered in his infamous memorandum. This is the first time that I have had the chance to mention Mr. Maples since that memorandum, which has been quoted several times this evening. The Conservative party may rest assured that it will be quoted copiously between now and the next election. Although the language of the Budget statement made some genuflections to the way in which Mr. Maples was trying to encourage the Conservative party to go, the impact was different. The Chancellor used some of the phraseology in a plea to the country for understanding. He was saying, "We understand that things are not good for you, but we have got it all on track and, if you just bear with us, everything will come right."

Although the Conservatives seemed to promise a classless society of opportunity in the 1980s, the reality now is that the rich are getting richer on the backs of the rest of us—who are getting poorer—and the Budget does nothing to change that. While we trumpet the recovery, the voters do not think that the recession has ended. They still fear unemployment and have no more money in their pockets, so what we are saying is completely at odds with their experience. The good citizens of Lewisham, West—wise and perspicacious as they are—worked that out two years ago. That, in part, is why I am in the House rather than Mr. Maples. That is also the crux of the Government's dilemma. People do not believe them. That is not out of simple bloody-mindedness, but because the truth of their lives on the streets in which they live does not accord with the myopic technicalities of Tory protestations about growth and prosperity and nothing in the Budget has done anything to assuage people's fears. The recovery simply has not reached them.

Why should the people believe the Government when they tell them that everything is going so well? If there has been an improvement in recent years, it is due to the failure of Government economic policy, not their successes. The hon. Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran), who is not in his place now, spoke the magic words: he mentioned the exchange rate mechanism and the debacle over that. At the time, the Prime Minister said that the Government would not pull out and that to do so would be a betrayal of our future. He said that he and the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames would stick to it, through thick or thin. That was within a few days of the humiliation of our rejection, when we were thrown out of the ERM.

At first, the Government said that there would be no recession. When that proved not to be the case, they said that it would be shallow, but it was not. When they were finally forced to admit that we were in the middle of the deepest recession since the war, they said that it was due to international forces over which they had no control. Then, they magically rescued the nation from the recession, but the people did not believe them. They still

[Mr. Jim Dowd]

do not believe the Government and they do not believe that anything that has improved since devaluation has been anything to do with Government policy.

We know what the Government were prepared to do to save our position in the ERM. They were prepared to jack up interest rates alarmingly, twice in one day. The real Tory nightmare would be what would have happened if interest rates had succeeded in stabilising the exchange rate of the pound within the ERM. Where would the recovery that has been built on the back of that devaluation have been then?

The strategy in the Budget was clear—to buy time to bribe voters with their own money before the next election. That action is consistent with Tory practice during the past 15 years. They frittered away North sea oil and the proceeds of privatisation. That was a golden opportunity, and it has been wasted. The full import of that decision will stay with this country and its citizens for many years.

The confusion of using the proceeds of capital sales to fund revenue is economic illiteracy of staggering proportions. We have heard that the proceeds of the intended privatisation of Railtrack are pursued simply as part of the "Budget arithmetic". Any organisation, whether in the public or private sector, will look at its capital portfolio to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the business, but one will not find it liquidating those assets simply to cover revenue. No householder would do so and no Government with an interest in the long-term future of the country would believe in doing so, but that is precisely what the Government have done for the past 15 years.

There have been many criticisms of the details of the Budget and I shall add a couple more. The ending of relief on mortgage interest payments for people who become unemployed is probably one of the most sinister attacks on the unemployed and those who become unemployed, as so many people will continue to do under the Government. The period for which the Government are now insisting that people must take out their own insurance cover is the time at which they are most vulnerable and most likely to need assistance in meeting their mortgage interest payments. The costs will be borne, as the building societies have made plain, by the borrower and loans will be unavailable to those at the margins, including first-time buyers and the least well-off. They will not be able to afford the money—anywhere up to £20 a month—to fund their insurance during the most dangerous period of unemployment.

On housing benefit, we have now seen the clear aim of the Government: they want, in effect, to introduce a contribution to rent by everybody on housing benefit. They tried that previously with the poll tax, and the 20 per cent. payment which everybody had to make, regardless of income. Everyone knows what happened to the poll tax.

On VAT on fuel, the much-trumpeted extra pound from next April is, we now realise, worth only 30p. Even if one were to take that pound at face value, the calculation is that the average pensioner household will have to pay £1.69 in additional payments.

The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), in an intervention to the Secretary of State for Employment last Thursday, caught the mood of the Budget very well. He asked his right hon. Friend whether the Government had not achieved a "three-card trick" with the Budget. The Secretary of State, to give him his due, immediately recognised a trap when he saw one, and said that he preferred to think of it as a "triple crown".

A three-card trick—as anybody who has been to East street or Petticoat lane knows—is a con trick. To check that out, I went to the Library and looked up a dictionary, which defined the expression three-card trick as a card game much used by "street confidence tricksters". The Budget falls very much into the category of the three-card trick.

I shall go back to my friend, Mr. Maples. His memorandum states:

> "The Conservatives have let voters down, they have been in government too long, are complacent and have lost a sense of direction. They fail to fulfil promises, are clumsy at implementing policy and 'shoot themselves in the foot'."

Nothing in the Budget has done anything to change that, and the British public know it.

7.21 pm

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): I am grateful for the opportunity to comment on a Budget which can be fairly described as workmanlike. I am deeply suspicious about any Budget that is ever described as a "giveaway" Budget because, in my view, there is no such thing. If a Chancellor is giving something away, all he is doing is returning to people their own money.

The Budget has taken place at a crucial moment in the management of this country's post-war economy, because so many drastic mistakes have been made since the war. After the initial recovery of the 1950s, we saw a regime of stop-go, go-stop during the 1960s, a failure to invest and adapt large traditional industries which were living on subsidies, and no more than the management of decline.

Following the election to office of the previous Prime Minister in 1979, we saw a remarkable and significant departure from the post-war decline. Baroness Thatcher took steps to denationalise and liberalise, but unfortunately boom and bust discredited the excellent policies which she put into place.

I was very critical of the amplitude of the cycle and the causes which gave rise to it. I argued in my own book that there were important ways to show how the British economy, as it emerges from recession, can steer a surer path between boom and bust in the 1990s and beyond. I am pleased to say that almost everything in that little booklet is now Government policy, so I am hardly in a position to criticise what my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has done.

My right hon. and learned Friend faces a severe challenge in the climate in which his regime must be put into place, and that is to sell the virtues of the long-term stability at which his measures are aimed to an unsettled and suspicious electorate. We have a climate in which people can plan, invest and borrow for the long term in a greater mood of certainty than has existed in about 50 years. That the Government have resisted the temptation to seek popularity in the short term by debasing the coinage is to be welcomed.

My right hon. and learned Friend and his team of Ministers should be selling the Budget to the country on the ground that it is reality, and it works. The reality is good news, because almost all the figures—investment, inflation, output and employment—are now pointing in the right direction. I certainly welcome the accelerated reduction in the PSBR which was announced, combined with the other side of the equation, which is the reduction in the spending total and in the planned control total. To see nearly £8 billion taken off the latter is welcome indeed. Anything less than that would have been ground for criticism; anything more would have been doubly welcome. But £8 billion was a respectable amount, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on his negotiations to bring that about. I completely agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) who said that, none the less, Government spending as a percentage of GDP remains too high, and that it must be reduced further when prudent economic management allows.

I also regret the need to levy VAT on fuel. None of us, however orthodox our financial beliefs, would like that to happen, but it has been judged right to do it. I have a large measure of sympathy with my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), who a few moments ago gave the most cogent—yet remarkable—short speech I have heard in the House since I was elected. I hope that my hon. Friend will join the Government in the Lobby tomorrow night, because the consequences of interrupting the planned financial schemes of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer could be dire.

As the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) asked, are we to remove all the help that had been announced for pensioners? Is there to be a sudden and dramatic increase in interest rates as the City expresses its judgment on the loss of such a vote? I fear that we could be thrown into disarray if we do not hold the line tomorrow night.

There are two problems with which my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has to grapple. The first is that an unexciting recovery is not necessarily a popular one. Anyone can inflate the economy, borrow more and manufacture a boom which, in the short term, is very popular. There is a grave danger to democracy that a worthy, decent and steady long-term economic recovery cannot get support within the democratic process, because too few people are prepared to forgo immediate consumption and admit that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is doing the right thing. Our challenge has to be to make a virtue out of the progress which has been set in train by the previous two Budgets.

The second matter with which the Government and my right hon. and learned Friend must contend is that people feel unsettled. It is not often that I agree with something that has been argued in the House by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), and I am normally tempted to interrupt him when he is on his feet. However, he pointed out the other day that an increasing number of people do feel unsettled. We are seeing the clash of two important strains of Conservative thought. There is the need to privatise and to put into private hands those commercial enterprises that have no reason to be in the public sector but, in our search for economics and market testing, we are pressing against an equal and decent belief in institutions.

We cannot subject military bands to economic analysis, as one can a commercial enterprise. Nor can we do so with the workings of certain charities, such as the Women's Royal Volunteer Service or even the royal parks. We are now beginning to ask whether everything at which we are looking is a suitable candidate for the sharp nib of an accountant's pen.

The Opposition have offered a single policy in response to this Budget, as they have to others: it is simply to accumulate grievance and play on any grievance that they can identify. I also lay at their feet the charge of designing slogans that not only play on fear but deliberately implant mistaken economic concepts in people's minds. For instance, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) said on the BBC's "On the Record" that we are paying £25 billion a year to keep people unemployed. We are not. We are paying that sum because they are unemployed. Like the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock), he said that he wishes to release £6 billion-worth of housing capital receipt funds, but he failed to admit that that is further borrowing. To argue that it is just a pile of money ready to be spent is deceitful.

Labour Members also argue that the real unemployment figures are higher. Will they pledge now that if they ever came to office they would immediately raise the published unemployment figure and work through their own economic policies from that figure? I doubt it.

Another small matter that I want to raise is that of war widows—not service widows but widows whose husbands have been killed in active service. At present, they get an attributable pension as well as a social security pension, but as soon as they remarry, they lose both. If they could keep the attributable pension and forgo the social security pension, because at the moment they are not remarrying, the Government would save money. That matter is important to those widows, so some tired old objections in the Treasury should be shredded and this small matter looked at afresh.

I welcome the Budget and congratulate the Treasury team. In the years left before the next election, I am determined to ensure that an economy that is in the best condition since the war is not handed over to a potential Labour Government.

7.31 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): In one proposal in the Budget, the Government announced a new tax on home buyers, a measure to damage the housing market, a measure to increase the number of repossessions and a huge tax penalty on those who are now vulnerable because of changes in the jobs market. That was quite an achievement for one measure, which was the decision to withdraw for a longer period of time income support for mortgage interest payments.

Many principled arguments can be advanced against that change. The Government's argument for reducing that support could be applied to many other sectors of social insurance. If one must insure oneself against the possibility of losing one's job and being unable to meet interest payments, why not insure against ill health, invalidity or disability? Once that break in the social insurance system has been made, the slippery slope has begun and we shall see a gradual unravelling of the social insurance system. On those grounds alone, the move should be resisted.

[Mr. John Denham]

I wish to concentrate on the practical consequences of the Government's proposal. Many problems can be anticipated with the withdrawal of income support for mortgage interest payments. The first and most obvious one that the House can predict with certainty is that the cost of providing the cover will rise and be higher than the cost of providing cover through the current social security system. Although I have been unable to trace it in the *Official Report*, I understand that Ministers have suggested that the savings from that policy will be some £200 million a year. According to recent press reports, current policies work out at £7 per £100 of mortgage repayment, which means an average cost to new home buyers of £20 to £30 a month—£27.60 for an average £50,000 mortgage.

Given that some 10 million people have mortgages, it is clear that payments of that size mean that the amount that people are paying towards insurance cover will far outweigh the sum which the Government hope to save through that mean move. Even if, as is likely, some more specialised and somewhat cheaper policies are produced, I am certain that home owners will ultimately pay far more for the provision of that insurance than they do through the tax system.

Will the Financial Secretary assure us that, if the new system is ultimately more expensive to run than the existing system, it will be withdrawn immediately? It is a tax on home buyers. I understand that it is also a tax on mortgages taken out to improve people's properties. It will hit many thousands of home buyers, first-time buyers and people who want to move house.

As a Labour Member, I suppose that I should take comfort in the Government's unique ability to identify new ways of hitting their own supporters. The Government should be aware that the move will be deeply unpopular among people who have previously voted Conservative or might consider voting Conservative at the next election. A Conservative Government who are imposing a tax on buying homes and removing protection from home buyers will be deeply unpopular and I hope that that message will be put across over the coming months. It will be more expensive collectively on society to provide that cover than it is to provide it under the current system.

The second major problem is that the insurance system will not be equally available to all. That move cannot be seen in isolation from other changes which the Government have deliberately created. One such change is the creation of a labour market in which more people than ever before are in insecure employment, or forced self-employment—people have become self-employed because no other work has been available—or are dependent on part-time work, temporary work or short-term contracts. As many people have pointed out, the cost of insuring mortgage repayment for people in part-time work, running their own business, working on their own account or on short-term temporary contracts is extremely high or is simply not available. Many people who are in insecure work will be unable to obtain that cover at a reasonable price.

According to Malcolm Tarling of the Association of British Insurers, people on fixed-term contracts and the self-employed are often refused cover. Mr. Derek Roberts, chief executive of the Yorkshire building society, said that the proposals were a disaster. He also said:

> "Insurers will become more selective if everyone starts taking out insurance against unemployment and premiums are likely to go up."

I understand from a press note that General Accident has said that insurers would not be prepared to provide a come-all policy.

So what is to happen to people in insecure employment, who cannot provide the income cover? They will be in a desperate position, and more people are in that position than ever before because of the policies deliberately pursued by the Government. What will be the position of those with a record of short-term employment? As each period of employment comes to an end, they will find it increasingly difficult to renew their insurance cover.

The third problem is that of regulating the market. The Secretary of State for Social Security said that he is confident that a new market will be created for those products. We have been here before. When personal pensions were encouraged, no effective regulation was in place and the net result was that millions of people were ripped off by the insurance industry. Today, the sale of those insurance products is not regulated by statute and I am confident that exactly the same thing will happen again. Large numbers of people will be sold inappropriate and ineffective policies at a high price, because I have heard nothing from the Government to show that they intend to regulate the market by statute.

The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux produced a report on that matter a year or so ago. The evidence in that report is indeed that the mis-selling of expensive and inappropriate policies is rife. People find that claims in the first few months are excluded. People find that, when it becomes known to an insurance company that they may be confronted with redundancy, their policies are unilaterally withdrawn and they are offered policies that are not as good.

Policies are often invalidated by people taking short-term employment. What will happen to people who have a period of unemployment and claim on their policy, who go on to the jobseeker's allowance and are told to go back and take whatever temporary job is available? They will find that their insurance policy is invalidated, and obtaining a new one will be impossible or extremely expensive. Policies have also been invalidated by minor, unrelated and unreported sickness.

Unless those policies are regulated, the Government will invite that problem to continue and to worsen. I believe that the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux is right to say that, in any case and even without the change, that market needs proper regulation. That has not been offered.

The change will lead to an increase in the number of repossessions. We should be aware that, according to the latest announcement, not only people who take out new mortgages but other people should be insured, because the period when all mortgage holders' interest payments are not paid will be extended. The Government seem to assume that mortgage lenders will simply continue to carry the costs of a long and growing period of arrears from mortgage borrowers. I do not believe that that is the case. I believe that the Government, by the change, threaten the whole of the deal that was allegedly done with mortgage lenders a year or so ago, and far more people will have their homes taken away when they get into arrears.

Finally, the change will have a serious economic impact. People will no longer be able to move from one part of the country to another if they have had a period of unemployment, because they will not be able to obtain insurance protection. The labour market will become clogged up. Of course, as we have seen—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I call Mr. Sumberg.

7.41 pm

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): I warmly welcome three specific measures in the Budget. The first is the decision by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor to remove the disincentive to move from the benefit system to employment. My constituents in the north-west of England, who have suffered from unemployment for many decades, will value and appreciate that.

The second measure in the Budget that will have widespread support is that on the revaluation of business premises. Had the Chancellor done nothing, that would have had serious consequences for many small businesses in the north-west of England.

Thirdly, I warmly welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's decision to reduce the amount of money available for the road programme. I hope that that will mean the end of the disastrous M62 relief road, which has caused such hardship and difficulty for many of my constituents.

However, one part of the Budget will not be so popular or acceptable to my constituents, many of whom have loyally supported me in three general elections. That part is the increase in VAT on domestic fuel from 8 to 17.5 per cent.

When VAT was first introduced on that service about two years ago, I voted for it with the greatest possible reluctance. It seemed to me that, for an indirect tax, it suffered from two fatal flaws. The first was that it contained no real element of choice. One can choose whether to buy a motor car; one can choose whether to have a meal in a restaurant; one can choose whether to go on a holiday. One cannot choose whether to keep warm in winter—and VAT follows the choice that one makes.

The second fatal flaw, unique in an indirect tax, is that in order to make it politically acceptable—I do not think that we ever have—we have to throw so much money at it that we then reduce dramatically the amount of revenue that it produces. We went through all of that with the poll tax.

Two years ago, the nation's finances were precarious. We were deep in recession, public borrowing and public spending were escalating out of control and any Government who failed to take measures to correct the situation would have been regarded, rightly, as profligate and irresponsible. I concluded that the Government had no choice but to take the tough remedial action that they did, and I supported the imposition of VAT in the Lobby.

However, two years after that first decision to introduce VAT on domestic fuel, a new and different scene has emerged. The Government's measures are working. Inflation is at its lowest for nearly 25 years. The economy is reviving. Unemployment is falling, day by day, month by month. Exports are increasing and investment is growing. The prospects for the British economy are better than they have been for years. They have changed dramatically in two years, and the Government deserve a great deal of the credit for that.

It is true that we cannot afford to relax, but I believe that we can afford to review our earlier measures. Indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor seems to take that view himself. In this Budget, in contrast to previous Budgets, he has fully indexed the personal tax allowances because, as he rightly put it in his Budget statement:

"we can at last begin to benefit from our steady return to healthy public finances."—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1102.]

Therefore, in my opinion, a political choice can be made. There is scope—limited scope, I accept, but scope nevertheless—to revisit the VAT on fuel issue and, I believe, to limit it to 8 per cent. We could forgo some of the tax reductions, or forgo in part some future income tax cut. We could introduce new tax measures, which are there if we want to seize them, or perhaps have a slightly less ambitious target for reducing public borrowing, for the Chancellor's targets were far better than any of the experts expected them to be, or we could combine all or some of those measures.

I am acutely conscious that if my right hon. and learned Friend has been a little harsh on income tax payers in this year's or previous years' Budgets, he can come back next year and the year after to correct that injustice in future Budgets. That is not, in practical terms, the case with VAT on fuel for domestic heating. Once that additional rate is imposed, there really is no going back—no going back for the Government and, by the Opposition's silence, no going back for any future Labour Government.

The burdens of correcting the nation's finances in the past two years have been properly and rightly shared between indirect and direct taxpayers. The benefits of those measures in future Budgets will accrue only to direct taxpayers, and that, in my view, is not right. Many, many loyal Conservatives throughout the country are not direct taxpayers or, if they are, pay very little direct tax. I think that they deserve to be heard. It is undoubtedly their last chance.

The Opposition amendment is purely technical. Of itself, it does not alter the Budget or the tax rates one iota. It does not allow the Opposition to reopen every aspect of previous taxation and fiscal policy. It simply permits a rethink, a reconsideration, a review, of whether we proceed with that additional amount of VAT on domestic fuel. That is all it allows—nothing more, nothing less.

After a great deal of thought—for I have supported the Government through thick and thin almost since the day that I came into the House—I do not believe that we can allow that final opportunity to pass us by. We owe it to our constituents, to our party, to our friends outside, and most of all to ourselves, to give everyone the chance to consider whether we are doing the right thing. I shall vote tomorrow so as to give the country, the House and, most important, the Government the chance to think again.

7.49 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Bury, South (Mr.

[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]

Sumberg) on demonstrating some political bottle. He has told us that he is prepared to vote to enable the House to rethink the terrible imposition of value added tax on fuel, which will bear most heavily on the poorest and most disadvantaged in our society. I give the hon. Gentleman full marks for that. At the same time, I wonder whether his stance has anything to do with the fact that Conservative Members who represent marginal seats will have difficulty obtaining mortgage insurance protection over the next few months, bearing in mind the fact that many of them will be facing redundancy. It will be difficult for people such as the hon. Member for Bury, South to arrange for mortgage insurance protection. He is vulnerable, and no doubt insurers are aware of that.

Many things have been said about the Budget, and perhaps the least important comment is that it is dull. The Tory press used that description, and perhaps its coded message is that the Government are leaderless, lack direction and do not know how to regenerate the economy and to get people back to work in real jobs that provide stimulation and the opportunity for them to develop their skills.

The Tory press is aware of the cynicism that lies behind the Budget. It is designed to buy time so as to maximise the diminishing chances of the Conservative party being returned to office after the next general election. That is not in the interests of the economy and the nation. Provision has been made for cynical tax bribes before the next election, but that will not fool anybody this time round. There is the old maxim that it is possible to fool some of the people some of the time. The other side of the coin is that it is not possible to fool all the people all the time. That stage has been reached and the Tory party has been rumbled. The people will not buy again the Tory tax bribes that have been offered in previous general elections.

An interesting comment—it was lost in the acres of newsprint about the Budget—was made by Nick Goulding, who is at the sharp end when it comes to policy. He was speaking on behalf of the Forum of Private Business. He is not someone who would automatically support and sustain the Labour party. He referred to the Budget as

"jam tomorrow when what we needed was jam today."

I understand that. The Government claim to be the pal of small business, but they have let down the small business sector. Small businesses need demand in the economy. They need people to be in work so that they have incomes to enable them to purchase products and services from the small business sector. Unfortunately, small businesses have had a harrowing time over the past few years. The Government's economic policy has deprived them of customers. It is tragic that so many small businesses have gone to the wall. I put out my hand to those people of courage who have tried to run and sustain small private businesses. In some instances they have been family businesses, which were built up over many years. The individual families were proud of those businesses, which were the result of sacrifices and long hours of work. In many instances the businesses have been lost because of the Government's callousness, not because of fecklessness or their owners' inadequate business skills.

The Government demonstrate their callousness by their determination to impose further taxation on ordinary families, especially working-class people. Some of the poorest in our society will be worse off, some by more than £300 a year, because of the tax measures that are set out in the Budget. The Government's last-minute attempts to minimise the cruel effects of imposing value added tax on heating bills will not be sufficient to ensure that the elderly and the poorest families are able to keep warm during this and subsequent winters. It seems that the Government do not recognise that for a single pensioner to keep his or her home warm, the cost is the same as has to be met by two people. That fact has not been recognised in the Government's palliatives.

The Budget was presented against a backdrop of growing greed and division in our society. The hon. Member for Bury, South produced a litany of "full marks" for the Government. Needless to say, I did not agree with it. What he did not say was that during the Thatcher years and those of the current Prime Minister the divisions between the haves and have nots have become much wider. Selfishness and greed have flourished.

I am irritated when Conservative Members try to distance themselves—they do so for local consumption in their constituencies—from some of the worst effects of the Government's policies. There was an example of that on the evening of 1 December. I was in the Chamber during an Adjournment debate—one of my many sins is that I never go home. Present in the Chamber were the hon. Members for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) and for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway). The dentist Minister—the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—was at the Dispatch Box. I rumbled them. The hon. Member for Croydon, South was bleating about the excessive profits of the East Surrey water company. He talked also about excessive dividends. His comments were obviously for consumption in his constituency.

At the same time the hon. Member for Croydon, South is supporting and sustaining a situation in which considerable profits are allowed to be amassed by a few directors when his constituents are paying more and more for a basic need—water. The hon. Gentleman reported

"a profit increase last year of more than 45 per cent.—some £8.2 million on a turnover of only £25.5 million—and as such should be prepared to submit to competition."

He added that

"in 1991, two directors, who held almost half the shares, were paid a dividend of £1.17 million at a time when consumers faced an increase of 24 per cent."

I am recounting what the hon. Member for Croydon, South was saying in the Chamber late at night last week. Only three Members, apart from Mr. Deputy Speaker, were in the Chamber. It is hypocritical of hon. Members to express such views when they are not prepared to support the measures that are suggested by my right hon. and hon. Friends, including the taxation of windfall profits of privatised companies. It is outrageous.

The hon. Member for Croydon, South said that Ofwat, that toothless consumer protection body,

"in a letter dated 12 July 1991",

expressed concern

"about the levels of prices, profits and dividends. Regrettably, it took no further action."—*[Official Report*, 1 December 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1433.]

That is what is happening. It is time that the truth was told. Conservative Members are supporting and sustaining a Government whose policies are designed to make the rich richer and to depress the living standards and quality of life of the poor.

The Budget has been introduced for a year when we can mark the 50th anniversary of the victory over fascism as well as the 50th anniversary of the election of the post-war Labour Government. I hope that we shall celebrate the fact that that Government introduced the national health service, which was much valued and appreciated by ordinary working people. We now see the NHS under constant attack by the Government, and especially in the Budget.

The financial allocation for the coming year marks a reduction for NHS provision. The Minister shakes his head, but he knows that the additional moneys that will be made available will be wiped out by inflation. There is an increasing demand for services because as a consequence of the policies pursued by the Labour Government from 1945 to 1950 people are living longer. As a result, there is now a greater burden on the national health service—an increased demand. I am proud of that increased demand, but the Government are failing to shift enough national resources to provide for the service that is needed.

I could go on much longer about the anniversary of the Labour Government, because it is particularly pertinent, but we shall have other opportunities to mention it this coming year. The fact is that the Budget will cut many services that were introduced in 1945 by our fathers and grandfathers—and, of course, our grandmothers—who were proud of having instituted a welfare state of which the country should also be proud, and which my party is proud to defend and protect. We shall do so this year, campaigning on the Floor of the House, and when we take office in two years' time.

7.59 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), but I considered his remarks about my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) particularly snide. As the hon. Gentleman should know, my hon. Friend is a solicitor, and I cannot believe that any solicitor would make less money than a Member of Parliament; I should have thought that any insurance company would regard my hon. Friend as a very good risk.

The hon. Gentleman displayed considerable ignorance of the water industry. It is absurd for him to regard Ofwat as a toothless body, given that Ofwat has reviewed the K factor and told the privatised companies that the rate of price increase will have to decline substantially—and that, in some cases, prices must be reduced. It is scarcely a toothless body; it is a very effective body.

The hon. Member for Thurrock does not understand that one reason for the necessity to privatise the water industry was the fact that, so long as it remained in the public sector, investment in sewerage and new water facilities had to compete with investment in schools, hospitals, housing, railways and roads, and always came off very badly. The hon. Gentleman knows, and the House knows, that there has been a dramatic increase in investment in the water industry since its privatisation. It is surely the height of hypocrisy to call for more investment in water and then to complain about the consequences.

In a previous incarnation, I used to have to write an annual article about the Budget for Scottish chartered accountants. I frequently began my article with this quotation:

> "To tax and to please no more than to love and be wise is not given to man."

Those words have come back to haunt many of us over the past few months as we have listened to what our constituents have said about the proposal to increase the rate of value added tax on electricity and gas.

I do not wish to oppose that increase tomorrow. I challenge my hon. Friends who propose to do so by abstaining, or by voting with the Opposition, to answer two questions. First, how would they replace the revenue that they will vote to go without? Secondly, if they cannot tell us which tax they wish to increase, they should at least tell the House which form of public expenditure they would reduce. Would they favour less spending on the health service, less spending on schools or less spending on housing? It is for them to tell the House what they would cut, or which tax they would increase; to do neither would be an act of irresponsible populism. Anyone who votes with the Opposition tomorrow must recognise that his or her action will lead to a degree of uncertainty in the gilt-edged market on Wednesday, to weaker sterling and, perhaps, to higher interest rates. That is the price that some people are willing to pay tomorrow.

The decision taken by some of my hon. Friends, however, pales into insignificance when compared to the irresponsibility of the Opposition. The Labour party is never knowingly underbid when it comes to public expenditure. It wants to spend more on the health service and overseas aid; we are told that it wants to invest more in the infrastructure. It wants to spend more on schools, and—since last week—it even wants to spend more on grant-maintained schools. But Labour never tells us how it will pay for that increased spending. Tomorrow it will vote for a tax reduction: it is trying to fool the British public into believing that it is possible to vote for a tax reduction and increased public expenditure at the same time. Labour Members are the first people to try to follow Ronald Reagan into supply-side economics, which caused remarkable problems in the United States; it seems that they seek similar problems in the United Kingdom.

I welcome the Budget's proposals on housing benefit. Some 12 months ago, a constituent of mine moved from the London borough of Hackney to the London borough of Barnet. The constituent wrote to me saying that Barnet was a nicer place in which to live, but did not say that Barnet's Member of Parliament was any better! The constituent then complained that Barnet would provide only £250 a week in housing benefit, which would not meet the full cost of the rent: the full cost of the rent had been met in Hackney.

That sum of £250 a week, however, amounted to no less than £13,000 a year. I do not think that people should expect to receive such sums from the taxpayer week in, week out: once they start receiving £13,000 a year in housing benefit, there will be precious little incentive for them to get out of the housing benefit trap.

We have certainly found that there is no incentive for people to haggle about rent levels. If people know that their rent will be underwritten by the local authority and

[Mr. John Marshall]

the taxpayer, why bother arguing with the landlord? The landlord knows that the level of rent that the local authority will agree is reasonable, so he charges up to that level. The tenant knows that he will get it all back, so there is no incentive for any discussion to take place. As a result, the other body—the body of taxpayers who are paying something towards other people's housing benefit—must also pay the consequence of housing benefit, in the shape of higher rents.

I am sorry that the Budget did nothing about capital gains tax. This country has the highest CGT rate in western Europe, and I believe that the 40 per cent. tax on long-term gains is too high. I understand why Lord Lawson decided to harmonise capital gains tax and income tax rates in 1988, so that there would be no fiscal incentive to take income as capital rather than as income; I also understand why the artificial barrier between short-term and long-term gains was abolished. There was a nonsense which said that a stock held for 364 days represented a short-term gain, while one held for 367 days was a long-term gain and attracted a significantly lower tax rate: that was a distortion of the operation of the market. I see some merit in saying that people who held shares for five, six, seven, eight or 10 years should pay a lower rate of CGT than the current 40 per cent.

I must be true to the principle that I enunciated earlier this evening, when I criticised those who wanted to leave VAT on fuel at 8 per cent. and asked how they would pay for it. I must say how I would pay for a reduction in the long-term rate of capital gains tax. I would do that by re-examining the two tax advantages associated with personal equity plans and tax-exempt special savings accounts—PEPs and TESSAs. I believe that those accounts have affected the pattern of savings, rather than the total level. They have constituted a significant cost to the Revenue.

PEPs are of no value to the standard-rate taxpayer, because the money paid to the fund manager is broadly equal to the income tax savings that he generates. We see the financially sophisticated taking advantage of such benefits. They have not increased the level of savings; they have merely altered the way in which people save.

I welcome the Budget's increased emphasis on the private finance initiative. The Chancellor announced that we were close to signing £5 billion worth of contracts. I was particularly interested in his statement that there would soon be another statement about the Northern line—he used the words "very soon"—which was a remarkably positive thing for a Treasury Minister ever to say about any future contract.

Those of us who live in north London must put up with trains that are 35 years old. They are well past their sell-by date and we look forward to having new trains.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Why are you selling them?

Mr. Marshall: I do not think that anyone will buy them, but we need new trains. I was chairman of the all-party friends of the Northern line group which pressurised Ministers earlier this year. I am glad to say that because of that pressure there is the probability of an announcement before the Christmas recess. That will be warmly welcomed by the people of north London who would look on it as their best Christmas present for a long time. Of course, the private finance initiative will do much more than improve the quality of the Northern line. It will improve the quality of the health service, public transport in general and, of course, education.

The different philosophies of Conservative and Labour were demonstrated over the weekend. In *The Mail on Sunday* the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) said that the Labour party would impose restrictions on British Telecom dividends. He gave the impression that that was fine because it would affect only a few millionaire toffs, perhaps from Mayfair. He did not realise that such a restriction would affect all the recipients of occupational pensions because there cannot be an occupational pension fund company that has not invested in BT. Even the managers of the Maxwell pension fund would have invested in BT.

Such a restriction would also affect the holders of with-profits and life insurance policies because every insurance company has invested in BT. The proposal affects not just a few millionaires but millions of common people. The hon. Member for Cunninghame, North underlined the economic illiteracy that often afflicts Labour party spokesmen. They call for windfall taxes on public utilities and forget that such taxes will affect investment by those utilities. They propose dividend controls without realising that they would hit many millions of people. They fail to recognise the major changes that have occurred since privatisation of our major industries and ignore the fact that privatisation has led to a huge increase in investment and a massive improvement in the quality of service.

At one time industries such as British Telecom, British Airways and British Steel cost the taxpayer a great deal of money, but they now contribute massive amounts in corporation tax and give a much better service to the customer. Those are the accolades for the policy that the Conservative Government have pursued for a long time.

The Budget is one of the most fortunate that has ever been bestowed on the country. Britain now has the most soundly based economic growth since the war and for the first time economic growth is export led. The Chancellor was able to forecast a £6 billion improvement in the balance of trade this year. Historically, Britain has had periods of expansion that were fuelled by consumer demand, but this time the expansion is fuelled by increased exports by our great midlands industries. The prosperity of the midlands will percolate down to the south-east and be drawn up to Scotland. It provides the greatest opportunity that Britain has had since the war.

The one move that would defeat the prospect of sustained economic recovery would be the election of a Labour Government committed to a massive increase in expenditure and no increase in taxation to compensate for it. That would lead to higher interest rates and higher inflation and would destroy many hundreds of thousands of jobs.

8.13 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): I welcome the Budget not so much because of what it does, although what it does is good in terms of helping the long-term unemployed to get back to work and assisting small businesses, but because it is modest. It does not do much, and that is entirely right. More significant is what it does not do, and those omissions were dictated by previous Budgets because most of the corrections that were needed to improve the budget deficit had already been made.

The problem is that the economy is coming out of recession and growing fast. The growth rate is over 4 per cent. and the last thing that the economy needs is further stimulus. A Budget that did not reverse the earlier tax increases and did not decrease taxes is precisely what the economy needs. The Red Book predicts that economic growth will slow next year, largely because of changes in North sea oil production but also because tax increases are slowing the economy. On the whole that is welcome, because a growth rate of about 4 per cent. is unsustainable and would eventually lead to bottlenecks in the economy. That would give rise to inflation and the problems that have occurred too often in the past.

If the economy does not slow down in the way that has been suggested, other measures will need to be taken. The Treasury's record on forecasting economic growth has not been good. Over the past two years, the projections were for a much slower growth rate than has occurred. It is entirely possible that over the next few years growth may still be far higher than the Government predict in the Red Book. There must be flexibility in the response to economic recovery and in the various mechanisms that are used to slow it down.

No one likes tax rises or VAT on fuel, although in this case tax rises are perhaps more acceptable than the alternative, which would be a rise in interest rates. We need to take some of the excess growth out of the economy, and that must be done either by tax rises or by interest rate rises. VAT on fuel is a peculiar tax in that although it will raise about £3 billion, about half that amount will be given back in various benefits. Consequently, it is a rather inefficient tax and if it were not for the broader picture of the use of VAT, many people would find it even more objectionable than most tax rises. However, as the VAT base needs to be broadened and as fuel is one of the most obvious areas in which to raise tax—

Mr. Mackinlay: Truly, I am at a loss. As if it is an authoritative statement, the hon. Gentleman says that the VAT base has to be broadened. Who says? That is clearly divisive. Where did the hon. Gentleman get that great wisdom?

Mr. Carrington: The hon. Gentleman should look at statements by his party on the need to increase VAT to meet European objectives. VAT is one of the major revenue raisers upon which the tax system relies. If the VAT base was too narrow and it was levied on too few goods, it would have to be levied at too high a rate to be effective.

Widening the VAT base is right; the difficulty comes when it is levied on people who cannot afford it. That is precisely where the help for old-age pensioners comes in and makes VAT on fuel a more acceptable tax. The rebates are at about the right level to ensure that those who end up paying VAT on fuel will, for the most part, afford it, whether or not they want to afford it. The tax needs to bed down and in the end it will be accepted.

There is one other way of bringing Government revenues into balance, which is to cut public spending. I would strongly support any such measures and I am glad that the Budget outlined some moves in that direction. However, as has been said in our Budget debates on other days, the reality of the cuts being made is to do more with inflation, a reduction in unemployment and the growth of the economy than with Government spending. That was probably inevitable because any easy cuts in Government spending have already been made. Any cuts in current Government spending would be difficult to make without causing serious hardship and lasting damage.

The changes that have occurred have been in long-term Government spending—for example, to the rising trend in social security payments and pension entitlements. They have been necessary to bring the long-term structure into balance. They are to be welcomed, but they do not really affect what is happening currently in the economy.

The Budget's overall picture of the economy is strong. It appears that within two years it will return to fairly robust health; certainly by the turn of the century it will be very strong indeed. That will provide the opportunity for jam tomorrow, which many of us would welcome. However, it raises problems because as the economy grows stronger, the amount of savings will begin to decline. That has already happened. The savings ratio—an imprecise measure, but the best that we have—has declined from 12.25 per cent. to 10 per cent. this year and is likely to continue to decline, possibly to as low as 8 per cent., in subsequent years. Therefore, I was pleased with the provisions in the Budget to liberalise the PEPs and TESSA regimes in order to encourage savings.

More will need to be done as the opportunity presents itself. In particular, we must encourage people to make their own investments. One of the principal obstacles to investment is capital gains tax. I strongly urge that the whole structure of capital gains tax be reconsidered. To have it set at a figure of 40 per cent. is punitive in the long term, even if it is justified in the short term.

As I understand it, the reason for setting capital gains tax at the same level as the top rate of income tax is purely to stop anti-avoidance—people converting income streams into capital gains tax opportunities. I can understand that and it may be a good reason for having a short-term rate of capital gains tax at a fairly high level; perhaps not as high as 40 per cent.—there are transaction costs in making such a conversion—but at a realistic level that still deters anti-avoidance.

Having long-term capital gains tax means that people do not retain investment for a lengthy period and therefore do not make the necessary long-term planning decisions to invest in the economy. We should consider incentives to encourage investment, of which the major one has to be the restructuring of the capital gains tax system.

I would like a cut in direct taxes when the right circumstances prevail. Far too many people are paying income tax. One of the facts that will emerge with the self-assessment system is that far too many people are required to submit income tax returns. There should be reform of the system to take more people out of paying income tax. We should also think again about the present income threshold of £8,500, above which everyone has to submit a return. That figure was initially set at a level that reflected the income of directors and higher-paid employees, but now it is about half the average wage. It is a ludicrous threshold and in effect is just a job creation programme for Inland Revenue officers.

[Mr. Carrington]

We should consider carefully whether the tax benefit from large numbers of people on low incomes submitting returns is offset by giving the Revenue the means to catch people on low incomes who might otherwise avoid tax. That measure should be re-examined.

Taken overall, the Budget is extremely good. It will lead to stability, which is vital as Britain comes out of recession. It will enable industry to plan, people to save and a climate of certainty to prevail, which in turn will enable our economy to gather a strength that it has not had since the second world war. We will not be able wholly to eliminate the busts and booms in our economic cycle. It is too much to assume that we can get away from peaks and troughs because no Government have that sort of power. However, stability in fiscal matters will smooth the peaks and the troughs and enable the economy to continue to grow steadily over the years to come.

For that reason I welcome the Budget and I hope that it successfully overcomes its hurdles tomorrow night.

8.27 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): I am grateful for the opportunity to address this great assembly this evening. I always feel that the House is at its best when it is jam-packed.

Having listened to the Chancellor last week, I am a little concerned about his health. I know that he looks the picture of robust health and cultivates an image of bonhomie and strength, but he is beginning to suffer from an affliction which, unfortunately, has struck down so many Conservative Chancellors—chronic economic amnesia. The right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues speak as though the Government have just taken office and compare this year's figures with those for two or three years ago. It is a contagious disease. The hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) said—and it was a choice quotation—that he believed that within two years the economy would be robust. Within two years? The Government have already been in power for 15 years. He is effectively saying that within 17 years of the Conservatives coming to power, they may be able to speak of a robust economy.

Mr. Mackinlay: Like Moses in the desert.

Dr. Reid: There is a parallel with Moses' 40 years in the desert.

In two years' time, Conservative Members may find themselves talking about turning the corner some 17 years after coming to power. Indeed, the Prime Minister has made that allusion during the past few weeks. I have heard so often that the Government are turning the corner that I have a grave suspicion that we are on a roundabout. The Government's 15-year economic record is plain for all to see, and the Budget must be viewed against that background. The story so far is a sorry one of low growth, low investment, high unemployment and high deficits.

The Chancellor has not achieved that single-handed. No one person could have done that alone. Since the Government first came to power, there have been nine Chief Secretaries to the Treasury, five Chancellors of the Exchequer, and two Prime Ministers—soon, no doubt, three. That sustained team effort over 15 years has left the country in its present sorry plight. Only one right hon. Member has the distinction of failing in all three offices, having served as Chief Secretary, Chancellor and Prime Minister.

Due to the Chancellor's efforts and those of his predecessors, this country has suffered lower growth than any other major industrial nation over 15 years of Conservative Government. The UK has achieved a growth rate of 1.7 per cent.—14 per cent. lower than the rest of the European Union, which had a growth rate of 2 per cent., 25 per cent. lower than the rest of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which enjoyed annual growth over the same period of 2.3 per cent., and 30 per cent. lower than G7 countries, excluding the UK, with a growth rate of 2.7 per cent.

The Chancellor says that we can look forward to growth over the next year. Let us remember that we are in nearly the 16th year of Conservative Government. The country has suffered the lowest growth rate over the past 15 years of any major industrial nation. The only thing as consistently low is the Government's popularity rating over the same period.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh) *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Reid: The Government Whip protests. I can see that that may be a wrong comparison. The only thing much lower than Britain's growth rate is the Government's popularity over the same period.

Conservative Members have spoken at length about investment, but that is the same sorry story. The private business sector now has lower investment than—not this time last year or in the 1980s—but, as a proportion of gross domestic product, than in 1979: 15 years ago, when a Conservative Government first came to power promising that such would be confidence in British industry under them that investment rates would rocket. The figure is now 12 per cent. compared with 13 per cent. for 15 years ago. It is unlikely that any of the Chancellor's actions will remedy that.

Government investment is less than half that of Japan throughout the 1980s, and at a miserable 2 per cent. of GDP it is less than the G7 rate, excluding the United States. It is getting worse. The Government intend by their measures to have even lower investment in the public sector than over the past 15 years, which itself had lower investment than previously.

The Government almost abandoned manufacturing for almost a decade. We remember the time of the supposed technological and industrial revolution under Mrs. Thatcher, with everyone working in hairdressing and other service industries or in the City of London. Manufacturing investment fell by 28 per cent. from the start of 1990 to mid-1994. Over the past four and a half years alone, manufacturing investment has fallen by over 25 per cent. Total investment is still 8 per cent. below the level before the recession. In terms of both growth and investment, the Chancellor's task is not to achieve something that has arrived from nowhere but to overcome the deficits and disadvantages of 15 years of Conservative Government.

I have not said much about unemployment because when historians look back on this Government, they will remembered above all as the Government of unemployment. Despite some 30 manipulations of the figures, unemployment has more than doubled in the 15 years since the Government took power. Tragically, long-term unemployment has almost trebled, from 340,000 in 1979 to more than 1 million today.

The Conservatives say that we should consider not unemployment but the figures of those in work. They are just as illuminating. The UK is the only European Union or G7 nation to have suffered a fall in civilian employment between 1979 and 1993. The total number employed has been falling at an even faster rate recently. The much-vaunted fall in unemployment is often paraded by Conservatives, but there has been a fall in employment itself. When the Government say that unemployment has fallen—due mainly to rigging the statistics—and that unemployment has in fact fallen by 400,000 since the end of 1992, we must realise that employment has fallen by an even greater number. If anything illustrates the Government's ability to create not jobs but statistics to cover unemployment levels, it is that the number of people in work has fallen by a greater amount than the supposed fall in unemployment—by 440,000 since the bottom of the recession in mid-1992.

Conservative Members said that the country was emerging from recession, led by massive trade exports. For the first time—not since 1979, the second world war, the first world war or the Boer war, but since the industrial revolution, since 1780, when statistics were first created—the Government have created the unenviable record—

Mr. Jacques Arnold *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Reid: The hon. Gentleman dislikes me repeating this point, but we should shout it from the rooftops. For the first time since the industrial revolution, the Government have managed to produce a deficit in our balance of trade in manufactured goods. Over the past 15 years, manufacturing output has fallen from 30 per cent. to 20 per cent. of gross domestic product—a drop of 33 per cent. in manufacturing products over one Tory generation. There is a current account deficit of more than £10,000 million per annum stretching to the horizon.

Nothing short of the collective genius of a Tory Cabinet could have taken a nation of makers and traders, underpinned by two centuries of trading surplus, fortified by North sea oil and boosted by sterling depreciation, and turned it into a nation of trading debtors. That is the record that the Chancellor had to defend last week. I do not blame him alone. It has been a team effort, and only one member of that team has held all three Treasury posts—the present Prime Minister.

What of the effects on our constituents? I refer to a specific item in the Budget that affects my own constituents. I support the introduction of a landfill tax; it is only right that polluters should pay. I have a warning for the Chancellor, however. I have in mind the fact that we have to reclaim the great Ravenscraig site. Landfill is not only a pollution issue, because landfill can be used for reclamation and development. It would be bizarre if the tax was applied in the same fashion to landfill that was being carried out for a positive purpose, such as overcoming toxicity or enhancing redevelopment. I hope, therefore, that the Chancellor and his Ministers will be careful when drafting that tax provision.

Little positive is done in the Budget for the people of this country. Indeed, almost everything done in the Budget will affect our constituents for the worse. Three issues are relevant. The first is tax, which has concentrated most minds. I was interested when the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who is, understandably, not in his place at present, and his hon. Friend the Member for Fulham spoke about tax. I often ask myself why it is that when taxes are raised in the company sector, Conservatives describe them as "punitive". Whenever taxes are raised from ordinary individuals, it is because of some necessity to broaden the tax base. That is asserted as a requirement without any evidence to back up the assertion. It is taken as an a priori argument that it is a good thing to increase the tax on individuals, especially through VAT, but a bad and punitive thing to do the same to companies.

The Conservatives have created a minor poll tax for themselves through VAT on fuel. That tax has, with some justification, received the most attention in the press. However the Government tackle the problem, people out there realise that they will be hit. Despite the rebates, the most vulnerable in our society will be hit even harder. It will be a sorry epitaph if the Prime Minister has to enter the Tory conference not to the strains of "Land of hope and glory", but to the strains of "Keep the home fires burning, but only at low peep". That is precisely what the Conservatives have inflicted on millions of people. The imposition of VAT on fuel is another breach of a personal pledge by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has broken pledge after pledge; this one will not be forgotten.

It is not only a question of VAT on fuel. After this Budget, the average family will be almost £6 a week better off. Does it not show the level to which the Chancellor has stooped that he parades—I think that I slipped up. It was a Freudian slip; I was thinking of the next Labour Government. People will, of course, as you well know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Deputy Speaker does not wish to be involved at all in this argument.

Dr. Reid: As anyone with the objectivity that some of our colleagues have—the objectivity that you are reputed to have, Mr. Deputy Speaker—would know, after this Budget, the average family will be worse off. Before the Budget and before a number of handouts, they were £860 worse off per annum. When we are told by the Conservatives that there is no way in which we can reject VAT on fuel because it is an essential element of running the country, no one is fooled. The poor and the vulnerable are being taxed this year so that a war chest, a sleaze fund, a tax cuts fund can be set up by the Conservatives in the naive belief that, yet again, they can go back to the British people 12 months before an election, cut taxes and say, "There you are. We have put taxes down again. Now vote us in so that we can put them up within weeks of the next election."

Under the Conservatives, people are taxed not only from the cradle to the grave, but when they sit in front of the fire, when they insure their cars, when they go on holiday and when they take out insurance. The Conservatives have extended the tax base far more comprehensively than did any of their predecessors. There is nothing but woe in terms of tax for the average family.

What is there in the Budget for the homeless or for those who seek to become part of the great property-owning democracy that the Conservatives are supposed to encourage? Once again, there is nothing. Indeed, impediments are now being placed in people's way. Such is the collective wisdom of the Conservative party that the reason why housing benefit has gone up

[Dr. Reid]

never strikes it. It has been explained to us in the Budget, and subsequently, that we must cut housing benefit because we are spending too much on it. Let us ask the Conservatives why we are spending too much on housing benefit.

First, the Conservative Government reduced the subsidy for council houses by slashing the central Exchequer fund for council housing for the rational economic reason that Mrs. Thatcher, the Prime Minister of the time, hated council housing and thought that council housing equalled Labour politicians elected locally. If the subsidy on council houses is reduced, it does not take an economic genius to work out that council house rents will rise. In the social sector, the Conservatives created the rise in rents.

Secondly, the Conservatives deregulated rents in the private sector. Thirdly, there was the decimation of the construction industry. If there is deregulation of the private sector, the withdrawal of subsidies in the council sector and a shortage of housing, according to the law of supply and demand, rents automatically rise. The Conservatives are now reaping what they sowed against the advice of the Opposition. There is nothing in terms of tax, nothing for the homeless and nothing for those on unemployment benefit.

There is nothing beneficial in this Budget. As the hon. Member for Fulham said, this is basically a sit-still Budget; the hon. Gentleman praised that. I prefer to think that the Conservatives have run out of ideas. They are now coming round to the third recession of their period in government. Like a rabbit in the glare of headlights, they sit transfixed. They are sitting waiting. The Foreign Secretary sits and waits for a blessed retirement. The Secretary of State for Employment sits and waits for his opportunity. The President of the Board of Trade sits and waits for his call. The Prime Minister, presumably, sits and waits for the men in grey suits. According to the speeches that I have heard, some of his Back Benchers are sitting waiting for the men in white coats.

Unfortunately, the people who suffer from that waiting are our constituents. They have waited long enough. It cannot be too soon until the Chancellor, his Prime Minister and his Government are thrown out and until a Labour Chancellor can introduce a Budget that will start our country's recovery.

8.47 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I listened intently to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), who told us that we are heading for a third recession. The fact is that we are coming quite fast out of the second recession. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is giving away a natural lack of confidence. Perhaps he believes that in, say, 10 years' time, when we run into yet another recession, this Conservative Government will still be caring for the interests of the nation. Let us see what happens.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, North also dwelt lovingly on the past four years and on the impact that they have had on the average family—a period of recession and difficult times for that family. I admit that during the 15 years of Conservative government to which the hon. Gentleman referred, there has been some undulation in the economy. We had good recovery, then the first recession, another good recovery and then the second recession. We are now going into another recovery. The hon. Gentleman failed to mention, however, that the average family is about £80 a week better off in real terms than it was when the Conservative Government came to power after the previous Labour Government.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, North referred to a "sleaze fund" and a "war chest" for the election. A Conservative Government ripping off less of taxpayers' money is not a war chest. That is leaving money with the people who earned it, and any Government should be working in that direction.

I have been present for most of the debates on the Budget statement. I have been most struck by the unanimous and strident line taken by most Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen in their speeches. On the first day of the Budget debate, the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said:

> "this Budget will go down in history as the VAT-on-fuel Budget."—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1104.]

One can understand the right hon. Gentleman's inability rapidly to absorb and comment on the Budget's considerable detail and therefore his reliance on a pre-prepared speech, but why take that line on a decision that was taken two years ago?

On the second day of the Budget debate, the first words of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) were:

> "Yesterday, in what has become known as the VAT-on-fuel Budget".—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1225.]

I hardly think that this is a "VAT-on-fuel" Budget. On the second day of the Budget debate some two years ago, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East made great play of the introduction of VAT on fuel. That was a Budget in which he gloated:

> "For people paying VAT, there will be 'tax rises before breakfast, before lunch and before dinner.'"

I cannot help thinking that Labour Members condemning tax increases is rather like the devil renouncing sin. They have traditionally taxed and spent. They now propose to knock £3 billion out of the Government's finances by voting, yet again, against VAT on fuel. However, they do not say what taxes they would increase or what spending programmes they would cut.

Such fiscal irresponsibility would cause chaos in the financial markets on Wednesday morning and turbulence until March next year when the detail of taxation would finally have to be settled. The immediate chaos that would occur this week, which would destabilise sterling, would lead rapidly to damaging interest rate rises. That opportunism and irresponsibility from a Labour party that includes a carbon tax in its own party policy is particularly significant.

In the Budget debate two years ago, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said:

> "I say that there is no recovery that we will call a recovery when it assumes that 3 million people stay out of work. There is no recovery that is worth its name which does not begin to put Britain back to work."—[*Official Report*, 17 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 290-94.]

He went on to predict that unemployment would rise for months thereafter.

As we all know, unemployment is down to 2.5 million and is falling. There was no acknowledgement of that welcome trend from the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. For a more objective assessment we should note that Anatole Kaletsky in *The Times* on 30 November said:

> "the economy and the public finances really are healthier than they have been for at least 25 years."

Therein lies the explanation for the stridency of Opposition Members. A big enough barrage might drown out the clear message of this Budget: that this country is rapidly coming clear of the recession and is powering ahead. That will become progressively clearer to the electorate, and the bankruptcy of Labour economic policy will become clear too. The Opposition know that a trend—economic and then electoral—is clearly set and a succession of Opposition speeches today showed clearly that they had worked that out and that they are becoming windy.

Growth is 4 per cent. this year and manufacturing output is up 5 per cent. Industrial production is up nearly 6 per cent. Unemployment is down nearly 500,000 from its peak and it is falling faster. The current account deficit, to which reference was made, is down sharply and the public sector borrowing requirement is at last plummeting. Inflation is at a 27-year low, which is a tribute to firm monetary policy.

I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, however, to the pressures on input prices of commodities and other raw materials. Important raw materials for factories in my constituency, such as lead for batteries, pulp for paper and plastic ingredients for containers, are priced internationally and they have all seen sharp increases due to world supply limitations. How the Chancellor reacts to the effects of that cost push will be important for further progress of the British economy.

I welcome the return in this Budget to the indexation of income tax basic allowances and in particular the priority given to the less well-off through the exceptional widening of the 20 per cent. tax band and to pensioners by the increase in their personal allowances ahead of inflation.

I also welcome the measures for small businesses and the assistance for new employment. I particularly welcome safeguards in respect of business rate revaluation. The small retail sector in Kent was very badly hit by the exceptionally high valuations that were made five years ago. I suspect that those valuations, which will come into effect next April, will be significantly less, thus reducing rate bills. Thanks to the Government's introduction of the unified business rate five years ago, the rate can go up only with inflation and therefore business rate payers are protected from profligate Labour councils.

Representing a Kent constituency, I am of course aware of the impact of the single European market on the off-licences, brewers and publicans in the county. The decision not to increase alcohol duties this year to diminish the differential between prices across the channel and in Kent is very much appreciated.

The House will be aware of my interest in Latin America, a region now growing rapidly with historically low inflation rates thanks to it following policies pioneered by the Conservative Government of free enterprise, privatisation and monetary discipline. There are great opportunities in the region for British exporters and investors, but to achieve even greater success British exporters need to enjoy at least competitive terms for export finance. That is why I welcome the 10 per cent. cut in Export Credits Guarantee Department premium rates, which put them below the average charged by other G7 export credit agencies. The large increase of ECGD cover available for developing markets, such as those in Latin America, will also be welcomed.

I should like to consider a serious criticism. I want to draw the attention of the House to an aspect of fiscal and social security policy perpetuated and extended in this Budget which is doing progressive damage to the very fabric of our society and the families that make it up. There was a time when fiscal policies showed a strong bias in favour of the family unit. Over the past few years, we have split the taxation of the family. When a mother gives up paid work to care for her children, she forfeits not only her income but her tax allowance, which is worth at least £880 to the family and which is not transferable to her husband.

The married couple's allowance has been frozen and, therefore, eroded in value for the past four years. Its value is being further eroded by down-banding from standard rate to the 20 per cent. band this year and to the notional 15 per cent. band next year. The benefit to families has been reduced from £430 last year to £258 next year, a loss of £172. Furthermore, if the married couple's allowance had kept up with inflation and had continued to be applied to the standard rate, it would be worth £200 more next year.

Mortgage interest tax relief, of greatest value in the early years of a loan, tends to be of greatest benefit to families when they have purchased the family home, which they tend to do when the children are young. We have not only failed to upgrade it for inflation but we are down-banding its effect. In the south-east, where most families utilise the entire £30,000, the value of the relief has fallen from £1,200 at standard rate on 15 per cent. interest rates two years ago to £360 next year on the notional 15 per cent. tax band at reduced interest rates of 8 per cent. That loss of £840 is considerably offset by lower mortgage interest payments, but we should not underestimate the impact on families if interest rates rise in the years ahead.

For the average family with a full-time mother caring for the children, the impact of the loss of her income and tax allowance benefit, combined with the devaluing of the married couple's allowance and mortgage interest tax relief, is a severe squeeze on family net income.

We should contrast that squeeze with conditions for so-called one-parent families. Their finances have gone in the other direction. Wholly dependent on the state, or even with earned income comparable to that of two-parent families, lone parents today gain a favoured position through state benefits such as social security and housing benefits, all of which are not taxable.

Paradoxically, the Child Support Agency only accentuates that position. The role of a father as breadwinner for a young family is being economically undermined. The state is becoming a surrogate financial provider, with considerable social detriment, particularly to the development of children.

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

The Budget also increases pressures on mothers to go out to work. The personal tax allowance of a mother, which is otherwise useless, can be harnessed. The state reimburses lone mothers for child care costs when they go out to work. Mothers are being encouraged to switch from part-time to full-time work, not least by the announcement in the Budget of a £10 weekly premium on family credit for those who do so.

Social pressures are also building for women to go out to work, to the detriment of their young children. How often do we hear in the media denigration of the so-called non-working mother and praise of professional women who "manage their families"? We are seeing a growth in the number of latch-key children who get into trouble, delinquency or even crime. The growth in juvenile crime is surely not unrelated. I hardly think that the increase in creches and child minding is an improvement on mothers' care for their children.

A generation ago, the overwhelming majority of mothers stayed at home to care for their children. Financial and social pressures are forcing an increasing number of mothers out to work. Even so, 40 per cent. of women with children under 10 remain at home and an additional 35 per cent. work only part time. Even higher percentages do so among the C, D and E economic groupings. The irony is that they are a silent majority, putting their children first in their personal scale of priorities. The minority of full-time working mothers, particularly professional women, tend to be the most vociferous in the media and, I fear, are listened to disproportionately by Ministers.

All those pressures on mothers to go out to work are having unforeseen side-effects in addition to their effect on child care. In a rapidly changing economy, jobs are decreasing in mass-manufacturing and mining, to the detriment of young low-skilled males, and are increasing in high-tech and service industries, where they are increasingly being taken by women. That is leading to increasing unemployment among young men, who become more vulnerable to crime and who do not have the financial means to become worthy husbands and fathers. That leads to increasing single-parent families. We seem to be encouraging a vicious downward spiral. Our current fiscal, employment and social security policies are putting growing destructive pressures on the family.

I urge my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as his economic policies produce more fiscal room for manoeuvre, carefully to consider the tax and benefit treatment of families. Should we not only enhance the married couple's allowance but authorise the full transferability of a full-time mother's tax allowance to her husband? Those issues are vital to our future as a nation. The Opposition do not even appear to have grasped the problems. The Labour party's social justice commission ducked them.

Benjamin Disraeli identified the Conservative working man as the chap who led a decent working life and cared for his family and its well-being and its future. We in the Conservative party should take up the challenge of our inheritance and back the Conservative working man.

9.4 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): I sometimes wish that more members of the public could hear the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) speak, not for the reasons that he would like, but because when I hear his onslaught against single parents, I believe that he speaks for a number of those on the Government Benches who characterise single parents as scroungers, as undeserving and as people who should somehow be reviled. That is most unfortunate and we hear it time and again from Government Members.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Darling: No, I will not give way now, but I may do so later. The hon. Gentleman is one of the people whom Mr. Maples had in mind when he wrote his memorandum.

Mr. Arnold *rose—*

Mr. Darling: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

I shall refer to one non-controversial point that was raised by the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold)—who I see is now in his place—about the scrutiny of the Budget. He said that there had been fewer economic debates than is desirable and he talked particularly about the Select Committee.

I remind the House that a year ago the Finance Bill was subject to a guillotine for the first time in recent memory. I understand why the Government guillotined the Bill. They did it for the curious reason that they did not want proceedings on the Finance Bill to conclude before the end of March because of a little difficulty with VAT—which has come back to haunt the Government this year.

One result of the guillotine was that a large amount of technical detail in the Bill was never scrutinised properly. Committee members were in the absurd position of finding that we had time on our hands, having exhausted the subjects listed for discussion, but we could not begin to discuss the necessary technical detail—probably in a non-partisan manner.

I should declare a vested interest in the debate in that I am a member of the Institute of Fiscal Studies tax reform committee which was set up partly in response to the fact that the Government are not looking—

Mr. Arnold *rose—*

Mr. Darling: I may give way to the hon. Gentleman, but not yet. I have made my position clear, and if the hon. Gentleman behaves himself I may give way to him later.

Any Finance Bill contains large sections that are non-controversial in party political terms, and if we are to do our duty as a House, and as a Committee which scrutinises the Finance Bill, we need proper time to review the proceedings. I hope that the Government are not, even now, thinking of some spurious reason for guillotining the Finance Bill yet again.

Listening to Tory Members' speeches, one might assume that the Conservative party had been in power for only the past two or three years. In fact, we are entitled to judge the Government on their performance over the past 15 years. In that time, we have seen low growth and high unemployment, there have been two recessions and one unsustainable boom. Yet the Secretary of State for National Heritage, who introduced the debate this afternoon, said that the Government believe in stability. Stability is one of the things that we do not have under this Government and there is no sign that we shall attain it.

Despite the good news that they set out in their speeches, Government Members could not explain why no one believes what they say and why none of them responded to the memorandum prepared by Mr. Maples, who was a respected Member of the House and a respected member of the Government's Treasury team. He identified a major problem with Tory instincts: not the instinct for reducing taxation that we are constantly told about, but the Tory instinct for making the rich appear to be getting richer on the backs of the rest of the population.

Mr. Arnold *rose—*

Mr. Darling: For the sake of peace and because the hon. Member for Gravesham is referred to in the Maples memorandum, at least by implication, I shall give way.

Mr. Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman face the fact that the scurrilous attack that he made on my motives, which he interpreted as an attack on single-parent families, exactly encapsulates the problem I spoke of? We are not facing the fact that, nine times out of 10, a two-parent family is better for children's development. A personal attack on me and the implication that I am attacking those mothers who, for one reason or another, have to bring up their children on their own is no way to deal with a very serious and growing problem.

Mr. Darling: The hon. Gentleman flatters himself. It was not a personal attack on him, as he well knows. I know from observing the hon. Gentleman during the past two years that he is no stranger to making attacks. I was attacking not his motives but what he said.

The 1994 Budget has been subjected to a deal of criticism, some of it perhaps unfair. "Workmanlike" was the best that I read, but other people were unkind enough to say that it was boring or even to suggest that some right hon. and hon. Members might have nodded off during its delivery. Others have said that it was remarkable only because it was the Budget after 1993 and the one before 1995. The 1995 Budget will be the interesting one because 1996 is down for election year.

I believe that some of the criticisms of the Budget are misplaced. At the risk of being controversial, let me say that I believe that it was fascinating and remarkable for two reasons. First, it tells us that the Tory party is deeply divided in what remains of its philosophy, between the right-wing members, some of whom were celebrating at Alexandra palace on Friday night, and those who want to occupy the middle ground of British politics—Labour's ground.

We saw signs of that right-wing legacy last week with the housing benefit measures. The Tories believe in rent control, but they want to use the tenant—a blunt and usually vulnerable instrument—as an instrument of control. There is now a restriction on the amount of help to be given to people who become unemployed and have a mortgage. No help will be given for the first nine months. The Chancellor's answer is that people should get insurance. Has he any idea of the cost of insurance? It can be as high as £7 for every £100 to be covered. People in vulnerable occupations or who have been made redundant in the past may have to pay even more. Of course, the Chancellor did not say that when people take out insurance they will pay tax on top of the premiums. That is the double whammy for such people.

The second reason why the Budget is remarkable is that it raises a fundamental question—what are the Government for? What is their view of economic affairs? It seems to us and, I suspect, to a majority of the population, that their sole object is to be re-elected. Nothing else matters. The 1992 and 1993 Budgets increased taxes to record levels to pay for economic failure and to pay the bills that the Tories ran up to win the last election.

When the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who is not in his place, bemoaned the fact that some of the rebels would not come into line on the vote on VAT tomorrow night, as befits a former Chief Whip, he did not pause to reflect on the fact that one of the difficulties with VAT was that the Conservatives specifically said they would not increase the scope of VAT at the last election. They did not tell the truth. That is one of the reasons why the public are so unhappy about it.

We now move to phase 2 in a familiar cycle. Having raised taxes, the Conservatives plan to reduce them in 1995 so that the electorate will see the benefit of the reductions in 1996. The hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), who is not here, said that Opposition Members were worried that the Conservatives might reduce taxes. No, we are not. The one thing that the Conservatives have blown once and for all is a matter of trust. People do not believe what the Conservatives say on tax or on anything else. They are not trusted. No political party can win an election unless it is trusted. So what are the Government for? Their sole purpose now is to buy votes, whatever the cost. The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) was good enough to tell us that it was essential from the Tory party point of view to reduce taxes next year.

We have the absurdity that the Government are selling off Railtrack to raise funds to reduce taxes. As the Chancellor said, that was an integral part of the Tory calculations. That is not because there are any great benefits to the British public. Selling Railtrack will cost the taxpayer more from 1997 to 1998 because we shall have to pay increased subsidies to the operators to use the privatised rail track. Here we have an example of how the Government are going for short-term gain, which we the public and the taxpayers will have to pay for in the future.

There is no sign of stability. All that we have is great uncertainty. The Government's strategy of attempting to buy votes in 1996 will not work. A 5p reduction in the standard rate of income tax or the equivalent will not make up for the fact that, in the past two or three years, the Conservatives have introduced seven new taxes. That is equivalent to 7p in the pound. It will not work because people do not believe anything that the Government have to say.

Even in the past week, a new tax has been introduced. Value added tax is to be extended to certain travel—pensioners travel, recreational travel and so forth—as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) said. The people do not trust the Tories on tax and they never will.

[Mr. Darling]

The right hon. Member for Suttton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) spoke at the beginning of the debate. First, he had to take the precaution of reassuring the House that he supported the Government. It is a fine thing when a former Tory party chairman must start his speech with such reassurances. He wanted to stress that it was a mistake in political terms not to have introduced VAT on domestic fuel at the full rate. What a cynical approach. That is not the problem. Other Conservative Members identified what the problem is—the fact that they have introduced VAT rather than the fact that it was introduced in two parts. The right hon. Gentleman said that, for political purposes, it should have been introduced at one stroke because that would have made party management easier. That sort of cynical approach is one of the many reasons why people do not support the Government.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth) *rose—*

Mr. Darling: Despite the fact that I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has been in the Chamber all evening, I will give way.

Mr. Deva: I listened briefly to what the hon. Gentleman was saying. Can he explain what the Opposition are trying to do? He says that they have ditched all their policies of the past 15 years. Is that not trying to buy votes?

Mr. Darling: The hon. Gentleman might be better informed if, first, he attended debates of this sort for their entire duration and secondly, if he cared to study our various policy statements.

The Government have no sense of direction or of the long term. Growth has been abysmally low throughout their full term in office—the past 15 years. Increasingly, as the Dudley by-election will show, the Government have lost touch with reality and with people the length and breadth of the country. The electorate are not looking for tax cuts designed to buy votes. No one likes paying tax, but if people are to be taxed they want to know that their taxes are going for some positive purpose. They look for a long-term improvement for themselves and their children. Increasingly, they worry about the future and they are afraid.

As the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) said, the Government face an electorate who are increasingly unsettled and suspicious. They are looking for a Government who are on their side and not on the side of privilege. The Government must not forget that people are faced with the prospect of VAT on fuel but see the chief executives of privatised industries, such as British Gas, getting huge pay increases, about which the Government do not even seem to care, let alone try to do anything. Is it any wonder that the people do not trust the Government and have no faith that they will act on their behalf? So often they appear to be the Government of the vested interest and of privilege—the Government who have nothing to say for the vast majority of people.

Mr. John Marshall *rose—*

Mr. Darling: I will give way to the spokesman for privilege and for those who have rather than have not.

Mr. Marshall: One is getting used to the hon. Gentleman's snide remarks. What would he do about the pay of the directors of privatised utilities? Is he in favour of a selective wages policy?

Mr. Darling: We pointed out that the regulator ought to have jurisdiction on such matters. As the hon. Gentleman raised the subject, I shall point out that the Prime Minister's formal call for restraint has been roundly rebuffed. I see that he has been considering alternatives, such as giving institutional investors, shareholders and others a greater say. At least the Government are beginning to recognise that there is a problem, which is a significant shift in the position that they took when the announcements were first made. We, on the other hand, are suggesting something positive.

People have every right to be afraid because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) and, I think, my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) said, if £6 billion is to be put back into the economy next year because of tax cuts, what will that do to inflation? The economy is growing. If the markets are to be reassured, the brakes will have to be applied hard after Christmas. There is a very real prospect of interest rate rises to slow down the economy after Christmas, to allow the Government to reduce taxes and buy votes. People will pay a double penalty. They have had high taxes and high interest rates, and they may have still higher interest rates to enable the Government to reduce taxes for the sole purpose of trying to win the next election.

Indeed, the problem of high interest rates is bound to strike fear into the hearts of many people, be they in business or elsewhere. Interest rate rises have been necessary so far because of the lack of capacity in the economy. That is because the Government will not accept that what is needed is investment in our economic capacity so that we can achieve sustainable non-inflationary growth. It is too early for the Government to start celebrating low inflation—the test for that will come in five or six years, and certainly after any election.

The Government have no purpose or direction and precious little philosophy left, but the Chancellor is trying to scramble to the middle ground, at least in part. However, the contradictions of the divided Government show through. Take the help—if I can call it that—for the long-term unemployed, the numbers of whom are growing at the rate of 350,000 a year. There is too little help, and why does it start only in April 1996? Does the year 1996 ring a bell? It may be an election year, and would not it be convenient if unemployment started to full in the summer before an autumn election? The Government know that there are very good social and economic reasons for tackling the problem of long-term unemployment, yet they are not prepared to do something about it until 1996.

Venture capital trusts are an example of a worthwhile idea which stands every chance of being undermined by becoming a major tax break for the few. I saw that one of the professional magazines said that no one need pay capital gains tax again because of the 60 per cent. relief which is achieved when all of the reliefs are put together. If one is going to intervene and encourage people to save and invest—which we would certainly want to encourage—one should at least begin to point people in the right direction.

Where is the evidence that the Government want to point people to invest in those sectors that are not getting investment at present, such as high technology where there is a greater risk? Where is the guarantee that we shall not see a repeat of the business expansion scheme, where money was put into property and granny-farming, or into safe sectors in which people would probably have invested anyway?

If the Government want to read a critique of the business expansion scheme and all of its failures, they could do worse than to read a pamphlet written by the Secretary of State for National Heritage. The right hon. Gentleman is not in his place, perhaps because he suspected that I might mention the pamphlet. He wrote a very telling piece criticising the Government's policy on that scheme.

The Government are committed to intervention, despite what some of their right-wing adherents might say. The problem is that they do not yet know how to intervene in the public interest, although they know how to intervene in the private interest. *[Interruption.]* The Financial Secretary can fill in the Secretary of State for National Heritage, who has just arrived.

The Government have no sense of the long term. What about the reforms to the capital gains tax regime which we were promised? What happened to the review? In fact, the Secretary of State for National Heritage walked in right on cue. When he was still Financial Secretary, he was charged with reviewing the policy on the payment of dividends. He started the review, but Lord Hanson, who bankrolls the Conservative party—one of the few who still does—told the Prime Minister that the review would have to be stopped because the Financial Secretary seemed to be too much like a socialist.

The Prime Minister, full of resolution and strength, agreed to stop the review immediately and made an announcement to that effect. Then, more and more people said that the review was necessary and, according to today's *Financial Times*, the review has started again. I hope that the present Financial Secretary will tell us whether the review of the payment of dividends by companies started by his right hon. Friend has been started again, whether it is still on ice or whether it has been scrapped. Perhaps we should know.

We believe that a review of the corporate tax regime is absolutely essential, which is why we propose to establish a review committee examining the whole issue of dividends and other reforms to the corporate tax structure which we believe to be long overdue and which the Government should have done.

The Government also ought to review their competition policy in the light of Mercury's announcement today and, in particular, the announcement that Mercury pay phones are to be taken off the streets. Many of us believe that the Government's commitment to competition in the private sector does not run as deep as it should do.

The public have more sense than the Government think. They know that the Conservatives lied about tax in 1992, and about VAT, to which I shall return briefly. Many people do not make the connection between VAT and the British constitution, but it was significant that, in opening the debate this afternoon, the Secretary of State for National Heritage began by discussing the British constitution. It was also significant that, on Friday night, the Prime Minister defended the British constitution and suggested that no changes were necessary. The last time that he did that was when he thought that he was in political difficulty, and he has done it this time because he is in political difficulty. The only reason why the Conservatives have raised the issue of the constitution and criticised those who wish to amend parts of it, particularly those of us who want to see reform of the relationship—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am not clear that that falls within the remit of our present subject.

Mr. Darling: The Secretary of State for National Heritage first raised the matter and I am replying to the debate. To be fair to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, he was admonished for doing so and I was simply pointing out that the matter was raised to deflect attention away from the divisions on VAT and, of course, on Europe.

We need a Government who are committed to the long term. For example, the Government's track record on investment is poor. In the course of his Budget statement, the Chancellor said much about the finance initiative which his predecessor and then he announced some two years ago. Let us look at the facts. Of the 78 projects announced two years ago, only 12 have got off the ground. Although £5 billion of private money has been levered into those projects in the past two years, £4.5 billion has been cut from public spending. So there has been a net reduction in the amount of investment at the very time when we need it.

In the Budget, the Chancellor announced a cut in rail investment. We know the problems with a lack of a link between the channel tunnel and the rest of the rail network. We have had problems with the Northern line and there are problems with the Heathrow express, where the most visible sign of activity is parts of Heathrow slipping into the mud. We believe that the private finance initiative needs fresh impetus. The Treasury is now reviewing each and every project. Some of us believe that that will lead to greater delay, although there is certainly a need for more clarity and openness.

There is also an urgent need for the Government to make real proposals to tackle the problem of long-term unemployment, such as we have proposed. That is important for both economic and social reasons. We should spend some time—perhaps not tonight—reflecting on the more unpleasant changes in society that the Government have brought about. The Chancellor talked of his concern about a deprived underclass. Many Opposition Members and, I suspect, many Conservative Members know that that underclass is already here and has been here for some time. We should all be concerned about the fact that a second generation of unemployed people with no prospect of work is now appearing in towns and cities.

There have been lower living standards for a growing number of the population. It has been estimated that almost a third of the population has seen no increase in

[Mr. Darling]

standard of living for the past 14 years. Above all, there is a perceived lack of fairness from the Government. Many people believe that the true Tory instinct is not tax cutting—in fact, Tories increase taxation—but lack of fairness.

A minimum wage would begin to put right the problem that is now arising because the Government are driving down wages. We cannot compete with the developing world on low wages; we can compete on quality. To get quality, we need a highly skilled, highly motivated work force and anyone who fails to see that is doomed to economic failure. For society as a whole, what happens to our neighbour matters in a social and economic sense.

The Government need a positive attitude to Europe. What happened to the Prime Minister's slogan that we must be at the heart of Europe? We shall see in the next two or three days.

On education and skills, is it not astonishing that, with nearly 3 million people unemployed, many parts of the country have skills shortages because the Government will not face up to the fact that it is necessary to invest in education and skills if we are to compete with the rest of the world? We have had none of that. Instead, we are confronted by a Government party deeply divided—so divided that I see today that the Secretary of State for Social Security had to call on his faction to rally round the Prime Minister on the vote on VAT tomorrow night.

This year's Budget is fascinating because it reveals the Government's true problems—their divided philosophy and their uncertainty as to why they are there or what they want to do. They are united only in the interests of keeping themselves in power. They are torn between competing philosophies. They end up pleasing no one because they do not know which way to follow. They have no idea why they are in power other than the fact that they want to stay there. There is no purpose other than trying to be re-elected. Everything, it appears, is now pinned on tax reductions in 1996. That will not work, because the Government have lost the trust of the people, and no party will ever win unless people trust it.

The Government seem to have nothing else to say. They have no long-term view, no ideas for reform, no idea of social justice and no concept of society. The Government have run their course. They are out of touch; they are remote. People are looking for a change, and they will get that under Labour.

9.30 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Sir George Young): The debate has been first class, and I shall try to answer the many points that hon. Members on both sides of the House raised.

I begin with what I thought was the saddest remark in the debate—a remark by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), who explained why he attended an Adjournment debate last week: "I never go home." Having answered more Adjournment debates in the House than any other Minister, I have to say to the hon. Gentleman that, confronted with the wide range of entertainment available in the capital, as outlined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage in his opening speech, to choose to attend an Adjournment debate in the House exhibits unparalleled commitment. Looking around the Chamber tonight, I see that some other hon. Members are not confronted with the same problems that have confronted him.

I shall deal straight away with an issue mentioned by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), on passenger transport. During the day, the Opposition have criticised the removal of VAT zero rating for transport provided as part of entertainment services. It is typical that they have concentrated on scaring people rather than putting forward the facts, and they talk about closing loopholes but oppose the Government when the Government do so. I want to put the record straight.

The measure that the Opposition have mentioned during the day restricts zero rating for passenger transport to what any reasonable person would call passenger transport and to what Parliament intended when the relief was first introduced, so it stops favourable tax treatment for trips in hot air balloons, round trips in Concorde over the bay of Biscay, and so on. Zero rating will continue for independent coach travel to football matches organised by supporters' clubs, mountain railways, steam train rides that are complete in themselves rather than, for example, part of the entrance to a museum, and so on. The tax treatment of canal boats—an issue that seems to have assumed dramatic proportions—should remain unchanged.

The attack on VAT on fuel made by the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) has been made less effective by the interview that he gave with *Green Magazine* in February 1993, when he said that Labour had been thinking of a number of

"small but effective tax measures"

which included

"increasing VAT on environmentally unfriendly products".

Then he was demolished by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he started championing loopholes. My right hon. Friend pointed out—

Mr. Chris Smith: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir George Young: May I just finish this point? Then I will give way.

Mr. Smith *rose*—

Sir George Young: No. I will finish this point and then I will give way.

On loopholes, my right hon. Friend pointed out that the Labour party voted against a loophole on capital gains tax in last year's Budget—a loophole that the Government have closed, bringing in revenue of £300 million in a full year.

Mr. Smith: I think that the interview in *Green Magazine* has now been quoted about five times by Conservative Members in the House, and every time I give the same reply, because they do not appear to listen or understand. As I clearly said, we were talking about small matters, such as VAT on unleaded batteries. If the right hon. Gentleman cannot tell the difference between a leaded and an unleaded battery and someone's fuel bill, he is even more stupid than I think he is.

Sir George Young: I have to say that that would be a rather ineffective response to the environmental challenge that I thought that the hon. Gentleman took seriously when he had an environmental responsibility.

However, the astonishing climax came at the end of the speech of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury, when he accused us of "paralysis". Four per cent. growth, the highest rate of growth in Europe, record exports, an 11 per cent. increase in business investment next year, unemployment falling—he calls that paralysis. We can be grateful that he chose a career in politics rather than in medicine.

We welcome my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) to the Government Back Benches and the liberation that that can bring with it. He rightly focused his remarks on the needs of pensioners and drew on his experience as Secretary of State for Social Services to stress that we must safeguard the interests of those who have retired in the context of the benefits of the recovery. I am sure that my right hon. Friend has noticed that in the Budget we have over-indexed age allowances in recognition of the very factors that he mentioned.

The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) alleged that our plans are unsustainable because they rely on the proceeds of privatisation. If he studies table 4.5 on page 69 of the Red Book, he will find that next year privatisation will provide the resources for less than 1 per cent. of Government expenditure, falling to a third of one per cent. in 1998-99. There is no over-reliance on privatisation proceeds in our forward plans.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) focused on the cost of servicing the national debt. I know that he will welcome the £42 billion reduction in public expenditure over four years which has been achieved. My right hon. Friend will be interested to know that that will save over £3 billion a year at current long-term interest rates. He was good enough to compliment my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on achieving the goal of growth with low inflation.

The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) was rather condescending about part-time jobs. It is worth noting that a recent survey showed that 85 per cent. of those with part-time jobs wanted part-time jobs. The Liberal Democrats now oppose the imposition of value added tax on fuel, yet they produced a policy document entitled "Costing the Earth", in which they stated that they

> "advocate as a first priority the imposition of a tax on energy . . . The UK is unusual amongst EC members in not applying even standard rates of VAT to domestic fuels . . . If it proved completely impossible to persuade our international partners to adopt energy taxes, we would nevertheless press forward, but phase them in at lower levels than otherwise—for example, by ending the anomalous zero-rate of VAT upon fuel".

The hon. Member for Bath moved on to education and the revenue support grant statement that was made on Thursday by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. My right hon. Friend said that there is always concern at this time of the year about the prospective reduction in the number of teachers for the following year. He demonstrated, however, that such fears have proved groundless and that the number of teachers employed has increased from year to year.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) said that the Government were too big and that there were too many Ministers. He will not expect a sympathetic response to that from the Government Front Bench. Of course, since my right hon. Friend left the Administration, more Ministers are required to do the same amount of work. He made an ingenious suggestion to exempt the elderly from VAT. There are some administrative difficulties in his suggested solution as well as scope for abuse. For example, an electricity account could be put in the name of a pensioner if a pensioner was a member of the household. My right hon. Friend's solution would not meet our requirements.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) made a serious speech, as one would expect from him. Instead of talking about this Budget, he talked about the next Budget. Not only that, he told us what would be in it. He then went on to tell us that we could not afford it. He forecast the date but not the result of the next general election.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South wanted further steps taken to reduce unemployment. He will know that unemployment has been falling for some time. The Government's priority was to ensure that the welcome fall in unemployment reached those who, for whatever reason, had remained outside the job market over the past two years. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have done that through a number of measures, with incentives for employers and employees. Some of those measures will be implemented next year, and one in April 1996. The measure to be introduced in 1996 will be relatively inexpensive compared with those that are to be implemented next year. The most expensive measure in terms of revenue forgone is the reduction in national insurance contributions, which will begin next April.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) gave the debate a nautical flavour, introducing the theme of "Steady as she goes." Unusually for a Conservative Member, he made a plea for higher taxation—higher taxation on tobacco. As he knows, the Government are committed to real increases in the cost of tobacco, explicitly for the health reasons that he rightly mentioned. I shall write to him about the points he raised on auction houses.

The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) made a rather grudging speech, recognising that things were looking slightly better but giving the Government no credit for that. Let me quote from the Co-operative bank's 1993 report: if the hon. Gentleman does not take it from me, he may take it from the bank. The report states:

> "if the Government can continue to fund and reduce its borrowing requirement whilst maintaining low inflation, low interest rate environment and establishing steady growth, then the prospects for many of our UK customers will be better than at any time during the last five years."

If that does not work, how about the annual report of MAI, a well-known public company with a well-known socialist as its chairman? Its 1994 annual report stated:

> "All of the markets in which the group operates are characterised by great opportunity, rapid change and increasing competition . . . The outlook for television advertising, and motor car and information sales is encouraging."

[Sir George Young]

I see from that latest annual report, however, that the company's chairman made no political contribution in 1994.

Let me take up a technical point put to me by the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North about funding the public sector borrowing requirement. He is right: we have sold £18.7 billion worth of gilts already, and there are £10.5 billion to go.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) raised an important procedural point: how does the House monitor the expenditure incurred by the Government, and how does it monitor economic policy now that the Budget and the Queen's Speech are so close together? He will understand that replying to those questions goes way beyond my negotiating brief, but I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and the Leader of the House are aware of the issues, and that they are being discussed through the usual channels.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) reminded the House of the opportunities to promote further economic recovery in Northern Ireland on the basis of the welcome political stability that we are now seeing. He approved of nil PSBR, and of the measures that we have taken to balance our budget; however, he drew back from an important component of that strategy—the imposition of VAT on fuel—making it clear that he and his party had always resisted that measure.

My hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran) put the Budget in a broader perspective, reminding us that internal discipline—getting a grip on public expenditure—was as important as the external discipline imposed, as he put it, by the exchange rate mechanism. He welcomed the determined and considered policies of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security to curb the rise in social security expenditure, and made it clear that he was against high taxation.

I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden). As he said, I was a housing Minister, and spent some time in Birmingham taking a close interest in the problems that he described. He did not mention the extra help that his city is given through the housing action trust in Castle Vale, which means that the Government are directly bearing a responsibility that would otherwise have fallen on the shoulders of the city council. The area is also helped by city challenge, and by the work of the development corporation. As for housing, I am sure the hon. Gentleman knows that the Government have more than kept their manifesto commitment in regard to the number of new lettings.

My hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) rightly pointed out that low interest rates could be as important as low tax rates. He then made what I am sure all who heard it would agree was a brave and honest speech, in which he shared his dilemma with the House. On one hand, he made it clear that he disliked the imposition of VAT on fuel; on the other, he recognised the wider implications for the Government that would follow if we did not proceed with the measure. He said that he would consider his position before tomorrow's vote. I hope that the wider implications for the Government as a whole will be at the forefront of his mind in coming to a decision.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) brought some colour to an otherwise colourless speech by quoting from the Maples memorandum, a document about which we have heard even more than the interview of the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury with *Green Magazine*. We move from the Maples memorandum to the Melton memorandum, an ingenious plug for a publication that my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) has recently produced. He put in a broader context, the context of what has been happening for decades, the Budget strategy of getting public funds on a sound basis and coming to terms with the economic cycle. He mentioned the disarray that could follow if the VAT on fuel decision were reversed. He also said that what is right is not always immediately popular. I think that all Conservative Members are conscious of that. I shall write to my hon. Friend about his specific point on widows' pensions.

The hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) focused on the income support changes on mortgage interest. He was wrong to describe it as a new tax, because under the current system the taxpayer is funding over £1 billion of income support in the circumstances that he described. We are seeking to move from a tax to insurance, placing the liability where it rightly belongs. The hon. Gentleman will know that there is no change for existing claimants. For existing borrowers who claim in future, there are some modest changes which would add, on average, £600 to the amount of debt outstanding. I doubt that that would oblige any building society or bank to foreclose. A new regime which will come in next year is designed to promote a new market in insurance. As I have said, we propose to place the responsibility for insurance where it rightly belongs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg) made a courageous speech. He was the only hon. Member in the debate to focus on help for businesses through transitional relief. He was right to focus on that because it is one of the more generous measures in the Budget, albeit a one-year measure. It will be greatly welcomed by many small and large businesses. My hon. Friend made a constituency point, on which I know he feels strongly, when he mentioned the reduction in investment in roads and hoped that it would see the end of the road which I know he has strongly opposed in his constituency. He reluctantly concluded that he would be unable to support the Government in tomorrow's vote. His reason was that the policies have worked and he painted a rosy picture of economic prospects and used it to justify reversing the decision. But prospects are rosy precisely because we took difficult decisions last year to get the public finances in balance. We risk forgoing that rosy picture if we begin to unpick the foundations of the successful recovery.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) said that capital gains tax was too high and that he would like to see it reduced. He outlined measures to fund that reduction. I understand that he was supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington).

I regret missing the speech by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), but I shall read it with interest, not least because he is my pair and I should like to know exactly what he is getting up to.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), who has sat through more of the Budget debate than many other hon. Members, said that import prices are buoyant. A year ago, import prices were rising faster than inflation and everybody thought that that would inevitably feed through to the retail prices index. In practice, that has not happened, partly because of competitive retail pressure, and we hope that that will continue. However, it is right to put down a marker. My hon. Friend made an important point about the tax treatment of married couples. A married couple will still pay less tax than two individuals with the same income, so there is an inbuilt bias in the system towards those who are married. My hon. Friend said that the reduction in the MCA has somewhat eroded that advantage over recent years.

There has been some inconsistency in Opposition speeches over the past four or five days. First, Opposition Members say that we have taxed too much and, secondly, they say that we spend too little. But taxes and spending are two sides of the same coin. When one presses Opposition Members they come up with a variety of solutions, such as windfalls, loopholes and the spending of capital receipts. I am bound to say that their arguments lack credibility. We cannot fund continuing revenue commitments with windfalls or one-off receipts. Even if we had the one-off receipts in year one, they would not pay for the revenue commitments in year two.

Listening to Labour Members trying to justify their spending aspirations by referring to windfalls and loopholes is like watching a very large lady trying to get into a small dress—there is simply inadequate cover for all the liabilities. Spending the capital receipts, which would not have even existed if we had listened to the Labour party, would lead to an increase in borrowing and public expenditure.

At some point during the five-day debate, in which nine Opposition spokesmen have taken part, the House is entitled to a few answers to some fairly basic questions. I do not mean the details given by my right hon. and hon. Friends in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" but simply a rough idea of where the Opposition are going. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham said, they can no longer hide behind the skirts of the Commission on Social Justice.

Would the Labour party spend more or less than a Conservative Government? Would it raise more or less in taxation? Would it borrow more or less? Would its inflation target be higher or lower? A party that can produce page after page of turgid, multisyllabic prose on contemporary economic theory should be able to answer, in a few monosyllables, the key questions that any responsible party should answer.

I want to say a word about the work incentives package, to which a number of my hon. Friends have referred. It is one of the exciting themes running through the Budget. As everyone has recognised, unemployment has fallen significantly as the recovery has gone from strength to strength. However, long-term unemployment is still too high. Our priority must be to help people who have been out of work for long spells to get back into work.

We want to ensure that no group is excluded from the benefits of recovery. That is why we are introducing a £680 million package of measures to improve the incentives for the unemployed to get back into work. It is an innovative, well-thought-out package, which has been well received by commentators on the Budget.

We arrived at the package by listening to the unemployed and to the employers. We discovered the real problems that deterred people from taking work and employers from offering them jobs. We have done more than listen; we have done something about it. We are encouraging employers to give the unemployed a further chance by making them cheaper to employ with the cut in national insurance contributions for the lower-paid and, eventually, a national insurance contributions holiday. We are also giving employers the chance to try out people in a job before deciding whether to take them on permanently.

We are ensuring that the unemployed are not temporarily left hard up for money when they leave benefit to start work. We are paying them the benefits to which they were entitled if they take a low-paid job. We are also giving them more help with initial work expenses, such as clothes and tools. We are giving help to the many unemployed people who say that they have to have a full-time job to meet their financial needs. We are giving people with children who work full time an extra £10 a week in family credit. We are introducing new incentives for people who have not been able to find a full-time job to use part-time jobs as a stepping stone to full-time work.

We will improve the chances of the unemployed to find a job by keeping them in touch with the world of work. We will be giving them work experience and advice on how to look for work effectively through community action. We are giving 18 to 24-year-olds intensive help in how to search for work. We are trying out new ways to help unemployed people who do not have children—the biggest group of people out of work for a year or more. We are piloting new benefits for people without children who take low-paid work. That is a major innovation in social policy.

Mr. Darling: Will the Financial Secretary answer my question about the review of dividend payments started by his predecessor? Is the report in today's *Financial Times* that the inquiry has restarted true? If so, who is conducting that review and when will the conclusions be published?

Sir George Young: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor made it clear in his Budget statement that the industrial finance initiative underpinned a number of his Budget proposals, particularly in the provision of finance for small and medium enterprises. Finance for industry remains an important issue, as stressed in the competitiveness White Paper. As to dividends, my right hon. and learned Friend announced no change in the value of the tax credit or in the rate of advance corporation tax for 1995, but those items will, as usual, be kept under review.

More generally, the formal consultation associated with the industrial finance initiative has drawn to a close, but the results will inform Government decisions in future, and will be announced as and when appropriate.

Mr. Darling: I gained the impression from the press report that the consultation had restarted. Until now, the Government's official position has been that the review was scrapped because Lord Hanson told the Government to stop it. The Minister appeared to confirm that the whole consultation has finished, and that the results will not be published because they might be embarrassing.

Sir George Young: That should come as no surprise to the hon. Gentleman, because I announced that in Treasury

[Sir George Young]

questions, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor made it clear in his speech to the Confederation of British Industry. There never was going to be a formal White Paper, but the consultation was a valuable exercise that will continue to inform Government decisions.

The Government are committed to reducing fraud and to improving compliance. We want to bring to book people who try to escape the true extent of their tax liability. If we are successful, that will benefit the wider tax-paying population. The Government's yield from compliance work in 1993-94 was equivalent to 2.5p in the basic rate of tax.

My right hon. and learned Friend's Budget statement mentioned that we have instituted a programme of closer working between the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise. As part of that, those organisations will remove many of the restrictions that currently limit the flow of useful information between their local offices. That will allow tax officers in both organisations to enjoy a better overall picture of taxpayers' affairs and help them to combat non-compliance more effectively.

Although taxpayers are expected and encouraged to comply voluntarily with their tax obligations, some choose to pay less than their full duty or nothing at all. The Inland Revenue looks to investigating a wide spectrum of individuals, companies and businesses to maintain compliance across the board. More than 90 per cent. of cases taken up for investigation result in additional duties being assessed.

The Revenue's total compliance yield in 1993-94 amounted to £4.7 billion. That covers all aspects of its compliance work, from inquiries about the technical merits of an account to in-depth investigations. The Revenue, in the drive to improve its compliance activities, keeps resources under review, redeploys staff as and when necessary, and monitors the quality of investigation work. In the 1993 public expenditure survey, the Government arranged an increase in compliance work staffing equivalent to more than 100 fully trained inspectors.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central asked about executive pay, board pay and the rest. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear that he does not agree with excessive and unjustified pay increases. He made it clear also that prices charged by utilities are a matter for the regulators. Boardroom pay is a matter for shareholders, as in all companies.

Shareholders already have the ability to exercise influence by raising questions at annual general meetings or, in the case of institutional holdings, by exerting behind-the-scenes pressure. I welcome the reports of the National Association of Pension Funds, which is minded to take a more aggressive approach at AGMs, using its considerable voting power to ensure that any abuses are restrained.

Ministers are always ready to consider ideas for improving shareholders' powers and information. It was announced in the White Paper on competitiveness that the Government have been reviewing a number of aspects of company law, including directors' duties. Those and other matters fall within the remit of Cabinet Sub-Committees.

It is especially interesting that some hon. Members are clearly worried that taxes may, at some point, come down. As Labour has put so much energy into attacking any tax increases, I hope that we shall not have any nonsense from Labour Members if and when taxes come down. What this country now wants are solutions and not sound bites. What this country wants are policies and not pantomime. What this country wants are remedies and not rhetoric. What this country wants are goals and not gimmicks. What the people will get from the Conservatives are remedies, goals, policies and solutions. All they will get from the Opposition are sound bites, pantomime, rhetoric and gimmicks.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

PETITION

VAT on Fuel

10 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): I present a petition on behalf of my constituents. It declares:

> the Government's decision to increase VAT on domestic fuel from 8 per cent. to 17.5 per cent. in 1995 will place a heavy financial burden on pensioners and others on low incomes which they will find hard to meet. The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons votes down this proposed increase.

The petitioners hope that all hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, will tomorrow night vote according to their convictions and not the diktat of Tory party Whips, so enabling the House to stop VAT on power increasing next April.

To lie upon the Table.

Bosnia (Corporal Stott)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): One day last March, the life of Corporal Stephen Stott was changed dramatically when a mortar shell exploded in Bosnia. Corporal Stott, who has been in the Army for almost 10 years, had been in Bosnia with his regiment, the Duke of Wellington's, for only 10 days when the explosion took place. The shell blew a hole in his right leg, as well as causing injuries to his back and arm.

Corporal Stott was brought up and educated in Colne Valley and his parents, who live in Marsden in my constituency, have brought his situation to my attention. His parents understandably believe that Stephen should be able to claim some compensation for the injuries that he sustained while working for the United Nations. My inquiries have uncovered a number of issues that I wish to raise in the Chamber this evening.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces for his presence here this evening. He knows that I have been in correspondence with his colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence. He will also know that I have been in touch with his office to inform him of some of the issues that I intend to raise tonight.

The Ministry of Defence has told me that if Corporal Stott was invalided out of the Army, he would immediately qualify for a pension along with a tax-free lump sum equal to three times the annual rate of the pension. I do not for a moment dismiss the financial support that would be available through the pension. The problem now, however, is that Corporal Stott's earning power in civilian life could be seriously diminished.

Corporal Stott had intended to apply to join the police force on leaving the Army and his income as a policeman would have far outweighed the income from the pension arrangements. As a result of the injuries he has sustained, he would clearly not now be sufficiently fit to join the police service or, indeed, the fire service, another career that he had been considering.

I discovered that had Corporal Stott been injured in Northern Ireland, he would have qualified for compensation under the criminal injuries compensation scheme. That is because terrorist activity in Northern Ireland is classed as a criminal act and service men injured there would therefore be entitled to claim compensation under the scheme. However, soldiers serving in Bosnia are deemed to be operating within a war zone and if injury or death is sustained, that is as a result of military activity.

I believe that that is a somewhat tenuous distinction. The reality is that the soldiers will see no difference whatsoever between doing their duty in Northern Ireland and doing their duty in Bosnia. Of course, we all desperately hope that the peace process brought about through the sterling efforts of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is sustained in the long term and that no more British soldiers will be injured or killed in Northern Ireland.

I have learnt that the MOD pays compensation when soldiers are serving abroad in certain circumstances under the criminal injuries compensation (overseas) scheme. That scheme pays compensation to service men when they suffer injury in circumstances similar to those in respect of which compensation would be payable under the criminal injuries compensation scheme in the United Kingdom.

My interpretation of that is that if, for example, British troops had been involved alongside American troops in Haiti, compensation would be payable because any injury sustained would have been as a result of terrorist and criminal activities rather than as a result of military activity between warring factions. Therefore, a soldier injured while doing his duty in Northern Ireland or Haiti would receive compensation; a soldier injured doing his duty in Bosnia would not receive compensation. That is a clear anomaly which I believe the Ministry should address.

Corporal Stott is a professional soldier and he has made it quite clear to me that he is fully aware of the risks associated with being a soldier in Her Majesty's forces and that if he had suffered his injuries as a result of fighting for his country during, for example, the Falklands war, he would not have expected to receive any compensation beyond what he would have received through the pension arrangements. However, he does feel—I agree with him—that it is a somewhat different matter when the British Army is operating on behalf of the United Nations.

I want to ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces whether there is any possibility that the UN could arrange compensation for soldiers injured or killed while serving with UN forces. Indeed, I shall make my hon. Friend the Minister aware of the comments made by a spokeswoman at the UN headquarters in Austria when Corporal Stott's case first became public. My local newspaper, the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner*—

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): Hear, hear.

Mr. Riddick: It is indeed a fine organ. My hon. Friend the Minister has obviously heard about that excellent newspaper.

The *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* quoted the spokeswoman as saying that Corporal Stott's case highlighted a major loophole in the UN's peacekeeping operations. The article stated:

> "She said the UN was discussing new rules to make the Government which calls in UN forces liable for compensation claims if soldiers are hurt or killed."

The newspaper then quotes her as saying:

> "There is a crying need for this kind of arrangement. The UN is now involved in 17 peacekeeping missions worldwide."

It would seem that the UN itself feels that something should be done on that front and I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister could tell the House whether any progress can be reported.

A new precedent would not be created if the United Nations was to provide compensation. The United Nations compensation commission was set up after the Gulf war of 1991 and while the eligibility of the scheme was quite precise, a number of British service men lodged claims for compensation under it.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has told the House of Commons Library that the United Nations, although not offering compensation itself, reimburses states which themselves pay compensation of that kind. Indeed, that is in line with the standard United Nations

[Mr. Riddick]

practice of defraying the cost incurred by contributing states during peacekeeping operations. I believe, therefore, that the British Government should make strenuous efforts to ensure that soldiers who are injured in Bosnia receive proper compensation and, indeed, that the families of soldiers who are killed in Bosnia also receive compensation.

It is not as though those soldiers have been putting their lives at risk in defence of their own country—quite the reverse. I accept, of course, that the soldiers have been carrying out an extremely important humanitarian task, and I pay tribute to the courage and dedication of all our service men and women who are carrying out a difficult job extremely well in difficult circumstances in the former Yugoslavia.

As for compensation, I must tell my hon. Friend that Corporal Stott and another local soldier from Mirfield near Huddersfield, Lance Corporal Douglas Stroyan, have received enormous support from people living in and around Huddersfield. A petition containing 25,000 signatures was handed in to 10 Downing street on 7 November, calling for compensation for soldiers injured in Bosnia. I hope that the Government will not ignore such a demonstration of public opinion. I understand also that the Royal British Legion fully supports Corporal Stott and Lance Corporal Stroyan in their efforts to receive proper compensation.

I make the additional point that the failure to pay proper compensation to those soldiers is in marked contrast with the large sums of money which the Ministry has been forced to pay to former service women who left the services as a result of becoming pregnant. My hon. Friend disclosed to the House on 22 November that such compensation had already cost the Ministry £32 million and that the final sum could be around the £50 million mark. Many of my constituents were appalled, as I was, at the large amounts of money which were paid in those circumstances.

Corporal Stott hopes that, next weekend, the steel pins in his leg will be taken out and that, if all goes well, his leg will then be put into a cast for a number of months; he will then receive some physiotherapy. However, the reality is that Corporal Stott will almost certainly have to carry with him for the rest of his life the disability of having one leg an inch and a half shorter than the other. Having known clearly what he wished to do on leaving the Army, Corporal Stott now faces an uncertain future.

In the circumstances, we really should see whether we can provide Corporal Stott and others who find themselves in a similar situation with more generous compensation than will be available under the pension arrangements. Local public opinion certainly supports that view. Compensation has been payable in certain circumstances in the past, so we are not talking about a novel situation. A spokeswoman of the United Nations itself feels that compensation should be paid.

I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to provide some comfort and encouragement for Corporal Stott and his parents, and I look forward to my hon. Friend's response to the points that I have made this evening.

10.13 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) on securing this debate on a subject of concern not only to the House but to the public at large. I thank him for his great courtesy in alerting me to some of the points that he wished to raise tonight. I hope, therefore, to be able to make a fuller reply than I otherwise might have.

My hon. Friend has taken great interest in this matter. I am aware of his correspondence with the Ministry of Defence, which I have most vigorously reviewed. He has also made several important points, with which I shall try to deal.

The safety of British forces on the ground in Bosnia is of paramount and cardinal importance to the Government and is clearly something that we must, and do, take extremely seriously. Our troops are very well trained and are extremely well led. They are well equipped for the demands of their mission, and we keep their position under close and constant review. I know that the whole House has profound admiration and respect for their achievements and that hon. Members wish to commend all those who have served, or are serving, in the former Yugoslavian theatre for their courage and fortitude in carrying out vital tasks, often in difficult and dangerous circumstances, with distinction and skill. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have seen at first hand their quite outstanding work and I am unswerving in my admiration for and my gratitude to them.

Sadly, however, it is an inescapable fact of life that in an operation of this type it is more than likely that casualties will be sustained. I should like to take this opportunity to say how deeply sorry I was to hear about Corporal Stott's injury, which he sustained in March when a mortar round landed within the perimeter of his base.

A number of other soldiers have been injured while serving in Bosnia. I hope that we will never forget that 12 British service men paid the ultimate sacrifice and lost their lives since operations began in the region. I offer, once again, my heartfelt sympathy to the families, friends and colleagues of those people. Although I realise that it is small comfort, I hope that they will feel justly proud of the brave sacrifice made by those men in helping to save thousands of innocent lives and in the cause of peace.

My hon. Friend will understand that I am constrained for reasons of medical confidentiality and I cannot comment in detail about Corporal Stott's current medical condition. I can say, however, as my hon. Friend well knows, that he is making satisfactory progress from his leg injury and that he continues to respond to the care that he is receiving from the Army medical service. None the less, it is still too early to tell whether his leg will improve sufficiently to enable him to resume active Army service and whether he will be able to continue with his Army career, should he wish to do so. Whatever the case, I am sure that hon. Members wish him well.

The Government will ensure, as we do with all service men who leave the armed forces, that Corporal Stott receives everything to which he is entitled should he be invalided out of the service. He will of course be entitled to all the benefits of the armed forces pension scheme, which includes an immediately payable index-linked pension, together with a tax-free lump sum equal to three times the annual rate of pension. In addition, if the Department of Social Security accepts that the injury was attributable to his service, Corporal Stott is eligible for an award under the DSS war pensions scheme.

My hon. Friend made a point that has caused concern among many people—what they see as the gross injustice of service men who are injured while serving their country receiving less, at least in terms of a lump-sum payment, than some women who have been discharged from the services on the grounds of pregnancy. I fully understand the sense of outrage and unfairness felt when such widely different awards are given, but however unfair that may seem, the two issues are entirely separate under the law.

The legal basis for compensation is the extent of our legal liability. That applies to women discharged on grounds of pregnancy and to service personnel who are injured because of some negligence on the part of my Department or someone acting on our behalf.

My hon. Friend will recall that, since the repeal of section 10 of the Crown Proceedings (Armed Forces) Act 1987, service personnel have been in the same position as civilians in respect of the payment of compensation for personal injury arising out of their employment.

The level of compensation is determined in accordance with the same legal principles, no matter whether the case involves a woman discharged because she was pregnant or a service man grievously injured in a training accident caused by the negligence of someone for whom we are responsible.

Several factors have conspired, however, to result in what obviously appear as awards to the pregnant service women that are out of all proportion to the amount of money that a service man such as Corporal Stott, and those like him, are likely to receive should they be invalided out of the service.

In pregnancy cases, we are dealing with past losses. The principal loss is loss of earnings and, associated with it, loss of pension rights. This can add up to a considerable sum. To it must be added a further amount for interest as some of the claims may go back to events 10 or more years ago. The addition of interest can, of course, have the effect of almost doubling the original compensation award.

An injured service man, on the other hand, discharged now because of his injury, will receive his compensation now so the same considerations of interest will not apply, although some interest may be payable if it takes some time to agree the full amount of compensation. That is unlikely to compare with the sums awarded in pregnancy cases. Similarly, as my hon. Friend knows, an injured soldier will receive his pension now although, again, he may receive additional compensation to take account of the fact that his pension may be smaller than it would have been if he had served his full engagement.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will be relieved to know that following my Department's recent appeals to the employment appeals tribunal on several of the pregnancy cases, tribunals are in general making lower awards in accordance with the tribunal's very helpful guidelines. Indeed, as I told the House recently, the current average award is about £10,000, and the average of all the 3,235 claims settled so far—about 70 per cent. of the total—is also about £10,000. By way of comparison, in the past 12 months we have settled 235 cases of personal injury. The average settlement has been £30,000, with nine awards in excess of £200,000. The maximum was for £1,000,000.

My hon. Friend also referred to what he considered to be an anomaly between payments made to service men injured in Bosnia and other war-like operations and those injured in Northern Ireland. I am afraid that the fact remains that Corporal Stott is not entitled to an ex gratia payment under my Department's discretionary scheme, which pays criminal injury compensation for members of the armed forces and their dependants who are victims of crimes of violence while serving overseas.

The purpose of that particular scheme is to give comparable levels of compensation to that which would have been awarded by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board had the incident occurred in Great Britain. However, criminal injury compensation is not payable where injury to, or death of, service men and women occurs as a result of war operations or military activity by warring factions. Current operations in Bosnia obviously fall into that category. In those circumstances, members of the armed forces who are invalided from service receive for life the tax-free and index-linked benefits of the armed forces pension scheme and the Department of Social Security war pension, to which I referred earlier.

As my hon. Friend knows well, members of the armed forces in Northern Ireland provide military support to the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the fight against terrorism, so they are not deemed to be involved in war operations while serving there. As terrorist acts are a criminal offence, soldiers and civilians injured in such attacks would be entitled to apply to the Northern Ireland compensation agency, which funds awards of criminal injury compensation in Northern Ireland.

All criminal injury compensation awards for service people in the United Kingdom and overseas, and for civilians in the United Kingdom, are reduced to take account of pensions accruing as a result of the injury.

My hon. Friend referred to an article in his excellent local newspaper, which mentioned alleged United Nations plans to seek to recover compensation payments from countries where UN troops are deployed. I was grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me notice of that matter, which I have been able to follow up for him. As attractive a proposition as the idea may sound—certainly from the UN's point of view—I can confirm, having consulted the UN in New York, that there is no substance to the rumour.

There is absolutely no question of us simply abandoning Corporal Stott, or others like him, should they be invalided out of the service. We acknowledge that some ex-service personnel have special requirements as a result of their service with the armed forces. Of course, we recognise the particular needs of disabled ex-service people, for example, and the Government have not only preserved the preferential provisions of the war pensions scheme, but done much to enhance it.

[Mr. Nicholas Soames]

War disablement pensioners are given priority when referred to the national health service for treatment of their pensioned disablement, both as out-patients and in-patients, subject only to the needs of emergency or other cases.

My Department has developed a comprehensive resettlement package, which includes an extensive range of briefings and training courses, incorporating arrangements for on-the-job training and the introduction of national vocational qualifications.

Service personnel due to be invalided out of the armed forces on medical grounds are eligible for the full range of resettlement provisions after only one year of reckonable service. That is a concessionary entitlement for disabled personnel, as the resettlement package is normally available only to those who have completed at least five years' reckonable service.

Personnel who are medically discharged are given priority over all other service leavers for places on resettlement briefings and training courses and, in addition, a medically discharged service person may seek further resettlement and employment advice for up to two years after discharge.

As my hon. Friend knows, the many veterans' organisations, including the regimental associations, the Royal British Legion and others, continue to provide advice, help and support. Her Majesty's Government are very conscious of the tireless work undertaken by the dedicated teams of voluntary workers throughout the country and of the highly professional way in which they assist their former colleagues. We very much value their advice and hold in high esteem the work that they undertake.

I would simply like to close by repeating my assurance that those members of the armed forces who are injured in action will be given every assistance, both monetary and otherwise, that it is possible for my Department to give.

Once again, I congratulate my hon. Friend on advancing his case in such a measured, sympathetic and compassionate manner. We will continue to ensure that Corporal Stott receives the very finest care that is available to us. We have first-rate service men and women and it is important that we do all that we can to assist them when they most need our help.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-seven minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 6 December 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY HERITAGE FOUNDATION BILL
Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Dental Services

1. **Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service patients have been deregistered by dentists in the last year.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): Some 177,752 adult and 1,154 child patients were deregistered by dentists in the year ending 18 November 1994, but 1 million more patients were registered at 30 September 1994 than at 30 June 1992.

Ms Anderson: What advice would the Minister offer to my constituents in Haslingden, who have been told by their dentist, Gillian Burn, that, as a direct result of the Government's Green Paper, she is no longer able to treat them under the NHS?

Mr. Malone: Where dental services cannot be found from a local dentist, they are available through family health services authorities. Haslingden, which has a population of 14,000, is served by three dental practices, but NHS dental services are available in neighbouring villages. Service are available and we are monitoring the position closely.

Mr. Shersby: What proposals do the Government have for strengthening the provision of NHS dentistry, for improving the quality of the service and for providing fairer remuneration for dentists?

Mr. Malone: My hon. Friend will be well aware that we published the Bloomfield report and the Green Paper that followed thereafter and that there have been consultations with the dental profession. Dentists have provided constructive opinions about moving towards a purchaser-provider relationship in the longer term. We are now dealing with other issues raised in the Green Paper and I hope that we can make some progress on that. We sent officials around the country to garner opinion from dental practitioners. It was a comprehensive and proper survey and we are now considering the results of that comprehensive test of dentists' opinion.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister realise that he, the Secretary of State and Ministers in the Welsh Office are talking absolute nonsense on this matter? They claim that salaried dentists are available, but in my area, which has an establishment of four dentists, only one has been recruited. That is hardly surprising when the salary being offered is £15,000 a year. When will the hon. Gentleman open his eyes to the crisis facing people looking for dental treatment?

Mr. Malone: The fact that the hon. Gentleman must recognise is that, since 1992, adult registrations have risen substantially and the number of dentists practising within the NHS has also risen. He cannot say that a service where expenditure has risen by some 53 per cent. in real terms since 1979 is in decline; it is not. Of course there are concerns that must be dealt with—that is why we looked at Bloomfield, that is why we published the Green Paper and that is why we have had the most significant consultation exercise for dentists that has been undertaken in recent years.

Mr. Illsley: Is there not now a real crisis in NHS dentistry, with a rising number of areas in which NHS dentistry is not available even to existing registered patients? Bearing in mind that the proposals to which the Minister referred will take some years to come to fruition, how will he ensure that NHS dentistry is restored to those areas now?

Mr. Malone: The Government undertook, in discussions on the Green Paper and during the consultation period, to underpin the provision of NHS dentistry, and the profession as a whole has welcomed that. I hope that we can make progress so that we can get the total provision of dentistry back on to the stable footing that we all want.

The hon. Gentleman is wrong—NHS provision is made by dentists who give NHS cover, by family health services authorities directly employed dentists or by community dental services in other areas. The service exists and it is working. Everyone who needs dental treatment under the NHS gets it.

Mr. Allason: Does the Department have a policy on deregistration? Is my hon. Friend aware of the suspicion that a large number of dentists are making any excuse to deregister their patients because of the lack of NHS remuneration? One constituent of mine was refused further treatment by a dentist when he failed to keep an appointment. Although that was obviously an expensive inconvenience for the dentist, it appears that no other dentist in the same FHSA is willing to take on that constituent.

Mr. Malone: If my hon. Friend will write to me with details of that particular case, I will be happy to consider it. The system of continuing care payments ensures that somebody remains registered for two years. I am not sure whether the case that my hon. Friend raised falls into the category of someone rolling out after the two-year period, which happens frequently.

Audit Commission

2. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to implement the recommendations of the Audit Commission.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): The Government extended the remit of the Audit Commission to the national health service as part of our health reforms. That is a further demonstration of our commitment to ensuring the proper stewardship, and the effective use, of NHS resources. Both my Department and the NHS always take the commission's reports seriously and ensure that, where necessary, improvements in practice result.

Mrs. Campbell: Has the Secretary of State taken any notice of the representations made to her by Councillor Janet Jones of Cambridgeshire county council about the underfunding of community care? Would the right hon. Lady like to follow her advice to Cambridgeshire county council and get her act together in respect of underfunding of community care? Will she make sure that Government policies are properly funded?

Mrs. Bottomley: One difficulty faced by local government is the regrettable change of political control of many social service departments. The responsible stewardship to which we had become accustomed from Conservative county councils is sadly lacking among many hung or Labour-controlled councils. The county councillor in question has failed to point out that Cambridgeshire had a 20 per cent. increase in funding for personal social services this year—an extra £10 million. Next year, it will increase by another 13 per cent. If Labour-controlled councils are unable to exercise responsible stewardship, it looks bad for the future of local government, and that is the message of the Audit Commission.

Mrs. Roe: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, thanks to Government reforms, NHS expenditure is now subject to the careful scrutiny of the Audit Commission's external auditors? Is that not particularly important, given the substantial extra money that the Government are giving the NHS? When will my right hon. Friend be in a position to detail how that money will be allocated between different health regions next year?

Mrs. Bottomley: I endorse my hon. Friend's comments. The substantial increase in NHS funding is recognition of the priority that we attach to the service. A £1.3 billion cash boost will be available, and much better value for money will be achieved because of the measures in hand. I am pleased to tell my hon. Friend that I am placing in the Library and in the Vote Office today details of allocations to regions of next year's extra funding. Her region of North Thames will receive an additional £153 million.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Does the Secretary of State recall that the Audit Commission report "Finding a Place" made specific reference to problems arising in the allocation of resources for community care? Is she aware that at least 12 local authorities controlled by various political parties have run out of care funding, with four months still left before the end of the current financial year? Is it not a disgrace that pensioners are having to go to court to obtain basic care services? Should not the Secretary of State, rather than local councils, be in the dock?

Mrs. Bottomley: It is extremely irresponsible to exploit old and vulnerable people's fears about the discharge of the responsibilities that, as the hon. Gentleman knows full well, local government wanted to take on. This year, local government has an extra £1.2 billion for community care. Those are very substantial sums indeed. Next year, the increase will be 10 per cent. So, overall, local government spending on social services will have doubled in four years. Every local authority in the country has extra money for personal social services this year, but all of them must learn the message that the health service had to learn—that each year contains 12 months, not nine. Running out of money after nine months and frightening old and vulnerable people is irresponsible. Good stewardship is the only way in which to get the trust of the public.

Mr. Whittingdale: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Audit Commission estimated that some £50 million could be saved if general practitioners prescribed just 20 generic drugs? Will she take further steps to encourage generic substitution, and in particular, measures such as the institution of a tick-in system on the prescription form?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend makes a further suggestion on how we can curb the rising costs of prescribing. A particularly succesful measure has been the introduction of GP fundholding. The prescribing increases of GP fundholders are going up by 3 or 4 per cent. less than those of non-fundholding GPs. There are many measures to be considered. It is quite clear that, with the extra money that the taxpayer has made available to the health service, we have a duty to ensure that we root out waste and use the money saved in that way as effectively as possible for the benefit of patients.

Asthma

3. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she has taken to stem the increases in the incidence of asthma.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): We have put in place a range of measures on research into the causes and triggers of asthma, and on the care and education of asthmatics, including the chronic disease management programme run by general practitioners.

Dr. Howells: Given that there is no cure as such for asthma and that many people who suffer from that illness must take expensive cocktails of drugs for the rest of their lives to stay alive, will the Minister take the advice of the Select Committee on Health and undertake a review of prescription charge exemptions?

Mr. Bowis: We always look at the cases for prescriptions. We provide the inhalers and drugs for nebulisers on GP prescription, and the nebulisers come on prescription from hospitals. However, the hon. Gentleman is quite right to point out that there is, as yet, no cure. Research shows that the causes are probably of a genetic predisposition, followed by triggers which start off asthma attacks. It is important to put money into research. The good news is that, this year, we have been able to put an additional £5 million into research into respiratory and related diseases.

Mr. Congdon: Given the dangers that asthma presents, does my hon. Friend welcome the fact that 90 per cent. of GPs are now signed up to the chronic disease management programme? Is he aware that, if that is to be a success, he will have to ensure proper liaison with the Department for

Education, to ensure that teachers participate, and co-operate fully, in allowing children to use their inhalers in school?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend makes two important points. Some 90 per cent. of GPs are signed up and participating in the chronic disease management programme. That is an enormous step forward, but it is no less important that schools work alongside school nurses and take their advice, because it is given not only to the children who unfortunately suffer from this condition, but to the teachers who can help them.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: Is the Minister aware that a survey of children's health carried out in Sheffield three years ago showed that no fewer than 26 per cent. of school children in the area had suffered from asthma at some time in their lives? Does he accept that a major cause of that worrying increase is the rundown of good-quality public transport in Sheffield and elsewhere, and the consequent increase in private car use? What is the Minister doing—in consultation with his colleagues in the Department of Transport—to ensure that urgent action is taken to upgrade public transport?

Mr. Bowis: As the hon. Lady may know, I am the first to advocate good public transport. Traffic does not cause asthma, although it may well be one of the factors that exacerbate it. It is interesting to note that New Zealand—where pollution and traffic jams are not a problem—has high asthma levels.

We need to look more widely, and to take account of all the household effects: central heating and double glazing, for instance, have produced more dust mites. We should also consider working conditions. Some people work in a dusty environment. Above all, we should try, between us, to send a message to pregnant mothers begging them not to smoke; smoking by pregnant mothers is one of the main causes of asthma in very young children.

General Practitioner Targets, North Thames

4. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of the progress of general practitioners in meeting their targets under the general practitioner contract in the North Thames region.

Mr. Malone: I am pleased to be able to tell my hon. Friend that, as at April 1993, 88 per cent. of general practitioners in North Thames achieved targets for childhood immunisation, 83 per cent. for pre-school booster and 93 per cent. for cervical cytology. This represents an improvement since 1990 of more than 10 per cent. for childhood immunisation and the pre-school booster, and 25 per cent. for cervical cytology—an excellent record.

Mr. Carrington: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his answer, which shows a most impressive record against the targets. One of the problems facing general practice in west London, however, is the large number of single-doctor surgeries. Will my hon. Friend take measures to enable doctors to come together, so that they can become fundholders as a group?

Mr. Malone: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his acknowledgement of the successful figures. I hope that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) will pass on to the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who is sitting on the Opposition Front Bench, the fact that, when we set them, he said that the targets would never be attainable. General practitioners are now attaining them all over the country.

I can tell my hon. Friend that we encourage single practitioners to combine to form fundholding practices where we are able to do so. We give them other benefits such as allowances specifically geared to ensure that they can manage their practices more easily and co-operate. We have also announced a range of measures to encourage fundholding, not least a community fundholding threshold for lists of 3,000. The position will improve, as my hon. Friend will discover when he visits the Library and finds that his region has an additional allocation of £153,385,000 this year.

Mr. Purchase: Is the Minister aware that, in my authority, the targets for cervical testing have been missed by 40 per cent.—

Madam Speaker: Order. The question relates specifically to the North Thames region. I have tried to tell hon. Members that they must read the Order Paper.

Mr. Purchase: I am trying, Madam Speaker, to make a comparison between my authority and the one referred to in the question.

Madam Speaker: In that case, the hon. Gentleman should table a substantive question. I expect him to do so next month.

Mentally Ill People

5. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements she has in place to ensure that money saved from the closure of mental hospitals is spent on the needs of the mentally ill; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The NHS executive has written to regional general managers to make it clear that the resources released from the closure of a long-stay hospital should be reinvested in community-based services for the same client group. The number of beds available for mentally ill people has remained at about 80,000 for the past 10 years, but there is now a wider range of accommodation in the community.

Mr. Miller: Twice this afternoon, the Secretary of State has referred to stewardship of moneys by local authorities. In that context, does she agree that—in the light of her answer—it would be inappropriate for the Tory-Liberal alliance in Cheshire county council to continue its policy of charging for mental health day-care places?

Mrs. Bottomley: The Conservative group on Cheshire county council will be wanting to point out that Cheshire has 15 per cent. more money this year—£13 million more. I hope that it will also welcome the increases in the mental illness specific grant, particularly the recent allocation in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. It may be that, on charging, it will have considered the report of the Commission on Social Justice, which made it clear that there is a distinction between health care and social care and that it is reasonable to expect a contribution towards social care from those who can afford it if we are to extend the quality and quantity of care for all who need it. I suspect that, in that respect, the Commission on Social Justice had much to offer.

Madam Speaker: Order. I want brisk questions and answers today.

Sir Giles Shaw: I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to the fact that the consequences of selling or closing large mental institutions will result in ploughing back money into health funding. Will she confirm that she is satisfied that there are adequate facilities for care in the community for those discharged from mental hospitals and that there is proper doctor control for those who are having to be transferred?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend makes a vital point. We need to tighten up the care of those who are discharged from hospital and are severely mentally ill. Unless or until it is safe to discharge people from hospital, they should not be discharged and for those in the community who have severe problems we have introduced supervision registers and new guidance. I hope that all hon. Members will support the new power of supervised discharge to ensure that the minority who get into difficulties have better support and better care and are better watched over in the community. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friend.

Mr. Alex Carlile: How can the Secretary of State be satisfied with a situation in which people discharged from mental hospitals are finding themselves in inadequate accommodation with inadequately funded social services support and without the necessary housing provision? What are the Government going to do to improve that?

Mrs. Bottomley: It is extremely important that health and social services give the necessary priority to mental health. There has been a dramatic increase in resources for mental health services with about £2.5 billion being spent. I am surprised that the hon. and learned Gentleman should not be aware of the new £10 million mental illness specific grant, let alone the £1.3 billion for the NHS next year which will allow health authorities to give mental health services the priority that they deserve. Report after report suggests that better co-ordination, better management and better monitoring are also required.

Mr. David Atkinson: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge the valuable work of those who run halfway hostels for the discharged mentally ill? Does she agree that there are still insufficient numbers of such hostels to make community care for the mentally ill a reality? Will she encourage social services authorities to use their ring-fenced grants more for that purpose?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can affirm my hon. Friend's comments. We need comprehensive and coherent mental health services. There is much good practice and we have to ensure that there is greater coherence in every community and that it is targeted on the severely mentally ill.

NHS Contracts

6. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the financial value of NHS contracts placed with the private sector in (a) 1993-94 and (b) 1988-89.

Mr. Malone: The total financial value of all contracts placed by the national health service with the private sector is not known. The NHS has been a substantial purchaser from external suppliers since its inception.

Mr. Burden: Is the Minister aware that he is at least being consistent? In answer to a written question that I tabled last week, the Under-Secretary also said that Ministers did not know the number of patients being treated in the private sector, the costs or even how many were involved. Does the Minister agree that the Opposition have perhaps been a little unfair in accusing Ministers of knowing the cost of everything and the value of nothing, and that Ministers in the Department of Health know neither?

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman obviously seeks an answer, and if he had tabled the right question, he would have got one. If he is interested in the private health care that is purchased from the NHS, I can tell him that in the South Birmingham health authority in 1993-94, the total was £2.3 million. The national figure for 1992-93 was £267 million. I wonder whether we are seeing part of the dinosaur Labour party—the Leader of the Opposition is perfectly content to break down policy boundaries and use grant-aided schools. Are we seeing some sort of division between health care in the public sector and in the private sector? If the hon. Gentleman looks at the glossy brochure published by the Labour council in Hammersmith and Fulham, he will find private health care advertised there. Clearly, people in Hammersmith and Fulham are well ahead of the hon. Gentleman.

Dame Jill Knight: Does my hon. Friend agree that it does not matter whether NHS contracts are placed with the private sector so long as patients are being treated? Will he deplore the blind dogma of the Labour party that it does not matter whether patients wait a long time for treatment or are a long time being treated, but a partnership between the NHS and the private sector must not happen?

Mr. Malone: My hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear that I agree with her. She highlights the dogma of the Opposition, who are more interested in who treats patients than in whether patients are treated. I thought that as the Labour party's clause IV on nationalisation of the means of production was being reviewed there might be less infatuation with who was treating whom in the health service and that whether people received better care might be the main issue.

Mrs. Beckett: How can the Minister agree with his hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) and, indeed, how can she assert that it does not matter whether patients are treated in the public sector or the private sector when we know from the Government's waiting lists initiative that it costs five times as much to treat patients in the private sector? The Secretary of State is always bleating about value for money. Surely that means, ultimately, that fewer patients will be treated for the same money because the

Government are dogmatically insisting on sending them into the private sector. Is that not a waste of money and a denial of care?

Mr. Malone: No, it is not. I am aware of the figures from which the right hon. Lady selectively quotes. If she considers the figures procedure by procedure, she will find that people who were treated in the private sector were treated at a far better cost. Would she say to her constituents that they should wait for treatment rather than be treated in the private sector? I suppose that she is endorsing that sort of dogma today.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that competitive tendering has saved the NHS many tens of millions of pounds and provided the resources to treat more and not fewer patients?

Mr. Malone: Yes. The whole point about health service reforms—not just those involving competitive tendering—is that the benefits and savings go directly back into patient care.That is why there has been a substantial increase in activity for given amounts of taxpayers' money since the reforms were put in place.

Burnley Healthcare NHS Trust

7. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set up an inquiry into recent events at the Burnley Healthcare NHS Trust.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): No. The trust must be allowed to concentrate on treating patients under the leadership of its new chairman, Dr. J. F. Archer.

Mr. Prentice: Does the Minister appreciate that people will be dismayed by that answer? in saying that, I speak not only for my hon. Friends the Members for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson), but for the community health council, the Royal College of Nursing and many others. Was not what happened at Burnley Healthcare NHS Trust an utter fiasco, with macho management, no accountability and no transparency? Is it not clear that an independent inquiry is needed to prove that what happened there is not symptomatic of the new market-driven NHS, where the first duty of doctors is, allegedly, to the organisation and not to their patients?

Mr. Sackville: I agree that there have been uniquely regrettable incidents, but a new chairman and a new chief executive are in post. If the hon. Gentleman is interested in the welfare of patients and staff, which I sometimes doubt, he will want to ensure that the trust returns to a period of stability, with no further allegations or counter-allegations.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is shameful for Opposition Members to try to play politics with this issue? Burnley has had a local difficulty, but recognition should be given to the fine record that the Burnley Healthcare NHS Trust achieved in 12 months, with nine five-star and five four-star ratings in the summer performance league tables. It was the first trust in the north-west to have no patients waiting more than 12 months for treatment. Opposition Members should concentrate on those things and not just rubbish the NHS trusts.

Mr. Sackville: I congratulate the trust on maintaining its excellent standards during these difficult times. I hope that the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) and his hon. Friends will help the trust to get back to normal.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I am sure that the Minister will accept that rows of this sort are debilitating for health care workers. Will he also accept that they are turning out to be increasingly expensive for the NHS? The latest £250,000 pay-off will be seen by many people as an inappropriate use of public funds, particularly when set alongside criticisms of the Minister's Department from the district auditor, the Audit Commission and the Public Accounts Committee in investigating similar incidents. Has it occurred to the Minister that the source of misuse of public money might be the reforms themselves, which are turning out to be more expensive and less efficient and, are in fact, encouraging conflict and corruption?

Mr. Sackville: The performance of the trust—what it has done for patients—speaks for itself. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the payment made was in accordance with the former chief executive's contract.

Mr. Ian Bruce: My hon. Friend will know that I stood as a candidate in Burnley almost a decade ago, when there was a great deal of disquiet about the length of time that people were waiting for treatment. Will he confirm that many more patients are being treated now, due to the adoption of trust status, than when I stood in Burnley?

Mr. Sackville: I have no doubt that my hon. Friend made a very strong impression on Burnley. I can confirm that there have been enormous benefits for the people of Burnley from trust status.

Departmental Statistics

8. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances one patient's treatment in hospital can be counted under Department of Health statistical rules as more than one finished consultant episode.

Mr. Sackville: A patient's treatment in hospital may comprise more than one consultant episode if a hospital patient is transferred from the care of one consultant to that of another, or if a patient is discharged and then subsequently readmitted.

Mr. Jones: In other words, there is double and triple counting. When do the Government intend to use reliable and accurate figures for patient numbers rather than inaccurate and inflated figures? Or do they prefer to use fiddled figures rather than the real values?

Mr. Sackville: What the hon. Gentleman has said is an insult to all the people who work in the national health service, including the statisticians. They agree with Dr. Edith Korner who, in the 1980s, chaired a committee which concluded that patient activity was best measured by the numbers of consultant episodes and that the number of deaths and discharges, which had been used previously, was not the correct way to measured hospital activity.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend accept that some patients do not wish to be treated in mixed wards and are determined to stay in single-sex wards? Can he give a guarantee that if a patient chooses to be treated in a single-sex ward he or she will be placed in one?

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should know better. There is a question on the Order Paper—No. 18—about single-sex wards, if we ever get to it. Let us have a quick answer.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter with which we shall deal with great urgency.

Herbal Medicine

9. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reassurance he can offer to practitioners in herbal medicine and their clients about the impact on them of changes to the Medicines Act 1968 consequent on European directive 93/39.

Mr. Sackville: I am glad to reassure the House that the position of herbal medicines under United Kingdom law is not affected by directive 93/39.

Mr. Michael: The Minister seeks to reassure people, but does he accept that his reassurances are meaningless because they can be challenged in the European Court and shown to be worthless? Why is it that, although Ministers tell us that they are not willing to be pushed around by Europe, we are rushing headlong into this legislation while Germany is delaying it by 10 years? Would it not be better to withdraw the statutory instrument and introduce one that gives specific assurances in respect of herbal medicines?

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Gentleman has chosen wholly to misunderstand the situation. On 20 October, I made it clear in a series of interviews that we would not be pushed by the Commission or anyone else into clearing the shelves of medicines or anything else. By 11 November, I was able to announce that the herbal medicines which were currently exempt would continue to enjoy that exemption under the directive; and on 16 November I wrote to all hon. Members to confirm that. I am glad to be able to say that only yesterday the British Herbal Medicine Association confirmed that it was happy to support the Government's conclusions.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Is my hon. Friend aware of the continuing belief of many hon. Members and their constituents that stronger protection is required in respect of herbal medicines, stronger than that which he has identified and which he has accepted could be overturned by the European Court? Will he therefore refrain from introducing the statutory instrument until the European Commission can give the guaranteed protection that herbalists and their patients demand?

Mr. Sackville: There can be no clearer protection than the fact that those exemptions will continue under both United Kingdom and European law. What more does my hon. Friend want?

Brinnington Health Centre

10. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects funds to be available to extend the Brinnington health centre.

Mr. Bowis: That is a matter for local decision. However, I understand that discussions are taking place locally to identify the most appropriate type of development and funding arrangement, and that negotiations to acquire additional land are in hand.

Mr. Bennett: I thank the Minister for that reply, but does he share my nausea at the number of health service officials and medical experts in Stockport who are prepared to produce survey after survey to demonstrate how much poor health and ill health there is in Brinnington, but who, when asked to provide practical help by enlarging the health centre so that poor health can be prevented or treated, seem totally incapable of taking action? Will the hon. Gentleman urge those people to get a move on and to enlarge the health centre as soon as possible?

Mr. Bowis: I understand that representatives of the Stockport trust are talking to the general practitioners in the two practices concerned, and that progress is being made. I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern for progress. He will know that the North West region has been developing its programme of primary care resource centres, and I understand why he wants his local service to be on a par with that excellent health advance for the area. The good news is that for the coming year the general medical service allocation for the North West region is to increase by 8 per cent. to £86 million, so perhaps good news for the hon. Gentleman will follow.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: If the Brinnington health centre is to be extended, will my hon. Friend confirm that its patients, like my constituents, will be able to use the excellent herbal remedies that have been saved by his fellow Under-Secretary of State as such remedies are efficacious against eczema and asthma while ordinary medicine is not?

Mr. Bowis: I can think of no better place for people to go—although they could, of course, also go to the local shop.

NHS Trusts

11. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people currently serve on the boards of NHS trusts as lay appointees; and what is the total cost of their emoluments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are currently nearly 2,500 non-executives and chairmen serving in 419 trusts in England. The latest provisional figures for 1993-94 give the cost of their remuneration as about £12,500,000—just one penny for every £11 of the trusts' turnover.

Mr. Hardy: In the light of that answer, which should be taken more seriously than the Secretary of State appeared to present it, will the right hon. Lady examine the claim that some trusts made inquiries about the political affiliations of those aspiring to be directors? Will she comment on the fact that a large proportion of directors of trusts have political affiliations with the

Conservative party or are associated with businesses which give substantial support to that party? Does that not merit investigation in the public interest?

Mrs. Bottomley: Again, the hon. Gentleman chooses to make a rather vindictive point rather than heralding the dramatic improvements in his local trust, such as new endoscopy suites, out-patient departments, dermatology departments and physiotherapy departments. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] I shall indeed answer the hon. Gentleman's question. I think that it is wrong to sack NHS chairmen because of their political persuasion, wrong to appoint people to health authorities simply because they are prospective political candidates and wrong to appoint people who are unable to be good stewards of the public purse. As for the Labour party, David Ennals sacked 32 chairmen because he thought that they were Conservative, and the Labour party appointed three people in Greenwich because they were prospective Labour candidates, and it appointed a disqualified Lambeth councillor to the health authority. We want people of good intent who mind about the health service. I do not think that the Labour party should throw stones.

Administration Costs

12. **Mr. Hoon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost to the national health service to administer (a) a general practitioner fundholding practice and (b) a non-fundholding practice.

Mr. Malone: General practitioner fundholding practices receive additional allowances for directly managing their funds and purchasing care on their patients' behalf. These amount to around 2 per cent. of budgets set and are excellent value. It is not possible to disaggregate other administration costs from total costs.

Mr. Hoon: The Minister has conspicuously failed to answer my question. Does he agree with the results of a survey into fundholding in Oxfordshire, which shows that the administration costs of fundholding practices are more than four times the administration costs of non-fundholding practices? Does that not show that the taxpayer is being asked to pay over the odds for a discriminatory, two-tier service?

Mr. Malone: I am sorry that it has not occurred to the hon. Gentleman that the reason is that fundholding practices do things in addition to those done by non-fundholding practices. The administrative costs that apply to a lot of the work of non-fundholding practices are borne by family health services authorities. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand that, he does not understand much about the matter. I hope that he will go back to his constituency and ask three of the fundholding practices there, all of them in extended, purpose-built premises, what their transaction costs are and what their administrative costs are. I bet that he will find that they are giving exceptionally good value for money and that, in addition to that, they are providing even more patient care.

Mr. Hoon *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Malone: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman shakes his head and does not like it.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been attending the Budapest summit of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe.

Mrs. Prentice: What advice would the Leader of the House give to his hon. Friends who have made public commitments to vote against any rise in VAT on fuel? Should they stand by their principles and their constituents or should they abandon those principles, ditch their constituents and toe the Tory party line?

Mr. Newton: My advice to my hon. Friends would be to recognise the importance of the vote tonight and the fact that it will be incumbent on those who wish to vote as the hon. Lady suggests—as she will, no doubt, vote herself—to show a credible alternative and not some cop-out like a windfall tax. The alternatives are other taxes, cuts in expenditure or additional borrowing, with all that that might mean for interest rates.

Q2. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the overwhelming majority of the British people are opposed to any fundamental constitutional change? They do not wish to see a Scandinavian-style monarchy and they do not wish to see a socialist republic. They believe that any such changes would be highly expensive and totally unnecessary. They believe, "If it works, don't fix it."

Mr. Newton: I think that my hon. Friend speaks for the large majority of people in this country in finding it almost unbelievable that the Labour party apparently thinks that its first priority should be to have a year of constitutional upheaval, involving all British institutions, including Parliament, and threatening the Union. I believe that Labour has greatly underestimated the strength and depth of public support for the monarchy.

Mr. Blair: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that in tonight's vote on VAT there will be two types of Tory Member: those who will abide by their specific promise made at the general election not to extend VAT on fuel and those who will make any promise to get elected with no intention of keeping to it even when some of the poorest people in our country will be affected?

Mr. Newton: From what the right hon. Gentleman says, I suppose that we can assume that there will be only one kind of Labour Member—one who votes for an irresponsible cop-out.

Mr. Blair: Is the Leader of the House really saying that there is no other way to restore the nation's finances than through this most hated and unpopular tax? Why does he not look first at the executive share options, the abuses of inheritance tax and the windfall profits made by utilities rather than taxing families and pensioners?

Mr. Newton: I have already described the windfall tax as a cop-out; by definition, a windfall must be a one-off and cannot replace a continuing stream of revenue. As for the right hon. Gentleman's loopholes, I remind him of the words of the director general of the Confederation of British Industry, who said that this

> "is not a loophole-closing exercise at all, rather a massive increase in business taxation".

That is the clue to the Opposition's position. They prattle all the time about their desire to encourage employment, but every time they are pushed, they want to put up business taxes, raise social costs and damage investment and jobs.

Mr. Blair: Is it really the nation's finances that concern the right hon. Gentleman, or the Conservative party's pre-election tax cuts? May I summarise the strategy for which Tory Members of Parliament will vote tonight? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I will have order in this House. *[Interruption.]* Order—from all of you.

Mr. Blair: May I summarise the strategy of Tory Members of Parliament for next year? The price of tax cuts next winter will be some of Britain's pensioners freezing in their own homes this week.

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Gentleman would have done better to stick to his recent practice of asking rather fewer questions. My priority and the priority of Her Majesty's Government is to sustain an economic recovery, which is now giving us some of the strongest growth in Europe, low inflation, rapidly falling unemployment and the prospect of improving living standards. That is what we intend to maintain, and that is what the right hon. Gentleman would throw away.

Q3. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mans: Will my right hon. Friend take steps to ensure that any decision regarding the Royal Air Force's future requirement for transport aircraft will not be taken until the spring, when all the alternatives, including the future large aircraft and British Aerospace's commitment to maintain the existing Hercules fleet at 20 per cent. below the present cost, will have been fully evaluated?

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend will know, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has made it clear that we hope to be able to make an announcement on tranche 3 of the Hercules rolling replacement programme shortly. All relevant factors will be taken into account and, I am sure, will include my hon. Friend's representations on behalf of his constituents.

Q4. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Loyden: Does the Leader of the House recall a question asked during Business Question Time about the provision of a copy of the report of the marine accident investigation branch into the recent research done on the MV Derbyshire? Obviously, the Leader of the House made no impression on his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport because, in fact, the report is not in the Library. I was also surprised today to see a letter telling the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, which had asked for a copy of the report, that the report was a matter for the Secretary of State. Does the Leader of the House not think that the bereaved families, the House and the country are entitled to know what that report says about the investigation carried out and financed by an international union and the RMT?

Mr. Newton: I well understand why the hon. Gentleman has raised the matter and the continuing concern of bereaved families about the loss of the Derbyshire. The position is that the chief inspector of marine accidents submitted his assessment of the sonar and video material provided by the International Transport Workers Federation to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 30 November—less than a week ago. My right hon. Friend is currently considering whether further action needs to taken. I shall, of course, bring to his attention the request that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Mr. Walden: Does my right hon. Friend think that when a Member of this House makes proposals concerning the constitution it is grown-up politics or intelligent politics for Ministers to hunt him like a pack of demented corgis? How does my right hon. Friend think that we as a party can hope to reconcile the encouragement of indiscriminate deference towards well-born nonentities with our policy of encouraging and promoting social talent in this country?

Mr. Newton: I would say to my hon. Friends what I said in answer to a previous question. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and some of his colleagues have significantly underestimated the strength and depth of public support for the monarchy, which is not the same as saying that there will not be continued evolution, as there has been during the past couple of years. More important than that, however, I believe that the hon. Gentleman and some of his hon. Friends have gravely overestimated the public's desire to see constitutional upheaval, including the monarchy, all over the scene. I do not believe that that is what the British public want.

Q5. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Howells: Does the Leader of the House agree that British troops in UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia are doing a superb job in difficult and dangerous circumstances, and that the attacks on General Mike Rose and on British troops by American Congressmen and Bosnian politicians are completely unwarranted and seem designed more to promote further bloodshed than to reach a peaceful situation in the area?

Mr. Newton: Yes, indeed. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question and for the way in which he put it. It is clear that it is widely supported in the House. For my part, and on behalf of the Government, I can say straightforwardly that we do not accept the criticism of General Rose. He and his small, courageous force are doing an excellent job in the most difficult and trying circumstances and they will continue to have our full support. I might add—I know that there is some concern in the House about the matter—that I anticipate that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, who has been much involved with the contact group over the weekend, will wish to make a statement tomorrow.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Does my right hon. Friend share my concern and that of the several hundred people who have contacted me about the case of one of my constituents, the elderly pensioner Mr. Ted Newbery? Is he aware that Mr. Newbery was acquitted by a jury of the action that he took in self-defence against a burglar? The burglar was gaoled. Yet the cleared Mr. Newbery has been asked to compensate the guilty burglar. Does my right hon. Friend agree that justice has not been done, that Mr. Newbery's case should be re-heard and that the law that is applied in such circumstances must be reviewed?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will see that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is present on the Government Front Bench and will have heard what she said. I hope that my hon. Friend will understand—she may even have anticipated what I am about to say—that I must make the point that the judiciary is entirely independent of Government and that it is not the practice for Ministers to comment on its decisions in quite the way that she invites me to do. On the other hand, she will have gauged, as no doubt others have also done, the reaction in the House generally to the events that she has described.

Q6. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Is the Leader of the House aware that Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein claims to have no semtex in his hands? Will he assure the House that Her Majesty's Government will not be misled by such blandishments? In the light of the Hamas parallel in Israel, will the right hon. Gentleman give an assurance that the guard will not be lowered, nor the entry requirement for talks?

Mr. Newton: The handing over of arms and explosives is, as I know that the hon. Gentleman appreciates, an important issue to be addressed in the exploratory dialogue which begins on Friday. I can give the hon. Gentleman a clear-cut assurance on behalf of all my right hon. and hon. Friends that Her Majesty's Government will not leave the people of Northern Ireland—or, indeed, of Great Britain—exposed.

Mr. Day: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Conservative party will always seek to protect those parents who rightly put the interests of their children first in making a choice about where to send their children to school, even if that means defending the Leader of the Opposition from the policies of his own party?

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend knows, the policy of Her Majesty's Government is not only to defend the right of choice of parents in these and other circumstances, but, so far as possible, to enhance and increase them. What I would really like to hear from Opposition Front-Bench Members—I can see several who have opposed this in the past—is a clear-cut commitment to call off their local authorities, which are trying to frustrate that choice throughout the country.

Q7. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Davies: As the chair of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has stated, the Student Loans Company Ltd. is in such chaos that students are being denied the resources which the Government say they require in order to live. What do the Government intend to do about that?

Mr. Newton: What I will do on this occasion is to make the point that the suggestion that the hon. Gentleman has just made appears inconsistent with the fact that, during this Government's period in office, participation in higher education has risen from one in eight of the relevant group to one in three.

Public Expenditure (Scotland)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement about public expenditure in Scotland. Copies of my statement and the table accompanying it will be available in the Vote Office when I sit down.

In his Budget statement, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Government's overall expenditure plans. I am now able to announce how I propose to allocate the resources available for my programmes in Scotland. Full details will be included in my departmental report, which will be published in March.

We have been successful in controlling inflation. Inflation this year will be around 2 per cent.—half the level predicted a year ago. Low inflation will continue. Thanks to that, spending power in 1995-96 will be 2.5 per cent. higher than we expected when making provisional spending plans last year. We cannot let that feed through into a higher level of real spending, without jeopardising our broader objectives of sustained growth free from inflation. Firm control over public expenditure is therefore an essential discipline and one that we are determined to maintain.

Against that background, the resources available to me for allocation next year at over £14.25 billion represent a very fair settlement. In cash terms, there is an increase of about £250 million over this year's planned spending. The total budget will be more than 1 per cent. higher in terms of spending power than the previous, provisional plans for that year. My allocation is equivalent to spending of over £6,200 for every home in Scotland—nearly £120 a week.

In order to increase the cash available to meet my top priorities, my plans release resources by reining back on the cost of government, and by taking advantage of the increasing scope for private investment in capital projects.

In line with our general policy outlined in the White Paper on the civil service, I am pursuing substantial efficiency savings in my Departments. The Scottish prison service is a special case and will receive extra cash while being set demanding efficiency targets. The cost of running my other Departments will reduce over the next three years by more than 10 per cent. in real terms. Increases in pay will be fully funded by efficiency savings, allowing services to the public to be maintained.

I look to local government to follow central Government's lead. Support of local authorities' current and capital expenditure accounts for 47 per cent. of all Scottish Office expenditure. Local government has benefited equally from the fall in inflation. It must play its full part in reducing the cost of government and in the drive for efficiency improvement. With local authority staffing levels having increased by over 2,000 in the year to June 1994, with an increase of no less than 9 per cent. in central services staff, there is clearly scope to do so.

On Budget day, I announced my decisions for local authority spending in 1995-96—both Government-supported expenditure and aggregate external finance. Within that, I have made provision for a range of new burdens and for the financial effects of local government reform, including specific provision next year for local authority elections. I shall make separate provision for the operating costs of the new authorities in their shadow year.

My plans for local authority capital spending are contained within the relevant programme totals. They assume that local authorities will take full advantage of the private finance initiative. At this time of transition in local government, it is important to limit the burdens that the new councils will inherit. I am therefore tightening up aspects of the capital control regime. From 1 April 1995, notional receipts created by the lease of assets to third parties will no longer entitle authorities to incur extra capital expenditure. In addition, with immediate effect, the cost of assets funded under what are known as covenant schemes will score in full against capital allocations in the first year.

In other respects, the capital control arrangements are unchanged. Scottish local authorities retain the significant benefit of being able to augment allocations by the full amount of actual receipts generated in the same year. With aggregate capital provision of £880 million a year, and capital spending from all sources likely to exceed £1.2 billion next year, the resources available to local authorities for investment remain substantial.

I also announced on Budget day the introduction of a unified business rate poundage for Scotland at the same level as in England, thus successfully completing our objective of harmonisation. The continuation of poundages at the English level will ensure a level playing field. That has been welcomed by Scottish business. Maintaining harmonisation after future revaluations will not be a burden on Scottish expenditure programmes. I also announced transitional arrangements to phase in the effect for businesses faced with significant changes in their rates bills. The Exchequer will provide £72 million in support of those arrangements.

I now refer to individual programmes. Public investment in Scotland's roads and transport infrastructure will exceed £1.2 billion over the next three years, bringing the total public investment since 1988-89 to nearly £2.3 billion. As a result of the high investment in the national roads programme in recent years, the central Scotland motorway network is almost complete. The dualling of the road between Perth, Dundee and Aberdeen is now complete, and exceptional progress has been made on upgrading the A74. At present, there are £370 million worth of national schemes under construction in Scotland. Public spending on that programme will be nearly 6 per cent. higher in real terms next year than it was in 1988-89. Work will proceed on improving the major routes such as the A74, the M8 and the A1. My plans also maintain my commitment to shipping services to the west and north of Scotland.

At more than £2,850 million over the next three years, the gross resources available for housing allow me to meet the resource planning assumptions for capital expenditure by local authorities and to recognise their funding requirements for care in the community projects. They also maintain high investment in house condition through improvement grants, and enable Scottish Homes to maintain the development programme in 1995-96 at about the current level. Provided that local authorities and Scottish Homes target their resources on key national priorities, ensure maximum value for money, and are imaginative in attracting private investment, we shall continue to make good progress in tackling Scotland's housing needs.

There will be extra cash available next year for priority public services. I am able again to meet fully our commitment to provide for an increase in real terms in the public expenditure devoted to the national health service in Scotland, year on year. In 1995-96, net expenditure on health in Scotland will exceed £4.1 billion, which is £13 million or 3.6 per cent. more cash than our plans for the current year.

That will mean that, over this year and next, spending on the health service will have increased by 3.2 per cent. over and above inflation. At that level, expenditure on the NHS in Scotland next year will be at an all-time record high of nearly £800 for every man, woman and child in Scotland. Furthermore, I am increasing the allowance for community care within the local government settlement next year to around £180 million. Taken together with the growth in expenditure on the health programme, that should enable the needs of the Scottish people for care in the community to be fully met.

The maintenance of law and order and the protection of the public continue to be prime concerns for the Government. We have invested substantial public expenditure in the law and order programme, increasing spending by 25 per cent. in real terms over the past five years. Measures taken to improve value for money and to target resources on the essentials—such as civilianisation to release police officers for operational duties—are now bearing fruit. To keep up the momentum, I have maintained previous spending plans and allocated an extra £20 million over the next three years. That will ensure that we can build on the progress already made.

Most expenditure on social work in Scotland is the responsibility of the local authorities, and I have provided some £16 million in the local government settlement in recognition of new burdens. With regard to the social work expenditure within my own direct control, I have been able to provide for an increase in 1995-96 of some £1.2 million over planned spending for the present year. In addition to providing for all on-going services, the increase will allow me to provide for the initial set-up costs of the new children's reporter administration and also to give additional support to voluntary organisations.

Rural Scotland will continue to benefit from further substantial increases in support for agriculture, which will increase by £63 million next year— nearly 10 per cent. after allowing for inflation. The rural environment will also be a priority, with Scottish Natural Heritage receiving a budget of more than £120 million over the next three years.

Provision for historic buildings repair grants will be increased to £12 million a year. To complement support for the natural and built heritage, funding for the arts will exceed £220 million over three years, allowing a start next year to the main construction phase of the new museum of Scotland. There will be an increase of nearly 3 per cent. in the budget of the Scottish Arts Council.

Education and training are priorities for the Government and for me personally. The education budget of the Scottish Office Education Department will exceed £1.35 billion next year. In a tight survey for local authority capital, I have chosen to maintain capital provision for school-building at more than £70 million in all three years. Numbers of students in higher and further education will continue to rise next year in line with the Government's objectives.

Earlier this year, I assumed policy responsibility for training in Scotland and am now able to plan training and vocational education on an integrated basis. I recently published the consultation paper, "Training for the Future". I am happy to announce that my plans make provision for training and vocational education expenditure of around £30 million over the next three years to fund the new measures proposed in that document. Detailed decisions will be announced in the new year in the light of the responses to the consultation paper.

My plans once again give high priority to enterprise development. In total, I have allocated more than £1.8 billion for expenditure on industry, enterprise and training over the next three years. Within that total, I have allocated £467 million to the Scottish Enterprise network for 1995-96. Those resources will allow the enterprise network to invest in training as well as to promote its other key objectives of enterprise development and environmental improvement.

The environmental budget of Scottish Enterprise will include specific provision of £3 million a year to improve brownfield land in Glasgow for housing development. For Highlands and Islands Enterprise, I have allocated a budget of £77.3 million. I am making ample provision for continued encouragement of inward investment, and I shall support the development of a new strategy for tourism with an additional £1.5 million, an increase of nearly 10 per cent., for marketing Scotland as a tourist destination.

The Government are determined to keep a firm grip on public expenditure so that the economy continues to improve. Improving the efficiency of delivering services is a policy that should apply throughout the public service—in my own Departments, in local government, in the national health service and in other public bodies. In that way we shall give good value to the people of Scotland for the £14.25 billion that this Scottish Office budget represents. We shall protect key public services and, by strengthening the business environment and our skills base in particular, we shall lay secure foundations for Scotland's future prosperity.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): So far do the figures of the Secretary of State for Scotland depart from reality, I am tempted to think that it is almost a conjuring show—Tommy Cooper without the laughs—with horrible consequences for the people of Scotland. The public expenditure statement is nothing short of a personal humiliation for the Secretary of State for Scotland and it is a hammer blow for Scotland, which will mean fewer jobs and much worse service provision. The right hon. Gentleman lost in Cabinet the argument about the second increase in VAT on fuel—perhaps to be saved by his hon. Friends tonight. Now he has been subjected to what can be described only as a public expenditure mugging by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

The Secretary of State described the settlement as fair. If it is fair, why is total Scottish spending over the next three years to fall by more than 4 per cent. in real terms, according to the Government's Red Book, while spending in Wales will fall by only 3 per cent., overall United Kingdom spending will fall by less than 1 per cent. and

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spending in Northern Ireland will stay the same? Why is Scotland being short-changed yet again? Will the right hon. Gentleman kindly explain that?

Even this Government, who have elevated duplicity and fiddling the figures almost to a management science, cannot conceal the true extent of their economic failure and waste. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that even the Treasury's figures show that total public spending in Scotland will fall by £600 million in real terms over the next three years? Does he acknowledge that when the figures are adjusted for inflation, spending on housing, for example, will be cut by £125 million—almost 20 per cent., one fifth, of the housing budget—over the next three years?

How can the right hon. Gentleman avoid being aware of the devastating impact of cutting housing budgets at a time of record homelessness? Since 1978, 400,000 homeless applications have been made. Even the Government's house condition survey shows that more than half a million Scottish houses suffer from damp and condensation. In those circumstances, how can he possibly defend such massive cuts in housing finance?

Let us look at where else the axe will fall over the next three years. The right hon. Gentleman intends to hack £50 million in real terms—3.5 per cent.—from the education budget, which is already sorely pressed. What price the value of our schools, education and training, never mind the nursery education to which we are told the Government are now committed?

The right hon. Gentleman intends to cut a huge hole in the roads budget. He has not itemised where the cuts will be, so perhaps he will now tell the House which road programmes will be lost through a cut of 13.5 per cent. in real terms over the next three years. There are to be cuts in the arts, in law and order and in training. All those programmes will be cut in real terms over the next three years. Is not it true that social work services also will be cut by 5 per cent. in real terms over the next three years? Yet local authorities now have the increased burden of community care and the new children's legislation. Thousands of old people will be coming out of hospitals and back into the community. In addition, the problems of drugs and alcoholism will have to be met from the fast-diminishing budget.

How on earth can the Secretary of State boast with a straight face about increases in health service cash? There is a mounting health problem in Scotland, including the tide of drugs and all that that brings. Yet today he proposed a real terms increase over three years of only 0.6 per cent.—less than 1 per cent. in real terms for Scotland's health budget. Next year, the real increase in health service spending in Scotland will be only £14 million—less than half the £30 million poured down the Health Care International drain, and that is on one failed private hospital alone.

Those are swingeing cuts by any standard and they will mean even more misery for Scots on top of the seven new Tory taxes imposed in the last two Budgets. If that were not bad enough, today's cuts in council cash mean that Scottish taxpayers can expect savage cuts in local services as well as increases in council tax bills. The figures for council spending which the Secretary of State has just announced will deepen the cash crisis already hitting Scottish local government. Is not it true that Government support next year will be cut by £133 million in real terms, at a time when councils must pick up a huge tab for reorganisation that is unwanted, unnecessary and has been foisted on them, and are facing additional responsibilities for care in the community?

Is the Secretary of State aware that Strathclyde regional council alone has calculated that the cuts plus capping will mean a drop in its budget of £107 million this year and a 25 per cent. increase in council tax? We can expect the same story all over Scotland—more broken promises, more taxes and worse services.

Ministers tell us that money must be saved, so why are they prepared to waste more than £700 million on reorganisation that nobody wants, that is completely unnecessary and that was designed only for Tory party self-interest? Ministers say that they are strapped for cash, so why did they waste £30 million of taxpayers' money on a private hospital that went bust fewer than 112 days after the Secretary of State officially opened it?

Ministers bleat unconvincingly about sound public finance. Do they not remember that they squandered more than £14 billion of taxpayers' money on the poll tax? If an elected council wasted money on such a monumental scale, the Secretary of State for Scotland would be calling for surcharging.

The statement offers precious little hope to the 220,000 unemployed people in Scotland or to the 75,000 who have been unemployed for more than a year. Neither will it do anything to enhance business confidence or to boost the already ailing recovery. Scotland will pay dearly for the economic failure and waste of this lame-duck Government.

The Scottish people have been lied to by a Government who promised them lower taxes and higher spending, but who gave them higher taxes and lower spending. They are sick and tired of the Government's incompetence. This is in no way a fair settlement. It is a bad deal for Scottish business and short change for the Scottish people.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman talked about a conjuring show, but it is he who is up to tricks—the same tricks as he tried to play on the House a year ago, when, in response to my public expenditure statement, he said:

> "The cost of living in Scotland will rise sharply and all our public services . . . will be cut substantially."—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1993; Vol. 234, c. 316.]

The reality is that inflation is 2 per cent. and not the 4 per cent. that the hon. Gentleman assumed. The increase in cash terms for all our programmes—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may not like the facts, but I will not allow the hon. Gentleman to get away with his conjuring tricks. It is the hon. Gentleman who is facing humiliation.

The cash increase was 3.8 per cent, and the real terms increase across the whole Scottish Office expenditure programme, after allowing for the rise in the cost of living, was 1.8 per cent. Under this year's formula, the Scottish Office block remains as it was, with Scotland receiving 10.66 per cent. of spending in England under comparable headings. That formula was introduced by a Labour Government and has been updated in the light of population changes.

The hon. Gentleman made comparisons with Wales, Northern Ireland and England, but they bear no relation to reality. If he will examine the table in the Budget day announcement made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, he will find that Scotland is placed well in the middle of the various spending Departments. Moreover, the spending programme that I announced today, far from embodying the cuts that the hon. Gentleman tried to portray, will be more than 1 per cent. higher in terms of spending power than previous spending plans this year.

I told the House that over the next three years, spending on roads and the transport infrastructure will be no less than £1.2 billion, which will lead to a total of £2.3 billion since 1988-89. A whole range of roads is under construction at present, and more are about to start. In the summer of 1995, the Eaglesfield-Kilpatrick-Fleming section of the M6 will be completed; in December this year, the Cleuchbrae-Dinwoodie Green section; in December 1995, the Eaglesfield phase; in February 1996, the Newbridge-Edinburgh road; in the autumn of 1995, the Skye bridge, built with private sector money; and so on. When one reflects on the Labour party's plans to cut road spending, it is, to put it mildly, misleading to the country for it to pretend that we should be increasing it further.

Last year, there was a cash increase of 3.9 per cent. in the housing programme. Over the next three years, £2.8 billion will be available for housing. That will enable very considerable progress to be made, including in the next year some £300 million towards dampness and condensation.

The hon. Gentleman asked about education. He might like to reflect on the fact that, in the current expenditure year, resources have increased over the 1993-94 outturn by no less than 9.9 per cent. in cash terms and by 7.8 per cent. in real terms, on top of which our plans for next year allow for an increase of 3.7 per cent. in cash terms—a very substantial commitment to education, which would enable higher education to continue to expand.

The hon. Gentleman raised social work, and referred particularly to community care. He might like to know that the resources in housing authorities for community care will rise next year, from £25 million this year to some £45 million to £50 million, that the spending for Scottish Homes on community care will rise from some £78 million in 1993-94 to £82.5 million in 1994-95, that the budget for social work, providing inter alia for community care, will rise from £345 million to £390 million, and that the total new resources for local authorities for community care will rise from £170 million to £241 million—a rise of some 40 per cent. So the hon. Gentleman had better have another look at his figures and come back into the real world.

As for the arts programme, let me reassure the hon. Gentleman that we have plans to increase spending for the Arts Council by some £700,000, and spending for the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland is up by some £300,000, enabling both those important bodies to make considerable progress.

The spending power of local authorities will be 1.5 per cent. higher than was planned a year ago—an increase in cash terms of £103 million in Government support and expenditure. If local authorities paid the same attention to efficiency in the way in which they deliver services, as my staff in the Scottish Office are doing, their numbers having reduced by some 35 per cent. in the past 15 years compared with a 5 per cent. increase in local authority staff—indeed, local authorities have had a staff increase of 2,100 in the past year alone—they would find that greater resources were available to apply to local services.

This is a good settlement in a difficult year, during which it has been necessary to control public expenditure. I look to all Departments that spend the public's money to spend it in the most efficient way that they can.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents will welcome his comments on efficiency saving, law and order, business rates, agriculture and tourism? They will, of course, be concerned that he did not find in his proposals a method of looking at a flood prevention scheme for the Tay valley, or, indeed, the upgrading of the single carriageway parts of the A9, which have been prone to accidents. Other than that, my constituents will feel that it is a good proposal in difficult economic circumstances world wide.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and take note of his concern about flood prevention, which is a matter to which my Department is giving attention.

My hon. Friend particularly welcomed the progress that has been made in business rates. He was right to do so, because as a result of contributions from both the Scottish Office block and the Treasury in recent years, rising to £440 million, we have now eliminated the discrepancy in business rates that has arisen from the high spending of Labour-controlled authorities in the past, and have brought the average Scottish poundage down from 58.1p in 1991-92 to 43.2p, and it will now remain harmonised with the uniform business rate in England. That is a major achievement. The average poundage this coming year alone will be down by 11 per cent. or 5.3p. That will have a major benefit for Scottish business.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Is not it a rule of thumb that when the Secretary of State compares next year's expenditure with spending on some arbitrary date in the past, he really means that spending will be less than it has been in the current year?

How much of the increase in local authority staff to which the Secretary of State referred is due to local authorities' having engaged part-time non-manual staff to clear up the poll tax mess and introduce the council tax? Is not it the case that, after 18 years of cutting back the fat, local authorities are now being asked to hack into the backbone of public services and put up council tax? In short, the message that the right hon. Gentleman's statement sends to the people of Scotland is, "Pay more, get less."

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense, as he will realise if he looks at the figures. Local authorities have continued year by year to increase staff numbers, which are now higher by several thousand than they were when the Government took office. Authorities constantly tell us that we are taking powers and responsibilities away from them; but the number of Scottish Office staff has fallen by more than 30 per cent. in the past 15 years, while the provision of local government services has continued to rise.

In the past year alone, the increase in the provision of central services was no less than 9 per cent. I look to local authorities to use the substantial resources that they are being given, which account for no less than 47 per cent. of the total Scottish Office block of £14.25 billion. That

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is more in cash terms than authorities have ever had before, and I look to them to spend it efficiently and responsibly.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that until the Labour party comes clean about how much it will spend, where it will find the money and what it will spend the money on, its media whingeing will continue to have more than a whiff of insincerity about it? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, despite a very tight public expenditure round, he has been able to increase resources to help the fight against crime in Scotland while at the same time maintaining our manifesto commitment to the national health service in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I can confirm both those points. The law and order and protective services budget will have increased by 25 per cent. in real terms over a five-year period, and spending next year will increase by £11 million as compared with last year. That will enable the fight against crime to continue—a fight that the figures now show to be increasingly succesful.

I can also reassure my hon. Friend that spending on the national health service next year will be 53.2 per cent. higher, in real terms, than the level that we inherited from the Labour party. Last year's increase was 2.9 per cent. in real terms, and we anticipate a cash increase of 3.6 per cent. next year—substantially above the likely rate of inflation.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): Is not the Secretary of State simply engaged in a conjuring trick with the roads figures? Does not he appreciate the importance of transport infrastructure to west central Scotland, where we are trying to secure inward investment to sustain jobs? In that context, will he say something about the proposals for the M80 motorway between Stepps and Haggs? When will all the planning procedures and so forth be completed, and when can we expect the road to be constructed?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will know better than many hon. Members how much progress has been made in road building in central Scotland. He will appreciate that the planning procedures and other details are not matters entirely for me; let me point out, however, that the 1994-95 programme was increased, in cash terms, by 5.6 per cent. on the outturn for the previous year. That is a real terms increase of 3.6 per cent., and represents a substantial commitment. The programme that we are now implementing will provide for 10 new trunk road starts over the next three years.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Does my right hon. Friend consider the words of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson)—who suggested in a whining, whingeing way that there should be more public expenditure in Scotland—consistent with the hon. Gentleman's intention of entering the Lobby tonight to vote against a tax measure whose aim is to support and sustain existing public expenditure levels?

Mr. Lang: I can only agree with my hon. Friend. Indeed, Labour Members—who constantly cry out for higher expenditure—never offer us a suggestion of where that expenditure should come from. If they were being honest with the House today, they would either explain how they would raise the money through more taxation or higher borrowing, or explain where they would make cuts to make the increases that they demand.

Mr. David Marshall (Glasgow, Shettleston): Does the Secretary of State accept that, despite the best efforts of Glasgow district council and Strathclyde regional council, Glasgow on its own cannot solve the serious problems facing the city, having as it does eight of the 10 constituencies with the highest unemployment in Scotland? Will the Secretary of State tell the House how this settlement—the worst for 20 years—can possibly benefit the people of Glasgow?

Mr. Lang: Apart from anything else, I announced in my statement over £9 million over the next three years for brownfield sites in Glasgow for the benefit of housing. Also, I am committing substantial resources to the industry, enterprise and training budget, much of which will find its way to Glasgow. In the current year, the increase was no less than 12.9 per cent. in cash terms over the previous year's outturn and we shall continue to commit £1.8 billion over the next three years to that important programme. Glasgow will undoubtedly benefit from some of that.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Does my right hon. Friend accept that my constituents in Kincardine and Deeside will recognise that he has made a fair settlement in a tight expenditure round and will welcome his emphasis on the efficient delivery of services—something that the Labour party does not seem to understand? In that context, and in view of the welcome 3.6 per cent. increase in health spending, will he be willing to review the funding arrangements by region to take account of efficient delivery of services and growth in population?

Mr. Lang: I can assure my hon. Friend that, in the distribution of resources, great care will be taken to reflect the needs of the different parts of Scotland. Not only is the overall health budget increasing by the figure repeated by my hon. Friend, but he might like to know that the programme for hospital and community health services will increase substantially next year. A figure of £201.9 million is scheduled for that, compared with an outturn in 1993-94 of £160 million. Family health services are budgeted to increase by 15.6 per cent. in cash terms during the next financial year.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): The Secretary of State will recall that I have had considerable support from his junior Ministers on the problem of toxic waste dumping in my constituency. The Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), has said that the Scottish Office will play a role in clearing up the sites. Despite that, when it came to the Secretary of State's turn to do something about it, he maintained a bureaucratic attitude and has allocated no extra money for the problem. Does he feel no shame that his uncaring attitude is putting at risk the health of my constituents?

Mr. Lang: If that were my attitude, I would feel shame, but as it is not my attitude, I must rebut the hon. Gentleman's charge. I have already told him about the £3 million per annum for brownfield sites in Glasgow. I can also assure him that the environment budget of Scottish

Enterprise will be nearly £83 million in 1995-96 and from that substantial resources will be used for the sort of dereliction and contamination to which he referred.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): How can the Secretary of State possibly justify misspending £30 million of public money on a private hospital in Clydebank while there are proposals for the closure of thousands of beds for frail elderly patients throughout Scotland, including the proposed closure of Lochgreen hospital in my constituency and the loss of 155 beds at Bellsdyke hospital? Is not the Government's hidden agenda to shift more and more frail elderly patients out of NHS hospitals and into the private sector where they can be exploited, even to the extent of their homes being sold over their heads?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely wrong. The Health Care International hospital was funded out of the regional selective assistance budget at a time when it was not part of the Scottish Office block. Therefore, the hon. Gentleman's intervention on that is irrelevant to today's decisions. It did not come out of the health service budget and we need no lessons on health expenditure from the Labour party since we have increased health expenditure over and above the rate of inflation by no less than 53 per cent. in the past 15 years.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Does the Secretary of State agree that it is difficult for hon. Members to consider the percentages that he has given us unless we get an analysis? Does he further agree that his Government have created the problems in housing and crime and that that is why we have the extra expenditure? I noticed that he never said how many jobs would be created when he spent his money on trade and industry.

Mr. Lang: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome the fact that, in each of the past two years, crime has fallen by substantial percentages. We are determined to give authorities the resources to ensure that that continues. The hon. Gentleman might like to reflect that, in the past five years, some 47,000 jobs have been either created or protected by our inward investment programme, largely funded by regional selective assistance, for which the budget next year will be substantial.

Dr. Norman A.. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): May I offer my sincere thanks to the Secretary of State for his continuing commitment to the mental illness specific grant? I should like more, but there it is. Why is it, however, that he and his officials continue to ignore in such a disgraceful way the housing needs of disabled people? May I remind him that many of those people, particularly wheelchair users, are unable to enter the housing market because of their low incomes? Why do he and his officials continue to ignore those people's needs?

Mr. Lang: We have not ignored the needs of disabled people when it comes to housing. The hon. Gentleman will know about the large number of small urban renewal initiatives to which we have committed resources. I understand that he has a Margaret Blackwood housing association arrangement in his constituency. I am grateful to him, however, for his remarks of appreciation on the mental illness specific grant. He might like to know that, having increased that grant from £10 million to £14 million last year, we shall increase it to £18 million next year—a 28 per cent. increase. That will mean that, over a four-year period, the grant will have increased sixfold.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Does the Secretary of State concede that the budget increase is less than the inflation rate and that it comes as part of a three-year plan of cuts that amount to £600 million? At a time of greater demands through care in the community, local government reorganisation and the Children (Scotland) Bill, which will be soon, something must give if cuts are made. What is that something? Will he state whether the Highlands and Islands Enterprise money is in addition to, rather than a replacement for, objective 1 cash? Is the Scottish prison service settlement simply a prelude to privatisation?

Mr. Lang: The answer is no to the last question and yes to the question before that. On the other questions, the figures that we announced today are more than 1 per cent. higher in terms of what that spending can buy than the provisional spending plans of a year ago.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for his reference to the A1 road, but we shall keep an eye on that one. The rest of the news, however, seems to be an unmitigated disaster. Will he deal specifically with housing? As 40,000 Scots are becoming homeless every year, is there anything in the package that will add to the supply of affordable rented housing in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: Yes, and as for disasters, let me remind the hon. Gentleman, since he is involved in farming, of the announcement of substantial increases, amounting to some £63 million, to the farming sector next year. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about housing?"] I am coming to housing. The hon. Gentleman said that it was an unmitigated disaster, but he might like to reflect on his farming constituents' interests, about which, presumably, he knows a little. The programme should generate about £170 million in private finance for housing, in addition to the resources going into it. Scottish Homes will have enough to produce about 8,300 housing units overall—300 more than its target for this year.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): How can the Secretary of State possibly justify the fact that, although tens of thousands of Scottish families live in damp, decaying and cold houses, he intends to cut the housing budget by 19.4 per cent. over three years? Will he confirm that, on one and the same day, he intends to lead at least most of his Scottish colleagues into the Division Lobby to impose VAT on fuel at 17.5 per cent. while taking away the resources to give people in Scotland warm, comfortable and dry houses?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman cannot have heard me announce the figure of £300 million for dampness and condensation. On VAT on fuel, he will have heard my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announce substantial further increases in benefit for pensioners, for people on other benefits and for people in need. The increases include those in severe weather payments and the substantial increases in tax allowances. If the hon. Gentleman takes account of all those resources, set against a background of falling fuel

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prices as a result of privatisation, he will recognise that the needs of the people to whom he referred will be well met.

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): Will the Secretary of State refer back to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) about funding for housing in Glasgow? Recently, the Minister with responsibility for housing—the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton)—toured my constituency. He was so dismayed by the condition of the houses that he immediately awarded £1.1 million to Pollok. He agreed that it was insufficient and thought that Pollok should receive far more, but he was, unfortunately, unable to deliver. What has the Secretary of State to say about that?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's constituency received a supplementary allocation and his figures wholly disregard the fact that, under the housing revenue account, housing resources between last year and the current year increased in cash terms by no less than 6.8 per cent. and that the non-HRA housing figures increased by 7.8 per cent. in the same period, which is a real-terms increase of 5.7 per cent. The figures that I announced today will enable the housing gross provision to be maintained.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): Too many of our children are educated in rundown and crumbling schools. Is the Secretary of State aware that the £70 million that he announced today for capital building this year is in real terms half of what it was in 1979? Does he agree that that is a confession of failure?

Mr. Lang: No, I certainly do not agree. If I examine the spending figures under the previous Labour Government and recall the 30 per cent. cuts that were imposed right across the board, not even by Labour Chancellors but by the International Monetary Fund acting on behalf of common sense and responsibility in place of the then Labour Government, I reflect that I need no lessons from the Labour party.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): Does the Secretary of State agree that aggregate external finance to local authorities is to increase by only 0.64 per cent. and that, once transferred community care money is stripped out, the minuscule cash increase disappears altogether? Given that the Government's GDP deflator is 3.25 per cent., does he admit that it is, in fact, a massive cut and will he state publicly that any cuts in council services and any increases in council tax beyond 3.25 per cent. are entirely due to the Government?

Mr. Lang: No. I will not admit that that is a massive cut. The hon. Gentleman is making the same mistake as his hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). Last year, the GDP deflator at this time was around 4 per cent. and the inflation rate was around 2 per cent. This year, the GDP deflator is 3.25 per cent. and the inflation rate at present is running at 2 per cent. Provided that inflation does not rise to the levels that the hon. Gentleman is assuming, the figures that he cited are incorrect. The hon. Gentleman should also reflect on the fact that aggregate external finance is 45 per cent. higher per head in Scotland than in England.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): The Secretary of State will be aware that in all our constituencies there are growing queues of people looking for homes. In the latest payment round, the Secretary of State allocated Renfrew district four houses for the homeless. Today's announcement means that thousands of people will continue to be homeless. When will the misery queue end? When will the Government act to ensure that the people of Scotland have a future, a home and the right to live in comfort?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is exaggerating. Gross expenditure on housing in 1995-96 will be maintained at 1994-95 planned levels in cash terms. Expenditure per house continues to rise in cash terms—from £667 per house in the current year to no less than £717 at the end of the three-year survey.

Mr. Brian H. Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): How much has been made this year from the sale of the assets of the industrial sites in the five new towns? How much does he intend to get from such sales next year and what does he intend to do with the money?

Mr. Lang: The figures do not form part of the public expenditure announcement that I am making today, but I have made substantial provision for the new towns to enable them to complete their task as they approach wind-up.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): The biggest concern of the people of Scotland, and the greatest blight on Scotland, remains unemployment. Far from helping to reduce unemployment, today's statement will increase it. When the Secretary of State says that wage increases will be fully funded out of efficiency savings, does not that mean that by definition there will be fewer services, or the same level of services with fewer people providing them? In other words, one person's wage increase will be another person's redundancy notice. Given the present level of unemployment in Scotland, does the Secretary of State think that that is a sensible policy to follow?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's analysis is wrong; I am talking about the more efficient delivery of services. However, he may like to know that the enterprise budget of Scottish Enterprise—£155 million for the forthcoming year—will allow it to assist many companies and to help to create or safeguard about 42,000 jobs.

Points of Order

4.20 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In connection with the Council's own resources decision and the European Communities (Finance) Bill, which we shall consider tomorrow, I thought that you would be interested in the following account.

In April 1994 the Select Committee on European Legislation considered the own resources decision that was about to be made, and, against the background of the Government's explanatory memorandum as provided by the Paymaster General of the day, in paragraph 10.5 of our report we wrote:

> "In the light of the Paymaster General's account of the Government's position and the conclusions already reached in the Council, we do not feel that there is practical advantage in further consideration of this proposal. We take it that, as unanimity is required, this amended proposal cannot be proceeded with in the face of the Government's opposition. If this amended proposal were to be further changed, we would expect a further round of Scrutiny to be initiated. Were the Government to change its view on the present unamended proposal we would expect to be informed before any decision were taken in the Council."

As you will know, Madam Speaker, a resolution of the House dated October 1990 clearly says that there would not in any reasonable circumstances be any removal of a reserve imposed by resolution of the House through the Select Committee on European Legislation, if a matter of such importance were to be considered in the Council of Ministers.

I believe that there was no such reference back to the Select Committee before the Chancellor of the Exchequer went to Brussels and agreed to what had been decided by other member states on the own resources decision. I should therefore be glad if you, Madam Speaker, considered that point. It seems to me that there has been a prima facie breach of the resolution of the House of October 1990.

Madam Speaker: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's point of order, but it seems to me to be a matter of interest rather than material for a point of order. It is something that the hon. Gentleman might raise in debate—tomorrow perhaps—to extract a reply from the Government Front Bench.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Earlier today the Government announced the single regeneration budget, which I believe is about £4 billion over the next three years. The Department of the Environment has written to every hon. Member—either to all 651 of us or at least to all those affected—to tell us the good news, but, unfortunately, because of the volume of the document, the House authorities have not been able to distribute the information through the Members' notice board, and most hon. Members do not know that the document is tucked away near the office of the Liberal Democrats.

I wonder whether you, Madam Speaker, could look into the matter. I have already spoken to the Deputy Serjeant at Arms and asked him to ensure that the material is distributed, so that in future we can all be given such good news. It must be good news when £2.7 million is to come to Portland, in my constituency, to help regenerate jobs.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman appears to be behaving like Pat the Post. I am sure that the Serjeant at Arms, who normally takes care of such matters, will ensure that the document is distributed as soon as possible. Copies for 651 Members represent a great volume of mail for our board to deal with, and I am sure that it will all be distributed as speedily as possible.

Orders of the Day

WAYS AND MEANS

Order read for resuming debate on Question [29 November].

AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply, acquisition or importation;

(b) for refunding any amount of tax;

(c) for varying any rate at which that tax is at any time chargeable; or

(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.—[*Mr. Kenneth Clarke.*]

Question again proposed.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

Madam Speaker: I must tell the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition to the first Ways and Means motion. It may be convenient if, at this stage, I also announce that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition to the motion on public expenditure, which is being debated together with the Budget resolutions.

4.24 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): The economic policies of the Chancellor, of which this Budget is an essential part, are long term. The first priority for a successful industrial and commercial policy is to establish economic conditions within which enterprise can flourish. The single most important part Government can play in fostering growth and improving competitiveness is to provide a stable macro-economic background.

The Government's overall economic objective is to promote sustained economic growth and higher living standards. Last week, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor presented the Government's taxation and spending plans for the next three years, enshrining those guiding principles. This was a Budget that concentrated on securing a healthy, lasting recovery. This was a Budget to reduce long-term unemployment and to get us out of debt. It offers the best prospect that the British people have faced for decades to enjoy the benefits of growth which does not pass through illusory boom to painful bust.

Overhauling the tax system every year can often make good newspaper headlines, but it can also have an unfortunate effect on the economy. Our priority is, as it must be, to ensure sustained, low-inflationary growth, which is our best chance of delivering the higher living standards that our people expect and deserve. Low inflation and sound public finances are an essential prerequisite for a successful and expanding economy. They are not optional extras.

A stable macro-economic environment is vital to give business the confidence it needs to invest in the future. Inflation is the enemy of investment; it erodes profits and encourages safety-first, short-term attitudes. That is why the Chancellor set a target for underlying inflation of 1 per cent. to 4 per cent. and aimed for the bottom half of that range. Underlying inflation is, at 2 per cent., at its lowest level for a generation. It has been below 3 per cent. for 13 consecutive months, the longest run since 1964.

Our public finances are firmly on track to be in balance by 1998 and in surplus by the end of the decade. Total Government spending is set to fall by £28 billion over the next three years. That is not just the effect of low inflation, welcome though that is. It involves real spending cuts to reduce further the amount of national income taken by the state.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the gas and fuel tax is being imposed largely because the time that we spent in the exchange rate mechanism when we should have got out led to a massive increase in our public sector borrowing requirement? It went up to £50 billion with the accumulated social security and other costs. In fact, this new tax, which amounts to a breaking of our tax pledges in the manifesto in terms of both tax and public expenditure, is being imposed simply to retrieve the mistakes made as a result of remaining stubbornly in the exchange rate mechanism when we should have come out.

Mr. Heseltine: I am afraid that I must say that many of my hon. Friend's speeches are fairly repetitious. One would think that the whole of human history started and ended with our leaving the exchange rate mechanism.

The Chancellor has explained clearly the overall balance that his judgment in the Budget is intended to achieve. I am now setting out what I believe to be the important background to that. That background, coupled with the continued flow of good economic forecasts, provides one of the most optimistic scenarios for industry and commerce that many of us can remember.

The House is all too familiar with obligatory attempts by the Opposition to undermine any announcement or statement that portrays this country in a favourable light. What the Opposition cannot ignore is the massive vote of confidence from the outside world when it confirms its judgments about what is actually happening in the British domestic economy. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development predicts that the UK economy will be the fastest-growing major economy in the European Union this year. Our exports have soared to all-time record levels, inward investment is transforming our older, more traditional, workplaces and nation after nation is copying the ideas developed here to privatise our industries and deregulate our practices. It is this that gives the lie to the Leader of the Opposition's assertion in his opening speech on the Budget that we have no long-term strategy.

It is clear for all who want to see that we are delivering a strong and prosperous economy. What is more, we are putting in place the conditions to ensure that it remains that way. The Labour party simply cannot understand that the UK's economy has been transformed over the past decade.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): In Strathclyde, since the Tories came to power, we have lost more than half our manufacturing jobs—more than 166,000 jobs. In the first half of 1990, we lost 30 per cent. of manufacturing investment. In 1994, we have lost 30 per cent. of manufacturing investment in Britain. Is the Minister saying that the glory hole is round the corner? We have heard that, yet the Tories are going on and on with their mismanagement of our manufacturing base.

Mr. Heseltine: The way in which the hon. Member seeks constantly to run down the achievements of the Scottish people is immensely dispiriting. The Scottish people are attracting massive inward investment from some of the world's most advanced high-technology companies. Anybody who goes to Scotland and sees what is happening in Glasgow and Edinburgh, to the central belt and to silicon glen, knows perfectly well that the Scotland depicted by Labour Members is far divorced from the reality of what is being achieved north of the border.

It is clear, for all who have their eyes open enough to see, that we are delivering a strong and prosperous economy. What is more, we are putting in place the conditions to ensure that we keep it that way. The hard reality is that the Labour party simply cannot understand the way in which we have brought about that remarkable transformation and improvement.

Mr. Graham: We are not strong and prosperous in Scotland.

Mr. Heseltine: Let me explain—

Mr. Graham: Go on, explain.

Mr. Heseltine: Let me explain, for the benefit of Labour Members, exactly what it is that has so—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) must restrain himself. He has made one intervention.

Mr. Heseltine: Let me explain to the Labour party exactly what has so transformed our economy over the past decade and a half.

In the 1980s, productivity grew faster in this country than in any other major industrialised country. Investment in plant and machinery has risen by 54 per cent. since 1979. Business investment has risen by 35 per cent. over the same period. Wherever one travels outside the country, people pay tribute to the transformation that has taken place in British economic performance. Our industrial and commercial managers know just how exciting a prospect that is for their products and their services out there in the world markets. Here in the United Kingdom, the Opposition, day after day, undermine and underplay our achievements and our resolve to build on them.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): The Engineering Employers Federation report before the Budget showed that manufacturing investment by volume had fallen by 24 per cent. since 1990 and that engineering investment had fallen in every quarter since the last quarter of 1989. In fact, Mr. Tim Melville Ross of the Institute of Directors said that the Budget was a missed opportunity, that it merely tinkered at the edges of business and that it did not deal with the fundamental long-term growth needs of our manufacturing industry.

Mr. Heseltine: It is obvious that the hon. Member has not followed the latest surveys of industrial confidence, which tell a totally different story. We have, in fact, a fast-growing, low-inflation economy with a competitive currency. The challenge for the Chancellor is to keep in place the disciplines that have brought that about. The Budget has been widely praised precisely because he has achieved that objective.

The Chancellor has added to the comprehensive improvements in our export credit arrangements in a further set of changes to enable our companies to compete overseas. He has announced changes in our insolvency law which will encourage a rescue culture in the United Kingdom. At the same time he has made some constructive improvements to help with incentives that will encourage the availability of finance for small businesses. He has raised the value added tax threshold for small businesses and helped them also by reducing employers' national insurance contributions for low earners. He has eased administrative burdens on 100,000 small businesses by increasing the threshold for making quarterly returns to the Inland Revenue. In addition, he has introduced a £600 million package of transitional relief for uniform business rates, which again will be of special benefit to smaller companies.

Perhaps the most unexpected and particularly welcome development in economic policy has been the growing awareness that, unlike all earlier economic revivals in this country, we are now enjoying an improvement that is based on export growth. We can add to that the latest CBI forecast of investment intentions, which shows that companies expect to see a growth of over 11 per cent. in manufacturing investment next year. The House will recognise why we have the economic background for which we have so long striven but hitherto failed to achieve and good grounds for believing that the exciting trends that are now under way will continue.

Perhaps the most interesting example is that a year ago commentators were confidently predicting a widening trade deficit as imports were sucked in as a result of a consumer-led surge in activity. Consumer demand has risen by 2.3 per cent. over the past 12 months. But while total imports have increased by 4 per cent., exports have risen by 11 per cent. The current account deficit is expected to halve this year and to continue falling next year. Our underlying exports to the European Union are up 17 per cent. on a year ago, although the European economies have grown by only 5 per cent. in nominal terms. The upturn in economic activity in Europe means expanding markets and opportunities for our exports. Consequently, as the recovery has strengthened, growth has come increasingly from exports.

The markets of the Pacific include many with consistently high economic growth rates. It is especially encouraging to see that our exports to China grew by 47 per cent. between 1992 and 1993. More recently, our exports to Malaysia in the year so far have grown by 42 per cent., to South Korea by 31 per cent. and to Singapore by 22 per cent. It is in competition with others that we can really see whether we are making progress. For decades, our world share of manufactured exports by

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volume fell back. We halted that decline by the mid-1980s. Since then our share of manufactured exports has broadly held.

Recently our exporters have been able to take advantage of the pick-up in activity. Our market share for manufactured exports is set to increase this year, and it is expected to do so again the year after. Manufactured exports are expected to rise by nearly 10 per cent. in 1994 and by 8 per cent. in 1995.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): My right hon. Friend referred to exports to China. Does he agree that the measures taken in the Budget to strengthen ECGD support to China, Indonesia and other countries will assist exports in that direction?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been extremely helpful to our exporters by consistently improving the competitive terms of ECGD. That is a fact that has been widely admired and praised by the companies on which our exports depend.

Mr. Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield): The right hon. Gentleman might like to know that many of us recently met representatives of the Engineering Employers Federation from Yorkshire. They are not entirely critical of the Government, but they are extremely concerned that the Budget did not deliver much help to those engaged in the engineering world. They are extremely worried that a rather neutral Budget will be coupled with an increase in interest rates, which would be damaging to what they might see as any improvement.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman makes a selective point. He fails to reflect on the confidence that is being indicated. I mentioned the CBI's survey and quoted figures that appear in it. Confidence is felt by British exporters across a wide area. If the hon. Gentleman cares to examine the record that is being achieved by British exporters in manufacturing and engineering, he will see that that is one of the most exciting backgrounds that we have had for many a long year.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): My right hon. Friend has rightly pointed to the expansion in manufacturing in this country and to our exports. However, that is only part of the picture. If we consider the most successful economies of Japan and America, it is clear that the number of people employed in manufacturing industry is shrinking rapidly. They are being replaced by people in knowledge-based services and industries which are related to manufacturing. If we look only at investment in manufacturing, we do not look at the whole picture. The strength of our economy is that we have knowledge-based industries coming through.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is perfectly right and that is why I referred to business investment. As anyone who studies these matters is fully aware, the reclassification that is taking place as manufacturing companies out-source their procurement into the service industries is making a mockery of much of the historical figure base. The important aspect is to consider the overall position in the economy.

The Hong Kong economy, one of the most dynamic economies in the world, is now down to 15 per cent. manufacturing because the whole basis of manufacturing has shifted to the southern province of China. No one would question the vibrancy of the Hong Kong economy. We must take the broad view. There is no doubt that in our economy today we are losing jobs in manufacturing, but a very exciting future is on offer to us as we attract throughout the United Kingdom a larger and larger proportion of the investment into the European Union.

Our manufacturing exports are rising and are on a rising trend which is likely to improve our position in world trade. Our exporters have earned that success by keeping their costs down and by raising their productivity. Over the past year, manufacturing productivity has risen by 6 per cent., far outstripping the growth in earnings. As a result, unit wage costs have actually fallen by nearly 1.5 per cent. That is the biggest fall since records began in 1970.

Our manufacturers have also succeeded in improving their performance in domestic markets so that while exports continue to rise, imports are little changed. Our current account deficit has fallen sharply this year. In the last quarter, it stood at less than £0.7 billion compared with £3.1 billion for the same period a year ago. An improving balance of payments is remarkable at a time when the economy is growing so strongly.

In support of that, the Government have put in place the most comprehensive export support strategy that we have ever seen in this country. That has been done in partnership with the private sector. There are now 108 middle managers seconded by Britain's leading companies into my Department to support our exporters across our 80 principal markets. We are now recruiting another 70 experienced exporters to bring the rapidly growing chain of Business Links into direct contact with our overseas markets.

It is no wonder that today the commentators are talking of closing the balance of payments gap. It is particularly satisfying that all those trends that I have described are now feeding through into the employment market.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The President said that all the trends are in the right direction. Why, then, do we need the extra percentage of VAT on fuel?

Mr. Heseltine: Because the Government are determined to maintain the disciplines that have enabled the Chancellor to produce a Budget which has gained the confidence of the markets and which are essential prerequisites to maintaining the growth upon which future prosperity depends. That is in stark contrast to the policies that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has advocated and supported all his life.

The clearest sign that things are beginning to work as the whole House would wish is that unemployment has been falling for nine successive months and is now more than 300,000 lower than a year ago. It is nearly 500,000 lower than two years ago. The United Kingdom is the only major economy in Europe where unemployment has fallen over the past year. The welcome measures that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor announced in his Budget last week to help the long-term unemployed back to work will ensure that that rapidly improving picture continues to improve further.

There has been much debate over the past few days about energy prices. I should like to set the debate in context. The Opposition have always said that there was no way of freeing the utilities from state control. They said that they were "natural monopolies" and that there was no alternative to public ownership. As usual, they were wrong.

We have introduced competition wherever possible. There are now 36 companies supplying electricity—twice the number before privatisation. Forty companies now supply natural gas. There was only British Gas before privatisation. Where competition was not possible, we introduced tough and transparent regulation to replicate market pressures.

Let us consider the results. Productivity in the industries has leapt. The electricity generators have increased their labour productivity by more than 50 per cent. since 1990. Improved efficiency has led to higher rates of return. Before privatisation, the regional electricity companies were accustomed to rates of return on their capital employed as low as 1 per cent. to 2 per cent. Last year, they earned a rate of return of 20 per cent. As a result, investment has shot ahead.

Real investment in the electricity industry has increased by more than 10 per cent. since privatisation. That can be compared with the record of the last Labour Government when the investment programmes were cut by 25 per cent. between 1974 and 1979.

No one has any doubt about the fact that they would rather not see price increases, but let us get the issue into perspective. Under the Labour Government, electricity prices in real terms rose by 22 per cent. in five years. Under the Conservatives, and allowing for the full impact of VAT, the equivalent figure today would be about 17.5 per cent. in 15 years.

The improvements are not restricted to electricity. Between 1974 and 1979, real industrial coal prices rose by 30 per cent. Between 1979 and 1994, they fell by nearly 50 per cent. Between 1974 and 1979, domestic coal prices increased by 18 per cent. Since we came to power, they have been held broadly stable in real terms.

British Gas has increased its level of investment by 200 per cent. in real terms since privatisation. Customers, too, have seen major improvements, with falling prices and improved service quality. The average gas consumer has benefited from a fall in real prices since privatisation of 23 per cent. before VAT.

Let me demonstrate what that means. A rough calculation shows that the average domestic gas bill in the last year before privatisation was £422 in today's money. Including the full effects of VAT, today that average bill would be £382 and that is before any discount under the new direct debit proposal.

Industrial customers have also benefited. Their real gas prices have fallen by 35 per cent. since privatisation. Between 1974 and 1979, far from falling by 35 per cent., their prices rose by 75 per cent. What does that mean? It means that faced with the increased prices under a Labour Government with a nationalised industry, Labour tried to hide the fact that prices were going up by making the industries bear the heaviest burden and pass the price increases on to their customers. Industry took the blame as opposed to the Labour Government. However, that did not make the slightest difference because the prices had to be paid by the consumer. That is the stark difference between what has happened under this Government and what happened under the previous Labour Government.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): While the President is taking us on this tour of the public utilities which have been privatised, will he respond to his Parliamentary Private Secretary, the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway)—Tarzan's monkey—who, a few nights ago in the Chamber, criticised the greed of the East Surrey water company for its high profits and high prices? Will the right hon. Gentleman note that his own Parliamentary Private Secretary criticised the greed of privatised water companies and their excessive charges, and that he criticised Ofwat for doing nothing? What is the right hon. Gentleman going to do about those excessive charges for water, gas and electricity?

Mr. Heseltine: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman why we have seen increases in water prices. It is because, from 1976 to 1979, the Labour party slaughtered the capital investment programmes of the water industry, not because it wanted to but because it got the economy into such a mess that international bankers did it. In the same way, it cut electricity capital investments, because it had no choice. They were public sector programmes, and they were cut to ribbons. I am fascinated to see that Opposition Members think that that is funny. We are now seeing expanding investment programmes in the water industry to make good the deficiencies left behind by the Labour party.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Does my right hon. Friend welcome the decision of the chairman of British Gas to bring forward the direct debit discount scheme, which makes gas even cheaper for my constituents? Will he call on the chairman of British Gas to extend that discount scheme to all prompt payers, not just those who pay by direct debit?

Mr. Heseltine: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend, who brings me precisely to the point that I now make. British Gas is shortly, as the House knows, to be affected by legislation which has been promised in the Gracious Speech, and we are going to introduce yet further competitive pressures into that industry. In fact, the private sector, which of course will seek the opportunities that that will make available, is talking not about price increases in a few years but about price reductions, and in terms of prices 10 per cent. lower than we would otherwise see. My hon. Friend is absolutely right, but British Gas has already said that, some time toward the middle of next year, it intends to extend the direct debit benefits for prompt payers into a much wider category of people. Once again, we can see that gains are being distributed between customers, shareholders and taxpayers and, in the case of water and electricity, among those who care about the quality of the environment as well.

Having listened to the speech of the Leader of the Opposition last week, I was amazed at the lack of integrity that underlay the case that he put forward. At no stage were his standards lower than when he spoke about regenerating economic activity in our inner cities, coal communities and steel communities. I remember Labour's inner-city policies of 1979. They consisted of a slush fund at the discretion of the Secretary of State for the Environment which was used to add to the public

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expenditure programmes that were already in place—a little more on this road scheme, a little more on that school programme or on a minor environmental project.

The long-term decline that characterised our older inner cities or industrial areas had been completely ignored by the Labour party. The tinkering at the edges of the programmes that I have mentioned was actually tinkering with programmes which themselves were part of the reason for the long-term decline of urban areas.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Almost by accident, the right hon. Gentleman has stumbled on one of the issues of the debate, which is integrity. What about the integrity of himself and his right hon. and hon. Friends—the promise of the Prime Minister in the House, the promise of the Prime Minister to the British people in the general election campaign, and the promise of the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), not to increase VAT or to extend its scope? Was there any integrity in those promises?

Mr. Heseltine: I shall come to the question of integrity—*[Interruption.]* I shall refer, three pages on, to integrity, and then we will have a few questions to ask about the Leader of the Opposition, what he believes in and what he stands for.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. Friend accept that more than one third of the national health service budget goes on pensioners and that the increase in VAT almost exactly mirrors the increased spending on the national health service? Does my right hon. Friend accept that, taking also into account the fact that pensioners will receive substantial assistance with the payment of bills, pensioners, above all, will benefit from the increase in VAT, regardless of what they have been led to believe by the Labour party?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is right to express concern. The whole House will be preoccupied to make sure that we have the most successful and fastest-growing economy that we can afford, because that is the only way in which we will be able to enhance the living standards of our pensioners.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

The Leader of the Opposition sought to suggest that, in some way, the Labour Government were preoccupied with the regeneration of our inner cities. The truth is that, within our inner cities today, a transformation of historic proportions is under way.

London's east end is home to one of the biggest urban regeneration projects to be found anywhere in the world. The banks of the Mersey, the Tyne and the Tees, and the centres of Birmingham, Leeds, Salford, Manchester and many other cities are being transformed as the Government's philosophy of creating partnerships between the public and private sectors brings new life and new investment into our most hard-pressed areas. All the ideas that have made that transformation possible have been introduced by Conservative Governments—for example, the derelict land grant, urban development corporations, enterprise zones, city challenge, regional challenge, housing action trusts or English partnerships. All of them and more are replacing the inertia and inadequacy of Labour councils with a new dynamism and new hope.

The Leader of the Opposition was at his most revealing when he said that people are fed up with privatisation. What an extraordinary admission. He is the man who is trying to persuade his party to repeal clause 4, all for a cause with which he now concludes that the people are fed up. I say to the Leader of the Opposition: if people are so fed up, why does he not stick to the principles that he has espoused all his life, and take those industries back into state ownership?

If there is a great yearning for the triumphant recapture of the commanding heights of the economy, why is the right hon. Gentleman burning the text books, hauling down the flags and preparing his own children for the heady world of competitive selection? Dreary egalitarianism may be good enough to feed the boyos in Bolsover, but the closer the leaders of the left get to the pinnacles of power, the more they yearn to turn their children into tiny Tory tots.

Anyway, just suppose for one instant that the people are fed up, which I wholly reject: does that constitute the standard by which political leadership should be judged? Have the fearless leaders of yesterday's socialism now been replaced by a leader so much reduced by their failures that he casts about to determine which way the crowd is running so that he can dash in front and shout, "Follow me"? It certainly looks like it. The Leader of the Opposition is so ashamed that he denies that he ever was a member of CND. He spent the 1980s arguing that we should get out of Europe. By the 1990s, he has become so mesmerised by the social chapter and the minimum wage that he cannot sell out to Europe fast enough. What a story. On privatisation, grant-maintained schools and clause 4—a veritable Henry V. Yesterday, he was urging his dear friends once more into the breach. Today, he is stuffing the holes in the wall with all that is left of his dumped convictions.

I tell the Leader of the Opposition and the Labour party that privatisation has brought about one of the most successful industrial revolutions in the country's history. It has turned producer-dominated monopolies into world-class companies. It has opened up competition, created choice, brought down prices and stimulated investment. It has broken up London-dominated monopolies and restored power to the provinces. It has led to vast improvements in productivity. It has played a part in leading British exports to the highest levels that we have ever known. It has led to a worldwide revolution in attitudes in virtually every significant country in the world. But all that the Leader of the Opposition can say is that "people are fed up".

The truth is that the only people with cause to be fed up with the success of privatisation are the trade unions, which have seen their power base destroyed as the prop of taxpayers' money was pulled from under them. The only people with cause to be fed up with privatisation are Opposition Members, because they have lost the industrial playthings which they manipulated and mismanaged so grossly. In the process, they have sat for 16 years where they naturally belong—on the Opposition Benches. This Budget will play its part in keeping them there.

5 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): I beg to move amendment (a), in line 4, after 'tax' insert

'other than in respect of value added tax on fuel and power for domestic or charity use'.

It is quite clear that, whatever the President of the Board of Trade came to the Chamber to do today, he did not come to defend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's decision to impose 17.5 per cent. value added tax on people's fuel bills. Indeed, had it not been for my intervention, he probably would not have touched on the subject at all.

Claims about the impact of Tory Budgets often look forlorn, if not foolhardy, in retrospect. This year's Budget looked tawdry from the start. We have had enough Tory Budgets—17 in 16 years—to make a long-term judgment on that score.

Last week the Chancellor set out his priorities: keeping the economy on track, job creation and greater prosperity, and the prevention of the emergence of a deprived underclass—I wonder where he has been for the past 16 years—in order to strengthen the economy in the longer term. Fairness was not one of his priorities; clearly, self-delusion was.

We have heard those claims before. In 1983, Lord Howe said:

"This is a Budget for that recovery".—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1983; Vol. 39, c. 157.]

In 1986 Lord Lawson said:

"these are . . . routes to more jobs, and jobs that last."—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 166.]

However, they did not. The President's claim in his speech this afternoon that the British economy has been "transformed" has a rather jaded ring because that is exactly what Lord Lawson said in his Budget speech in 1988. He said:

"The plain fact is that the British economy has been transformed."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1988; Vol. 129, c. 993.]

He went on to claim an economic miracle, and of course then came the crash. The right hon. Gentleman is making the same mistake.

In 1992, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) claimed:

"This year's Budget is a Budget for recovery".

He went on to say:

"Over the past decade our belief in low taxation has brought unparalleled growth".—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1992; Vol. 205, c. 745-61.]

They were bogus claims of economic miracles by false prophets which, in reality, did not stand the test of time.

Far from lowering taxes, the Tories have literally created a tax mountain out of a molehill. From last week's Budget we know that in 1996-97, taxes will take up a record 36.3 per cent. of the average earnings of a couple with two children. That is how far the Government have got with lowering taxes. When Labour left office, the comparable figure was 32.2 per cent.

Having created their tax mountain, Tory Budgets have devastated manufacturing industry—indeed, here Tory policies have made a molehill from a mountain. Their bust-boom-bust policies have reduced the contribution of manufacturing to gross domestic product by a staggering seven percentage points since 1979. The manufacturing contribution has decreased from 28.5 to 21.7 per cent. of GDP—a 25 per cent. reduction. Manufacturing output is barely above what it was 20 years ago. So much for the President's "transformation".

Manufacturing investment fell by 30 per cent. between the first half of 1990 and the first half of this year. Manufacturing investment was at an all-time low as a proportion of GDP in the first half of this year according to Professor Godley, one of the Chancellor's seven wise men. Even the most optimistic Tory Members must face reality some time—or, as their party vice-chairman, Mr. John Maples, would have it, "face the killer facts".

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester) *rose*—

Dr. Cunningham: How can I refuse the star of Ally Pally?

Mr. Brandreth: The hon. Gentleman is quite right: no party is complete without me. I am grateful to him for giving way. He spoke about reality. In my part of the world, the reality is yearly growth of 4 per cent., productivity up by 6 per cent. and exports up by 8 per cent. The hon. Gentleman obviously deplores the increases in taxation. Before he leaves that subject, will he explain to the House, if it were his Budget, which taxes and which elements of public expenditure he would cut or increase? Can he be specific about that?

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman is so amusing that if I live long enough to celebrate my 25 years in the House next year perhaps I will invite him to do a star turn at that party, too. I assure him that I do not intend to leave the subject of taxation for a considerable time.

The hon. Gentleman must know that his constituents' living standards are falling. As for alternatives, and since he has asked me, my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has made it quite clear that we advocate a number of steps which would cover the cost of abandoning VAT. The money can come from tightening up the treatment of executive share options. Does the hon. Gentleman agree with that? It can come from part of the proceeds of a windfall levy on privatised utilities similar to that which Lady Thatcher charged the banks. The money can come from the proceeds of ending tax relief for private medical insurance. It can come from steps to end commercial avoidance of stamp duty.

In future years, the money can come from the decision to draw on some of the gains of retaining the stamp duty charge on share transactions, which the Red Book says will be dropped. Let us not forget about dropping the VAT increase, which would reduce slightly our contribution to the European Union. In this Budget, the Chancellor is reducing the duty on champagne. Why does he feel that that is so essential to the well-being of the British economy at the same time as he imposes VAT on the fuel bills of pensioners?

Taxes are higher under the Tories. Total social security payments are higher, not because of greater generosity but because of the huge increase in the number of claimants. The public sector borrowing requirement is higher at £46 billion—7 per cent. of GDP. Government expenditure as a share of GDP is higher. All the Tory party's old

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shibboleths and their claims about the effectiveness of their economic policies are as dust when set beside the "killer facts", as Mr. Maples would have it.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Will the Minister give way?

Dr. Cunningham: I know that the hon. Gentleman is nervous, but that is a little presumptuous.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am very confused today. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Chancellor made it quite clear that he cut the tax on champagne and sparkling wine only because he was obliged to do so under an international agreement— and the hon. Gentleman knows where that agreement came from. In order to avoid all this nonsense, will he tell the people the score? If Labour is returned to power, will he give a commitment to cut VAT on fuel and power from 17.5 per cent. to the present level? Would that not clarify the situation?

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman asks a fatuous question. He knows that we do not know what the Chancellor will have in his Budget next year, so why should we announce now what we will do in a Budget in two or three years' time? I am happy to have the hon. Gentleman's comforting support in assuming that there will be a Labour Government after the next general election. I am sorry to disappoint him, but I do not agree that the tax on champagne was cut because of the dreadful European Union. It occurred because of an international agreement which the Chancellor of the Exchequer accepted voluntarily, but it was not because of the European Union.

The boastfulness of the President's speech was reminiscent of the boastfulness of the Thatcher-Lawson-Major-Lamont years, which have been exposed as so much waste, so much unfairness and so much failure. What of Britain in the world? The President is fond of talking about the need for world-class performance. He is correct in that at least, but has that happened as the result of 17 Tory Budgets? No—indeed, the reverse is true. Britain is falling behind. Our country has been undermined by Tory incompetence, as comparisons make only too clear. While Britain's manufacturing base has shrunk, those of Germany, Japan and the United States of America have grown.

Our country has gone down the league table of the seven largest economies in the world and has been overtaken by Italy. In output per capita, Britain has been overtaken by Hong Kong and Singapore. Britain had a £4 billion trade deficit with the European Union last year. We have trade deficits with 10 of the richest nations in the world and trade surpluses with 10 of the poorest.

The President boasts of export-led growth, but our performance, even now, is no better than that of the United States of America or than that of the European Union average. No matter how he presents the figures, the fact remains that Britain's share of world trade fell from 5.4 per cent. in 1979 to 5.1 per cent. in 1993.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I will not give way for the moment.

Between 1979 and 1993, despite the benefits of North sea oil, Britain's average annual growth rate lagged behind that of every member of the G7 and every member of the European Union except Denmark and Greece. Inequalities have grown after the Tory Budgets. By 1990, 11.5 million people had an income less than half the national average. In the 1970s, the figure was half that. Similarly, the number—

Mr. Clappison: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way now?

Dr. Cunningham: No, I am not giving way for the moment.

The number of children living in families with incomes below the poverty line has trebled from 1.4 million to 4.1 million. According to the Equal Opportunities Commission, as many as 4 million women—more than one third of the female work force in Britain—earn less than two thirds of the median of male weekly earnings. Those are some of the international comparisons, some of the indicators and some of the killer facts about the record on 17 Tory Budgets.

The record is no better on training. The United Kingdom ranks 21st out of 22 countries in the OECD skills league tables—second bottom. We have the second-lowest proportion of 18-year-olds in full-time education, yet Government investment in training is to be cut by 5.1 per cent. next year, following cuts of £400 million since 1990-91.

After such an unprecedented period in office—16 Tory years and 17 Tory Budgets—the Prime Minister claims to want to create a nation at ease with itself, yet the rich get richer and the gap between top earners and the rest widen year by year. Do not take my word for that. Hon. Members should listen to Mr. John Maples, vice-chairman of the Conservative party, who said:

> "The reality is now that the rich are getting richer on the backs of the rest who are getting poorer. The gap between the highest and the lowest paid worker is larger now than at any time since records began in 1886."

It is no good the Prime Minister, the President of the Board of Trade or the Chancellor protesting. As Mr. Maples said in his candid memorandum:

> "What we are saying is at odds with their experience which leads them to conclude we are 'out of touch', 'lying', 'don't care'."

Of course, I could not possibly say that the President of the Board of Trade and the Government are lying, but Mr. Maples could— *[Interruption.]* Oh yes he did. That is what he implied.

It is no wonder that people are angry when chairmen, chief executives and directors make free with company cash, bonuses, share options and incredible salary increases. There is no control, no accountability, no shame and no justification—except, apparently, from the President. None of his Cabinet colleagues have supported him in that. He talks of world-class companies, yet such abuse and greed are not seen or thought necessary in Germany or Japan—which, in truth, do have world-class economies. Nor are domestic private sector monopolies comparable with truly international companies, which inevitably have to compete in global markets.

Mr. Clappison *rose—*

Dr. Cunningham: No, I am not giving way.

We all know that in water, electricity and gas companies, grotesque personal rewards—based not on merit or performance but on self-interest—in shares, bonuses and salaries have been commonplace. Where are the Government's checks, where are the regulators? For example, the chairman of Midland Electricity was earning £68,000 a year before privatisation. He now earns more than £231,000. Of course, on top of that he is estimated to have had more than £900,000 total share option profits. Profits and salaries are just as lucrative for the chairmen of the other 11 regional electricity companies that the President was so keen to praise in his speech.

Inevitably, the chief executive of British Gas took his turn. Observing the free-for-all, he did not just say, "Me too", he said, "Me two hundred thousand." The President agreed, approved and supported the £4,000 a week rise. He did nothing to prevent it, just as he has done nothing in other cases.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is contemptible for the President to defend the chief executive of British Gas getting a £4,000 a week rise, while at the same time he denounces the proposition that a low-paid worker should have a wage of £150 a week? Is that not disgraceful and contemptible?

Dr. Cunningham: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend.

Why did the President proclaim his support for such extravagant and unmerited pay awards? Well, they are his friends, his appointees and supporters of the Tory party. We might say that they are all the President's men. Why does he believe that chief executives, part-time chairmen and directors need world-class salaries and perks to make them perform well, when he imposes third-class pay and conditions on the vast majority of men and women in Britain to encourage them to work well? He is denying the social chapter benefits to our people while allowing his friends and supporters carte blanche to rip off consumers and make themselves rich.

The Secretary of State for Social Services, at least, deserves one cheer. He, if no one else in Government, has recognised—here I quote from his speech in Belfast a few days ago—that there has been a "widening of earnings differentials" during the last 16 years in Britain. He acknowledged that inequalities had increased. He said:

> "This lies behind many of our social problems . . . It may play a major part in the break-up of families . . . and a growing welfare dependency . . . It may even play a part in explaining delinquency and crime."

The right hon. Gentleman said all that in his speech, but typically he claimed that none of it has anything to do with the Government and Government policies. He dismisses the minimum wage as a contribution to a solution and instead presses on with policies that increase dependency on social security and subsidise bad employers and poverty pay. He says that more skills are the answer, yet the Budget slashes the training programme by several hundred million pounds. Is it any wonder, to quote again John Maples on the Tory party, that the electorate "think we are stupid"?

There is nothing in the Budget to promote and sustain significant long-term investment in the British economy. There is nothing to encourage and direct more profit away from dividends and into capital investment. The Heritage Secretary wanted change and, so we were told, did the Chancellor—but Lord Hanson did not. He leant on the Prime Minister who, predictably, caved in and the industrial finance initiative was dead.

The Budget has cut Government investment by 17.7 per cent. in real terms; it contains a 16.6 per cent. real cut in local authority investment and next year there will be a 10.8 per cent. cut in public investment. There is no long-term strategy—simply vague claims of private finance making up the difference, and we are entitled to doubt that given previous performances. My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) pointed out that the Government said some time ago that they needed to prevent a hiatus in railway investment pending privatisation, yet the Budget contradicts Government statements and announces a cut in such investment. Nothing could be more bizarre than the Government contradicting their own objectives for their own privatisation—which is not necessary anyway—and damaging the future of the railways in the process.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): The right hon. Gentleman is in danger of straying back to the subject of this year's Budget, to which he has made passing reference. In so far as the right hon. Gentleman touched on the Budget, he mentioned his desire to reduce taxation. He has also spoken, on a number of programmes, of his desire to increase expenditure. As no Labour Front-Bench spokesman has put a figure on those aspirations, will the right hon. Gentleman say by how much overall taxation would be reduced in a Labour shadow Budget, and by how much overall spending would be increased, and give his view of the correct level of public borrowing and the impact that that would have on the industrial recovery? Will the right hon. Gentleman move to the point instead of meandering through bits of the Red Book?

Dr. Cunningham: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is right, because the Red Book is full of very odd bits. I will not respond to that rambling intervention. I remind the Chancellor of something that he once said:

> "Only the Conservatives believe in keeping taxation down, to give incentives to enterprise and investment. Only the Conservatives will keep the country's finances on a sound footing."

That, with a £46 billion borrowing requirement. The Chancellor said also:

> "Public borrowing under the Conservatives has averaged 2 per cent. of GDP."

It is 7 per cent. now.

The Government are also half-hearted about help for the long-term unemployed, even though each such person costs the country £9,000 per annum in income

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support and lost revenue. A self-financing scheme was spelt out by hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Cunningham: No.

Mr. Clarke: I ask the right hon. Gentleman to give way, if he is not afraid of losing his place.

Dr. Cunningham: The right hon. and learned Gentleman flatters himself if he thinks that I have lost my place. He knows as well as anyone in the House—no more so than other Ministers—that asking me to spell out the contents of a future Labour Budget two and a half years from now is a fatuous intervention. The Chancellor will not tell us the contents of his Budget for next year, so that is the best answer to his intervention.

The Chancellor has given us another Budget for the short-term benefit of the Tory party, but to the long-term disadvantage of Britain and the British people. Burdens are heaped on those least able to bear them. Value added tax is a classic example. On 28 January 1992, the Prime Minister said:

> "We have no plans to increase value-added tax... There will be no VAT increase."—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1992; Vol. 202, c. 308.]

On 27 March 1992, the Prime Minister said:

> "I have made it clear, we have no plans and no need to extend the scope of VAT."

When the Prime Minister gives his word to the European Union, his word must be kept, even to the point of a vote of confidence—but when he gives his word to the House and to the British people, he is apparently not concerned about keeping it. It seems that that does not matter.

The President of the Board of Trade mentioned integrity. Where is the integrity in that behaviour? We are told that the Government must keep their word because they have an international obligation to do so—but that the Government do not have to keep their word when their obligation is to the British people. That sums up the hypocrisy resident on the Treasury Bench.

Mr. Clarke: The right hon. Gentleman quoted my election address commitment to healthy public finances. He fought the last election on a policy of increasing taxes and public spending. Of course the right hon. Gentleman cannot spell out a shadow Budget, but will he give a sign of his commitment to health public finances? Does he believe that we should be reducing taxes, increasing public spending and allowing borrowing to rise—or does he, in the midst of all this blather, have no view of those critical issues?

Dr. Cunningham: The blather is all coming from the right hon. and learned Gentleman. This debate is about not a Budget in three years' time but his Budget now. It is also a debate about the Prime Minister's promises to the British people. The Government do not want to answer. They do not want to face the fact that they have ratted on their promises about VAT. That is the reality of the position in which the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues find themselves.

The public and Parliament were given clear, unambiguous promises, and those promises have been broken. Many Conservative Members made similar promises in speeches, interviews and personal election addresses during the 1992 campaign. A few of them, to their credit, have announced their intention to abstain or to vote with us tonight, to prevent the VAT abuse contained in the Budget. Those Conservative Members know that they made a commitment to their constituents and believe that they should keep their promises—unlike the Chancellor, the Prime Minister and the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I accept that the right hon. Gentleman may find it difficult to answer my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, but perhaps I may ask him a simple question. Does he think that public expenditure now is too high or too low?

Dr. Cunningham: Public expenditure is too high and all in the wrong direction. A sum of £40 billion is being spent on social security and the hon. Gentleman asks for our views. Public expenditure is paying the price of the failure of 17 Tory Budgets. There is too little investment, too much social security, too much consumption and not enough for the long term.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South) *rose*—

Dr. Cunningham: I shall not give way again for the moment.

In arguing about their responsibilities and commitments, Conservative Members have an unusual ally—none other than the President of the Board of Trade, who made his position clear in Bournemouth on 13 October. Reflecting on 16 years of Tory Government, he entitled his speech "Tomorrow's Yesterday". That was really forward looking. He clearly anticipated another Budget similar to the previous 16—unfair, long on the short term and short on the long term, and devoid of any coherent strategy. The Chancellor did not let him down.

Value added tax at 17.5 per cent. is to be imposed on pensioners, people with disabilities, the housebound, and people with low pay or no pay. It is to be imposed on all those for whom heating costs account for a much higher proportion of household expenditure than those who are better off. This winter, thanks to the Budget, many thousands of people in Britain will be cold, hungry and afraid to use their heating.

Is the Tory party proud of that? Are Conservative Members proud of offering a pensioner 25p and a pensioner couple 30p above the statutory uprating to cope with VAT on their energy bills? Are they content to support that squalid unfairness at a time when Cabinet Ministers give their approval to rises of £4,000 per week to executives?

In "Tomorrow's Yesterday", the President of the Board of Trade told us, prophetically:

> "There is more to Conservative thought than just free markets. Laissez-faire economies expose a risk of cruelty and social extremes that no Tory could countenance. So once again for tomorrow's journey we look back to traditional Tory faith in duty and obligation. It is at the heart of Tory tradition. Back to Shaftesbury and Disraeli, to share a concern for those less fortunate than ourselves . . . The success and dynamism of a confident society will be led and determined by those who are

strong and self reliant. But we have never lost sight of those in society to whom such opportunities are for whatever reason denied."

Well he certainly seems to have gone blind between 13 October and Budget day. Or is he is suffering from convenient amnesia? Did he mean what he said in Bournemouth? Does he stand by what he said then? We shall see. Today, he will be put to the test. If he stands by his views and commitments, he will vote with us. If he does not—*[Interruption.]* Of course he will not stand by what he said in Bournemouth, just as the Conservatives are not prepared to stand by what they said in the general election campaign. We know, of course, that he will not stand by what he said and therefore he will very well merit the description of that other Disraeli quotation:

"A Tory Government is an organised hypocrisy."

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): What the President of the Board of Trade said at the Tory party conference in October and what he does today demonstrates quite clearly the gap between the rhetoric and practice of Tory Cabinet Ministers.

Dr. Cunningham: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

In his Budget speech, the Chancellor said that the present conditions have to be sustained if they are to deliver higher living standards and secure jobs. But as the record shows, Tory Governments have never sustained those conditions. They have never been consistent. They have never looked to the long term in 16 years and 17 Budgets. Last night, the Governor of the Bank of England is reported to have said in Frankfurt:

"The economy is growing faster than can be sustained."

Stripped of all their grandiose claims, the fabrications about their record and intentions, the Government's policy for Britain is clear: cut taxes before elections and put them up again much more afterwards. Reward the strong, the highly paid, the powerful, at the expense of those least able to help themselves.

That is why Conservatives will never be trusted on tax again. That is why the House should vote for the amendment tonight. It gives us an opportunity to reject this unjust proposal and to oblige the Chancellor to think again.

5.32 pm

Mr. John MacGregor (Norfolk, South): As one who for 15 years sat on the Front Bench listening to speeches from hon. Members on the Back Benches, I know how selective one must be in the issues that one raises and the points that one makes. I shall therefore not repeat the many points made in the debate and outside.

I begin by stating my total support for the general strategy in the Budget and the measures contained in it, and especially the concentration on controlling public expenditure and getting public sector borrowing down. Those of us who are connoisseurs of Budget speeches know that the key point of the Budget is always there in the peroration, and I thought that it was right for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor to put the emphasis this year on those two points in his peroration, and how important they are. I should just say in parentheses, and perhaps rather quietly and modestly, that the Budget brief which has been circulated to all of us contains a table showing public borrowing since 1971-72 as a percentage of money gross domestic product. I note that one of the lowest levels of public borrowing as a proportion of money GDP was in the two years during which I had the great privilege of being Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and the plans that I hope that we laid then came through even more in the years afterwards.

That also means that I know how difficult it is to control public expenditure, and I pay a warm tribute to my right hon. Friend the current Chief Secretary for the way in which he has carried out his responsibilities through the year—in stark contrast with the Opposition, who are now attacking us for the level of taxation generally. They claim that they are not now a party of high public expenditure, but their amendment to today's public expenditure motion, particularly the last six lines, is absolutely riddled with new commitments to public expenditure as it condemns the current levels in so many important areas of Government expenditure.

During the exchanges on the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, just about every Opposition Member who spoke violently attacked the statement for not announcing enough public expenditure—every one of them, right across the board, in all the different areas. It really is not good enough for the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—

Dr. Cunningham: Right honourable.

Mr. MacGregor: I beg the right hon. Gentleman's pardon—I frequently get that wrong.

It is not good enough for the right hon. Gentleman to say that we must wait two years to know his party's position on these matters; he can state it today. All that we have to go by is the statement that he makes in the amendment and the statements that we hear so often from Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), the Opposition spokesman for Scotland, whom we heard today. We must therefore conclude that they would substantially increase expenditure in many areas.

Nor is it good enough for the right hon. Gentleman to say that he will make savings on the social security budget. He attacked it and said that it was the one area in which the Labour party might make compensating savings. He knows perfectly well that it contains substantial increases for the disabled—something of which I am particularly proud—and a whole range of worthy groups who have nothing to do with the levels of unemployment. He also knows perfectly well that under his policies unemployment would rise, so it is totally false for him to suggest that savings can be made there, unless he intends to cut some of the areas of social service expenditure. If that is the case, we should be interested to know where those areas are. On public expenditure, therefore, the right hon. Gentleman and his party have demonstrated once again that theirs is a high-spending party, although it claims not to be.

I listened carefully to the right hon. Gentleman's proposals to save taxes. I notice that he has not quantified them. I have a great deal of doubt about a number of those proposals. I will take the example that he started with—the one so often mentioned by the Labour party—about share option schemes. I am puzzled as to just what he expects to do about them and where he expects to get a revenue saving, as he must be well aware that the gain on those schemes is already taxed at 40 per cent. in virtually

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every case, or at least in very many cases. I believe that there is a great yawning gap in the policy position of Labour Members in relation to the Budget: they would spend a great deal more, but they cannot find tax savings to compensate for the tax proposals to which they object.

I do not want to repeat all the points that were made about the underlying strength of the economy, which were so well put by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, although I totally agree with them. In particular, the many illustrations that he gave and the impressive figures about the benefits brought about by privatisation really demonstrated the strength of that case. They were met, however, by incomprehension and lack of interest on the faces of Members on the Opposition Front Bench. I well understand now why the Labour party has not yet committed itself to reversing any of the privatisations, because at heart it recognises the benefits. I do not think that it is yet fully aware of the real benefits that have come through. I particularly welcome the fact that we now have low inflation, which I believe can be sustained, as well as export-led and now investment-led recovery.

Mr. Fabricant: Before privatisation, were not those industries costing the Exchequer £50 million a week? Since privatisation, the Exchequer—and that means hospitals and schools, for instance—has benefited, through corporation tax, by £60 million a week.

Mr. MacGregor: Indeed, the Exchequer is now benefiting considerably from the revenue generated by corporation tax. I will go a step further The right hon. Member for Copeland said that some privatisations had "ripped off" consumers, but he must know very well that that has not happened. Prices have fallen in real terms—a great benefit that has resulted from privatisation.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not want to give way too often, because others wish to speak, but I will give way briefly.

Mr. Enright: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman.

If the benefits of privatisation are as massive as the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) suggested, why do we have to raise taxes so much?

Mr. MacGregor: That has nothing to do with privatisation as such. Privatisation has resulted in a great improvement in the performance of businesses, which is very much to the advantage of the economy generally.

If there is indeed an underlying strength in the economy, why is the feelgood factor not yet in evidence? I shall make two points about the feelgood factor, but in so doing I want to move away from immediate issues.

As both my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) and my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury have recently said in the House, the impact of technological change on employment—when combined with increasing international competition—is undoubtedly an issue that will face all Governments for some time. When I was Secretary of State for Education, at the prize-givings at which I had to speak I constantly used as a theme the need for pupils to realise that from now on they would have to change not just jobs three or four times in their lifetime, but careers—hence the importance of securing a strong education and skills base before setting out in the job market.

We are seeing that clearly now in many industries. The privatised utilities, for example, have undoubtedly been able to make themselves much more efficient—egged on by the spur of being in the private sector—as a result of technological advance. They have taken the opportunity to gain from it. The same is evident in the financial sector—in banks and building societies, for instance. Technological change must be undertaken, or businesses will become uncompetitive; but the impact on jobs, including what used to be regarded as traditionally secure jobs, is often considerable.

We are seeing the same effect in central Government. One of the figures in the Red Book relates to the Department of Transport's running costs. I am having to pay a good deal of attention to those running costs; they are to fall from £423 million this year to £374 million by 1996-97. Taken across the board, that means substantial savings in central Government which can then be applied at the "front end".

Those savings will be achieved partly because we can now take advantage of the effects of technological change, but partly because Government and Ministers must be driven by the same impulse as those in the private sector to ensure that they are as efficient as possible, and that both the activities and the people involved add value. I think it reasonable for those in the private sector who have been through the process of becoming much more efficient and competitive in the past few years to expect Government to do the same. I also think that there is a message for large local authorities: if we can demonstrate that we have recently been through that process, they can be expected to do the same, and to review their administration and other activities.

In both the public and private sectors, that will introduce an underlying element of uncertainty about what used to be regarded as totally secure jobs. All political parties must now recognise such uncertainty as a permanent feature of our economic life, driven by technical change and international competition. The question for the electorate is which party is most likely to gain the benefits of technological change for the country and to meet the demands of the international competition. Nothing in Labour's policy and approach—the minimum wage, the social chapter and a raft of other measures—suggests that they understand that.

I am thinking not least of the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who suggested recently that one way of dealing with employment was to keep jobs in the public sector which are not really required and not efficient, simply to avoid unemployment. That is not a sensible suggestion and it is no way of continuing to achieve a competitive economy. Nothing in Labour's approach indicates that it can offer a better alternative.

The second point about the feelgood factor is the need to become accustomed again to inflation between 2 per cent. and 3 per cent. As I go around the country, I note that when inflation is at between 2 per cent. and 2.5 per cent. but salary increases are at 3 per cent.—in some instances, interest rates are lower because interest rate payments are falling—people do not understand that they are in a better position in real terms with a 3 per cent. pay increase and 2 per cent. inflation, or interest rate payments at 5 per cent. and 2.5 per cent. inflation. The cash figure looked bigger before. It is vital for us to overcome that problem and ensure that the low-inflation culture is properly established.

During the 1980s, we made considerable progress in that respect—massive progress compared with the general level of inflation under the last Labour Government, when the average was about 15 per cent. and the level went as high as 27 per cent. In the 1980s we came a long way, but not far enough. I remember engaging in debates in 1986-87 and trying to get across the point that, given the tax reductions that average earners were receiving and the current low inflation, it was better to have a 3 per cent. salary increase and keep costs down. That meant a real gain, but the message still had not got through. During the period when house prices rose substantially—*[Interruption.]* I am trying to make a serious point. During that period, many people felt that they were better off although in fact it was a paper gain.

It is important for us to establish that. I believe that as a result of a strategy which has been pursued for a long time, but particularly now, we are achieving those "mind set" adjustments to inflation. It is vital that we maintain the downward pressure and persuade people—people at work, pensioners, home owners and employers—of the "feelgood" benefits of a low-inflation era. If we persist, I believe that we can do that and that it will greatly benefit our competitiveness.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): When travelling through the country, does the right hon. Gentleman never come across people who are discontented because they are getting a 2 per cent. pay increase—or a nil increase—while inflation is running at 2.7 per cent. and others are awarding themselves increases of 300 per cent.? Does that not cause the right hon. Gentleman any unhappiness?

Mr. MacGregor: I have always made clear my belief that salary increases of that kind, which are not directly earned through improvements in the performance of companies or productivity improvements, are unjustified and unrealistic at present and give the wrong signals. I also believe, however, that it is important for people to be able to gain the benefits of the productivity improvements that they have undertaken and that they should receive performance bonuses, provided that the performance targets are good and realistic.

That brings me to the question of VAT on fuel. I shall make just two points, as so much has already been said. First, I believe that public comment—this may be our own fault to some extent—has not made enough of one of the two elements which led to the original introduction of VAT on fuel. I refer to the environmental aspects of the proposal. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) laughs, but it is a hollow laugh from a member of one of the parties which argue for a carbon tax.

Mrs. Ewing *rose—*

Mr. MacGregor: I should like to develop my point. In all letters to my constituents and in all my remarks, I have always stressed the importance of that aspect. We have the Rio targets to meet; if we are to meet them and to secure energy conservation at the same time, all sectors of the economy—including households—must play their part in conserving fuel and using less of it. Given the real reduction in fuel prices since privatisation, that is at least a modest contribution to our goal.

Mrs. Ewing *rose—*

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that the hon. Lady will not mind if I do not give way. I am anxious not to speak for too long.

I should be happy to elaborate my point about the environment, but I have time to speak only very briefly.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor is absolutely right to warn about the consequences of the measure not going through. It would not be easy to find £1 billion plus of further expenditure saving. It would be difficult and painful in some areas and the Labour party would almost certainly oppose each and every suggestion. It would therefore have to be done with other tax measures which would involve many difficulties. Given that pensioners and other vulnerable groups are protected by the additional Government commitments and given the environmental aspects, where is the sense in that? Above all, it must not be done by adding to public sector borrowing. That could only have an upward effect on interest rates and I have found no support for that in the building industry or in small businesses or from anyone to whom I have talked.

Had there been time, I would have said more about interest rates. It is worth pointing out—it is in the Red Book—that Government gross debt interest next year will be £24.5 billion and rising. That is the consequence of high public sector borrowing and it would be added to if interest rates rose. That figure is exceeded by only four Government spending Departments. It is another reason why it is so important to bear down on inflation, interest rates and public sector borrowing.

I strongly support the Chancellor in what he said overnight and what he is doing in the Budget and I beg the minority of my hon. Friends who are still considering the matter to consider carefully the consequences that would follow their actions.

I want to raise three specific points about the future. Inevitably, I have had to be very selective. The Budget contains a number of measures to promote saving. In the past, I have played my part in the development of a number of schemes such as the business expansion scheme and schemes to encourage saving and investment. Each succeeding Chancellor wants to have a scheme that is attached to one Budget and I think that there is a danger of a proliferation of such schemes. Having watched them all during the past 15 years and analysed their effect, I doubt whether in the long run it is the best way to create a climate of encouragement for savings and investment and a savings-owning democracy.

We must look carefully at how much additionality in savings is provided by each scheme, and we must be mindful of the administrative and other costs. Therefore, one of the Budget measures about which I am a little doubtful is the proposal to continue the £9,000 investment in the tax-exempt special savings accounts. It will not add much in terms of additional saving and I doubt whether it will affect the amount of saving going into the institutions that currently have TESSAs.

There is perhaps a case for looking overall at how to encourage savings and whether the schemes are the best way of doing it, and perhaps concentrating instead on a

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low-tax regime and a change in capital gains tax to encourage longer-term saving. I have always felt that the tapering of capital gains tax, leading eventually to no tax being paid after a number of years, is the best way forward.

A Bill dealing with agricultural tenancy was announced in the Queen's Speech. I took through the House the last Bill dealing with that matter and I felt then that it was a fairly modest measure which would not achieve the result that we all seek of encouraging more agricultural tenancies. We now have agreement in the agricultural community for a much stronger measure, but I am concerned that it will not achieve its possibilities unless it is accompanied in due course by changes in taxation. I have in mind in particular the inheritance tax rules, which allow only 50 per cent. relief on land that the owner does not take in hand within a 12-month period, and also capital gains tax. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will keep a careful watch on that and be prepared to bring the treatment of let land into line with that of occupied land for inheritance tax and allow capital gains tax roll-over relief on let land. That is the way to make sure that the new Bill will work.

With regard to spending on transport and the road programme, as Secretary of State for Transport I was keen to switch as much traffic as possible from road to rail, although I was well aware of the difficulties of doing so and of the limitations of the likely ultimate effect. I believe that I did as much as anyone to promote the private finance initiative, which I strongly support. However, I am concerned at the considerable reduction in public spending on roads in the next three years. I do not believe that it will be possible to achieve a substantial switch to public transport without a cost level that we cannot contemplate. My right hon. Friend the current Secretary of State for Transport said that the

> £140 million spent on the Manchester metrolink has resulted in a reduction in traffic in Manchester of around 0.3 per cent.—[*Official Report*, 31 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 1287.]

On the basis of that and other research, it appears that on those figures a transfer of just 10 per cent. of car journeys nationally from road to rail would require an investment of £140 billion. Even if that is too much, it would require a massive investment to achieve a switch to public transport which would not quickly be taken up by two, three or four years' growth on roads.

However much we want to encourage the transfer to rail and public transport, it is important to continue a substantial road programme. The design, build, finance and operate schemes will take some time to come into effect. Five or 10 years from now we would regret it if we had allowed the road programme to run down because it would result in increased congestion and frustrating delays.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman has returned to the subject of investment in road and rail. Far from making any improvement, the Government have cut investment for Railtrack. Not only that, they are cutting investment in such a way as to threaten jobs at ABB York carriage works and the Hunslet, Leeds-based rolling stock manufacturers. Those manufacturers are running out of orders and laying people off. There is no sense of improving investment in the rail network: the Government are cutting it.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not think that the Government are cutting investment in Railtrack. There is the private finance initiative on the Northern line, which will lead to considerable investment in rolling stock. The right hon. Gentleman should take account of the fact that there has been substantial investment in rolling stock in the past eight to 10 years and much of it is very modern. Much of the investment in railways is now needed in the track and infrastructure, which is where the bulk of it is going.

I do not want to elaborate on the roads programme now as there will be other opportunities to do so: I just wanted to put down a marker.

Overall, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor was absolutely right to take a cautious, tough and courageous line in the Budget. I totally support the strategy and I hope that all my right hon. and hon. Friends will support him on the issue of VAT on fuel.

5.57 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) and many others talked about the possible dangers if the Government were to lose the vote on VAT on fuel. The right hon. Gentleman will recall, as I do, a Labour Government who were defeated on a tax amendment involving a much larger sum than this. I hope to show the consequences of that and to explain how these matters can be dealt with.

I want to make some general points. I had hoped that, belatedly, the Government might address some of the real problems. Over the past 15 years of this Administration we have seen a terrible catalogue of errors. I shall select about four of them to show some of the ways in which they went wrong and how they might have done things better and might yet be able to make amends in some of those areas.

First, we know that the Government started off with a belief in theoretical monetarism—the intellectual nonsense that devastated my constituency and that led to the loss of one third of the companies in my region. They were the small, medium-sized and medium-tech firms that exist in every country in the world, including Germany, Japan and the United States of America. That particular dedication to a dogma caused immense damage, not only to my constituency, but to many others.

Secondly, the Government set up an uncontrollable boom—the housing and spending explosion, the consequences of which are still with us. At that time a few years ago, people felt that it made sense to sell their houses and to buy more expensive ones. Trading up was seen as an investment rather than as a consumption. With the rise in prices, people felt a spurious prosperity that encouraged further indebtedness. That was a major scandal and we are still suffering from it, with a number of people having negative equity in their homes.

The Government's third serious error involved bringing about the second major recession of our time, when industry suffered once again. It led to us leaving the exchange rate mechanism on Black Wednesday. We seem to forget that that probably cost this country about £5 billion—an immense amount of money that was in foreign exchange, which we could have used in many other ways. Those events led to the industrial recovery, of a sort, that has arisen since.

The fourth indictment has been the waste of North sea oil, which hon. Members know about. Who is there in the House who believes that that accretion of sudden wealth has been handled for the good of our country? No one believes it. It was a disgraceful episode. We could have used that great resource to modernise our industry, to prepare us for the difficult times ahead, to revive our cities and to invest in infrastructure. Instead, we squandered it.

We are coming out of recession.

Mr. John Evans: My right hon. Friend has mentioned four points in relation to waste in the 15 years of Tory Government. Will he mention the fifth one: the £14 billion wasted on the poll tax?

Mr. Sheldon: No one can doubt that. The matter involves not only waste of money, although that is extremely serious. Local government finance has been ruined. Today, local government is different from what it was 15 years ago. It has never had sufficient finance to deal with the problems that it has faced, but it was able to contain the problems. The large proportion of money that it needs from central Government has distorted local government decisions. It cannot decide to spend money in a certain way because it costs so much more than it used to in the reduction of Government grants.

We are coming out of recession, but we still have a balance of payments deficit and a public sector deficit. At any rate, a chance exists to make some amends. The Government's main task is to create investment in both industry and people. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has put that at the forefront of the Labour party's aims—it should be there and he is right to do that.

There is a difference in the time scale involving investment in training and the time scale involving investment in plant and machinery. Investment in plant and machinery can often get a return in months. In education and training, investment success needs a number of years. There was one exception to that. The wartime training scheme created engineers for the war effort who produced large numbers of trainees ready for the factories. The difference between then and now is that jobs existed that could immediately be filled. The Government could, therefore, undertake training but they need to find ways of making use of it. The lesson from that is that training is best undertaken when demand is higher than it is now. Further investment in training and education is essential, but the results will be long term.

To achieve necessary investment in industry, incentives must be given. As I say again and again, a 25 per cent. investment incentive is not an incentive at all. It is a disincentive because so many items of plant and machinery are not worth 75 per cent. of their value at the end of the first year and they are not worth the amount by which they are allowed to depreciate over succeeding years. Already, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Governor of the Bank of England are telling us of their worries about an overheating economy. It is clear that severe capacity constraints exist due to the failure to invest.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer told us that investment incentives will "distort investment decisions." Of course they will. That is what they are all about. Such incentives are needed when investment is inadequate. The Chancellor distorted tax allowances to provide up to £290 million for venture capital trusts. He distorted them to produce a development that is far less important than investment. Venture capital trusts will receive £290 million, but the amount of incentive for plant and machinery will not change. Far more important than those trusts is the need to encourage investment in manufacturing industry.

Investment in manufacturing industry will not produce all that many jobs. Efficiency will translate into higher production rather than much higher employment. The whole purpose of investment in manufacturing industry is to provide wealth. That is what we need from industry. It allows us to export more and to reduce imports. That wealth is required and it will translate into higher expenditure and more jobs in other parts of the economy.

Another reason exists for the low level of investment: the way our corporation tax system works. The maintenance of dividends in bad times as well as good is a peculiarity and it makes it difficult to invest. The Secretary of State for National Heritage began an examination of short-termism and dividend excesses. It is wrong that outside influences, or whatever influences there were, have cut short that necessary examination. We are entitled to know the circumstances and the reasons behind the cancellation of that valuable initiative.

Retentions of profits are the most frequent and most reliable source of finance for investment. Of course, the use of outside capital is sensible, but, for many firms, the cost is high and uncertain. As well as that, a difficulty exists in convincing lenders where their technical understanding is fairly low. There are limitations, therefore, in going to the market for money. Those limitations do not apply if one is able to reinvest from one's own resources. After all, most investment comes from that source. Capital allowances should have been changed to allow for that.

There is a certain irony in saying that the failure to obtain £1.5 billion from VAT on heating will mean that the Budget will be "holed below the waterline." The Government predict that, if the amendment is carried, there will be dire consequences. That is nonsense; it is all rubbish. The Government scorned fine tuning, but this is fine tuning to the amount of 0.5 per cent., or even less, of Government spending. Why should the Budget judgment of the Chancellor of the Exchequer be sacrosanct? Iain Macleod used to scorn that view. The Chancellor of the Exchequer of the day used to say, "This is my Budget judgment and this is all set." Iain Macleod would say "nonsense" to that, and he was right.

I had the advantage of taking part in the consideration of many Finance Bills with Iain Macleod. It was a great privilege to sign, with, I think, only one other hon. Member now present, a plate that commemorated Iain Macleod on his life's work. The right hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) was the other signee. It was a privilege to have been recognised in that way. Iain Macleod scorned that fine tuning and he was right to do so.

The interesting thing is that the Red Book states that, in the past 10 years, the average error in spending has been £10.5 billion. We are talking about £1 billion now. Who do the Government think they are? They have such

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certainty about the future when the average error in the past 10 years—not the error for just one year—has been so great.

I, like the right hon. Members for Norfolk, South and for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins), remember when the Rooker-Wise amendment to index personal allowances was moved. It was supported by Nigel Lawson and cost about £1 billion in 1977. At the time, the Chancellor claimed—as all Chancellors claim—that the Budget judgment cannot be altered because it hangs together so well; it is so perfectly constructed that to take away one brick would mean the collapse of the whole thing. That, of course, is rubbish.

In 1977, the £1 billion was readily absorbed within the margins of error, but it is now claimed that the amendment would introduce such a fundamental change that everything would collapse if it were accepted. The present margins of error have become much greater and the cost is lower.

Chancellors of the Exchequer have a touch of the confidence trickster about them—they do not inform their Cabinet colleagues about the Budget until it is too late for them to do anything about it. The secrecy surrounding the Budget was because certain information could be used to enable those in the know to make large fortunes, but much of that has gone. The abolition of purchase tax and the introduction of value added tax mean that advance notice must be given and, in any event, the Chancellor himself leaks so many details that much secrecy is no longer possible.

The Budget is about raising money in taxation; it is not about the course of the economy but about how much the Chancellor can give away in income tax reductions the following year. However, I am not sure that it will have the same effect in 1996 as it did in the past because VAT is becoming ever more unpopular, and for very good reason.

VAT is a regressive tax which hits the worst off hardest. It used to be only a slightly regressive tax. Indeed, when the right hon. Member for Worthing introduced it, it was claimed that it was broadly neutral. I always believed that it was slightly regressive but recent changes have altered that, none more so than the latest.

Today, income tax is our only progressive tax. It is a major tragedy that we have lost what was once common ground between our parties. We believed in the need for "progressivity" in the tax system. We may have argued about the scale of progressivity—we wanted more progressivity than the Conservatives—but progressivity itself was taken to be a good thing. Now, however, we no longer have that general accord, which is a great pity because it was an advantage when dealing with such matters.

Conservatives Members should not be fooled into believing in the sacred nature of Budget totals. They should not deny themselves the opportunity to go through the sensible Lobby this evening. The Treasury can easily rewrite the figures, just as the Chancellor can easily rewrite his speeches following a wet night in Dudley. It is the House that must decide supply, now every bit as much as it has in the past.

6.12 pm

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): It is always a great pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) as I have done so many times. I wish immediately to take up his point about this evening's Division although I shall deal with it in more detail later. We are not considering whether the Budget is sacrosanct or the sum of money involved—although even these days £1.5 billion can scarcely be regarded as peanuts—but whether the Government can get their business through. I must point out to the right hon. Gentleman that we do not know what the effect on markets would be tomorrow morning if the Opposition amendment were carried.

I shall concentrate on three main points: value added tax on fuel; what I regard as the myth of the unified Budget; and the question of a single currency and whether we should have a referendum on it. All three points in different ways form part of what one might call the "Lamont legacy". I shall comment on each in turn, but I have a further issue to raise.

It is not usual to examine the nitty-gritty of the Budget resolutions but I seek clarification on one. I must declare an interest in that I am the chairman of a company pension fund. Although I do not quite follow the argument, there seems to be a discrepancy between the resolutions—especially No. 35—and what appears on the Order Paper today. Is it merely a misprint? I should appreciate some clarification.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Sir George Young): I commend my right hon. Friend on his observation. He is right to point out that since the resolution was published last week the text has been amended so that it more closely reflects the text of the clause to which it relates. In a nutshell, it will ensure that tax relief for pension contributions is correctly applied.

Sir Terence Higgins: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. We shall no doubt try to work out later what that means and whether it is a good or bad thing. At any rate, it certainly seemed odd that the two texts did not tie up.

The Opposition's amendment to the resolution to amend the law relates to a procedure that I introduced 20 years ago and which has stood the test of time. I am, therefore, not keen for the Opposition to muck around with it. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne will remember that one year we debated whether every possible item—from sanitary towels to antiques—should be zero-rated or exempt. Amendment after amendment was debated but, clearly, we could not continue in that way every year, so I devised the current form of words.

The Opposition, for the first time in 20 years, are seeking to amend that form of words in one specific case, namely VAT on fuel, so that it can be debated. I resent my form of words being mucked around and I shall certainly support the Government this evening. In one sense, I have perhaps more reason to object to VAT on fuel than anyone else because, as the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne said, I and the late Iain Macleod had the task of devising VAT in Opposition and I steered it through the nitty-gritty of the Finance Bill.

We believed that two main factors should form the basis of VAT in this country, which would make it fairer than anything in Europe. First, we took the view that the most essential items of consumer expenditure of importance to those on low incomes should be zero-rated and, secondly, that there should be only a single positive rate of tax. By way of mitigation, I should point out that we abolished at the same time the selective employment tax, which was incredibly unpopular, and purchase tax. The disadvantage of the purchase tax was that there were huge gradations between what were luxury items, semi-luxury items and those which were not quite so luxurious. We decided to scrub that system and introduced zero-rating for the largest items of consumer expenditure of importance to low-income families. Other than that, it was left up to people to decide on what they spent their money. The single rate of tax was 10 per cent., which is lower than it is now.

If the Opposition were to succeed this evening, and if it were subsequently decided to leave the rate of VAT on fuel where it is, we would effectively have a multiple-rate system and I do not doubt that before long many more multiple rates would be introduced. That would be a retrograde step and, for that reason, I am not inclined to support the Opposition.

Let us consider the effect of VAT on fuel on pensioners and those on low incomes. We are in an extraordinary position. If we go ahead and raise VAT on fuel to 17.5 per cent. and continue with the compensation arrangements, the gross yield from the tax—something like £2.9 billion—will give a net yield of only £1.6 billion while the relief will amount to £1.3 billion. To put it in simpler terms, more than 44 per cent. of the yield of this tax, which is imposed on the country as a whole, will be used to offer relief to pensioners, the disabled and those on income support. One might reasonably claim that that, as it has now been developed, is rather a socialist measure, and I am puzzled as to why the Opposition are not supporting it.

However, what I said when the idea was first mooted two years ago is still true: if we were to compensate people 10 times over they still would not believe us. That is the political reality. But the economic reality is that compensation is now very great.

The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who spoke for the Opposition, suggested alternative forms of tax that he would impose, but he made no attempt whatever to quantify them in relation to the revenue that would be lost if VAT on fuel were not increased to 17.5 per cent.

As the Prime Minister said the other day, since the tax was first mooted electricity and gas prices have fallen, so even allowing for VAT as it is now to be imposed, gas and electricity prices have still declined. Again, that effect is very different from that presented—even, alas, by some of my hon. Friends who have not studied the matter as closely as they might have done. I hope that the Government will succeed in rejecting the Opposition amendment, and anyone who has really studied the subject will hope so, too.

My next point is about another part of the Lamont legacy—the so-called unified Budget. From the Committees that examined the idea before it was announced, it was clear that we should not adopt it without carefully examining the procedural implications. That warning should have been heeded. I have spelt out both in an article in *The Times* and last week in *The House Magazine* the fact that instead of having three annual opportunities for debate—we have always debated both sides of the equation, expenditure and taxation—the whole thing is concertinaed into the period between the State Opening and the Christmas recess.

Of course, there will be a Finance Bill later, which will have a Second Reading, but that is about it. Last year, for more than seven months the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not make a speech in the House. That represents a serious deterioration in parliamentary accountability. Moreover, it means that there is a very short period within which representations may be made to the Chancellor about what he has announced in the Budget. The fact that the Christmas recess intervenes tightens the timetable considerably. We must reconsider the whole business from a procedural point of view, and I am glad that, as I understand it, the present Chairman of the Treasury Select Committee proposes to do so.

One possible way of solving the problem might be to leave the unified Budget in its present form but to move it to the spring. That would require a fairly radical change in the Treasury's internal proceedings, but it would avoid the difficult concertinaed programme that we now have. The difficulty has been exacerbated by the Opposition, who insist on an economic debate on the Queen's Speech a week before the Budget, when the latest forecasts are available and the Chancellor could not say anything substantive.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Would it not be better to reform the parliamentary year completely, and get away from the nonsensical arrangements whereby we are away for such a long period from July until the end of October?

Sir Terence Higgins: Perhaps, but that would raise different issues, rather than how the various items of Government business should be spread throughout the year. Presumably there will eventually be some reaction to the report of the Jopling Committee, and I believe that there is a strong case for having, in addition to the estimates days, which fulfil a useful function, a certain number of specific days devoted to public expenditure.

The House has never really had serious debates on public expenditure, because the estimates were totally incomprehensible to almost everyone, and bore no relation to the real subject of the debate. That is not now the case. As a result of the work of the Treasury Select Committee and of the Treasury under my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), people can now tell what the estimates are all about, and we could have an intelligent debate on the basis of the departmental reports.

The Select Committees can now examine those and the Departments can scrutinise expenditure. Perhaps on some sort of biannual cycle—with four days, or eight half days, of debate—we could then discuss particular Departments' expenditure plans. The Select Committees have the responsibility of scrutinising policy, expenditure and administration, but, for reasons that I have explained, they have not done a very good job on expenditure. Now there is an opportunity for them to put that right.

If that happens at least we shall have gained something from the change to a unified Budget—although in my view the whole idea is a myth. The reality is that because of our Standing Orders we can only reduce expenditure and taxation; we cannot increase either. So there is no question of the House saying, "We shall have a unified

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Budget, and trade off higher spending on the health service for an increase in income tax." In that sense, there can be no real unified Budget.

As I have said elsewhere, that applies even to the Government. The Secretary of State for Health does not go to the Chancellor and say, "I want more for the health service, so you must put up income tax." She has to haggle with the Chancellor about how much will be spent on the health service, then he separately decides what should happen to taxation. So there is no genuine unified Budget either in the House or within the Government. None the less, in deference to the idea, accountability in the House has been seriously eroded.

The Opposition have failed in their task by not bringing that fact out, especially when the confusion arose last year involving the withdrawal of pairing and the general breakdown in communications. The Opposition should then have negotiated better arrangements for financial matters.

Finally, I shall say a word or two about the single currency—and here I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames who was much involved in negotiating the opt-out clause, and so on. The single currency is a difficult issue, but I am deeply concerned about the proposals now being made by some of my right hon. and hon. Friends and others who want a referendum on it. It is a paradox that Members on both sides of the House who argue that the sovereignty of the House is being eroded by Brussels and by the European Union should seek to offset that process by resorting to the technique of referendums, which are alien to our system of representative democracy.

On that subject we always risk the accusation of being elitist, but it is not likely that one could get a sensible response from a referendum on a single currency. If one asked people outside what the difference was between a single currency and a common currency—it is a fundamental difference—I doubt whether one in 10, or even one in 50, would give you an intelligent answer.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Or people on either side of the House.

Sir Terence Higgins: That may be true. Indeed—and I am sorry to say this in his absence—the shadow Chancellor, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), mixes up not only a single currency and a common currency, but exempt and zero-rated VAT status. But that is by the way.

My main argument is that all appeals for a referendum on a single currency are really appeals on the broader European issue. The idea that a referendum should be held at all is wrong, and the idea that we should have one on a single currency—unless we added a few supplementary questions, such as what do people think about the convergence issue and what size deficit they favour—is bizarre. It is also fundamentally incompatible with our system of representative parliamentary democracy.

I make one exception on referendums, and that relates to Northern Ireland. When it is a question of which country people are to belong to—

Mrs. Ewing: Why not the Scots?

Sir Terence Higgins: I would describe what might happen there more in terms of a border plebiscite. I believe that that is distinguishable from what might reasonably be called a referendum. I very much hope that we shall not go down that road.

Despite what was said by the right hon. Member for Copeland, I believe that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor's Budget judgment generally is about right. Inflation is at a remarkably low level and unemployment is coming down month by month. The rate of economic growth may be a little too fast at this stage, but until we get closer to the capacity ceiling, that growth must be to everyone's benefit. The balance of payments is remarkably resilient, investment is going up and consumer expenditure is not likely to get out of control.

The only real problem is the size of the deficit. I am a little wary of those who say that we shall have tax increases now, but that we shall have tax reductions later. Such reductions seem likely to be envisaged at a stage in the economic cycle when they will be least appropriate. The deficit being forecast two or three years out is still too high. That being so, not to go along with this Chancellor's and the previous Chancellor's proposals on VAT on fuel at this stage would be the height of folly. On that basis, I shall support the Government this evening. I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor on what is, in all the circumstances, an entirely satisfactory Budget.

6.30 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Budget debates are sometimes rather something and nothing affairs. They are something in that they address one of the most important issues in the running of the state—the building of a strong and fair economy, and the balancing of state and personal finances to achieve that end. They are nothing in that the inbuilt majority of the party of government normally guarantees that, despite all the debate, the essentials of the Chancellor's programme, right or wrong, are seen through. The Opposition may oppose, but they cannot dispose.

I hope that tonight, things may prove rather different. Tonight, there appears to be the real prospect that the Chancellor will not have it all his own way. Tonight, if all those who know in their hearts that the proposed further increase in VAT on fuel is not only a broken tax promise, but wrong-headed and unjust vote with their consciences and their constituents, the Chancellor will be defeated. Such a defeat would undoubtedly be welcomed by the country. There is overwhelming opposition among all our constituents to this tax. The Government should already have started to listen to what the people are saying. If it takes some Conservative Back Benchers of courage and integrity to make the Government listen by joining the Opposition in voting against VAT tonight, in the long run, those Conservative Members will do the country and their party a service.

Why is the tax so unpopular? First, it is unpopular because the British people, rightly, feel that they have been deceived by the Government. As we heard earlier, Conservative Ministers and the Prime Minister himself made the specific pledge at the general election that

"we have no need and no plans to extend the scope of VAT."

Rightly, people cannot believe that those who were running the economy before and during the election were so ignorant of the true state of public finances that the need for big tax rises was not revealed to them until shortly after the election. Those tax rises were forced through in the March 1993 Budget.

Secondly, the tax is unpopular because it falls so harshly on the old and the cold. The tax asks those who struggle to afford to keep warm in winter, rather than those who can afford it and who have been the major beneficiaries of previous tax cuts, to bail out the Government financially to allow tax cuts next year. The Chancellor argued last week that adequate compensation measures would be introduced to help alleviate the burden on the elderly. This week, a report by Age Concern shows that the compensation is simply not enough. Many single pensioners will expect to receive an extra 50p a week to help offset VAT on fuel. In fact, they will get only an extra 30p, the other 20p being incorporated in the annual uprating. On average, single pensioners and pensioner couples who are mainly dependent on state pensions will be 56p a week worse off after the VAT increase.

A card that came in my postbag today raises a further point and sums up the horror that elderly people feel at the prospect of a 9.5 per cent. hike in VAT on domestic fuel. The writer said:

"I do not have a full stamp record so do not receive a full pension. Last year I only got a percentage of the fuel increase. Is the same to be done to the new £52 a year? SHAME."

Meanwhile, according to the social policy research unit at York university, lone parents with young children receive only 25 per cent. compensation and low-paid families who have children, but who are not on benefit, will get no extra help at all.

Furthermore, the compensation takes no account of regional variations in heating costs. In my area of the south-west, people pay some of the highest fuel bills in the country, largely because of the introduction under privatisation—about which the President of the Board of Trade boasted so much—of extra distribution costs for those living in remote areas far from generators. That comes on top of the highest water bills in the country and rising unemployment in an area where the benefits of such recovery as there is are not showing through to the businesses to which I talk. Indeed, unemployment has gone up at a time when it is falling elsewhere. As there are especially large numbers of elderly people living in the south-west, I am amazed that, as yet, no south-west Conservative Members have said that they will have the courage and decency to back their constituents on the issue. It is high time that Conservative Members in the south-west voted for their constituents rather than for the maintenance of their Government.

Thirdly, the tax is unpopular because everyone knows that it is being hiked up now so that the Chancellor can introduce tax cuts later. Taking money out of people's pockets to give some of it back to them as election bribes and raising VAT now to cut income tax next year is a pretty cheap trick by the Government, but a rather expensive trick for those on the receiving end. It is especially unfair to those on low incomes, some of whom may not benefit at all from direct tax cuts.

What are the Government's excuses for the tax? First, they say that the finance is necessary. Given that the Chancellor talks of tax cuts as early as next year, it is hard to be entirely convinced by that argument. Even if we accept the Chancellor's judgment that he needs the finances now, there is no need for this especially unfair tax. The Chancellor believes that the money is vital to the nation's economy, but there are various other ways in which the money could have been raised.

In the Budget, the Chancellor introduced new tax cuts totalling £1 billion, exactly the amount needed to hold VAT on fuel at 8 per cent., allowing for the compensation measures. The Government could have avoided the rise because they had the money, but they chose not to. I shall give a few other examples of ways in which the Chancellor could have met his target. He could have introduced the tax reforms outlined in the Liberal Democrats' alternative Budget, including extending employers' national insurance contributions to benefits in kind, and reforming inheritance tax and performance-related pay. That would raise £1 billion.

Sir Terence Higgins: The hon. Gentleman is saying that instead of raising VAT, the Chancellor should have abandoned the other tax changes he made. Those changes include, of course, hiking the threshold for tax on pensioners. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he is not in favour of that?

Mr. Taylor: I am outlining a series of different ways in which the Chancellor could have met his target. One would have been to abandon the tax cuts made which happen to exactly equal the cost of abandoning VAT on fuel. Another way is the series of tax reforms that I have just mentioned and I shall outline some others. We outlined what we would do in our alternative Budget, which included rather more substantive changes to employers' national insurance contributions.

I am addressing the Chancellor's claim that he had no alternative. That simply is not true. Indeed, it is pretty obviously not true because we all know that the Chancellor is choosing between a large range of alternatives and using his judgment about which is best. He cannot claim anything other than that it is his judgment. Although he says otherwise, he would not privately argue that very strongly.

The Chancellor could have reduced the 1995-96 contingency reserve by £1 billion, leaving a substantial £2 billion which would have risen to £5 billion by 1996-97 on his figures.

Secondly, the Government seek to justify the tax by arguing that it is green; a tax to save the planet. Never was there such a wolf in such inadequate sheep's clothing. In fact, the tax falls on all energy use equally, polluting or not. It is a tax on electricity from clean wind power as well as from polluting coal, on electricity from clean hydro-electric as well as from polluting gas. The whole point about shifting tax from the "polluter pays" principle is to target the polluter not the good guy. This tax notably fails to do so.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the hon. Gentleman therefore regard it as a double insult that, in many areas of Scotland, where the bulk of our power is produced by hydro-electric

[Mrs. Ewing]

power, our consumers will suffer most because they also live in the coldest climatic conditions in the whole of the UK?

Mr. Taylor: I agree with the hon. Lady. I know that that matter has been especially controversial in her area. The truth that the tax has nothing to do with the environment and everything to do with raising revenue is revealed most clearly by the fact that it is set to fall on standing charges as well as consumption. There is nothing in that which is green, but there is plenty in it which is regressive for those on low incomes. Moreover, the funds from this so-called green tax are not being used to invest in energy compensation. Just £10 million out of £1,000 million raised is going into the home energy efficiency scheme, helping the environment and those struggling to pay the bills. Nor is the tax a shift towards the "polluter pays" principle because it is not replacing another tax, but being used purely to raise further revenue. That is not the point of the shift for which we have argued—shifting taxes on to polluters.

Of course, Conservative Members of Parliament are briefed by Ministers and told that we, as Liberal Democrats, looked at extending VAT to fuel ourselves. So we did and we concluded that it was the wrong approach for all the reasons that I have given. We were honest enough to say that we considered it and bright enough to rule it out. In contrast, the Government were bright enough to rule it out during the run-up to the last election and dishonest enough to implement it afterwards.

It is true that the Liberal Democrats have long advocated a carbon energy tax—I shall not duck the issue—to address the need for energy conservation. In the early years of its adoption, it would raise similar revenue to that raised by VAT, but there are crucial differences. Unlike VAT, a carbon energy tax would target polluting industries. That means that there would be a far smaller burden on domestic users than is presently the case with VAT on fuel. Unlike VAT, it targets the raw material going into the power stations, encouraging more efficient energy production and, therefore, lower costs to customers, rather than putting up bills willy-nilly. Many power stations are currently only 30 to 40 per cent. efficient—a good starting point for improvement. Unlike VAT, we would recycle the revenue from the carbon tax into reducing employers' national insurance contributions, the tax on jobs, which returns to the point made earlier. So it would shift the burden from NI contributions, which currently puts people and keeps people out of work, and place it on the pollution of our environment, which is widely acknowledged as needing to be capped.

Unlike Labour, we do not run away from our policies, nor do we propose targets for cutting greenhouse gases without explaining how we would achieve them.

Mr. Fabricant: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that so-called clean producers of electricity—he talked about wind power and about hydro-electric power, which was also emphasised by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing)—represent a very small proportion of the total mechanisms used for generating electricity in the country? At the end of the day, has the hon. Gentleman calculated the total cost to pensioners and, indeed, any consumer of electricity, of his carbon tax, albeit, as he points out, that it is a tax on polluting producers of electricity?

Mr. Taylor: First, let us remember that we are talking about giving back with one hand the tax that we are collecting with the other in the same process, rather than giving it back later as tax bribes. So, we are not talking of increasing the overall burden on the economy. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman must remember that the more efficient and cleaner energy producers, those which are not destroying the environment, will be penalised equally by the imposition of VAT on fuel as those which are dirty. That will not be of any benefit.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) is wrong. One of the ways in which we clean up our environment is to make those who burn carbon fuels burn them more efficiently and get better returns on energy. At the moment, whichever power station we are talking about, the same burden of VAT on fuel will apply and the customer will see no benefit from it. However, if fuels were used intelligently to generate electricity, we would see a direct return in the profits of the company and in the prices to consumers under the carbon tax. That is the specific point of the adoption of that tax. That is why environmentalists are united on it and why the European Community also sees it as the best way forward.

The third reason that Ministers give their Back Benchers for supporting VAT is loyalty to the party. They say that the measure is a central part of Conservative Government policy, so Conservative Members should vote for it as a matter of duty, that they were elected as Government Members of Parliament and that they should stand or fall with their Chancellor, right or wrong. That is a new constitutional theory to me and not one, I fancy, for which many of us in the House have time. Members of Parliament are elected to represent and stand up for their constituents, not back a Government who are so out of touch.

Let us look instead at what defeat for the Government will tells us and what it will achieve. First, it will tell us that the Government will not only have lost their majority tonight. It will confirm that they have effectively become a minority Government. They will have got there not only because of defeats by Liberal Democrats in by-elections, but because they ceased to listen to the people who elected them or even to those elected to represent them on the Back Benches. The Cabinet has become so unwilling to listen to others that it can no longer even command the confidence of its own Back Benchers. A defeat for the Government will tell us that the time of this Government is drawing to a close, that the Prime Minister has neither the authority nor the ability to see through his policies, and that his is a Government buffeted and rocked by dissent and confusion.

Far more important is what the defeat will achieve. Whatever the technical status of the amendment, its success tonight will force the Government to abandon their plans for the second-stage increase in VAT on fuel—a result which would be welcomed by people across the country. Even more important, perhaps defeat can persuade the Government to stop listening to their ideologues and start listening to the country. It will be clear that the Government must start to build a more open-minded, a more consensual and a more honest approach to governing Britain. If they do not, it will be clear that neither the Prime Minister nor the Government deserve to survive.

Most important of all, a defeat will show that the Government can no longer get away with deceiving the electorate and that they cannot win the next election, as they did the previous election, on the back of promises that they had no intention of keeping. The bluff is called, the disguise uncovered. Their time is up.

6.47 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): After all the days of the Budget debate and having looked through some of speeches, I am fully aware that I will probably be repeating everything that has been said. However, I shall repeat it regardless because this, after all, is a secret that we are keeping in here. I know that nobody up there in the Press Gallery is bothering to report any of it anyway. I shall try all the same.

The Budget, which has been clearly presented to us tonight, falls very much into the context of what we have been doing over the past 15 years, and I shall review a little of that. It has been produced against the backdrop of the particularly successful economic regeneration that is going on at the moment. It is quite interesting to look back through the reforms made to the supply side during the 1980s, because one can see that some of the key areas of success, such as businesses being able to take up extra employment early and therefore producing new jobs for people, are mostly due to those hard decisions. It has meant that businesses are now much more flexible and much more able to compete. Essentially, they are able to take up those extra bits of slack in the economy. I emphasise manufacturing, which did not go through a boom period in the late 1980s, but which, with restructuring all the way through, has come out of the recession remarkably well and is now competing worldwide.

We forget at our cost the change in labour relations which we have undertaken over the past 15 years. Often, not one word is said about that. Back in the 1970s, a Labour Prime Minister was telling trade union bosses to get their tanks off his lawn because they were so threatening and were demanding so many things. We do not hear comments such as that any more because today the trade unions do not have any tanks. All the breast-beating before 1979 about the problems of days lost through strikes has disappeared. Not a word is said about that by Opposition Members, simply because it no longer exists. The concerns and worries that ran up to 1979 have gone, with the result that there has been a major and beneficial change to our economic prospects. The United Kingdom is in the vanguard of trade union reform. Fewer days are lost through strikes in this country than pretty well anywhere else in the western world.

We have talked about the exchange rate mechanism almost endlessly, so I do not intend to make it a great issue this evening. I merely say that our adherence to the ERM must be a lesson for us all. We find greater success through floating exchange rates than fixed exchange rates that peg us to currencies that relate to economies with which only a tiny proportion of our trade is conducted.

I welcomed our departure from the ERM. Much of our success and growth since then has stemmed from our leaving it. Those Opposition Members who speak as if they had been talking constantly about departure should carefully rethink their position. Earlier they were arguing that we should stay within the ERM regardless of the cost. They advocated upping interest rates. In effect, they were saying that we should find anything that would allow us to stay in. On that basis, they would take no credit from our departure. Indeed, they would still be in the ERM now, and we would see no growth.

We are in a period of sustained low inflation with strong export-led growth. We would have given our eye teeth for such a state of affairs 15 years ago. I remember over the years the growth that moved into consumer expansion, which led to inflation and everyone gritting their teeth and saying, "Up interest rates." We are not, thankfully, in that position. We are in a near-perfect position at the present stage of growth in the economy. It is export-led growth and consumers are not spending at rates that they cannot afford.

We have about 8.25 per cent. growth in exports with 2.5 per cent. growth in the level of consumer spending, which does, however, lead to some problems.

Mr. Clappison: My hon. Friend is going to the heart of the debate, which was conspicuously missed earlier by the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench. I am talking about sustainable growth. We have heard nothing from Opposition Members about how they would improve our present prospects.

My hon. Friend has made comparisons between now and the 1970s, and Opposition Members have produced a welter of selective economic comparisons. Does my hon. Friend recall a time under any Labour Government when growth was as high as at present and inflation was as low, and it looked as though things would stay like that for a long time?

Mr. Duncan Smith: I cannot remember such a period. I dare say that Opposition Members are unable to refer me to one.

Conspicuously absent from the speeches of Opposition Members is the fact that we have a strong level of growth in the economy. As I have said, there is 8.25 per cent. growth in exports, which is something that we have wished for over the past 30 years. At the same time, there is a lower level of growth in consumer spending. The two levels of consumer growth are the same as they were last year, and the predictions are that they will not rise by very much next year. That produces a strong level of growth and a strong base for the economy, but it is a situation that will lead to problems.

The current problem between consumers and businesses is that the businesses that will satisfy the consumers are in a 2.5 per cent. trap, which means that they do not necessarily recognise the growth that we are talking about. They do not see it to quite the same extent as it exists. We must try to explain much more clearly that in the long term a low level of inflation with export-led growth will be beneficial and that it will not lead to higher levels of inflation.

We are in a period of instability because of the shake-outs that have been taking place in manufacturing industry and the service sector over the past 15 years. For the first time, we find a great deal of instability among white-collar workers. Most white-collar workers succeeded in passing through many previous recessions without experiencing too many personal problems. They

[Mr. Duncan Smith]

now find that jobs that they might have anticipated keeping for long periods will not necessarily be available to them. They are in the same position as many others in looking much more frequently for jobs. They change their jobs more frequently and consequently are more often looking for new employment than hitherto. The concept of people entering industries and staying within them for their entire working lives has gone. It is a cultural shake-up that has had a major effect on the views that are taken on levels of growth within the economy.

It is excellent that we have low inflation and a good level of growth, but we must understand that outside the House it will take some time for people to recognise, for example, that the value of their houses will not increase massively and that they will not be able to borrow against increased property values. They will not experience wage settlements that bring them a great deal more money. In the short term, they will not think that they are better off. There is a cultural change taking place outside the House. Unfortunately, the Opposition continue to carp. They suggest that they would wave a magic wand and change everything. That is not possible and we must see through the change from an old, manufacturing society to a modern society that is based on knowledge and the employment of people in the selling of knowledge. Those will be the key factors. The change will be better for people in the long run.

We have a growing economy within which there is no real pressure from consumer spending. Against that background, I do not think that the Bank of England is right about pressures on inflation. It went on about them the other day and it is still doing so. If we take account of levels of consumer spending and project them over next year, however, and at the same time bear in mind M4, the broad money measure, which is low for the historical level of upturn within the economy—over the past two months or so M4 has reflected a decrease—the position is worrying. I take that view because the figures reveal that the amount of money in the economy is not as great as it perhaps should be at this stage. At the same time, there is no real pressure on inflation. I wish that people would stop talking about interest rate rises. We have yet to see the results of the most recent interest rate rises.

Mr. Fabricant: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Duncan Smith: I shall not because I am conscious that I must get on. Others wish to speak.

I welcome the Budget because it demonstrates that we can set a domestic monetary framework that works. We do not have to worry too much about the way in which others are behaving with their exchange rates. We take the right decisions, which are based on floating exchange rates and targets for inflation. Floating exchange rates worked for us in the early 1980s and they are working again for us now. I do not accept the arguments for the adoption of a single currency. Those who advance them suggest that there is a better approach that is based on re-pegging our currency to a fixed exchange rate. I do not agree. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will take that on board over the next six months, when a decision will need to be taken on whether to go into a single currency.

I am concerned to note that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has predicted from the Red Book that there will be a reduction of about 0.8 per cent. in public expenditure next year. That is a pretty tough target given our record. I am concerned because the Red Book figures tell us that we forecast a reduction, ultimately, of about 1.3 per cent. last time round and ended up with an increase of about 1.4 per cent. There has been an overall increase of about 2.7 per cent. from where we projected we would be. That could mean expenditure of up to £6 billion more than we expected. I raise a note of concern. Had we adhered to the figures that were forecast we would be in an even better public expenditure position than at present. The contents of page 10 of the Red Book show clearly that we need to make a greater effort to adhere to our public expenditure programmes. If we say 0.8 per cent., I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to adhere to that and even to do better.

When the right hon. Member for Copeland was asked by several hon. Members, and finally by me, whether public expenditure was too high or too low, he said that it was too high. He went further and said that social security spending was too high. Let us ask the right hon. Member for Copeland and his hon. Friends, in particular the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), who is to reply to the debate on behalf of the Opposition, which element of social security spending they are going to cut. Where is the axe going to fall?

I was amazed by that clear statement made by the right hon. Member for Copeland. I would like to follow it up to discover what it means. If public expenditure is not to be cut, which element of taxation is to rise to support higher levels of public expenditure?

Given the figures to which I referred earlier, and the fact that even under huge pressure to keep public expenditure down it has actually risen in real terms, we do not have scope to fiddle around with VAT on fuel this time round. Following a point made by one of my colleagues earlier, it is clear that we do not want to end up with a differentiated level of VAT. We must decide whether we want that tax altogether or not.

Some people may think that we do not want it. I accept that some hon. Members do not want it. However, in present circumstances, where else will they find the money if it does not come from higher public expenditure? There must be a level of taxation and they must want a higher level.

Mrs. Ewing: I must make it clear that I am not responding on behalf of the official Opposition. The City made it very clear that it anticipated a Budget based on a £23 billion public sector borrowing requirement while the Chancellor produced one with a £21.5 billion PSBR. The difference is exactly the amount of money that will be raised from VAT on fuel. Therefore, the City did not see the necessity for the tax on fuel. As Conservatives usually support the City, why does not the hon. Gentleman listen to the City?

Mr. Duncan Smith: I always listen to the City. If the hon. Lady looks at the figures carefully, she will discover that public expenditure this year is higher than was originally forecast in real terms. The question that we must ask, and which has not yet been answered, is that if the Opposition want to get rid of the uprating to 17.5 per cent. VAT on fuel, where will they find the extra money? We are already talking about £3.5 billion more than was forecast last year. As I said earlier, if we consider the original forecast, the figure is £6 billion higher. The Opposition have not faced that fact.

I must tell my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench that I am concerned about the fact that, although the increase in VAT on fuel is an important part of the Finance Bill, a week ago, in relation to the European budget, the issue became a matter of confidence and the measure was passed on that basis. Whether or not that measure had been approved, money still would have flowed, as the Paymaster General is aware, to the European Community—although not necessarily at the higher level.

However, if there is a problem further down the road with regard to the Finance Bill, money does not flow to the Government and they cannot finance their operations. It would therefore be wholly legitimate for my Government to say that the increase in VAT on fuel is a matter of supreme confidence in them, but we find that it is not. I am somewhat bewildered by the fact that it seems to be more important to make a matter of confidence out of moneys not being stopped going to Europe, while a serious measure of taxation does not have the same importance attached to it. I hope for an explanation about that.

Those who talk about the effects on poorer people and pensioners have not studied the figures and the package of measures. As was pointed out earlier, the package of measures has wiped out almost half the revenue that will be taken as a result of VAT on fuel. Pensioners across the board, regardless of income, will find themselves—in some cases—even better off. The Opposition say that those people are going to suffer, but that point has not been proved.

The public who are by and large on low incomes, and pensioners, are not suffering because of the measure. There has been a huge amount of largesse from the Government Front Bench in getting rid of a great deal of the money that the Government would have taken from the measure. The figures speak louder than anything else and those who try to avoid that point are avoiding reality. The figures show that we take far less than we might have done in respect of VAT on fuel simply because we are handing so much of it back.

Figures from 1988 to the end of 1993-94 show that there was an increase of between £90 billion and £100 billion in public expenditure. That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes, South-West (Mr. Legg) in an earlier debate. That increase in public expenditure is the culprit in respect of VAT on fuel. In those four to five years we took our eye off the ball on public expenditure. The biggest lesson must be that we cannot do that again. That is what has caused the pain and hardship.

Another culprit can be found in the people who, on the one hand, refer to public expenditure while on the other they fight hard to exempt certain things. It is impossible to argue both sides of the argument. Public expenditure must be controlled. I believe that we have not controlled it sufficiently, but we are controlling it now and that is welcome.

Some people say that the Budget falls between last year's Budget and next year's Budget and that it does nothing. I believe that the contrary is the case. Some people have missed the point that we are in the process of restoring finances. It was therefore wise of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor not to complete the changes to the taxation system which were started by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) at this stage.

It is remarkable that so few commentators have picked up the fact that we are seeing a fairly major process of change to taxation. There is a general move, by and large, from direct taxation to indirect taxation. That has been a process of Government thinking for the past 15 years, but it was given greater impetus by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames and it is being pursued now, quite rightly, by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor in this Budget and his previous Budget. That is a very good area of reform and it is one that Conservatives should be pleased about as it shifts the burden and leaves the element of choice.

Mr. Graham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Duncan Smith: I will not give way because others wish to speak and I have already given way on several occasions.

The success of the changes in taxation will be seen only when we drag the base rate of income tax down to 20p for all and force the level of overall taxation down much further. The key is that the overall burden of taxation must be reduced as a total package. That is what we must get back to. There has been a blip in that regard over the past two or three years. It must now go down as it would remain unfair if we left it simply as moving towards indirect taxation.

My right hon. and noble Friend the former Member for Blaby, Lord Lawson, said:

> "The history of the 1980s demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that unique political potency of cutting the basic rate of income tax."

I fully support that. Our economy is clearly now showing that it is a global economy—as it always has been. Most of our exports are outside the European Community, not inside it. The latest figures revealed in the Red Book show that 43.5 per cent. of our exports, including financial services, go to the European Community. It is clear that we will be influenced by the changes taking place outside the Community. We will affected by the massive changes in the far east and north America, which are big markets for us. We should be proud about that. We should not pretend that such growth is an accident.

Our business men are voting with their feet. They are exporting more every year to the far east and to north America and they do not want to be hidebound with restrictions, taxation and other forms of Government interference which the European Community seems to want to dump on us and which, in essence, comprises a smaller part of our exports.

I am tired of the constant gripe about manufacturing industry when not one word is said about the service sector. Financial services in this country are the main exporters. We have the third-largest surplus in financial trade in the world—a £16 billion surplus each year—which is beaten only by America and Switzerland. As one industrialist said the other day, our financial services skills are similar to the skills of which the German engineering sector has been proud for many years. We should trumpet that fact because people are beating a path to our door to employ people with those financial services skills.

[Mr. Duncan Smith]

In that light, I welcome the venture capital trust scheme, the industrial financial initiative, and the £600 million package of transitional support on business rates—they will go a long way to demonstrate our support for business activity—as well as the changes to the Export Credits Guarantee Department that were proposed in the Budget.

Opposition Members say that they will sort out the share options scheme and drag lots of money back to the Exchequer on that basis. They are in cloud cuckoo land, just as they are in respect of the loopholes that they will close and the tax that they will drag back to us in that way. It is easy for them to say that, but it does not hold water when we consider the finances.

We are moving in the right direction. At last, we are getting a grip on public expenditure. We are looking to bring down taxation, and we must bring down the overall burden of taxation. We must never let what happened to us in the four years to 1994 happen again. The Budget, seen in the light of the past 15 years, is exactly right. All that I ask for now is that we make certain that we hold tight on public expenditure so that we may deliver a lower burden of taxation to the British people in future.

7.10 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): I have listened to several Tory speeches since the Chancellor of the Exchequer opened the debate, and I have listened to the President of the Board of Trade, in particular. Nothing in the Tory party has changed since, more than a century ago, Disraeli described the Tory party as an organised hypocrisy.

It was interesting to hear the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) refer to the situation in the labour markets and the fact that we have no industrial problems. One reason, if not the principal reason, for that state of affairs is the fear that now exists throughout British industry. That fear was created by the Government's use of mass unemployment as a weapon in their economic policy.

Tories like to tell us that 2.5 million people are unemployed. Of course, that figure is utterly meaningless. There are 2.5 million unemployed people who are claiming benefit. The operative words are "claiming benefit". It is estimated that between 1.5 million and 2 million people are economically inactive, without work, but not claiming benefit. About 4 million people are without employment. One reason for the enormous drain on the public purse is that people who could work and contribute to the national Exchequer in national insurance contributions and income tax are in receipt of benefits of one form or another.

Another reason for the situation that the hon. Member for Chingford regards as so wonderful is that the average British worker has less legislative cover than workers in almost every other European country, including many in the former eastern bloc. The British employee is exposed to the depredations of some of the worst employers in Europe.

I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to two early-day motions. Early-day motion 166 refers to trade union representation and the fact that several organisations and companies refuse employees the right to trade union recognition. Early-day motion 166 states that G. R. Scott Ltd. of Wakefield has sacked four employees with 60 years' service between them because they sought trade union recognition. Early-day motion 178, which relates to Badgerline and the Eastern National bus company, states:

> "That this House regrets that employees of Eastern National Bus Company, based in Chelmsford have been dismissed whilst lawfully contemplating industrial action in furtherance of a trade dispute; notes that not a single employee was on strike at the time the sackings took place".

Many British workers find themselves in that situation today. I hope that the hon. Member for Chingford will bear that in mind before he makes another such speech.

The Budget has been described in a variety of ways. The Tories generally say that the Budget is good. Most Opposition Members describe it as bad. I describe it as a typical Tory Budget. It is the sort of Budget that I have witnessed since 1979, when the Tories took office from the previous Labour Government. As usual, it is a Budget that protects and promotes the interests of the wealthy and denigrates and downgrades the interests of the poor, the elderly, the low-paid, the sick and the unemployed. That is what one expects and gets from Tory Budgets.

The Budget reinforces the point that was rammed home by the memorandum that was so expertly leaked from Tory central office, from Mr. John Maples, deputy chairman of the Conservative party. That memorandum has caused many problems for the Tory party and great amusement and interest for the rest of the country. Mr. Maples struck the note exactly right when he said that the general opinion of Tory voters is that

> "the rich are getting richer on the backs of the rest, who are getting poorer".

In the Budget, once again, the rich are getting richer through the full uprating of inheritance tax, the venture capital trust scheme, which undoubtedly will be another scam for higher-rate taxpayers, and the extension of relief for investors in personal equity plans and tax-exempt special savings accounts. It is remarkable that, next year, holders of TESSAs—in many instances, they will be husbands and wives—at the culmination of their five-year TESSAs, will be able to reinvest £18,000 tax free for at least another five years.

We know that the poor are getting poorer, because VAT will increase from 8 per cent. to 17.5 per cent. if the Government get their way tonight. That will cost the average family an additional £80 a year. We know that, from the previous Budget, seven new Tory taxes will cost the average family another £7 a week. We have seen the freezing of the married couple's allowance, the freezing of the blind person's allowance, the ending of mortgage interest payments for the unemployed and, of course, the continuing tax on ordinary savings.

The increase in VAT on domestic fuel from 8 per cent. to 17.5 per cent. lies at the heart of the controversy surrounding the Budget. No one should be allowed to forget that, at the previous election, the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the Tory party said that there would be no need for any VAT on fuel. That was a specific statement to the country. We now see how worthless that promise was. The VAT increase is undoubtedly one of the most unpopular measures that have ever been perpetrated.

In St. Helens town centre, voluntary organisations and the Labour party organised a petition against the increase in VAT on domestic fuel. People were prepared to stand in a queue for half an hour to sign that petition. Thousands of people almost rushed to add their names to the petition for Members of Parliament to present to the House.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Was the hon. Gentleman able to assure those people who felt so strongly, that a future Labour Government would reduce the rate from 17.5 per cent. to its present level?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman and I share many views about the European Community. As far as I am aware, once value added tax is applied at a particular level, it cannot be reduced or removed. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will tell me if I am wrong. If it were possible, I would certainly like to see VAT removed from fuel. I hope that that satisfies the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I assure the hon. Gentleman that it would be possible to reduce VAT on gas and electricity—although there might be legal action— but not on other fuel items, such as wood.

Mr. Evans: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman does not wish to argue with me as we share similar views on the subject. I stress that, as far as I am aware, once VAT is imposed it cannot be reduced or removed.

The Tory party is the party of value added tax. It introduced VAT and has doubled the rate of VAT since 1979. A typical family will pay more than £1,250 in VAT next year, which is £715 more in real terms than it paid under the previous Labour Government.

I believe that the Tories intend to extend the imposition of VAT to other goods and services in successive Budgets. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has made it quite clear that he strongly favours switching from direct to indirect taxation. We all know how unfair that would be. The imposition of VAT on domestic fuel is both a regressive and retrograde step, which will hit hardest the elderly, the unemployed and the low-paid. It is certainly a bigger impost on the poorer sections of the community than it is on those who are better off.

All hon. Members who vote on the motion should bear it in mind that if there is a severe winter this year, a number of elderly people will die of hypothermia as a result of the increase in VAT. Elderly people died last year of hypothermia, and this year the Government have imposed an even bigger charge that will hit the low-paid—who will not qualify for any of the Chancellor's so-called benefits—particularly hard.

Mr. Fabricant: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman on several points, but is not it the case that people died of hypothermia last year and the year before that? People were dying of hypothermia long before VAT on fuel was ever dreamt of.

Mr. Evans: That is the point that I was making: there will be more deaths from hypothermia this year—particularly if it is a severe winter— than occurred in the last three winters, which were not particularly severe. Many weather forecasters are predicting a severe winter. Conservative Members should bear that in mind when they enter the Lobby to vote with the Chancellor of the Exchequer tonight.

Tory Members and Ministers constantly proclaim—as the President of the Board of Trade did in his speech today—what a wonderful situation the Government have created in Great Britain. They constantly extol the benefits of the growth in exports, the control of inflation, the fall in the public sector borrowing requirement and the decrease in unemployment. They say that we have the strongest economy in western Europe.

In the light of those comments, we are entitled to ask: why cannot the elderly, many of whom do not have long to live, share in that wonderful prosperity? Why has VAT on domestic fuel doubled from 8 per cent. to 17.5 per cent.? Apart from food, the absolute necessities of life for the elderly are heating and lighting.

I am a little sceptical about the rebellion that we may see tonight. I would not like to count all the rebellions in the Tory party that have almost taken place about issue after issue since 1979. While I hope that the Government are defeated tonight—and I hope that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will then resign—my instincts tell me that when the vote is counted, we shall see once again that Tory Members have failed to put their vote where their mouth has been in the past three or four weeks. We shall wait and see.

I now refer to an issue that has hardly been mentioned in the debate—indeed, it was skipped over almost completely in the Budget speech. Public expenditure took up barely two columns of the Chancellor's rather lengthy speech. He said that the Government will maintain "tight control" over public expenditure. That statement can be interpreted as a promise of massive cuts in public expenditure.

That is certainly what has happened with local government. It is remarkable that an area of public expenditure that has been pruned so ruthlessly in the past few years was not mentioned in the Budget speech. We had to wait for the statement by the Secretary of State for the Environment to learn precisely what was about to happen in that area.

According to calculations made by the metropolitan authorities local government committee, some 316 English councils face substantial spending cuts if they are to stay within the Government's new capping levels. Some 217 of those councils will be restricted to an expenditure increase of 0.5 per cent. The Chancellor's inflation forecast for 1995-96 is 2.5 per cent., which represents a substantial cut in local government finance.

Once again, the Government have cynically walked away from the results of their actions. It is obvious that they will refuse to fund any agreed national wage increases for local authority workers. When one considers that a 1 per cent. increase in teachers' wages will cost English local authorities £1 billion, which they do not possess, one can appreciate the burden that will be placed on local authorities.

The authority in St. Helens—I am tired of returning time and again to the theme of St. Helens' revenue support grant settlement—has been treated worse than the national average. Its standard spending assessment of £131.9 million this year has been reduced to £129.7 million—a reduction of £2.2 million or 1.7 per cent. of the total.

The capping level for 1994-95 is £138.5 million, and for 1995-96 it will be £139.2 million—an addition of £700,000 or 0.5 per cent. The reduction in the standard spending assessment in real terms means that St. Helens will lose £2.2 million in grant and that council taxes will have to rise by £45 for a band D property—or 7.7 per cent— in order to compensate for that loss.

[Mr. Evans]

The increased cap allows for an increase of only 0.5 per cent. on the existing budget. That falls far short of current inflation levels and means that the Government will again fail to fund any pay awards that St. Helens council may face. As a result of that reduction and the Government's failure to fund correctly in 1994-95, St. Helens borough council will need to make a £6 million cut in its already stricken budget.

One can make an amazing comparison of the treatment of St. Helens with that of Westminster city council—which I have done on many occasions— an authority of a similar size, with a similar population. Whereas St. Helens' standard spending assessment has been reduced by £2.2 million, unbelievably and incredibly, Westminster's standard spending assessment has increased by £5.5 million. The permitted increase in St. Helens' budget is 0.5 per cent., but the permitted increase for Westminster is an incredible 15.3 per cent. What does Westminster have on the Tory Government that allows it to get away with such largesse being showered upon it while St. Helens receives such drastic treatment?

We had a meeting upstairs this afternoon with members of the Merseyside fire and civil defence authority, whose budget has been slashed. They told us that they would probably have to ask the five local authorities of Merseyside for a 22 per cent. increase in the precept merely to stand still financially. On top of all the other tax increases that have been imposed on the people of St. Helens, they now face a further substantial hike in their council tax. The upshot will be that social services and education will have to be cut again.

Indeed, I suspect that most local authorities will have to make further savage cuts in their care in the community programmes. I shudder to think what yesterday's High Court judgment will mean. It granted judicial review to two pensioners in Gloucester, who can now take their council to court for cutting expenditure on community care. If councils are forced to meet the costs of community care in full, that can only mean further savage reductions, especially in the education budget.

The combination of ever-increasing taxation and constantly reducing public services, together with the widespread fear of unemployment, supports what the former Transport Secretary, the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), said about the lack of a feelgood factor. There is no feelgood factor because, as we know, even the middle classes are bitterly resentful of Tory incompetence and Tory sleaze. Every time people pick up a newspaper or turn on the television, they hear of all sorts of companies and all sorts of industries shedding hundreds and sometimes thousands of workers.

A good example of that can be found in St. Helens. Earlier this year, SmithKline Beecham announced an increased profit of £1.2 billion. At the same time, it announced the closure of Beecham's factory at St. Helens, with the loss of 500 jobs. That factory, which stands on a site in the town centre, has not suffered from even one industrial dispute in more than 30 years. It ceased production last week. The spectacle of the privatised utilities paying their directors large salaries and share options nauseates millions of people. There is no feelgood factor; there is only contempt for the Tories. Next week's by-election at Dudley, West will show that.

One matter in the Budget speech which offended me greatly was the Chancellor's casual reference to

"the emergence of a deprived underclass, excluded from the opportunity to work and dependent on welfare."—*[Official Report, 29 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1079.]*

Who has created that underclass? Who has been in government for 15 years? Who has presided over the enormous growth in unemployment and the enormous rise in the number of people in receipt of benefit? It is the Tory party; the Tory Government.

I remind Tory Members that in 1979 many of those people had jobs—in many instances, skilled jobs—in factories that were producing goods that were exported all over the world. Many of those factories, especially in places such as Merseyside, have been closed and demolished. The work forces have dissipated and many people have been out of work almost since 1979. In case Tory Members have forgotten, I remind them that millions of young people—working-class sons and daughters—obtained skilled apprenticeships and went on to produce for and serve their country. Apprenticeships have virtually disappeared in Great Britain and it is now a nation of low-skilled people. Yet what have the Government done? They have cut the unemployment budget by a further £500 million over the next three years.

Tax increases, public expenditure cuts, average families hugely worse off over the past few years—what is the purpose of the Budget strategy? It is to create a situation that will allow the Tories to go to the country at the next general election resting on a 5 or 6 per cent. cut in the standard rate of income tax. They sold that pup to the country in 1992. They will never sell it again because no one with an ounce of intelligence will ever again believe a Tory when he talks about taxation.

7.35 pm

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): We are coming to the end of five days of debate on the Budget. The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) made an interesting speech, although he raised a couple of points which begged a few questions. First, he spoke of what he called the litany of Tory tax rises; yet he did not refer to his party's position at the last general election, when it pledged additional spending of £13 billion. He did not say what tax rises there would have been had a Labour Government been in power trying to make that additional expenditure.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the "feelgood factor". The reason why there might not be one is the negative equity suffered by so many home owners. Of course, one reason for there being negative equity is that we have not fallen into the trap of encouraging inflation. In fact, currently the United Kingdom is enjoying growth and low inflation—a position which, as many hon. Members have pointed out over the past five days, is virtually unique.

In rising to take part in this debate on the Budget, I broadly welcome the initiative taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, although I deeply regret the fact that he has inherited one particular tax measure from an earlier Budget. However, I shall say more about that later. Over the past few days, my hon. Friends have highlighted the fact that it is a balanced Budget. It not only serves to build on a firm fiscal base by reducing spending and offering new tax initiatives, but it takes steps to improve employment prospects for the long-term unemployed. That is something that even the Leader of the Opposition was forced to welcome in his response to my right hon. and learned Friend—*[Interruption.]* although only because Conservative Members shouted at him, "Do you welcome it?" and he had to admit that he did.

I would not want to adopt the policy of my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith), who said that he would reiterate all the excellent points in the Budget. Instead, I shall concentrate on just two measures which have not attracted the headlines and have not been mentioned much over the past few days, but which deserve recognition. I also intend to deal with the question of VAT on fuel, about which I have the deepest misgivings.

Before becoming a Member of Parliament, I built up a business with clients in some 52 countries. Some were developed nations and others were developing nations. In the business that I was in, the multi-million-pound contracts tended to be in the developing world where high premiums were paid for western—nay, British—expertise. That gives the lie to Labour Members who constantly denigrate the level of expertise in this country.

The Opposition also denigrate the service industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford referred to the financial services industry. I remind the House that Britain is also one of the world leaders in computer software. That is another important service industry.

I and other British exporters often faced overwhelming competition from France, Germany, Japan and the United States, as a result of a price differential arising from the support that our competitors received from their Governments. HERMES, the German equivalent of our Office of Economic Co-operation and Development, offered particularly aggressive facilities and rates to domestic manufacturers—aiming to encourage exports to markets which have less than an A1 credit rating, but which are among the most lucrative markets for UK exporters. While I sweated in hot and humid climates, I saw Siemens and Bosch winning while we lost out.

Building on the initiatives of the past couple of years, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has wisely directed his attention to manufacturing and to the Export Credits Guarantee Department in particular. By reducing premiums by 20 per cent. for exporters to Argentina, Brazil, the Philippines, Egypt and to what in my view is "the economy most likely to succeed"—Vietnam—costs have been reduced substantially, enabling the UK to compete advantageously with our competitors.

In addition, a further £300 million of cover was announced last week for the so-called amber zone markets—China, South Africa and Indonesia—to which my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade referred. They are all areas where I have traded in the past and which offer Britain huge export potential.

With a stronger ECGD and one of the lowest rates of corporation tax in Europe, with rates lower than in Japan or the United States, low inflation and lower national insurance premiums for employers, British manufacturers have the springboard to take a deeper plunge into world markets.

Not every company can survive. Many can fail despite a full and profitable order book. Overtrading can induce cash flow difficulties, and banks and the Inland Revenue may be unsympathetic. I therefore welcome the second initiative that I wish to highlight—the 28-day moratorium for insolvent companies. Bankers and tax collectors are often different animals from the entrepreneurs working in small and medium-sized businesses. Too often, they foreclose without exploring opportunities. I look forward to the Green Paper, heralded in the Budget, which my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade plans to issue.

Chapter 11 has worked reasonably well in the United States. There are companies trading today which would have been bankrupt without chapter 11, which protects the creditor while allowing many companies to trade out of difficulty and to keep many people employed. I hope that the DTI initiative will include many of the best features of that legislation.

I was bitterly opposed to the imposition of value added tax on domestic fuel, and I am disappointed that the improvement in the economy has not allowed my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor to maintain it at 8 per cent.—an international treaty makes it difficult for us to lower it. I oppose that measure on three grounds—compensation levels, the effect on my party, and the very principle behind the tax.

The elderly spend three times as much on fuel as ordinary households. They feel the cold more. They are often at home during the day, particularly when it is cold outside, when others are at work and have their heating switched off. The elderly also often live in badly insulated houses, so I welcome the Government's initiative on home insulation in the Budget.

Other hon. Members have spoken at length about the shortfalls in the Government's compensation package. I refer the House to the excellent speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Sir A. Bowden). Despite the £2.5 billion for compensation announced in the Budget, which should not be underestimated, pensioners with little spare cash will be slightly worse off—and many hard-up people will receive no help at all.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor is wrong if he thinks that the hostility to VAT on fuel—a tax measure which he inherited—will blow over. It will not. I almost wonder whether this issue could be the final straw, as other hon. Members and the media have suggested. As I told the hon. Member for St. Helens, North, elderly people die of hypothermia every year. They have always done so and they always will. Often such deaths have nothing to do with the cost of fuel or with taxation, but for every foreseeable winter from now on the Opposition will be cynically blaming the Conservative Government for the deaths that will occur this winter and the next and the next—and the press will take up their cry. Neither we nor the electorate will be allowed to forget. The staggered introduction of VAT on domestic fuel has made things still worse for my party.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that over the year the average temperature in the north of England is more severe than in the south? Elderly parents in my constituency are a cause of concern for their children who, for economic

[Mr. Jack Thompson]

reasons, have moved to the south. In such instances, two families are affected by the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel.

Mr. Fabricant: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. The Government are giving extra assistance in the form of cold weather payments, but they will not help in every case.

My most important objection is to the principle behind the introduction of VAT on domestic fuel, which is fundamentally wrong. In the 1980s, we shifted from direct to indirect taxation, to extend choice and encourage a savings culture that had been enjoyed by Germany for many years. That country has had historically low interest rates, resulting partly from low inflation and a high savings ratio—something that we have not enjoyed. But how much choice is there in purchasing fuel for the home? Such choice as there is certainly does not extend to 17.5 per cent. of the cost, even taking into account the compensation available to some sectors of the community.

Privatisation has brought a significant lowering in the cost of fuel, as was admirably pointed out by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade earlier today. Why can we not keep VAT on fuel at 8 per cent? I intend to demonstrate that we could do so and remain within our public sector borrowing requirement target. The solution might even have satisfied the carbon tax lobby on the Opposition Benches.

Other countries have multiple VAT rates. France, our nearest neighbour, has four: zero, 2.1 per cent., 5.5 per cent. and 18.6 per cent. If we maintained VAT on fuel at 8 per cent.—an amount over which everyone can exercise some choice—we could broaden the tax base to include other commodities in that band which are currently zero-rated all in one step and without prolonging our political misery. That might be politically difficult, but not so politically difficult as putting VAT on fuel at 17.5 per cent.

The Government's thrust has rightly been to wean people off state benefits. Yet at a stroke we have succeeded in alienating more of our natural supporters while trawling still more into state dependency. This House is sometimes referred to as the palace of enchantments. At times, it is also the palace of empty gestures and rhetoric. If the Opposition amendment before us today would keep VAT on fuel at 8 per cent., I would vote for it. But it does not. And abstention is deplorable. Because the Opposition amendment would not result in keeping VAT on fuel at 8 per cent. and would, I believe, simply serve to destabilise the economy—*[Interruption.]* I invite Opposition Members to intervene and correct my argument if I have it wrong.

Mr. Bennett *rose—*

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East) *rose—*

Mr. Fabricant: The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) stood up first.

Mr. Bennett: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is normal practice in the House to have to have paving amendments and then the follow-up amendments, and that if the paving amendment is not passed it is very difficult to vote for the follow-up amendment? I invite the hon. Gentleman to vote for the paving amendment today and then, as soon as we get the opportunity on the Finance Bill, to vote to ensure that VAT on fuel does not go up to 17.5 per cent.

Mr. Fabricant: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point. I could refer to some paving motions in the past that I would have liked to avoid altogether, because they were not always necessary. However, I digress.

This amendment is a paving motion to disaster, because the hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that the international markets would say that a fundamental element of Government legislation—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) interrupts from a sedentary position, but makes no sensible points. I shall finish the point raised by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish. I shall then be happy to allow the hon. Member for Walsall, North to intervene.

If the paving motion fails, the international markets will say, quite correctly, that a fundamental pillar of Government legislation has failed. I believe that there will be pressure on the pound and that that will put interest rates up, which will be detrimental not only to householders, but to pensioners and the unemployed, because the growth in our economy will stagger to a halt and slowly slip backwards. There can be no doubt about that. So when I vote tonight, I shall be voting with a heavy heart, but I shall be voting for the better of two evils.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Why does the hon. Gentleman not simply say that although he is totally opposed to what the Government intend to do he has not got the bottle to follow his conscience and vote, as he should, with the Opposition? He is betraying his constituents. All the weasel excuses that he is making cannot alter the fact that he has surrendered to the Whips instead of listening to his constituents.

Mr. Fabricant: The hon. Gentleman does not know me. He thinks that he does, but he does not. If he knew me as well as the Whips do, he would know damned well that I would not surrender to them or to anyone else. He can sit there in Opposition and come up with weasel words and points that he thinks will score, but I tell him this: if the Government fail tonight, my constituents—and his—will suffer more than the 17.5 per cent. on fuel, which I still believe is iniquitous.

I am a Conservative because I wish to see no ceiling on anyone's aspirations or opportunities, but our safety net must be of a fine mesh to minimise the number of those who might slip through. I believe that it is time that we took a long, hard look into what we stand for as a party and reassess our programme for the future. It is not just about privatising the Post Office, which I would have supported vigorously, subject to the safeguards of which my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has already spoken. It is about supporting libraries, parks, the monarchy, care in the community, the police and a variety of other institutions—a whole social environment of which we can all be proud, including those who might not normally be this Government's natural supporters.

We need a sound economy. The Government have already won us that. But we need to remember that the boundaries of the state can be rolled back only so far. Too little, as Opposition Members would like, and initiative would be stifled, leading to economic and social ruin. Too much, and the Prime Minister's promise of "a nation at ease with itself" would become ever more hollow. We need to regain the trust of the people, of those decent, ordinary people who are our natural supporters. We need to revisit the values which respect firm governance and respect for our institutions, tempered with security for the weak and assistance for the vulnerable. Those values are not at variance with a sound economy: they should be the very aims of a sound economy—an economy based on respect for the law, low taxation, free trade and a balanced budget.

7.54 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I have found some of the speeches tonight so pathetic, so unbelievably wrong. I heard the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) showing his anger about VAT, yet he is not prepared to support the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed and the low-paid. He is not prepared to walk through the Lobby and put a stop to the increase in VAT on fuel increase. We will stop it tonight only if Tory Members are prepared to do that.

I heard the President of the Board of Tears—sorry, Trade—start the debate tonight. I have never heard him so weak. I have never heard him deliver such a pathetic speech—a speech that lacked any guts. He is normally at the Dispatch Box jumping, shouting and knocking his speech into us. Tonight, his speech was knocking into the elderly, the disabled and the unemployed. His Government created a situation in which the 17.5 per cent. VAT was a result of their total mismanagement of local councils. Lo and behold we had the poll tax, which was a disaster, then the increase in VAT to 17.5 per cent. The poor are paying for the absolute mismanagement of the Government. They are paying through their fuel—badly needed fuel which allows them to live in their homes.

We hear the members of the Government painting a rosy picture. Are they deaf? Do they not read the newspapers? Have they not travelled around the country? Can they not see what the opinion polls say? Are they not listening to the ordinary men and women who have said, "enough is enough"? The other day, when there was a possibility of a general election if the Government had been brought down, millions of people in the country were praying for just that. Millions would have turfed Tory Members into the place where they belong—the Opposition Benches.

I heard the President of the Board of Trade tonight. I felt as though I was in Disneyland and hearing "The Jungle Book", a kid's film. But that is not the world that I live in. It is no Disneyland where Tommy Graham comes from. I live in a community where the people have to pay the price of the Government's failures, and that price costs lives. Undoubtedly, people will die because of the Government's VAT policies. I will go further. I have heard rumours that the Chancellor, if he does not win the vote tonight, will savagely reduce public expenditure. Public expenditure has already been reduced, for 15 years.

I heard the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire talk about public expenditure. Where has he been? The number of home helps has been slashed. Bus services have been deregulated. Communities have been isolated. Bus services have been ruined. Train services look as though they will go the same way. We have seen the wholesale slaughter of private and nationalised industries. We have seen companies go bankrupt and go out of business. Millions of people are unemployed. I remember 1979. I had a job. My neighbours had jobs. The people of Linwood had jobs. Do they have jobs now? No, after 15 years, millions of people are unemployed and the Government have the audacity to tell us that they have the policies to make Britain good again. It is not on.

It is obscene that tonight the Chancellor was smiling away when my right hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) told him that he had made champagne cheaper. He gave us a lovely bubbly smile. Yes, the rich too are bubbling with cheer; but the ordinary men and women—the poor, the unemployed—are bubbling with tears because of the measures that the Government will force through tonight.

I spoke to a number of constituents before I came here tonight. One, Rose Templeton, has worked as a sister in NHS hospitals all over Britain. Last week, she told me that the imposition of VAT on fuel would cause shivering in the homes of the elderly. Let us make no bones about it: the hospitals will be full of elderly people suffering from the effects of trying to keep their homes warm. Other aspects of their lives will suffer, such as their dietary habits, and they will end up queuing for the doctor or even a hospital bed. The country will pay dearly for that.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Was the hon. Gentleman able to assure Rose that a possible future Labour Government would bring fuel costs down again?

Mr. Graham: If I were leader of the next Labour Government, I would give an assurance that I would look after the people of Britain far better than the present Government. I would ensure that the elderly could live and die comfortably, and that the young folk had a decent and healthy future. I would create a single system for us all, not a separate system for the rich. We would give the poor a chance to live and breathe. From small seeds grow great trees, but only if the Government are prepared to provide the seeds, and the present Government have no hope of doing that.

In a letter to me, the chairman of Renfrew district council wrote:

> "I sincerely urge you to take up the issues against an increase to fuel costs . . . There is clear evidence that the fabric on housing stock is damaged and rot sets in if houses are not well insulated but especially if they are not properly heated."

Local authority public expenditure will then be needed to make the houses habitable. The council chairman pleaded with the Government not to increase VAT on fuel.

I also received a letter from Age Concern, which represents many elderly people. One says:

> "I dread this tax as I must have heat; I will need to forfeit other things including bathing and washing clothes."

This is what VAT on fuel means to elderly men and women:

> "It means making flasks of tea for hot drinks rather than making a fresh brew each time. It would be nice to be allowed to live in comfort and dignity in our old age . . . I pray we have a mild winter . . . I am proud to say I have always paid whatever I have been asked for but God knows what the future holds."

After 15 years of the Tory Government, taxes on basic necessities are taxes on life. It is scandalous. The pensioners say:

> "Like the comedy on TV, I'll be Waiting for God . . . I'll hibernate for the winter . . . I'll have to sit in the shopping centre . . . This takes us back to the war years when sacrifices were made to help everyone. This is not required now—hardship should be a thing of the past."

[Mr. Graham]

I could go on, but I feel that I am speaking to a heartless bunch, and also that I am speaking to a number of Conservative Members who will not be here at the next general election.

Let me tell the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire about a wee note sent to me by Dr. Brenda Boardman, of Oxford university's environmental change unit. She has estimated that VAT at 8 per cent. will cause 5,000 extra winter deaths, and that VAT at 17.5 per cent. will double the number.

Mr. Fabricant *rose—*

Mrs. Ewing: Will the hon. Gentleman deny that?

Mr. Fabricant: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) for giving way to me. I have no doubt that the 17.5 per cent. rate of VAT on fuel may produce some detrimental effects; as for the 8 per cent. rate, prices have fallen over the past two years. The net effect of that is that the charge for most fuel is now the same as it was two years ago. Are not Dr. Boardman's figures flawed?

Mr. Graham: I think that every hon. Member has been inundated with letters, data and other information about the bad effects of VAT on fuel. I do not know of a single hon. Member who has received a letter supporting it—not even a Conservative Member. I am, however, more prepared to believe that woman than to believe any Conservative Member. That is what has happened in the country: we do not believe Conservative Members. We have lost our faith and trust in their ability to govern the country well. There is no possibility that I would believe the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire in this context.

There is no doubt that VAT is the Tories' favourite tax. How many times have the present Government conned the public? They have made such statements as:

> "We have no plans to increase value added tax . . . There will be no VAT increase."—[*Official Report*, 28 January 1992; Vol. 202, c. 808.]

In March 1992, in a Westminster press conference, the Prime Minister said:

> "I have made it clear that we have no plan and no need to extend the scope of VAT."

Less than a year later, his Government announced the imposition of VAT on fuel.

Since 1979, the Government have extended the scope of VAT 14 times. The Chancellor is clearly out of touch with the public in whole-heartedly supporting VAT, which he describes as "a perfectly fair tax". He has said:

> "I think it was a very sensible decision to impose VAT on fuel."

I plead with the House to listen, and to stop the imposition of VAT on fuel. I plead with hon. Members to allow 10,000 people to live, and to allow 10 million people to take part in the democratic process and vote the Government out. It is time for a change of direction, to ensure that everyone in the country can live comfortably and heat his or her house, eat in that house and enjoy living in Britain. I hope that the Minister will change his mind and support our amendment.

8.7 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham): to do so shows that he has finished speaking.

Mrs. Ewing: He spoke sincerely.

Mr. Porter: He did; he often speaks with great sincerity. I hope that the hon. Lady will accept that I will speak with equal sincerity in representing my part of the country.

Last week I felt that the Budget represented a small sticking plaster for the wounds inflicted on the party last Monday night. It was welcome in that regard. A Budget that is criticised for being a Budget without fireworks and praised for being a "no headlines" Budget must be quite good, especially at this point in the economic and political cycle. A Budget for business—especially small business—for jobs, for the unemployed and the low-paid, which cuts borrowing yet increases targeted public expenditure is just what we need.

The fact that the Budget is a part of a coherent economic policy, a strategy for long-term stability and growth, seems to have escaped many Opposition Members. The fact that it is possible to have this strategy of low inflation, sound finance, deregulation and supply-side reform is due in large measure to our departure from the ghastly exchange rate mechanism. That fact has not escaped my hon. Friends even if they do not talk about it in those terms. We all know that the holy grail of growth that is steady and sustained cannot be put at risk for short-term popularity.

Just before the Budget, the Confederation of British Industry, eastern region sent a letter to East Anglian Members of Parliament presenting a picture of a fragile recovery, a modest improvement in most sectors, cautious investment plans and some reluctance to take on extra employees. I should have thought that the Budget addressed all those concerns directly.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor referred to the strategy of letting the flow of new jobs come. That will always be required to replace the old jobs eroded by technology and competition. That point is at the heart of many of the problems in my constituency.

In Waveney, serious problems with declining industries seem to get worse as the recession visibly ends in other parts of East Anglia. We are not helped by a perception of remoteness of the area, by poor transport infrastructure or by Great Yarmouth, which is next door, being given assisted area status. The Government did not listen to the argument that giving assisted area status to one location may compound the problems of another just 10 miles away.

Not all businesses like being in assisted areas or having objective 5b status. They would rather pay less tax so that such artificial subsidies were unnecessary. They will welcome the tax changes and the small business measures. Some businesses do not find it helpful to hear an area being criticised or run down in the way that Waveney district council often does. It is controlled by an unmodernised Labour party which attempts to blame the Government for everything that moves. None the less, parts of Waveney now have approval for objective 5b funding.

In one of the copious press releases in our Budget information files there is one from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which confirms that in a reduced public borrowing environment parts of Waveney will benefit from extra spending. In so doing we can test the claims of two different arguments. The first is that extra funding of that sort can stimulate jobs and the second is that partnerships between public and private funding are the best way forward. The experiment in public funding will test both those absolutely.

Another press release tucked in the pile is from the Overseas Development Administration telling us that Britain's aid programme is to be increased. Few will argue with that, particularly where the ODA guarantee of tying aid to sound economic policies and good government is invoked. However, I must tell my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that I have had a small number of letters from constituents, particularly elderly people, who feel that we give too much overseas aid and that more should be spent at home. They find it particularly galling that, for example, money goes to the former communist bloc. It is a view and it should be recognised as such, particularly in a tight financial settlement.

The big resentment comes over the overseas aid we pour into Europe. The press release says:

> "British contributions to multilateral agencies, especially to the European Community, are planned to increase sharply."

I know that we are talking about money for genuine aid in third-world countries and countries in transition, but to most people in Britain, our net contribution to the European Union's budget is a glorified way of giving British taxpayers' money in overseas aid to Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy, to allow many of those countries to put our people out of work. I did not hear my right hon. and learned Friend justify such a big payment out of the nation's account for that.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Will the hon. Gentleman consider reimbursing the people who have lost their homes and thousands of pounds and are still paying the debt that the Government created for them? Will he consider giving them something back?

Mr. Porter: Given that I am not a member of the Government and that I am criticising them in a small way, that is a hypothetical question.

I know that we are not addressing the European Communities (Finance) Bill now, but it is hard to separate that from the tax and spend debate. One aspect of policy which, mercifully, is still free from European diktat is education. The 1 per cent. increase in real terms in education spending is very good news. It will allow for student numbers in further and higher education to grow still further, it will allow the curriculum reforms to bed down and it will allow some capital works spending. I presume that it will also allow for spending on the first steps towards the nursery and pre-school education that has been announced. Perhaps we shall have to wait for next year's Budget to hear the details.

I have already mentioned the roads in my area. In transport, a partnership between public and private sectors is obviously the best provision. As the Chancellor said, privatisation and private finance for capital investment are increasingly the chosen method for raising the quality of public service. That system works with the Department of Transport's policy of supporting a wide variety of smaller schemes. I remind the Government that the A12 Ipswich to Lowestoft dualling plans are already in five manageable bites, each one different. They range from rural dualling and village bypasses to a new bridge at Lowestoft. I commend all five parts to the Government as being economically essential and environmentally helpful to the quality of life.

The Department of the Environment has announced that standard spending assessment methodology is to be changed. It currently calculates the SSA by looking at social, demographic and other factors which affect an authority's need to spend and it applies those to the individual circumstances of each authority. I should like to see each authority that is left after the local government review raise what it likes in local taxes and then answer for it each year at the ballot box. That would be real local government accountability. Until then, we have SSAs and all that paraphernalia. I hope that the Department will review the rural deprivation element in the SSA and the extent to which local economic bases can diversify and adapt to increasing competition and technology.

The package of transitional support on business rates, the investment encouragement in growing firms and the reduction in costs for taking on new staff are not only welcome but essential and they should make big inroads into unemployment numbers. When those are coupled with the measures to help individuals back to work they should assist in keeping the United Kingdom at the forefront of Europe in achieving a sound and balanced economy.

For all the sweeping statements and visions of national changes benefiting individuals, the VAT issue remains a principal concern. I shall not rehearse all the arguments yet again because I do not believe that we shall change any minds in the Chamber. I suspect that the changing of minds is going on in Rooms outside this place. I wish that the media and some politicians would give equal space and hot air to the fact that 15 million people are receiving above-inflation help with VAT and that there is extra help from April 1995 and April 1996, which is in permanent addition to the benefit rates and will be uprated in the normal way. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security told the House last week that information on all that would be included in all benefit books and I welcome that.

Twenty years ago no one would have predicted that tourism would have been the biggest job creator in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s. We cannot predict everything that lies ahead. The challenges of the next century are enormous and unpredictable. We know that the technological revolution has only just begun and what is coming will make what has happened so far seem like a teddy bears' picnic. The advances in medicine, life style, communications and entertainment will be mind boggling for us. We know that the threats from drug abuse, organised crime and disaffected people are terrifying and real. We know that pollution and the environmental tasks ahead will stretch our brains, our ingenuity and our pockets to the limit. We know that demands to live longer with more material possessions and in better health will be relentless. That future is inevitable. We owe it to those who will follow us to take on that challenge, to give them a stable financial bedrock and we have to do it now. That is why I support the thrust of the Budget.

8.17 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): The Labour amendment talks about the Budget leaving increasing numbers of fellow citizens in poverty. It will do that and many of those fellow citizens will be children. It should be seen as a national scandal that one third of our children are now growing up in poverty. Many of those fellow citizens will be pregnant women. I notice that statutory maternity pay has been frozen at £52.50. Not many people remark on that. Somehow, pregnant women do not grab the headlines. The freezing of statutory maternity pay is a disgrace. Statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay were linked for technical reasons, and now statutory maternity pay is suffering because of that link. It shows the Chancellor's lack of concern for pregnant women, but there is worse.

In 1992, the Select Committee on Health report on maternity services suggested that family credit should be extended to families during pregnancy so that preparation could be made for a healthy birth and a healthy child. Still, family credit does not extend to pregnancy.

We recommended that pregnancy age discrimination should be abandoned, but there is no mention in the Budget of the hardship suffered by our youngest mothers and mothers-to-be. Under-16s do not receive any financial support and 16 and 17-year-olds receive no income support for the first 29 weeks of pregnancy unless they can show severe hardship.

Ministers say complacently that pregnancy is not a qualification for income support. They are asking 16 and 17-year-old pregnant girls, therefore, to suffer severe hardship before they receive the sort of help that is available to older women. Income support, if they receive it, is at the rate available to 18 to 24-year-olds—still substantially lower than that available to 25-year-olds.

The Government have given no convincing explanation as to why pregnant women aged under 25 need less money than pregnant women aged 25 and over. The reason why they receive a lower rate is that the Government consider that they have fewer household responsibilities. Pregnancy should at least be a cure for that assumption. It would cost peanuts to institute such a change in the Budget. Even though a majority of the members of the Select Committee are from the Conservative party, .the Government still ignore its recommendations.

As the Department of Health and Social Security noted as long ago as 1977:

> "An inadequate diet before and during pregnancy may impair growth of the baby and put at risk the health of both mother and child".

The Select Committee said:

> "We do not believe that all the difficulties faced by mothers in feeding themselves during pregnancy result from lack of knowledge about good food, rather we believe that major difficulties arise from poor material circumstances and low income."

The Select Committee, which has a majority of Tory Members, went on to say:

> "Our view is broadly no different to that expressed by one of the earliest commentators. In his report on poverty in York in 1899, Rowntree observed that if York was typical,'then the impediment to the rearing of healthy children is not the ignorance of the mothers so much or nearly so much as that the conditions of modern life do not enable them to supply their children with sufficient sustenance.'"

That applies not only in 1899 but, unfortunately and disgracefully, in 1994. We seem to have spent 100 years coming full circle. The Budget does nothing to remedy the problem. The Government, therefore, have left young poor women on income support in a position where, as is widely acknowledged, they cannot receive adequate nourishment because they cannot pay for it.

The babies of those women are likely to be smaller. In later life, smaller babies are more likely to suffer heart trouble, diabetes and other problems. They will then call on the national health service, if it still exists, which is not certain with the machinations of the Conservative party. This matter affects not only women during pregnancy, but the entire life of the babies to whom they give birth.

The poorest mothers might apply for a maternity grant from the social fund. It has been frozen again at £100. The poorest mothers can receive only £100 to help them to pay for all their babies' necessities. Women on supplementary benefit in April 1987, when the Government were in power, could receive a grant of £187. In December 1991, it would have been worth £249. The maternity grant level for the poorest mothers would, I think, now be about £270 if it were based in the same way as the 1987 grant. Instead, they receive a measly £100 and it is frozen. No wonder Opposition Members talk about leaving our fellow citizens in poverty.

Government policy affects not only the food of the poorest mothers. Children born into poor families are likely to live in inadequate housing. Those families will suffer greatly from VAT on fuel. I agree with everything that has been said about the plight of the elderly, but it is not the whole story. Poor families with children also suffer from VAT on fuel. Children in poor, inadequately heated homes are contributing to the positive epidemic of respiratory illness among children.

The Government's response is not to improve those families' housing. They do not take any constructive steps in that regard. They make threats to reduce housing benefit. Hon. Members can read the gobbledegook of the Secretary of State for Social Security in *Hansard*. In one paragraph, he says:

> "Rent officers determine whether rents are within reasonable market levels and help"—

that is help from housing benefit—

> "is not usually available above that."

He said that people could receive help above the market rent in their region and went on to say:

> "But in many areas, the market level is largely determined by those on housing benefit."

In the next paragraph, the Secretary of State says:

> "New claimants and those moving home will be entitled to housing benefit for the full rent up to the average rent for similar properties in the area."—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1206.]

In the previous paragraph, however, he said that that was the existing position. All I can conclude from that is that the Government are waving threats about while they consider how to carry them out.

Many Opposition Members have regular experience of the fact that people on housing benefit in the private rented sector frequently have the utmost difficulty in receiving the full rent. They are told that it is too expensive. I always challenge the housing benefit office to find accommodation at a lower rent than that being charged to the person whose case I am dealing with.

Usually I win the argument, but many people in my constituency receive less in housing benefit than they should. Gobbledegook is the best that the Secretary of State for Social Security can contribute to the housing problem.

We will find that people who need income support will receive no help on paying mortgage interest for the first nine months. They are told to insure against not being able to pay. Many people cannot afford their mortgage payments now and the Government want to add a mythical insurance, which people may not even be able to get. They seem completely to ignore the fact that their policy is likely to result in bigger debts and more homelessness. Even people with current loans will find that for the first two months during which they get income support they will receive no help with mortgage interest. The four months during which half of it will be paid will then begin. That is incredible when, as of June 1994, there were 485,000 households in Britain with mortgage arrears of three months or more.

Many people are already unable to pay interest on their mortgages having fallen on hard times. That is causing them the utmost distress but also leads to huge numbers of repossessions—200,000 properties were repossessed between 1991 and 1993—which necessitates more public spending because those people become homeless. Many finish up in bed-and-breakfast accommodation at huge public expense. The Government's policy is not only heartless but stupid.

The social rented sector—I hate that term but we know what it means—has shrunk by more than 1 million homes since 1981. The central problem is not fecklessness or even profiteering by private landlords—landlords would not be able to profiteer if there were not such a housing shortage presided over by the Government. The effects of the shrinking social rented sector are evident from a letter from my borough council. It states:

> "The key factors locally in Preston are that there are 2,300 applicants registered on the council's waiting list . . . 181 homeless families in temporary accommodation for periods up to eight months . . . it would cost an estimated £170 million to bring all the private sector housing stock up to full modern standards of repair and facilities and £90 million for the council's own stock . . . and there has been a cut of 60 per cent. in real terms in the council's borrowing approvals for housing over the last 10 years."

The Government have presided over all that. The council now expects that the Budget

> "will lead to a reduction in spending on improvements to existing council stock, higher council rents and further reductions in renovation grants in the private sector and in area-based improvements in such renewal areas."

That is no way to run a country.

Our fellow citizens live in such poverty that it is just as well that the curious conventions of the House allow the Prime Minister himself, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and their immediate colleagues to "congratulate Her Majesty's Government" because one thing is certain—the population in general will not.

8.32 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I wish to draw attention to a simple fact, not to make a political point. During this debate, I asked the Labour party's Front Bench spokesmen and two Back Benchers a simple question: if there were ever a Labour Government, would they abolish the 17.5 per cent. rate of value added tax? Unfortunately, I have not yet received a clear yes.

The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), in a delightful speech, argued strongly about how filthy Tory policies are and how splendid the Labour party's are, and I am sure that he believes that. However, I am going to Renfrew town hall on Sunday to make a point that I shall make now. It is time that the House woke up to the fact that we are kidding the people of Britain if we pretend that a change of Government will dramatically change what can be done about VAT. It is a horrible message, but we must tell people that this now pathetic Parliament can do hardly anything about VAT or many other things.

The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde talked about some of his poor friends whom he mentioned by name. He referred particularly to a lady who was having to pay more for her water, but what power do the Government have to reduce the VAT? The hon. Gentleman also talked about telephones; I am sure that many people, including his delightful Rose, are worried about paying this horrible VAT on their telephone bills. However, what the blazes could a Scottish Nationalist Government, a Labour Government or a real Conservative Government do about such matters? As the hon. Gentleman knows, the answer is nothing. That is not a matter for debate; it is a fact.

As we know, the freedom of our country to decide our taxation disappeared back when it all started in 1987 when Madame Scrivener proposed that there should be no provision for a zero rate. There was some flexibility but a series of decisions meant that Britain had to tax most of its goods at a basic rate within a certain band and a minority of its goods at the lower rate. Special provisions for gas and electricity meant that we could levy the lower rate but I am confused about one issue, which I hope that the Government will clarify.

It seems that gas and electricity are the only items on which we could reduce the 17.5 per cent. rate if the Government changed their mind or if there were a change of Government. However, I am led to believe that we could not reduce the rate on some items of fuel and power, such as fuel oil, coal, peat and coke. Furthermore, if the European Community decided that there had been a distortion of the rules of competition among the various forms of fuel it could take legal action. We are in a terrible mess.

I hope that hon. Members will appreciate the fact that, although the Tories and the present Government are blamed for levying VAT on certain items, we did not decide to do so. For example, I remember a great hoo-ha about the imposition of VAT on the construction of buildings; and there was a huge upsurge in complaints about VAT on sewerage and water services, but we did not take the relevant decisions. They were taken by something called the European Court of Justice and we had to comply. The same applies to fuel and power other than domestic fuel.

I wish that we would wake up to the fact that, no matter which party is in power, we are landed with a foul tax which is nasty for the poor, offensive and causes great hardship. As we know, the sad fact is that the people who suffer from the manipulation of VAT are those on low and medium incomes. The Government are kind and always try hard to help people, but it does not matter how hard they try.

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

Any extra money given to pensioners is taken into account in their housing benefit and, of course, some pensioners also pay tax. Let us assume that I had a very wealthy mother, which I do not, and that she received an increase in her pension—she would have to pay tax on it. The unpleasant fact is that, if one has saved nothing, one could now be better off.

Given that the Government's powers have almost disappeared, that democracy is almost dead and that there is virtually nothing we can do in this instance, would not it be sensible for the Chancellor to wait until he was forced to do something about VAT? Everyone knows that VAT on fuel and power is horribly unpopular, and understandably so. People have no choice about it. The imposition of VAT will not affect people like me because Members of Parliament have lots of money, but those with little money will not be able to get involved in savings schemes and the installation of various pieces of equipment.

During a debate on 12 April 1993, I made a little speech pointing out that VAT on fuel and power was filthy and that it was unkind to everyone. However, because the Government were in a horrific mess, having a deficit of £50 billion, one was inclined to say that anything was better than nothing. Because of the Government's magnificent attitude and because we fell out of the exchange rate mechanism, things are better and we now have more scope and opportunity, so I wonder whether it is wise to go ahead with the second tranche of VAT on fuel and power.

I believe that, as the Government are unpopular because of VAT decisions many of which have been nothing to do with us, it might be wise and prudent for us to say that we shall wait until we are told what to do, rather than take the initiative to put more taxes on fuel and power ourselves. I hope that people will wake up to the fact that on most of those VAT issues our freedom of action is basically nil. I also hope that the Government will agree on reflection that there may be a case for putting off the second stage of VAT on fuel and power. It is very unpopular and it appears very unfair.

Things have changed somewhat since the previous debate. It is a mistake for the Government to go on paying so much money to the EC to be wasted on fraud and mismanagement, and then to make a proposal that will hit people so hard. My feeling is that in those circumstances it is best to express no opinion—and that is what I shall do tonight. None the less, the measure is a mistake.

Unfortunately, the Labour party is playing games and trying to pretend that things would be infinitely better if it were in power. It would be better if Labour Members woke up to the fact that our powers are extremely limited. Therefore, if there is a vote I shall not vote for an extension of VAT on fuel and power; on the other hand, in loyalty to the views that I hold, and as the Labour party is playing silly political games and pretending that it would have powers that it would not, I shall certainly not vote with Labour Members.

8.40 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Tempting though it is to take up the issues raised by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) in the context of the various European Community directives on VAT and the qualifications placed on exemptions, reductions, derogations and so on, the hon. Gentleman will understand that, because of pressure of time and the fact that many Opposition Members have been here for the debate and wish to register their own opinions about the vote facing us, I cannot. I simply say to him that he is not the sole expert nor the fount of all wisdom on European directives and legislation. Many debates could no doubt arise from what he has said.

It may surprise Ministers that I shall start with a small congratulation to the Government on the Budget—I may add that that is the only congratulation that I shall offer them. I am glad to see that they have followed my advice in early-day motion 950, dated 24 March this year, to allow flexible arrangements on annuities. I welcome that measure in the Budget, but perhaps one of the Treasury Ministers will tell me why it is subject to an upper age limit of 75. That limit is regarded as arbitrary, and I believe that it should be removed. It would be nice to hear an answer on that point.

The second aspect of the Budget that I shall mention concerns the excise levels on DERV and fuel. Excise paid by the owners of vehicles in the United Kingdom is now the highest in the European Union, and fuel accounts for 21 per cent. of the operating costs of Scottish businesses. That is especially disastrous for my area and for many other rural constituencies.

In Moray we export fish, food, whisky and timber, and the additional cost is one that my local businesses cannot sustain. It will harm the local economy. Over the weekend various organisations representing business interests and people who work in local businesses made clear to me their anger at facing yet again the prospect of additional fuel costs, which make such a crucial difference in remote areas.

In Scotland we already have petrol differentials; petrol is more expensive there. In rural areas cars are not a luxury; they are a necessity for employment. I add a special word on behalf of the disabled, for whom access to a car is especially important. We greatly resent the fact that we are again having additional costs added for the use of our vehicles.

Because of the exigencies of time I may not be able to get through all the points that I wish to make to the Chancellor and the Government. My main argument is, of course, about VAT on fuel. Since the mid-1970s I have spoken in the House on the issue of fuel poverty, yet it still exists. In an energy-rich country such as Scotland it is appalling that fuel poverty continues, as indeed it does throughout the United Kingdom.

The vote tonight on VAT on fuel will be critical. The issue is one of life and death to many of our people. During a recent debate in Scotland I was told that the Conservatives were driving a nail into their coffin north of the border by going ahead with the second tranche of VAT on domestic fuel. I do not give a tuppenny scone for the future of the Conservative party in Scotland or anywhere else in the United Kingdom, nor for the future of the Conservative Government. But I care deeply about the well-being and the lives of the people whom I have been asked to represent, and about the thousands and thousands of people on low incomes—people who are disabled, pensioners and young families—all of whom are being severely affected by that Government policy.

I have met representatives of the disabled and the elderly in my constituency, and I can tell the Chancellor that their anger about the measure cannot be contained. They are shivering, but they are also shaking with temper. They read articles in the Sunday press about the Chancellor relishing his curry in a Pimlico restaurant, with his pint and his cigars, while they are frightened to order a bag of coal or to switch on their gas or electric fires.

Today the Secretary of State for the Environment, aided and abetted by the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), told us that VAT on fuel is a wonderful environmental tax, being imposed in the interests of green policy. Does that mean the 569,876 cold, damp and mouldy houses in Scotland? Is that the environment that we are talking about? Are we talking about the environment of our elderly, and of the disabled and other vulnerable people—the people who have watched £90 billion worth of revenues from North sea oil and gas flow to Westminster, while they still feel cold in 1994?

An article by Dorothy Grace Elder that appeared in *Scotland on Sunday* reflects the views of people in Scotland:

> "From the team which brought you The Sleaze, now comes The Freeze, with almost 4,000 funerals and no weddings.
>
> It is wrong to call the Budget 'boring'; VAT on fuel isn't boring—unless you count an additional 800 elderly Scots being bored to the point of death. Additional? That is because we already have around 3,000 cold-related deaths every year; the worst winter death rate in Europe within a country which has the greatest fuel bonanza in Europe".

Earlier speeches in the debate revealed that there is a dispute about excess winter deaths. Yet the Prime Minister himself, as long ago as 1986, admitted that there were excess winter deaths and that the figure was much higher in the United Kingdom than in the United States of America or in Sweden.

The Energy Action Group in Scotland has produced scientific statistics about excessive winter deaths in Scotland. To discover how many excess winter deaths there are we must compare the number of deaths per 10,000 of population in the first quarter of the year, from January to March, with those in the third quarter, from July to September. Studies for England and Wales show an average excess winter mortality of 20 per cent. The comparable figure for Scotland between 1977 and 1990 is 27 per cent.

The Energy Action Group's report also shows that countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland, which have more severe climatic conditions than ours, have far fewer excess winter deaths.

It is argued that the problem of winter deaths will not be exacerbated by the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel. The reality is that it will be exacerbated. The Government should talk to social workers or people involved in voluntary organisations. They should go into a pensioner's house where only one room is heated, where it is too cold to go to the toilet and where it is too cold to go to bed at night. People live, eat and breathe in the one room that they think they can afford to heat. That problem will be exacerbated.

People had the insult of seeing that the chief executive of British Gas had been given a 75 per cent. pay increase. That is ludicrous. We see headlines saying that the 75 per cent. rise for the gas chief is too little and that he should have more. Yet people are literally freezing to death in our country.

I received today a letter from the Charities Tax Reform Group which has complimented my party on the fact that it has mentioned charities in its amendment. The group has pointed out that the burden of VAT on fuel will add £13 million to the bill of charities. The group says that that may be small change in public expenditure terms, but that it could mean the difference between closing a residential home or leaving it open.

The Cancer Relief Macmillan Fund, to which we are all indebted, pays one third of its grant to people with cancer to help them meet the higher fuel costs they incur as a result of their illness. Residential care providers are required by law to maintain temperatures at a specific level. Reducing consumption is, therefore, difficult. In fact, I would say that it is well-nigh impossible.

I ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to take up the invitation that was issued to him on 1 December by a pensioner in Dingwall, in the constituency of Ross, Cromarty and Skye. I know that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) will not mind my quoting this. This lady says:

> "I'm just a pensioner and my electricity bill was over £200 last winter, so heaven knows what it'll be in years to come . . . I'd really like Kenneth Clarke to come and live in my house for a week in mid-winter so that he could see reality."

The reality is that people are frightened. They are living with fuel poverty. Whatever compensation deal the Government may argue about, it is not adequate to deal with the realities of the temperatures that we consistently experience in the north of Scotland.

Anyone who believes in social justice should be with us in the Lobby tonight, opposing the Government and giving us the opportunity to eradicate fuel poverty in our society. I ask Conservative Members this question. Will they be able to live with their consciences tomorrow?

8.52 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and to echo her views. I want to deliver two messages. My constituents are bitterly disappointed that the Prime Minister has broken one promise and they anticipate being bitterly disappointed when he breaks a second. The Prime Minister promised that he would not put VAT on fuel. He also promised that the Government would deliver their commitment to the Rio reductions in emissions, especially carbon dioxide emissions. From the evidence of the Budget, the Government will renege on that commitment as well.

To hear the rant by the President of the Board of Trade, one would have thought that this country could have difficulties if we did not go ahead with this increase in VAT. I do not believe a word of what he said because the evidence is all there. The right hon. Gentleman, however, insists that the increase is necessary. I suggest to the Government that there is no problem this year in avoiding the increase. Almost all my constituents would far prefer to see no increase in VAT next year instead of having the tax cuts at which the Chancellor is hinting.

What really concerns me is that there is no economic justification for VAT. The only thing that the Government have ever claimed is that there is a green argument for VAT on fuel. All the evidence I have shows that the green argument is equal nonsense. The Government said that to meet the Rio commitments, they had to reduce carbon

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

dioxide emissions by 10 million tonnes. The claim is that by putting VAT up, 15 per cent. of that target will be produced.

I have done a little bit of checking in my constituency to find out what people on average and above average incomes are doing about VAT on fuel. All of them are just accepting the VAT as another Government tax. It is not changing behaviour in any way. It is not persuading those people to use less fuel or to make their homes energy-efficient. I made further checks. There is no increase in the number of people trying to get wall insulation and no increase in the number of people ordering loft insulation or taking other similar measures. People who have the chance to borrow money to invest in energy efficiency measures are taking no action at all.

The hard-up in my constituency—the elderly and those with children—cannot afford to spend money on energy efficiency schemes. They are making their contribution to the Rio targets by going without and by suffering. One can see pensioners talking to each other about how they can move from a luncheon club to somewhere else, such as a library, so that they can use someone else's heat rather than having to heat their homes during the winter. For those with children, it is almost impossible to move around to use other people's heat. There is real hardship. Those people cannot improve their dwellings. Many of them are in rented property and they cannot persuade their landlords to take energy efficiency measures, whether they are in the public or the private sector.

The Government have said, "Ah well, we have got the home energy saving scheme." Last week, many hon. Members were out publicising that scheme. It is a very worthwhile scheme; how much extra did the Government put in? They put in £10 million. What does that actually mean? In Stockport, there is now a waiting list of more than six weeks to get the work done. If that pittance in the Budget was allocated across the whole country, six extra homes could have the energy saving schemes installed. If the Government really have a commitment to the Rio targets, they must come up with real money for energy saving. If they do not, they are not only betraying pensioners and young children, but betraying our commitment to the global strategy to stop global warming and to ensure that we look after our planet.

I now turn to the Energy Saving Trust; Lord Moore is supposed to be in charge of it. The Government say that it is intended to provide 35 per cent. of the achievement of the Rio targets. It has set up a whole series of schemes for energy saving so that we can achieve our Rio targets, ensure that people have better, warmer homes and stop the problems of damp and other problems. There is no money for the schemes. The gas regulator said that there would be no money from British Gas. The Government are now looking for £1 billion to finance the Energy Saving Trust and its targets. The trust is not mentioned at all in the Budget.

I am bitterly disappointed that on VAT, the Government will hit the poorest in our country. They are totally failing in their commitment to Rio. That is a disgrace. I certainly hope that the Government are defeated tonight.

8.57 pm

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I have two issues to raise on the question of fuel and I shall do so as briefly as I can. I thank the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) for their brevity. I shall try to match their brevity, but I do not know whether I can match their excellence.

One of the most important fuels that we have in Scotland is, of course, Scotch whisky. The Chancellor missed a marvellous opportunity to redress the imbalance of taxation, levied not only on Scotch whisky, but on spirits in general. He should have done something to harmonise taxes on spirits, wines and beers and, especially, he should have given a message to our continental friends because our products are being discriminated against to our detriment. While this country is being flooded by cheap booze from the continent, it can only be to the detriment of the Chancellor's coffers, because, as he is bound to see, the amount of cheap booze now entering the country is considerable.

The Lamont legacy in certain areas of the Budget was referred to earlier. The one Lamont trait that I appreciated was that he had a glass of Highland Park as he announced his Budget. I am not sure what the present Chancellor was drinking, but it looked like whisky.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *indicated assent.*

Mr. McKelvey: I do not know the product brand name, but, whatever it was, it was certainly a couple of million quid to the company and the industry and long may it continue.

The other serious issue, has, of course, already been described by my colleagues: VAT on fuel. At the outset, I echo the comments of the Braemar coal merchant, Mr. Alan Clark, who was quoted in today's edition of *The Guardian*. He said:

> "VAT was supposed to be for luxuries".

He then asked:

> "Since when was fuel a luxury?"

The answer, of course, is that fuel has been a luxury since the years of economic mismanagement and rash income tax promises to their supporters have led the Government to shift the burden of taxation on to those least able to shoulder it. The hon. Member for Moray and my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish outlined exactly the difficulties that people will suffer in their areas.

My comments should alert the House to the fact that I am implacably opposed to any VAT on fuel. As one of my hon. Friends said earlier, if we were to take office and I were the leader of my party, I would say here and now that we would rescind, wherever we could under the European legislation, imposition of VAT on fuel.

Even the best compensation packages designed to help the sections of the community who are most disadvantaged by the introduction of 17.5 per cent. VAT will be bound to leave out many thousands of vulnerable adults and children—those who do not qualify because of their age or because they have a few pence too much. In assessing income, 5p too much can knock somebody off income support and therefore devalue the opportunity of compensation.

The VAT on fuel compensation scheme is not, however, one of the best compensation packages by any measure of judgment. Indeed, it is appalling. First, it treats the British Isles as an amorphous mass and one cannot do that. It deals in averages, which take no account whatever of regional variations. The eligible pensioner or family in John o'Groats receives exactly the same as the eligible pensioner or family in Lands End, but their climates could not be more different.

I shall use figures which have been extracted from the Ministry. Over 10 years, the hon. Member for Moray has tenaciously tried to extract figures from it. I gave up 10 years ago. I asked the then Secretary of Scotland about compensation for colder climates in Scotland and I was told blandly from the Dispatch Box that there was no difference between the climate in Scotland and the climate in England, which showed how few visits he had made to Scotland. By the Department of the Environment's own reckoning, it costs 41 per cent. more to heat a typical semi in Aberdeen than it does in Bristol and it costs 66 per cent. more in Braemar, yet every pensioner in Bristol is entitled to the same compensation and will receive the same as every pensioner in Kilmarnock, Aberdeen, John o'Groats and Braemar. The princely sum of £52 per annum has been calculated by the Treasury as adequate compensation for 17.5 per cent. VAT on fuel for those who qualify.

Age Concern produced some interesting tables which showed that the compensation package benefits only those with fuel bills below £300, which takes into account £80 standing charges. I doubt very much if there is a pensioner in Bristol, let alone Braemar, who boast bills so low over the year. Again, today's article in *The Guardian* said that a retired nurse in Braemar, with a two-roomed flat, pays £700 a year on heating. Another villager, a former Tory voter, pays £1,100 a year to heat his five-roomed house. I know that those figures are not too dissimilar to those paid by pensioners and families in my constituency.

The Right to Warmth campaign demonstrates that a couple on income support with two children will pay, on average, an extra £135 per annum. Again, that is an average which must be taken into account to get the picture of the problems which will face young families in Scotland on income support. When people cannot pay to keep warm, their health suffers. These figures suggest that almost no one benefits from this meagre compensation. Scottish pensioners and families on income support will suffer disproportionately.

A new report "Ice Cold" from Age Concern shows than an estimated 3 million—one third of all pensioners—live in indoor temperatures at or below 16 deg. Celsius, 61 deg. Fahrenheit, in the winter. Contrast that with the advice of the Department of the Environment that the elderly and the sick should have an indoor temperature of 21 deg. Celsius, which is 70 deg. Fahrenheit. The same advice is given by the Institute of Housing and the Institute of Architects and Surveyors. It is sound advice, but it falls on the deaf ears of those who cannot afford to heat their homes accordingly.

It should be remembered that shops and offices are obliged to close if the indoor temperature drops to 16 deg. centigrade. The House might share my view that the elderly, the poor and the sick are already at considerable risk. A survey conducted by Age Concern found that 95 per cent. of pensioners interviewed expected to cut back on heating if VAT increased again.

Deaths as a result of hypothermia increased by 20 per cent. in Scotland last year. I am not producing fictitious figures or figures that are designed to scaremonger. These are real figures. The numbers of winter-time deaths among the elderly in this country provide a stark comparison with the figures of our continental neighbours. Given our record, can any sane people, including Members of this place, justify the imposition of VAT on fuel? For that matter, can any sane person or conscientious Member afford not to vote with us, the Opposition, to save elderly people from their fate?

I see that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman) is shaking her head. Perhaps her conscience bothers her, or perhaps she thinks that the figures to which I have referred were drawn from the air. As I have said, they are real figures. People will die of hypothermia in Scotland and elsewhere. The hon. Lady need not shake her head because I have stated a fact. My assertion is backed by Government figures.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McKelvey: No, I shall not. The hon. Lady has not been in her place for more than five minutes. I have been in the Chamber since 3 o'clock.

Should we not be considering ways of reducing hypothermia deaths, especially undertaking additional insulation work to give extra help to those who live in the coldest and remotest parts of Britain? It is every citizen's right, irrespective of his income, to have proper housing that is windproof, waterproof and adequately heated. That is a basic right that surely even Conservatives would have to accept.

There is no reason for those who have pontificated on the horrors of the imposition of more VAT on fuel to be in the House to abstain in person. That is nonsensical. Equally, hon. Members should not keep away from the House this evening. Conservative Members should add their votes to those of Opposition Members to defeat the increased burden of an obnoxious and unwanted tax.

9.7 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): The Opposition's charge against the Budget is that it is out of touch with the needs of the country and disregards the views of the British people. We needed a Budget for investment, jobs and fairness, and instead we have a Budget that does next to nothing for investment. The Government have acted too late and done too little to increase employment. They have confirmed the greatest tax rise in history, which perpetuates the injustice of imposing value added tax on fuel. It is significant that, with the exception of the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), no Conservative Member has sought to justify the increase in VAT on fuel on its merits, or on any merits that Conservative Members suppose that it has.

The Government's argument seems to be that they can bring national finances into order only by measures such as increasing VAT, which is manifestly unfair. We say that sound finances, a strong economy and fairness must go hand in hand.

The hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) sought to give us a history lesson on the past 15 years. He would have done well to remember, as would his hon. Friends, that when the Conservatives secured their route

[Mr. Andrew Smith]

to power in 1979, they did so because they were seen as helping people to get on and to make the most of their chances, and helping Britain make the most of its potential. As my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) so ably argued, all the Conservatives' claims have been betrayed. Living standards have fallen since the general election, as the latest edition of "Economic Trends" shows, with a fall in personal disposable income. What is more, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister seem not to understand how far they are seen now as holding people back and holding Britain back, where we are urging that people should have the chance to get on.

In his characteristically well-argued speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) spelt out how, to secure prosperity, Britain needs investment in business, in infrastructure and in people. As he said, everyone in Britain should be alarmed at the very low present level of investment. Not only is it at a very low level, but it has actually fallen in the past two quarters. Not only is it still lower in real terms than the level that the Conservatives inherited 15 years ago, but the real net capital stock available to British manufacturers is barely higher now than in 1979.

British firms must attempt to compete with 30 per cent. less investment per worker than in Germany and France and 65 per cent. less investment per worker than in Japan. In those circumstances, is not it staggering that the Chancellor did so very little in the Budget to stimulate investment? While, of course, growth in current output is one stimulus, on its own it may well not be enough.

We all note that the Red Book forecast is for private investment to grow next year by 11 per cent. Let us hope that that forecast is right, but such a figure is notoriously difficult to predict. It would be a triumph of hope over experience not to imagine that the now likely prospect of rising interest rates will not have an impact on that.

Mr. Fabricant: Does the hon. Gentleman believe—and he will probably say no, so I would like him to justify his negative response—that if the Opposition amendment was successful tonight, interest rates would rise still further?

Mr. Smith: It would be interesting to know whether, on the basis of my answer, the hon. Gentleman is seriously considering changing his mind to honour what he said to his constituents. However, if our amendment is successful, of course the Chancellor will make a statement. We have set out the measures, which I shall spell out in greater detail later, to raise the revenue. There is no reason why interest rates should rise tomorrow. We shall wait and see whether, on the basis of the discussions that the Chancellor has had with the Governor of the Bank of England, interest rates will rise anyway.

We believe that the Chancellor should have done more to stimulate investment in industry and that he should have acted on the representations that he received from the seven largest manufacturing associations. We noted with interest the suggestion of the right hon. Member for Norfolk, South about tapered capital gains taxation for longer-term holdings. We also believe that that is worth considering.

The new venture capital tax in the Budget will not address the shortcomings to which I referred. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) was right to say that that scheme is much more likely to create another tax loophole than to generate investment in the high-tech, high value added businesses that Britain needs. Similarly, the extended tax reliefs for the enterprise investment scheme remove the restrictions on investment in land and buildings and are thereby likely to open up the way for it to operate as a business expansion scheme mark 2, encouraging investment in low-risk, low value added schemes rather than in the high-risk, high value added schemes that Britain needs.

We believe that the Chancellor is out of touch with the need for business investment. We must ask why he allowed the industrial finance initiative, launched by the former Financial Secretary, to run into the sand. We have all heard about the letter from Lord Hanson. If that is not the only reason why the Chancellor backed off, he should give us the real reason, because we were promised much more extensive statements in this Budget than anything that has been forthcoming on the private finance initiative.

We argue that the Government are out of touch with the public on housing and the need for housing investment. With 160,000 families recorded as homeless last year; with 1.5 million homes deemed unfit for human habitation; with 59,000 homes repossessed; and with more than 1 million home owners trapped in negative equity, the public will be outraged that this Budget will make housing problems worse, not better.

According to the National Federation of Housing Associations, the 10 per cent. real cut in housing expenditure next year will mean that the number of housing association rented homes being built will be reduced by more than 10,000, the lowest level since world war 2. At the same time, council rents are being forced up by the squeeze on local authority budgets, by 6 per cent. on average next year, which is three times the rate of inflation. We say that those cuts, too, will damage people's chances of getting on and will make Britain a poorer place.

The Chancellor's measures on long-term unemployment represent a belated recognition of a crisis on which we have been campaigning for years. Like my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North, I was amazed at the breathtaking claim in the Chancellor's Budget speech, when he said:

> "We must combine greater prosperity for the majority of our people with measures to prevent the emergence of a deprived underclass, excluded from the opportunity to work and dependent on welfare."

I repeat:

> "to prevent the emergence of a deprived underclass".— [*Official Report*, 29 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1079.]

Where have the Chancellor and his right hon. and hon. Friends been for the past 15 years? Nothing demonstrates more clearly how out of touch he and the Government are with the reality facing people throughout the country.

Let the Chancellor tell us, too, why his proposed national insurance rebate scheme will bring help only in April 1996. We say that the long-term unemployed need help now, and the Government should provide that help now.

Of the many measures in the Budget that hold people back, none is more mean or unjust than the little measure to phase out means-tested allowances for over 26-year-olds who are studying. As the hon. Member for Chingford said, in a modern competitive economy, people need to re-educate and retrain throughout their working lives. How can it be right then to take away one component of the student support system which is specifically designed to help older people returning to education and training? On average, that measure will take £1,000 from students who would otherwise have expected that help, and it will hit especially hard older students who are either ineligible for or find it difficult to obtain support from the Student Loans Company.

Of all the measures in this Budget of missed opportunities, as hon. Members have said, nothing will be more widely resented than or as well remembered as the Chancellor's decision to persevere with the increase in VAT on fuel. Many of my hon. Friends, such as my hon. Friends the Members for St. Helens, North, for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde, for Preston (Mrs. Wise), and for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor)—*[Interruption.]* I include the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing); I apologise. Hon. Members of all parties put forward powerful arguments on why the increase is wrong. It hits family budgets hard and gratuitously, especially the budgets of the elderly, the disabled and the housebound. It will add an average of £2.30 a week to fuel bills. As my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) pointed out, that has everything to do with the financial mess that the Government got themselves into, and nothing whatever to do with Rio or the environment.

The VAT compensation that the Chancellor announced added nothing to what he offered last year. It will come as cold comfort to pensioners that the Secretary of State for Social Security now tells us that he is to insert a note into pension books explaining why the extra cash that they will receive this year is just 25p for a single pensioner and 30p for a couple over and above the inflation uprating. If I know pensioners at all, they will look at that note in their pension books every week and they will be enraged at what the Government have done to them. It will be a reminder every week that they cannot trust the Government ever again.

Contrary to what the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) and the hon. Member for Chingford said about largesse having been given to pensioners, based on the official family expenditure survey figures, even after compensation has been paid, including the compensation buried in the inflation uprating, the average pensioner couple will be £42 a year worse off. As many hon. Members have pointed out, the picture will be much worse for those who need to stay at home for longer periods, for those who need more heat and for those who live in colder parts of Britain.

Sir Terence Higgins: Is not it the case that more than 44 per cent. of the proceeds of VAT on fuel will be given in compensation?

Mr. Smith: The average pensioner facing an average fuel bill will still be worse off, and those facing higher bills will suffer even more. Many hon. Members have said that the increase is wrong in principle and wrong in practice and that it is a total breach of faith with the electorate for the Government to forge on regardless. People will not forget that. As the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) said, the Conservative party will pay a very high price at the polls—not only in Dudley, but in future polls—if the Government persist with the VAT increase.

I commend all honourable Members who oppose the increase. I do not underestimate the pressure which, even now, may be being brought to bear on Conservative Members who want to keep faith with what they have told their constituents.

One cannot help but wonder whether there are some in the Government who want to lose the vote. How else do we explain the Environment Secretary's tactics in writing to potential opponents of VAT? The Prime Minister may have cause to consider whether that was a wise move. The Environment Secretary wrote that he wanted to reduce bills rather than increase them, and said that that was a real possibility in most households. He said that falling unit energy prices since the mid-1980s had reduced the incentive to invest in saving energy, but the imposition of VAT re-established that incentive in a sensible and moderate manner. There we have it: people have been missing the point. They have not realised that VAT is a "sensible and moderate" measure. The Environment Secretary says that it is an "incentive"; better still, it saves people money. I think that the Environment Secretary has been eating a few too many beefburgers.

As well as the contradictions in the Environment Secretary's letter, Conservative Members should remember that the Prime Minister—I am pleased that he has joined us—said that tonight's vote is not a matter of confidence. He clearly entertains the possibility of the Chancellor being asked to reconsider the issue. He has been supported in that view by the Secretary of State for Employment, who said on the radio this morning that winning the vote was not the "be all and end all of everything" and that it was "not Armageddon".

I ask those Conservative Members who have doubts about the measure—I respect those who have expressed many sincere and honest doubts—to stand firm tonight and resist the increase in VAT on fuel. The Chancellor has no mandate to increase VAT and, as Conservative Members know, it goes completely against what the Conservative party promised at the last general election.

In the past half hour, all sorts of rumours have circulated Westminster about panic, last-minute compensation packages that have been cobbled together in an attempt to buy a vote here or a vote there. Nothing demonstrates more clearly that in Britain we now have government by shambles: the Government are not in control of events.

Before we vote on the motion, we should be clear about what the Opposition's amendment says. It says simply that in considering the Finance Bill, hon. Members must not be prevented from discussing VAT on fuel for domestic and charity use. Our amendment says that we should be able to discuss the matter during Finance Bill proceedings. That is an essential step in giving the House the opportunity to reconsider the fuel increase. At the same time, it raises an important matter of principle for the Chamber to consider. When the Government announced tax rises in advance and in the 1993 Finance Bill drove through measures that would take effect only in April 1995, they were trying to make one Parliament's decisions binding on its successors.

Surely it is right that this House of Commons should now have the chance to re-examine the VAT increase. Our amendment would simply give the House the opportunity to look at it again and to vote on it in the circumstances of today. When the Chancellor replies, he must tell us why he wants to deny the House the right

[Mr. Smith]

even to consider the question as a separate issue, as that is what voting against the amendment would do. The Government appear to be staggering from one panic to another and cannot even expose themselves to rational debate through the normal processes of the Finance Bill.

Labour has made its position clear on where the money would come from to replace the increase in VAT on fuel for domestic and charity purposes. I shall tell the Chancellor where in the Budget the money could come from. We have advocated a number of steps that would more than cover the cost of abandoning the VAT increase. The money could come from tightening up the treatment of executive share options— *[Interruption.]* Before Conservative Members shout too loudly, they might care to remember that that is a step advised by their own vice-chairman of the Conservative party. The money could come from part of a windfall levy on the privatised utilities, similar to that which Lady Thatcher levied on the banks in 1981. It could come from ending tax relief on private medical insurance. It could come from steps to end the commercial avoidance of stamp duty. For future years, we would also look to draw on some of the gains from retaining the stamp duty charge on share transactions that the Government intend to drop.

Let us not forget—I am sure that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) will not forget—that dropping the VAT increase would reduce slightly our contributions to the European Union. It would cut the measure of gross national product at market prices used in calculating the third and fourth reductions—

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): How much?

Mr. Smith: An £8 million saving on the contributions to the European Union.

There is something else that the Chancellor could do—he could abandon his proposal to cut the duty on champagne. How much more out of touch could the Government get than to cut the cost of champagne while our pensioners shiver? I emphasise that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has other choices open to him, such as those suggested to him during the Budget debate by his hon. Friends the Members for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland), for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Mid-Staffordshire.

Hon. Members may recall that when the increase was first put forward 21 months ago in March 1993, the Government justified it as being necessary to bring down the public sector borrowing requirement for 1995-96 to £39 billion. Without that increase, on present projections the PSBR for 1995-96 would be £22.3 billion. We believe that the Chancellor is right to get down the PSBR, which is why we are proposing alternative revenue-raising measures. The figures that I have given show the House how very much circumstances have changed since the increase was first proposed.

The point that I want to stress, in a genuinely non-partisan spirit, is that if the amendment is carried and a subsequent change to the Finance Bill made, the Chancellor has choices—whether he takes our advice, that of his hon. Friends or develops alternatives of his own. If the amendment is carried tonight, the responsible thing for the right hon. and learned Gentleman to do would be immediately to make a statement to the House indicating how he would raise the money. Let there be no mistake: choices can be made which leave the Budget's policy balance intact—a point that I know is of great concern to a number of Conservative Members. I understand that the Chancellor acknowledged that after the ECOFIN meeting, when he said that if he were defeated over VAT on domestic fuel, he would find other ways to raise the money.

The Chancellor has choices, but only one choice is open to pensioners struggling to pay their bills—they go cold or they go broke. Here and now, the House faces a clear choice—whether to allow this extremely unfair and bitterly resented tax increase to be implemented without challenge, or to assert the right of the House to question the Executive's revenue-raising powers and to call the Government to account for betraying their election promises.

I urge right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House to vote for the right and the duty of the House to speak for constituents, pensioners and the country. The people of Britain, whatever their views on the rest of the Budget, want the VAT increase on domestic fuel stopped. Let their voice be heard in the Division Lobby tonight.

9.30 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): We have debated the Budget for five days. Most right hon. and hon. Members have participated in many such debates, but this one had an unusual quality. A large number of right hon. and hon. Members, particularly on the Opposition Benches, devoted a high proportion of their speeches to last year's Budget and the Budget before that. They devoted a large part of their speeches also to next year's Budget.

The Opposition want to revisit last year's Budget—that is the point of their main motion. They criticise us for raising taxation and invite the House to reverse it. They anticipate and guess at next year's Budget, and criticise it because they believe that the Government intend to reduce taxation.

The issue on which the Opposition want to vote results from last year's Budget and the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel. The main subject of the speech of the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), like those of other right hon. and hon. Members, was the decision taken in last year's Budget to impose VAT on fuel. Are the Opposition concerned about the effect of higher fuel prices on people in this country and on energy conservation? I think not.

In a case that can be perfectly evenly balanced, we heard the most melodramatic interpretations. No one listening to speeches this evening about people dying from hypothermia would realise that fuel prices had fallen. Even after the imposition of the first stage of VAT on domestic fuel, prices have fallen 1 per cent. in real terms over the past two years—even taking account of the first stage of VAT, but taking no account of the compensation package for all pensioners and those on benefits.

Even when the full rate of VAT is imposed, gas prices will be 6 per cent. lower in real terms than before privatisation. The level of disconnections for non-payment of domestic fuel bills has never been lower. I will give way to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing); then perhaps I shall be allowed to talk about this year's Budget, the measures that I have taken this November, and what that bodes for the British economy and for our prospects over the next year or two.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman deny that people die from cold-related illnesses in this country?

Mr. Clarke: Of course I do not deny that, but as my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade said, fuel prices have been falling in real terms in recent years. Over the past two years, they fell 1 per cent., even taking into account VAT at 8 per cent. already imposed, and compensation has taken the price lower for pensioners and those on benefits receiving compensation. I realise that politics is more often about perception than about reality, but the underlying reality to what we are doing with VAT on fuel is that fuel prices are coming down, that they will continue to come down, that since privatisation far fewer people now have their supplies disconnected, and that we have a generous measure of further compensation for vulnerable groups, for all pensioners, for those on benefit, which I shall return to in due course.

Before we get to VAT on fuel, and I am sure that we will, I insist on reminding people of the Budget strategy to which the Opposition have totally failed to address themselves with the slightest seriousness at all. I set myself three objectives this year: keeping the economy on track for steady and sustainable growth; tackling the problem of long-term unemployment; and strengthening the economy in the medium term by introducing a package of measures to help businesses.

This Budget does have measures to cut long-term unemployment, and everyone has welcomed them. The only point that they can produce is to point out that a minority of the measures and the expenditure start in 1996, for perfectly obvious and practicable reasons. There is a package of measures to help small businesses and, so far as I am aware, no one has directly opposed the package of measures—the tax incentives or the deregulatory measures—that I proposed. The policies on taxation, particularly the cuts in public spending and borrowing, are of the scale necessary to keep confidence in our recovery.

Over the vast bulk of the five days of the Budget debate—the Budget has been particularly welcomed by all concerned with business, with our manufacturing base, with recovery and outside this country—there has been very little criticism from Opposition Members for the particular measures that I announced last week when I presented the Budget. What has most significance for our recovery in the Budget is the very firm action that we have taken to get Government borrowing down. The hon. Member for Oxford, East made a passing, apparently favourable, reference to that, but every speech made by almost every Opposition Member, be he or she on the shadow Treasury Bench or behind, by implication seeks to undermine that.

In the 1993 Budget, faced as we had been with the prospect of a £50 billion borrowing requirement after the recession, we effectively reduced public borrowing. We looked to the spending side of the account first—from listening to the Labour party, it is quite plain that that is something that it would never do—and we still had to increase taxes. Of course, Opposition Members heard us as clearly as my right hon. and hon. Friends did, before we even reached the Budget, that, this year, it was not practicable, if we were to put our recovery, prosperity and jobs first, to ease taxation, except for vulnerable groups.

I raised tax allowances for pensioners, above inflation. I raised the 20p band above inflation for the one fifth of all taxpayers who pay tax at the very lowest rate. Further tax reductions, including the tax reduction by going back on last year, for which the Labour party is pressing, are impracticable if we are to get borrowing down. I was able to be neutral on taxation, apart from those beneficial changes, then tackle spending, as only a Conservative Government can and as a Labour Government or Liberal Government never would.

Last year, I reduced Government spending by £15 billion over three years. This year, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary and I have been able to reduce Government spending by another £28 billion over the next three-year period. What is more, as we have managed to find savings, we have done so in so competent and effective a way in pursuing our priorities that we are able to increase real resources for key public services such as the national health service and the police. By improving efficiency, we make sure that the public get better public services for less public money, and we tackle the overheads of Government. Therefore we can produce those results and still build on the improvements which mean that the NHS treats 1 million more patients a year than it did in 1979, and that one in three young people will go on to higher education compared with 15 years ago.

Those measures represent a strategy, unlike the pathetic ramblings of Opposition Members. They represent a strategy that has not only put our borrowing on course but, as a result, has given us a recovery—real growth in the economy, a real increase in our production, rising manufacturing output, falling unemployment, a great productivity record, level unit wage costs, a record level of exports and a record level of retail sales. From beginning to end of this Budget debate, those developments simply have not registered in the speeches of Opposition Members who claimed to be talking about the economy.

Conservative Members recognise the link between public spending and taxes, public borrowing and helping public finances, enabling recovery to be sustained and not turned into boom followed by bust. Labour would put all that at risk. Last year Labour Members voted against our spending reductions, and they are plainly resisting spending reductions again. Last year they opposed our measures to raise revenue, and they would do so again.

Opposition Front Benchers avoid such words, but we need only listen to every Back Bencher to hear them. I sat and listened to Scottish Members questioning this year's Scottish local government settlement. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland answered questions, every Scottish Labour Member demanded more spending on one service or another—more for their local authorities. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) cheers on behalf of Scotland, but what he wants is not on behalf of Scotland. He is denied by the rest of the Opposition Front Bench.

[Mr. Clarke]

The new Opposition Front Bench is semi-detached from the hon. Gentleman, who sits urging public spending that will be the ruin of economic recovery in Scotland.

Mr. Graham *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way.

If Labour Members do not like the contrast between my measures and their approach, let them look at the shadow Budget. *[Interruption.]* If I may say so, the revival in Scotland is getting a little carried away. I think that the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) agrees with at least one measure that I took for Scottish industry.

Labour presented a draft Budget outside the House—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Let us have some order in the House.

Mr. Clarke: May I address the Scottish Front Bench? The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) only produced a draft Budget outside the House. A draft Budget worthy of the name should have at least three components—spending plans, tax plans and borrowing plans. The so-called shadow Budget had none of those components; as a document on economic policy, it was about as much use as a used bus ticket.

There were spending commitments. The shadow Budget referred to a regional development agency, allowing local councils to spend their capital receipts and a small business fund. Today, at one point in his speech, the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) began to go on about what he regarded as terrible reductions in transport spending; he implied that he might reverse them, although our level of transport investment is much higher than it was 10 years ago. A moment ago, the hon. Member for Oxford, East criticised the savings that we had made in housing expenditure, although we are well ahead of our manifesto commitments on social housing. The Opposition slink into spending commitments without spelling them out or costing them; then they try to address the question of how they would raise the taxation, talking of loopholes and windfalls. The loopholes that they are talking about are unspecified and are not spelled out. Last year, they put a bold figure of £10 billion on loopholes that they would close. In the shadow Budget this year—it is almost an identical document—the £10 billion has vanished because not a single independent tax commentator believed that they could raise anything like that amount.

What does the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East regard as loopholes? Last year, the Opposition voted against a measure in the Finance Bill that blocked the device of paying salaries in gold and coffee beans in order to avoid national insurance. This year, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East has been publicly criticising the ending of transport zero rating for things such as theme park rides, which have been taking advantage of a loophole. The hon. Gentleman's loopholes are non-existent and he knows that. Howard Davies has been quoted repeatedly in the debate to describe those loopholes as a massive increase in taxation on genuine business.

What is the one-off windfall tax that the Opposition hold out? In fact, it would penalise the success of those who now own the national grid and are improving its performance. That improved performance allows the national grid to reduce charges on electricity bills by 3 per cent. in real terms every year. The Opposition claim that there is a great pot of money to be had by reversing that. In fact, they would be penalising success, damaging prospects for investment and damaging electricity prices.

Right at the end of the debate the hon. Member for Oxford, East mentioned the tax on champagne. He knows that for legal reasons we are closing an anomaly whereby sparkling wine is taxed at a higher level than loopholes—*[Interruption.]* I mean fortified wine. Unlike some hon. Members who will be voting this evening, I have not been partaking of either. The correction of the anomaly on sparking wine will help many sparkling wines made in this country, not just champagne. Champagne socialists may believe otherwise. It produces a princely sum of £5 million if the legal challenge is defied by the Labour party. That leaves £1,495 million to go to give some credibility to its policy on VAT on fuel.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East said that we should reduce our VAT contribution to Europe. That would be another £8 million. It is fatuous as a taxation policy. It is fatuous at the end of a speech in which the hon. Gentleman had already talked gaily about capital allowances being restored, thereby giving great tax exemptions to all investment across all business.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East was attracted by tapered capital gains tax. The Labour party is attracted by every increase in public spending and every reduction in taxation that is put before it by any interest group, or any opportunistic lobby group. That is not a sensible economic policy.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): On the subject of anomalies, can my right hon. and learned Friend explain why he can find almost three quarters of a billion pounds to give to Europe, but he cannot find a similar sum to do away with the increase in VAT which is awfully unpopular? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Clarke: That was the biggest support yet shown to my hon. Friend. With respect to her, the figure is £75 million. That is not three quarters of a billion pounds, but she is getting nearer the total of £1.5 billion than the Labour party has remotely got so far—I concede that much to her.

I shall be coming to a subject in which I know my hon. Friends are interested: VAT on fuel. Before I leave the Labour party, however, I should point out that it is not just my view in the debate that the Labour party is putting forward waffle instead of policy: it is the view of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), my sworn political enemy for as many years as I have known him, although my personal relations with him are good. He would be pleased with the first description as he is a man of principle in a party that has been robbed of principles by its Front-Bench spokesmen and I quote him with approval talking of his Front-Bench spokesman. He said that

> "it is not enough to oppose the Conservative party; we have to spell out what we will do, how it will be better than what the Conservatives have done, who will pay the price and who will benefit. Until we do that, people will continue to doubt us".—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1268.]

Until the Labour party does that, anyone with the long-term interests of the British economy in mind should not just doubt the Labour party but reject it for trying to fob us off with such nonsense, as it has done for the past five days.

I had to take the necessary steps. I have explained that the strategy is to keep on course with a reduction in public borrowing, which I think most commentators did not believe possible last year, which we are on course to achieve and which is the principal explanation for the high level of confidence in the future of British industry and in the prospects for jobs and prosperity. Although public spending is the main contribution opposed by the Labour party, the taxation in the pipeline from past Budgets, including VAT on fuel, is a sensible, integral part of our tax policy. At this stage, it would be reckless for the House, having been taken so far on the road to lasting recovery, suddenly to decide that it cannot stay the course, that it will overturn what we have done and go back on the decision last year.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North) *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the Chancellor of the Exchequer giving way? Apparently so.

Mr. Greenway: As my right hon. and learned Friend returned to VAT on fuel, may I ask him this? Is he aware that, in a constituency like mine, pensioners' heating bills are much higher than they would be if their homes were properly insulated? The reduction in heating bills would probably be as much as 30 per cent. Will he do something about improving home insulation grants, in particular, to pensioners and poor people?

Mr. Clarke: I am surprised that a murmur of discontent broke out from the Labour party when my hon. Friend intervened to press the case for improved insulation of pensioners' homes which, as he rightly said, reduces bills. Loft insulation, for example, takes an average £70 off heating bills. The hon. Member for Moray pressed the same case upon me.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) that the tax of VAT on fuel, which I think is defensible for reasons that I shall give in a moment, has to be combined with efforts to protect the vulnerable, particularly pensioners and those people on benefit. Also, it has to be combined with measures that really deliver the fuel efficiency that led the Liberal party to propose it and Friends of the Earth to support it. I should say to my hon. Friend that, last year, I doubled the home energy efficiency scheme budget. As a result, nearly 1 million people have already benefited from it. I added a further £10 million in my Budget speech last week. My hon. Friend, however, has been pressing this case. So have other hon. Members—including the hon. Member for Moray who, with respect, is trying to intervene on me now—who have pointed out the arrears that are built up under the scheme. I am, therefore, prepared to add another £20 million to the home energy efficiency scheme.

Sir John Gorst (Hendon, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend say whether he has given any thought to imposing VAT on a less vulnerable community, namely the press?

Mr. Clarke: I have thought about it frequently but decided not to do it. The Labour party would have opposed it as it opposes all taxation and the further broadening of the VAT base is not necessary if we stick to the course that we are on and reduce public spending as we are doing.

As I have already announced, I have increased the cold weather payments to £8.50 a week in 1995 compared with £6 a week last year. I set out in the Budget help for the least well off, especially pensioners—all pensioners—and vulnerable groups. By April 1995, help for pensioners and vulnerable groups will be worth £52 a year for individuals and £73 a year for couples. From April 1996, the permanent increase in benefits due to VAT on fuel will be worth around £68 a year for individuals and £96 for couples.

Sir Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the increase for pensioners next April will be on exactly the same basis as this year, namely that there will be a full uprating of 2.2 per cent. for inflation, including the 0.4 per cent. as a result of VAT on fuel, plus an additional 50p for all single pensioners and 70p for all married pensioners?

Mr. Clarke: For as long as my hon. Friend has been in the House, he has pursued the cause of pensioners with very considerable effectiveness and skill. Ever since I announced the package of measures in the Budget, which I believe implement to the full what we said about compensation for all pensioners and vulnerable groups, he and I have been disputing whether the figure that I have given carries the commitment that I have given—certainly the package produces the figures that I have just given. *[Interruption.]* I believe that every statement that I have made is consistent with the figures that I have given but I do not wish there to be any doubt about our commitment to compensating pensioners and those on benefit. Therefore, to resolve the anomaly which has at times become a matter of semantics, when the second stage of VAT goes ahead I shall indeed make the changes to the uprating statement to meet the terms that my hon. Friend requests.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East) *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: Is the hon. Gentleman going to oppose it?

Mr. Brown: Will the Chancellor confirm that he is this evening offering not a penny more for families with children, the unemployed, the disabled or invalids and that the 25p a week more that he is offering for pensioners must be set against their average £505 fuel bill? If this scheme, which I estimate is worth only £100 million, is not enough to satisfy the country, it should not be enough to satisfy Tory Members.

Mr. Clarke: I am spelling out what we are doing for pensioners and vulnerable groups. If the Opposition win their amendment the principal beneficiaries will be people of working age who do not receive means-tested benefits, and people in larger houses, who pay the largest bills—obviously they will make the greatest savings if the Opposition have their way. But if the Government succeed we shall have VAT at a lower level than Scandinavian countries, on prices that are dropping in real terms because of privatisation. We shall be on course for a successful recovery—*[Interruption.]* The howls from the

[Mr. Clarke]

Labour party at what I am saying are howls of rage and disappointment at the fact that a successful economic strategy is being pursued.

Mr. Brown *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Brown *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. It is 9.59. Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown: Madam Speaker—

Mr. Greg Knight (Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:—

The House proceeded to a Division:

Madam Speaker: Order. Before this vote is declared, Members at the Bar will remove themselves behind the Bar. Members in the central aisle will resume their seats before the vote is declared. It is perfectly all right to sit in the aisles or to sit on someone's knee.

The House having divided: Ayes 319, Noes 311.

Division No. 7] **[22.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm Gordon
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Cartiss, Michael
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(S'field Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*

O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, Bill
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*

Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That it is expedient to amend the law with respect to the National Debt and the public revenue and to make further provision in connection with finance; but this Resolution does not extend to the making of any amendment with respect to value added tax other than in respect of value added tax on fuel and power for domestic or charity use so as to provide—

(a) for zero-rating or exempting any supply, acquisition or importation;

(b) for refunding any amount of tax;

(c) for varying any rate at which that tax is at any time chargeable; or

(d) for relief other than relief applying to goods of whatever description or services of whatever description.

10.23 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I think that it would be for the convenience of the House to know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will seek to catch your eye to give an indication of his intentions at the conclusion of any further votes on these resolutions.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. The House of Commons has now spoken for the country against a Government who are both discredited and no longer in control of events. Will you insist, Madam Speaker, that when the Chancellor makes his statement to the House, he withdraws the proposal to put up VAT to 17.5 per cent?

Madam Speaker: The Chancellor of the Exchequer will give an indication of his intentions to the House. I am now required to put the remaining questions.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. The Leader of the House has indicated that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will make his position clear. Will the Chancellor of the Exchequer acknowledge that the House has said quite clearly that that tax must be removed and that what we want is a motion to remove it?

Madam Speaker: Order. These are now becoming bogus points of order.

I have to put the remaining motions on the Budget resolutions. I am now required, under Standing Order No. 50, to put successively, without further debate, the motions on each of the Ways and Means motions, Nos. 2 to 64, and on the motions on procedure and finance, on all of which the Bill is to be brought in. After that, I will put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the motion entitled "Public Expenditure". Instead of reading out each motion in extenso—*[Interruption.]* Order. Do listen to what is going on in the House. I propose to follow the procedure used in recent years. That is to say, I will first state the title of the motion and then put simply the Question that the motion be agreed to. We start with motion No. 2, and that is "Low-strength alcohol".

MADAM SPEAKER *then, pursuant to paragraph (3) of Standing Order No. 50 (Ways and Means Motions), put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of the further motions.*

2. LOW-STRENGTH ALCOHOL

Resolved,

That—

(1) The Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In section 1, in subsections (4) and (5) after the words "any liquor" there shall in both cases be inserted "which is of a strength exceeding 1.2 per cent and which is".

(3) In section 1(6) after the word "strength" there shall be inserted "exceeding 1.2 per cent but".

(4) In section 59(1) for paragraph (b) there shall be substituted the following paragraph—

"(b) is wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 5.5 per cent.".

(5) Paragraphs (2) and (4) above—

(a) shall apply in relation to liquor imported into, or produced in, the United Kingdom on or after 1st January 1995, and

(b) as regards any provision about liquor removed to the United Kingdom from the Isle of Man, shall also apply in relation to liquor so removed on or after that date.

(6) Paragraph (3) above shall apply in relation to liquor imported into, or made in, the United Kingdom on or after 1st January 1995.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

Budget Resolutions and Economic Situation

3. WINE AND MADE-WINE (RATES)

Motion made, and Question put,

That—

(1) For the Table of rates of duty in Schedule 1 to the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 there shall be substituted the following Table—

TABLE OF RATES OF DUTY ON WINE AND MADE-WINE

PART I

WINE OR MADE-WINE OF A STRENGTH NOT EXCEEDING 22 PER CENT.

Description of wine or made-wine	Rates of duty per hectolitre
	£
Wine or made-wine of a strength not exceeding 4 per cent.	22.46
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 4 per cent. but not exceeding 5.5 per cent.	40.44
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 5.5 per cent. but not exceeding 15 per cent. and not sparkling	134.77
Sparkling wine or sparkling made-wine of a strength exceeding 5.5 per cent. but not exceeding 15 per cent.	192.53
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 15 per cent. but not exceeding 22 per cent.	192.53

PART II

WINE OR MADE-WINE OF A STRENGTH EXCEEDING 22 PER CENT.

Description of wine or made-wine	Rates of duty per litre of alcohol in the wine or made wine
Wine or made-wine of a strength exceeding 22 per cent.	£ 19.81

(2) This Resolution shall come into force on 1st January 1995.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 321, Noes 297.

Division No. 8] **[22.25 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*

Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert

King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham

Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*

Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macclesfield)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*

Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom

Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Mon)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, Bill
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew
Smith, Chris *(Is'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mrs. Barbara Roche.

Question accordingly agreed to.

4. ALCOHOLIC LIQUOR DUTIES (ALCOHOLIC INGREDIENTS AND VINEGAR)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the repayment and remission of duty charged on alcoholic liquor used as an ingredient or converted into vinegar.

5. ALCOHOLIC LIQUOR DUTIES (DENATURED ALCOHOL)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about alcoholic liquors that are denatured.

6. TOBACCO PRODUCTS (RATES)

Resolved,

That—

(1) For the Table of rates of duty in Schedule 1 to the Tobacco Products Duty Act 1979 there shall be substituted—

"TABLE

1. Cigarettes	An amount equal to 20 per cent. of the retail price plus £55.58 per thousand cigarettes.
2. Cigars	£82.56 per kilogram.
3. Hand-rolling tobacco	£85.94 per kilogram.
4. Other smoking tobacco and chewing tobacco	£36.30 per kilogram."

(2) This Resolution shall come into force at 6 o'clock in the evening of 29th November 1994.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

7. HYDROCARBON OIL (RATES)

Motion made, and Question put,

That—

(1) In section 6(1) of the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979 for "£0.3314" and "£0.2770" there shall be substituted "£0.3526" and "£0.3044" respectively.

(2) In section 8 of that Act the following subsection shall be substituted for subsections (3) to (5)—

"(3) The rate of the duty under this section shall be £0.3314 a kilogram."

(3) In section 11(1) of that Act for "£0.0116" and "£0.0164" there shall be substituted "£0.0166" and "£0.0214" respectively.

(4) In section 14(1) of that Act for "£0.0116" there shall be substituted "£0.0166".

(5) This Resolution shall come into force at 6 o'clock in the evening of 29th November 1994.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 322, Noes 161.

Division No. 9] **[22.41 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel; Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick

Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Derek Conway

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Burden, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cummings, John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hendron, Dr Joe
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Mon)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, Bill
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Rendel, David
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Timms, Stephen
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Margaret Ewing and
Mr. Andrew Welsh

Question accordingly agreed to.

8. HYDROCARBON OIL DUTY ("ROAD VEHICLE")

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending the meaning of "road vehicle" in the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979.

9. ROAD FUEL GAS (OLD STOCK)

Resolved,

That section 8(7) of the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979 may be repealed.

10. GAMING MACHINE LICENCE DUTY

Resolved,

That—

(1) In the Betting and Gaming Duties Act 1981 for the Table set out at the end of section 23 there shall be substituted—

TABLE

(1) Period (in months) for which licence granted	(2) Small prize or five-penny machines	(3) Other machines
	£	£
1	60	150
2	105	275
3	155	400
4	205	520
5	250	645
6	295	755
7	340	880
8	390	1,005
9	435	1,115
10	480	1,235
11	510	1,305
12	535	1,375

(2) This Resolution shall apply in relation to any gaming machine licence for which an application is made on or after 1st December 1994.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

11. AMUSEMENT MACHINE LICENCE DUTY

Resolved,

That provision may be made for excise duty to be charged on licences authorising the provision of amusement machines that are not gaming machines and for the amendment of the enactments relating to gaming machine licence duty.

12. VEHICLE EXCISE DUTY (RATES)

Motion made, and Question put,

That—

(1) Schedule 1 to the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph 1(b) for "£130" there shall be substituted "£135".

(3) In paragraph 3(1)(a) for "£130" there shall be substituted "£135".

(4) In paragraph 10—

(a) in sub-paragraph (2) for "£130" there shall be substituted "£135";

(b) in sub-paragraph (3) for "£360" there shall be substituted "£370".

(5) This Resolution shall apply in relation to licences taken out on or after 30th November 1994.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 323, Noes 78.

Division No. 10] **[22.54 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry

Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow West)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chidgey, David
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dafis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Donohoe, Brian H
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hendron, Dr Joe
Hoey, Kate
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Mon)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfedder, Sir James
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert

Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
McCrea, Rev William
McGrady, Eddie
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Olner, Bill
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Parry, Robert
Rendel, David
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rooney, Terry
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Simon Hughes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

13. Vehicle Excise Duty (General)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending the Vehicle Excise and Registration Act 1994.

14. Value Added Tax (Works of Art, Antiques, Etc.)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 21 of the Value Added Tax Act 1994 as to the value to be given for the purposes of that Act to imported works of art, antiques and collectors' pieces.

15. Value Added Tax (Agents)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 47 of the Value Added Tax Act 1994 in relation to goods supplied by an agent who acts in his own name.

16. Value added tax (margin schemes)

Resolved,

That provision may be made for enabling value added tax on some or all of the following supplies to be chargeable by reference to profit margins, instead of by reference to the value of the supplies, that is to say—

(a) supplies of works of art, antiques or collectors' items;
(b) supplies of motor vehicles;
(c) supplies of second-hand goods; and
(d) any supply of goods through a person who acts as an agent, but in his own name, in relation to the supply.

17. Value Added Tax (Set-Off of Credits)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 81 of the Value Added Tax Act 1994 with respect to the circumstances in which amounts due to any person from the Commissioners of Customs and Excise under that Act may be set against sums which that person is liable to pay under that Act.

18. Value Added Tax (Land Transactions)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending the Value Added Tax Act 1994 in relation to cases where there is a supply consisting in the grant, assignment or surrender of an interest in or right over land and the grant, assignment or surrender is made by, or the benefit of the consideration for the supply accrues to, more than one person.

19. Value Added Tax (Fuel Supplied for Private Use)

Resolved,

That section 57 of the Value Added Tax Act 1994 may be amended by—

(a) providing for the determination of the consideration appropriate to a vehicle where the prescribed accounting period is a period of 12 months;
(b) increasing the consideration appropriate to a vehicle where the prescribed accounting period is a period of 3 months or a period of one month.

20. Value Added Tax (Deemed Supplies)

Resolved,

That section 30(5) of the Value Added Tax Act 1994 (which treats transactions included in Schedule 8 as supplies) may be replaced by a provision dealing only with exports by charities.

21. Value Added Tax (Penalties)

Resolved,

That—

(1) In section 67 of the Value Added Tax Act 1994 in subsection (4) (the specified percentage)—

(a) in paragraph (a) for "10 per cent." there shall be substituted "5 per cent.";

(b) in paragraph (b) for "20 per cent." there shall be substituted "10 per cent."; and

(c) in paragraph (c) for "30 per cent." there shall be substituted "15 per cent."

(2) Section 15(3A) of the Finance Act 1985 shall have effect subject to the amendments made by paragraph (1) above.

(3) Subject to paragraph (4) below, paragraphs (1) and (2) above shall apply where a penalty is assessed on or after 1st January 1995.

(4) Paragraphs (1) and (2) above shall not apply in the case of a supplementary assessment if the original assessment was made before 1st January 1995.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

22. Value Added Tax (Minor Corrections)

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made amending provisions of the Value Added Tax Act 1994 that would otherwise have a different effect from the provisions they were intended to re-enact.

23. Income Tax (Charge and Rates for 1995-96)

Resolved,

That—

(1) Income tax shall be charged for the year 1995-96, and for that year—
(a) the lower rate shall be 20 per cent.,
(b) the basic rate shall be 25 per cent., and
(c) the higher rate shall be 40 per cent.

(2) For the year 1995-96 section 1(2) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall apply as if the amount specified in paragraph (aa) were £3,200; and accordingly section 1(4) of that Act so far as relating to that paragraph shall not apply for the year 1995-96.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

24. Income Tax (Personal Allowance)

Resolved,

That section 257 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall apply for the year 1995-96 as if—

(a) the amount specified in subsection (2) were £4,630, and
(b) the amount specified in subsection (3) were £4,800;

and accordingly section 257C(1) of that Act so far as relating to section 257(2) and (3) shall not apply for the year 1995-96.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

25. INCOME TAX (SCHEDULE A)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about income tax charged under Schedule A and for applying provisions relating to Schedule A to the charge to tax under Case V of Schedule D.

26. CORPORATION TAX (CHARGE AND RATE FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 1995)

Resolved,

That corporation tax shall be charged for the financial year 1995 at the rate of 33 per cent.

27. CORPORATION TAX (SMALL COMPANIES: 1995)

Resolved,

That for the financial year 1995—

(a) the small companies' rate shall be 25 per cent., and

(b) the fraction mentioned in section 13(2) of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 shall be one fiftieth.

28. CORPORATION TAX (DISTRIBUTIONS)

Resolved,

That provision may be made as to the meaning of "distribution" for the purposes of the Corporation Tax Acts.

29. CHANGE IN OWNERSHIP OF INVESTMENT COMPANY

Resolved,

That charges to corporation tax may be imposed by provisions about cases where there is a change in the ownership of an investment company.

30. INSURANCE COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made for cases where companies carry on insurance business and in relation to transfers of insurance business between companies.

31. OPEN-ENDED INVESTMENT COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision may be made in relation to open-ended investment companies, to holdings in and assets of such companies and to transactions involving such companies.

32. CONTRACTUAL SAVINGS SCHEMES

Resolved,

That provision may be made in relation to contractual savings schemes.

33. PERSONAL EQUITY PLANS

Resolved,

That provision may be made about plan managers of personal equity plans.

34. ENTERPRISE INVESTMENT SCHEME

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the enterprise investment scheme.

35. PERSONAL PENSION ARRANGEMENTS

Resolved,

That provision may be made imposing a charge to tax on sums payable under approved personal pension arrangements.

36. RETIREMENT BENEFITS SCHEMES

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about retirement benefits schemes.

37. CHARGEABLE GAINS (DE-GROUPING CHARGES)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 179 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992.

38. CHARGEABLE GAINS (ROLL-OVER RELIEF: GROUPS OF COMPANIES)

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about roll-over relief in cases involving members of a group of companies.

39. CHARGEABLE GAINS (ROLL-OVER RELIEF ON RE-INVESTMENT)

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about roll-over relief on re-investment.

40. CHARGEABLE GAINS (CORPORATE BONDS)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the meaning of "corporate bond" for the purposes of section 117 of the Taxation of Chargeable Gains Act 1992.

41. CURRENCY CONTRACTS

Resolved,

That charges (including charges by reference to existing contracts) may be imposed by provisions amending section 175 of the Finance Act 1994.

42. CONTROLLED FOREIGN COMPANIES

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made amending Chapter IV of Part XVII of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 and the corresponding provisions of the Finance Act 1984.

43. EXCHANGE GAINS AND LOSSES (GENERAL)

Resolved,

That Chapter II of Part II of the Finance Act 1993 may be amended.

44. EXCHANGE GAINS AND LOSSES (TRANSITIONAL)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about disposals between companies with different commencement days for the purposes of section 165 of the Finance Act 1993.

45. INTEREST, ETC. ON CERTAIN DEBTS

Resolved,

That provision may be made extending the application of sections 63 to 66 of the Finance Act 1993.

46. ABOLITION OF INTEREST RELIEF FOR COMMERCIALLY LET PROPERTY

Resolved,

That provision may be made abolishing interest relief in respect of property that is commercially let.

47. MIRAS (RECOVERY OF CERTAIN AMOUNTS)

Resolved,

That provision may be made for the recovery of amounts deducted by borrowers from payments of interest or paid to borrowers by the Commissioners of Inland Revenue.

48. SETTLEMENTS AND SETTLORS

Resolved,

That provision may be made about settlements and settlors.

49. Income of Estates of Deceased Persons

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about the taxation as income of sums comprised in the estates of deceased persons.

50. Benefits in Kind (Cars Available for Private Use)

Resolved,

That provision may be made in relation to cars available for private use.

51. Incapacity Benefit

Resolved,

That section 139 of the Finance Act 1994 shall have effect as follows—

(a) in subsection (5), for the definition of "initial period of incapacity" there shall be substituted—

"'initial period of incapacity', in relation to incapacity benefit, means any period for which short-term incapacity benefit is payable otherwise than at the higher rate; and"; and

(b) after that subsection there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(6) The reference in subsection (5) above to short-term incapacity benefit payable at the higher rate shall be construed in accordance with sections 30B(5), 40(8) and 41(7) of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992 and the corresponding provisions of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992."

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

52. Short Rotation Coppice

Resolved,

That provision may be made about short rotation coppice.

53. Trading Stock on Discontinuance of a Trade

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 100 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

54. Change of Residence

Resolved,

That provision may be made about cases where a person who is engaged in carrying on a trade, profession or vocation ceases to be resident in the United Kingdom or becomes so resident.

55. Relief for Pre-trading Expenditure

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 401 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988.

56. Change of Basis of Assessment Under Schedule D

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made amending, and with respect to the exploitation of, Schedule 20 to the Finance Act 1994.

57. Partnerships

Resolved,

That provision (including provision having retrospective effect) may be made about the taxation of persons who carry on trades, professions or businesses in partnership.

58. Lloyd's Underwriters (New Style Special Reserve Funds)

Resolved,

That provision may be made deeming paragraph 2 of Schedule 20 to the Finance Act 1993 to have been enacted with a modification.

59. Capital Allowances (Sales, Etc. of Buildings and Structures)

Resolved,

That provision may be made, for the purposes of Part I of the Capital Allowances Act 1990, about arrangements affecting the value of an interest in a building or structure.

60. Petroleum Revenue Tax (Unrelievable Losses From Abandoned Fields)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending section 6 of the Oil Taxation Act 1975 with respect to cases where certain claims or elections for the allowance of expenditure are received by the Board on or after 29th November 1994.

61. Petroleum Revenue Tax (Transfer of Interests in Oil Fields)

Resolved,

That provision may be made amending paragraph 7 of Schedule 17 to the Finance Act 1980 with respect to transfers of the whole or part of interests in oil fields on or after 29th November 1994.

62. Stamp Duty (Associated Bodies)

Resolved,

That provision may be made about stamp duty in relation to transactions between associated bodies.

63. Levy Under Section 13 of the Ports Act 1991

Resolved,

That provision may be made about the assessment of the levy chargeable under section 13 of the Ports Act 1991.

64. Relief From Tax (Incidental and Consequential Charges)

Resolved,

That it is expedient to authorise any incidental or consequential charges to any duty or tax (including charges having retrospective effect) which may arise from provisions designed in general to afford relief from taxation.

PROCEDURE (FUTURE TAXATION)

Resolved,

That, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the practice of the House relating to the matters which may be included in Finance Bills, any Finance Bill of the present Session may contain the following provisions taking effect in a future year—

(a) provision about the deduction of tax from payments of interest in respect of deposits;

(b) provision about sub-contractors in the construction industry;

(c) provision about the policies which are to be qualifying policies under Schedule 15 to the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988;

(d) provision about persons who are not resident in the United Kingdom and the persons through whom they act;

(e) provision about the management of tax.

FINANCE [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act of the present Session relating to finance, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of sums payable by the Secretary of State by virtue of provisions of that Act relating to vehicle excise and registration;

(b) the issue out of the National Loans Fund of sums required by the Commissioners of Inland Revenue for the payment of compensation in respect of tax deposits withdrawn for cash;

(c) any increase attributable to any provision of that Act in the sums payable out of money provided by Parliament under the Ports Act 1991.

Bill ordered to be brought in upon the foregoing resolutions: And that the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Howard, Mr. Secretary Heseltine, Mr. Secretary Gummer, Mr. William Waldegrave, Mr. Secretary Portillo, Mr. Secretary Dorrell, Mr. Jonathan Aitken, Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory, Mr. Anthony Nelson and Sir George Young do prepare and bring it in.

FINANCE BILL

Sir George Young accordingly presented a Bill to grant certain duties, to alter other duties, to amend the law relating to the national debt and the public revenue, and to make further provision in connection with finance: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 6.]

PUBLIC EXPENDITURE

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the motion relating to further expenditure, pursuant to Order [29 November].*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House welcomes the spending plans announced in the Budget statement by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 29th November; congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its firm control over public expenditure, its drive for greater efficiency and economy in all areas of government, and its progress in reducing the share of national income taken by the public sector while improving key public services; and commends the Government's determination to maintain sound public finances.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Amendment proposed to the Question, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'notes the real cuts in the Government's new spending plans set out in the Budget Statement presented by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 29th November, which are the result of the complete failure of Government policies to achieve either high employment or the basis for sustainable high economic growth; regrets the absence of any strategy for using public investment to help generate growth and employment, and the derisory progress made in attracting private finance to public projects; condemns the unacceptable cuts to key public services and public investment programmes, while forcing public sector workers to continue to pay the price of the Government's economic failure; and condemns the betrayal of election pledges which will savage transport and housing programmes, slash the employment budget, especially training, further reduce support for local authorities, and leave increasing numbers of fellow citizens in poverty.'.—*[Mr. Derek Foster.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 279, Noes 325.

Division No. 11] **[23.07 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew

Maclennan, Robert
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, Bill
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin

Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Clarke and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*

Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*

Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*

Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*

Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Derek Conway

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 324, Noes 297.

Division No. 12] **[23.20 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*

Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark

Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Mon)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, Bill
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jim Dowd and
Mrs. Barbara Roche

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the spending plans announced in the Budget statement by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer on 29th November; congratulates Her Majesty's Government on its firm control over public expenditure, its drive for greater efficiency and economy in all areas of government, and its progress in reducing the share of national income taken by the public sector while improving key public services; and commends the Government's determination to maintain sound public finances.

Madam Speaker: I call Mr. Conway and Mr. Jon Owen Jones to come to the Table.

Mr. Derek Conway (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): I have to report that in the Division on the amendment, the numbers for the Ayes were incorrectly reported as 279. The figure should have been 297.

Madam Speaker: I direct that the correct figure of 297 be recorded in the Votes and Proceedings.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On a point of order, Madam Speaker—*[Interruption.]* I see that voting against all the tax increases and against all the spending reductions has cheered up the Labour party, but it might actually help the House if I gave a brief explanation of how I think our proceedings will now go ahead.

During the Budget debate, I mapped out a clear path for reductions in public borrowing and emphasised the importance of sound public finances to the achievement of a strong and sustainable recovery. Nothing said in the course of the debate tonight has changed our commitment to take all the necessary measures to put the public finances on a sound footing and nor, indeed, has the outcome of the vote.

However, it is only right that we should listen to the views expressed here tonight. I have therefore decided not to proceed with the second stage of value added tax on fuel and power. The Government will be bringing forward a resolution to hold the rate at 8 per cent., together with the requisite new clause.

The shortfall in the public finances must be made good. I shall be bringing proposals to the House on Thursday, designed to ensure that the public sector borrowing requirement remains on the course that I mapped out in my Budget statement. Proceeding in that way is essential to keep the recovery on course in order to achieve the prosperity and jobs that we need in this country.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. The Chancellor of the Exchequer rose to catch my eye on a point of order. I judge what he has said to be a short statement, and I shall treat it as such.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Now that VAT at 17.5 per cent. has been stopped dead in its tracks, is that not a humiliating defeat for the Cabinet, for the Chancellor and for the Prime Minister? Having tried for 18 months, in three successive Budgets, to impose the unfair VAT tax, does the Chancellor agree that VAT on fuel should never have been imposed in the first place? Does he agree also that promises made by political parties at elections should be kept? The Government will have to listen to the British people.

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree also that no hasty and ill-considered measures—cobbled-together compromises—should be brought to the House by the Chancellor? If he believes, as he says, that there is an obligation on us to come forward with proposals, why does he not consult us before he brings proposals before the House on Thursday?

This is not just a defeat for the Budget. This signals a turning point in the politics of this country. Conservative Members may remain in office, but they are tired, they are discredited and they are out of touch. It is the Labour party that now represents and speaks for the people of this country.

Mr. Clarke: The Labour party may produce proposals slowly, but they are certainly cobbled together when they come. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has made his proposals to deal with the public finances—loopholes, windfalls and zero rates on rollercoasters in theme parks. They are unlikely to feature in my statement on Thursday.

On Thursday, I will produce what the hon. Gentleman has never produced, which is a package of spending and taxation measures designed to keep borrowing on course and to regain confidence in the strong recovery of this country. The hon. Gentleman, in all his speeches on this matter, has made it clear that he will be utterly unfit to take forward the affairs of this country. He has no responsible suggestions to make on either spending or taxation. His vote this evening has been irresponsible and opportunist. He may gloat today, but we have the responsibility of keeping British industry on course tomorrow.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the Chancellor accept that the defeat of the Government tonight was inflicted by the votes of Members from all nine parties in the House? That demonstrates a monumental rejection of the Government's policies. What ingenious new taxes will the Tories now introduce? They have become the party of tax. If it moves they will tax it, and they will go on taxing until it stops moving. Does he accept that he is a member of a discredited Government who are rejected by the House, by his own party and by the people? There is only one place for him and his Government to go, and that is out.

Mr. Clarke: The Liberal Democrat party was the first political party in this country to advocate the imposition of value added tax on domestic fuel. The Liberal Democrat party remains committed to a carbon energy tax which would impose equivalent taxation in terms of domestic fuel and would also impose huge costs on British industry, damaging our competitiveness in world markets.

The hon. Gentleman asked me a question. He asked what taxes I might bring forward. In effect, he is asking me to advertise tax increases in advance in an utterly irresponsible way. The Liberal Democrat party is no better than the Labour party at producing thought-out proposals of its own and the hon. Gentleman illustrates his own irresponsibility by asking me to trail tax changes in advance of their being announced. I cannot do so today, any more than I could do so before a Budget.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): As the Labour party is committed to harmonising all taxes with those in the European Union and as every country in western Europe has a value added tax on fuel, is not it absolutely clear that a future Labour Government would introduce the tax which the House has just rejected?

Mr. Clarke: As my hon. Friend says, if the Labour party stood by the commitments that it incurred in the European Parliament, that would indeed be the case. But Opposition Members shake their heads at the idea that they are committed to anything. Throughout five days of debate they never said that they would repeal the tax if we introduced it, and they engaged in pure political opportunism without offering any alternative proposals of their own.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Now that we have a minority Government, does not the Chancellor think that it is rather premature to bring forward new proposals this Thursday? Would not he be better advised to give himself more time to consult not only Opposition parties, but within his own party before he presents further proposals?

Mr. Clarke: I see no alternative Government—nothing resembling an alternative Government— before me. I see no political party ready for office which could be responsible for this country's economic affairs. I have heard the Labour party's propositions: the windfalls, the loopholes, the zero rating of funfairs, and the restoration of the tax on champagne. They are preposterous. Of course, better suggestions will be considered if the Opposition can think of any between now and Thursday.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Has the Chancellor had time to reflect upon the wisdom of the petulance which led him to defend an indefensible tax increase to the last ditch? If that was a marginal part of the Government's programme, should not the Chancellor consider his own position in leading his party to such

[Mr. Alex Salmond]

humiliation? If it was a central part of the Government's programme, should not the entire Government face the people in a general election?

Mr. Clarke: Because of the compensation I announced— and actually would have improved during the debate— pensioners were one group in this country who would not have borne the full weight of the proposal. Indeed, about one fifth of pensioners would have received more compensation than the VAT they would have been likely to pay. The principal beneficiaries of this evening's vote will be people living in large houses with large central heating bills.

Mr. Duncan Smith: Does not my right hon. and learned Friend agree that when he brings forward his package on Thursday he should consider the fact that we are determined to bring down public expenditure, while the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr Cunningham), said that public expenditure was too high, and other Opposition Back Benchers said that taxation is not high enough? Does the Chancellor agree that that shows the Labour party's absolute hypocrisy in this area?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is quite right: the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) made the extraordinary statement that, in his opinion, public expenditure was too high. He said— he repeats it now— that public expenditure on social security was too high, which I think bodes ill for old-age pensioners. He then went through the Division Lobby with his hon. Friends and voted against every public expenditure reduction that we had proposed. As I said a moment ago, the Labour party's position is preposterous—and other adjectives leap to mind quite easily.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In so far as Ministers were predicting a substantial increase in interest rates in the event that they lost the Division, is that still their view or were they just threatening Back Benchers in an irresponsible way?

Mr. Clarke: If there is one thing dafter than asking the Chancellor of the Exchequer questions about possible tax movements two days before he announces them, it is asking him about likely movements in interest rates. There is scarcely a Labour Member who would be capable of running a whelk stall, let alone the Exchequer.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. We shall move on to petitions.

PETITIONS

Population Control

11.45 pm

Ms Judith Church (Dagenham): I wish to present a petition from Mrs. Helen Descombes of 129 Ballards Road, Dagenham, signed by 36 constituents, against the use of overseas aid funds for the Chinese population control programme.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House will ensure that no further funds from the Overseas Aid budget are disbursed to the United Nations Population Fund and the International Planned Parenthood Federation whilst these organisations support, encourage or act as apologists for the Chinese Population Control Programme.

To lie upon the Table.

Imtiaz Begum

11.46 pm

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): I rise to present a petition from the constituents of Preston. There are 3,084 signatures attached to it, led by the mayor and mayoress of Preston, the leader of the council and the town clerk.

The petition declares that Imtiaz Begum should not be deported from the United Kingdom. She is a young woman who, because of head injuries sustained in an accident, cannot walk unaided or care for herself. She is being cared for in Preston by her brother, his wife and her parents, all of whom are British citizens. Her brother bears all the costs. She has no relatives in Pakistan who could care for her and so a deportation order would be a death sentence.

The petitioners therefore respectfully request the House of Commons to call upon the Home Secretary to revoke the deportation order.

To lie upon the Table.

Electoral Reform

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

11.47 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): It was something of a surprise to draw this Adjournment debate, which I put in for some 18 months ago, as the spokesperson on democracy. It was recycled and finally pulled out of the hat last week.

One reason why I put in for the debate was that the House of Commons very rarely talks about matters to do with democracy and the way in which we govern ourselves. I thought that it would be useful to give the House the opportunity to discuss and debate an important question on part of our democracy, which is the system that we use to elect not just this House but our other institutions.

I was delighted over the weekend to note that there is a growing view that our democracy needs to be talked about, looked at and, perhaps, reviewed. For some time, Labour has had a wide-ranging package of measures on how to improve our democracy. I was pleased over the weekend to read the words:

> "Labour's democratic agenda is the most extensive package of constitutional reform ever proposed by a British Government."

Those were not the words of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition; they were not a quotation from our former leader, the late and greatly lamented John Smith, the former right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East, but the words of the Prime Minister. It appears that there is a consensus that Labour has the most radical package of constitutional reform, even if there is no agreement that it should be implemented.

In my opinion, that package is designed to reinvent democracy in the United Kingdom. It stretches across all our institutions, to end the command politics that persist in this country. We have seen command economics wither and die in eastern and central Europe, and so, too, we shall inevitably see the highly centralised, one-track, winner-takes-all politics prevalent in our society wither and die. It must give way to a more open, diverse and plural system in which we are prepared to listen to all voices, which could be our salvation, rather than pretend and assume that someone in Whitehall or in No. 10 Downing street, regardless of party, possesses sufficient wisdom to answer all economic, social and political questions. That is the direction in which not only politics but any industry or international organisation is going.

In other countries, people are looking for answers, diversity, independent budgeting and accounting, and team work. Only our political system looks for centralised delivery of answers to all our problems.

Radical democratisation of our society and politics would free up the talents that could help us to move towards a more developed economy. If deference and hierarchy were ended and the terrible burden of our class structure were lifted, we would free people to liberate their talents, and make them more self-confident and assertive. They would then be more mobile, entrepreneurial and able to meet our economic needs. At present, people are held captive in the stranglehold of our unitary political system, often unable to express their politics other than once every four or five years, in a vote that is highly mediated by the media.

An incoming Labour Government would bring the victory of pluralism over centralism, which has failed our country over the years. It is time to consider a system that operates in not only western Europe but north America, to liberate the talents that could be our country's salvation.

The package of measures involved would include a review of the powers of the Executive. In the last couple of days, Crown prerogative and prerogative power have been confused with the future of the royal family. The two are quite distinct. Executive power is exercised almost without constraint in this country, and certainly without proper scrutiny by Parliament. We must ensure that international treaties, the ability to go to war and other aspects of Executive power are scrutinised by the House—not necessarily to obstruct or delay the exercise of those powers but to legitimise them.

If this country were to go to war, it would be appropriate for the Prime Minister or someone else to come to the House to seek ratification of that action by the elected legislature. The same applies to international treaties.

Another central part of our package is a Bill of Rights. It is remarkable that our country still does not have clear, written rights for all individuals. That makes us subjects rather than citizens. We should adopt the European convention on human rights, as most other countries have done, and then go further. We should ensure, through an all-party commission, that a British Bill of Rights is drafted, so that citizens have the ability to know and to defend their rights—and so that young people in school and elsewhere grow up know, to understand and to exercise their rights in a way that does not happen now. If we are to do that, the next question is: what do we do about the judiciary? I am careful not to stray too far and incur your wrath, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the judiciary needs to be examined carefully in terms of how it is selected, appointed and trained. Then, I believe, it would be capable of defending the civil and political rights that we would like to see in law.

In addition, we need to examine our own institutions, not merely in the other place—the second Chamber. We need to ensure not only that the hereditary principle is ended, but that the Chamber is fully and properly elected. I shall mention the method by which it should be elected in a moment. What is good for the Lords is also good for this Chamber. Far too often, we are complacent that, somehow, we do not need reform. Just about every other institution in our society may be pointed at as needing reform, but the House of Commons somehow escapes scrutiny. I believe that the reform process must begin at home, in this Chamber. We must give teeth to our democratic institutions. We must do what Gladstone said many years ago. He said that the role of the House of Commons is not to run the country, but to hold to account those who do.

By that clear criterion, we are failing in our duty in the House. The Labour party would like to introduce a package of measures to make this place more relevant, more accessible to people and more secure in the job that it should be doing as a legislature in the constitution.

We need also to look at the package of measures on the future of local government. Local government currently is just a creature of the centre. It needs to be given its own independence, its own ability to raise money. It is nonsense that only 20 per cent. of local expenditure is raised locally. We must ensure that local authorities are

[Mr. Graham Allen]

given not merely the powers to carry out their duties adequately on behalf of their electorate, but the finance to do so. Without those two criteria existing together, we shall not have genuinely independent local authorities. I would go as far as saying that we need constitutionally independent local authorities. I believe that that certainly could be done were there the will in this place to ensure that it would be done under an incoming Government.

That raises the further prospect of what should happen at regional level in this country. My party is committed to a Scottish Parliament and we shall introduce legislation to that effect in our first term. We are also committed to a Welsh Assembly, and that will also take place in the first term. But the English regions present some other difficulties, which need to be overcome. I suggest that they could be overcome not by imposing regions on the English people, but by encouraging the development of regions by local action—in other words, ensuring that they develop from a menu of powers rather than from some centralised blueprint imposed from above.

That would have a liberating effect in the regions. It would also mean that people would find it far more difficult to repeal those regions, because they would be built up by the people themselves and would be backed and supported by them. Nothing would be more certain of instant repeal than a region imposed on an unwilling, and often unaware population, in a region of England.

Finally, I suggest that we also need to be very serious about what we want to do to democratise the European level. The European project has been the province of an elite, a minority of self-proclaimed visionaries, and that has meant that the project has lost touch with people, not just people in our country, but throughout Europe. We need to reclaim our vision of what a peaceful Europe could be, and that means involving those people. It means involving the electorates of those people and their national Parliaments and democratising the institutions of the European Parliament. Again, my party has made a distinct set of proposals to ensure that that takes place.

If I were permitted to do so, I would go a little further and discuss the possibility of the 1996 intergovernmental conference producing what would, in effect, be a written constitution. One exists now, fractured in 20 or 30 parts, in treaties and directives; why not pull something together that defines competence not only in Europe but at national, regional and local level? A package of pluralist measures could reinvent democracy in our country, and I believe that such a package is long overdue.

The central part of tonight's debate, however, should concern a further element of that package—the electoral systems that should govern our country into the new century. As one who served on the committee on electoral systems chaired by Professor Raymond Plant, now Lord Plant, I am very pleased that a long-serving, long-suffering colleague from those days—my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Ms Church)—is present tonight. Indeed, I shall be pleased to take interventions from colleagues as I talk about electoral systems.

Labour's policy on the matter is now crystal clear. As a result of its 1993 conference decision, embodied in composite resolution 31, it is committed to a proportional representation system based on regional lists for the second Chamber, and to the same system for the European Parliament—which I hope will be active in the next European elections in 1998. Labour is also committed, through the same conference resolution, to a referendum to identify the electoral system that people want for the first Chamber. In many ways, that was the legacy of Professor Plant and his committee. The Plant proposals were taken further by the former leader of the Labour party, John Smith, and I think that that batch of proposals constitutes a coherent approach to electoral systems.

We talk of developing a plurality of institutions in the United Kingdom, but it is remarkable that some people—particularly Conservative Members—are still afraid of the possibility that there will also be a plurality of electoral systems. It is a question of horses for courses. The one thing that the year or two in which I served on the Plant committee taught me, and, I suspect, my colleagues, was that there is no holy grail, no perfect electoral system. In certain circumstances, proportional representation may be appropriate; in others, first-past-the-post may be appropriate. How we match electoral systems with the institutions that we wish to build and develop in a new pluralism is entirely a matter of political judgment and the wisdom of people, not least those in this place.

Probably the first new electoral system will be that for the Scottish Parliament. My party is rightly and thankfully committed to instituting a Parliament in Scotland, and I very much hope that that commitment will be honoured rapidly, in the first year of Labour government. We feel—ours is a view of some generosity—that we would not want a first-past-the-post system in Scotland; we would want the "additional member" system. That would mean a constituency-based system which would be made good, as it were, in terms of proportionality: the number of people elected directly would be topped up, possibly with losing candidates.

That means that the Labour party has forgone the possibility of developing a one-party state in Scotland. That is highly commendable. It will come on top of the discussion and activity that now takes place under the single transferable vote system, which is operative for European elections in Northern Ireland. So, civilisation as we know it has not collapsed where proportional representation systems or systems different from first-past-the-post have been exercised. I hope that that is something that people with an open mind will understand and appreciate.

If we were to have a regional list proportional representation system for the second Chamber, under Professor Plant's analysis, that would produce 322 Members. That would be in place of the current 1,203 peers, of whom 774 are hereditary and, of the remainder, 300 are Conservative and 100 are Labour. That is an important reason for us to move quickly to the second phase of our policy programme, which is to bring in an elected second Chamber. We could be faced with the ludicrous possibility of having 300 of the most partisan Conservative life peers outnumbering the 100 or so hard-working Labour life peers. That would necessitate the nomination of another 200 life peers just to balance the books. I do not think that any Labour Government would want to countenance that. We do not want to see a repeat of events under the last Labour Government, on whom 350 defeats were inflicted. That would surely be revisited were we to have a Labour Government, particularly one without a substantial majority.

Let me give a flavour of how the second Chamber might look. An elected Chamber would help to break down the existing metropolitan bias. For example, my region of the east midlands could elect 23 Members and the west midlands could elect 30. Throughout the whole of the midlands area, 53 people could be elected. To my knowledge—I am happy to be corrected—there are no peers representing my immediate area in the second Chamber now. There would be people representing the north, the north-west and other areas that are currently unrepresented. That would be great progress. It would also assist the representation of people who vote for parties that do not have any representation because of the first-past-the-post system. So, we would be operating a different system from that in the first Chamber.

Were we to have a system of proportional representation in the second Chamber, one operative in the European Parliament and another in the Scottish Parliament, we would see the decision on the referendum on the first Chamber in a different perspective. Right now, people will say that one may feel obliged to prove one's democratic credentials by supporting proportional representation in the first Chamber rather than to make a decision on a clear and honest basis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hesitate to intervene on the hon. Gentleman, but he is leaving very little time for the Minister to reply.

Mr. Allen: I understand that the Minister has generously allowed me to speak for 26 or 27 minutes. I should be pleased to take my seat if the Minister says that he is desperate to answer any of the questions that I am posing.

The perspective on which we would make a decision in the referendum on the first Chamber would be different from now. It would be an important decision for people to make on the basis of rational criteria.

Many people argued to Professor Plant that one needs a first-past-the-post system for the first Chamber to deliver a strong Executive. That argument may not be shared by everyone but people should certainly consider it. If people believe that both political parties supporting the first-past-the-post system in a referendum will make the result a foregone conclusion, they should look to New Zealand, where people were given a unique opportunity, if I may put it bluntly, to put two fingers up to both main parties, which were telling them that the first-past-the-post system was a good idea. People rejected that in New Zealand. People would have the option to do so in the United Kingdom.

Electoral systems are part of the Labour party's package for a new democracy in the UK and for a new constitutional settlement. People are ready for it. They are sick not only of the Government, but of the sleaze, of the inadequacy of this institution, the House of Commons, and of many other institutions that pretend to support our democracy in the UK.

The battle ahead is a philosophical battle between those who believe in plurality and in many independent and diverse institutions competing and conflicting, and those who believe that centralism, the unitary state, where one person or one institution can deliver the answer, is appropriate. More and more Labour Members are looking to pluralism as the way forward and the way to answer some of the economic, social and political questions that beset our nation.

12.10 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Nicholas Baker): I congratulate the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on securing this debate. Since he came into the House, he has been a doughty campaigner on procedure. He has made a special study of procedure and constitutional matters. It was no surprise that he became the Labour party's constitutional affairs spokesman, although he no longer has that responsibility. He does, however, speak for the Labour party.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, North gave us a warning of some of his views in the Thomas Paine memorial lecture in January this year, when he said:

> "I want to lead a Labour government"—

I do not know whether he gave notice of that to the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair).

Mr. Allen: He said that too.

Mr. Baker: The hon. Member for Nottingham, North said:

> "I want to lead a Labour government that will introduce the most radical package of constitutional reform ever proposed by any major political party. This, I believe, will be a key battleground of the 1990s as we define the new politics of a new century."

Radical words indeed. I notice that, at the lecture, he also said:

> "The Commons is currently held in contempt by the electorate."

He has echoed that view this evening. It is one of a number of points on which he and I will be unable to agree.

The Government are not opposed to any constitutional change. If one considers some of the changes that have happened under the Government, particularly in relation to the House, I think that one can see clearly that the contrary is the case. I cite the examples of the Select Committees, which were set up by the Government, and the Jopling Committee, which was set in motion to make considerable changes to the way in which we conduct ourselves and which now seems likely to make more progress given that the Opposition parties agree.

In reply to the hon. Gentleman's points about local government, he may or may not be aware that a local government review is now taking place. That review takes a radical look at how local government conducts itself and at the basis for our local democracy. Although we may disagree strongly with his call for regional government, we do not suggest that any of our institutions can be immune from change.

Change should be evolutionary. Our great institutions should be improved, but they should not be redefined in some of the ways that the hon. Gentleman has suggested. He has outlined a fairly radical package. I notice that, only this week, the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) recommended fixed-term Parliaments, which the hon. Member for Nottingham, North did not mention. Of course, any system of fixed-term Parliaments would still have to allow for the early dissolution of Parliament in some circumstances.

[Mr. Baker]

There is nothing to gain and much to lose from prolonging unnecessarily a Government or Parliament which is discredited or which has simply reached the end of its natural life. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the Labour Government who were defeated in, I think, 300 votes. They were clearly a Government who had reached the end of their natural life, and I should have thought that a fixed-term Parliament would be inappropriate in such circumstances. The ability to decide when a general election is to take place is a tactical advantage but I note that no Opposition have ever sought to relinquish that advantage when they have taken office.

I said that the hon. Gentleman's package was radical. He mentioned the redefinition of the monarchy, which his party announced only this week. Our electoral system has at its apex the monarchy. The monarchy is the oldest institution of government in Britain; it has existed even longer than Parliament itself. It is a vital element of our present constitution and representative of centuries of history and tradition.

The monarch personifies national and Commonwealth unity but has continued to develop and evolve during the present monarch's reign: the size of the civil list has been reduced; the monarch herself has proposed the payment of tax on her income and capital gains and undertaken to publish detailed accounts of expenditure. In short, we have a monarchy that has made changes and for that reason, as much as its long history, we are extremely fortunate in that institution.

The monarchy is part of our national heritage. The hon. Gentleman is a Labour spokesman on national heritage but now tells us that this part of our heritage is to be redefined. What else is to be redefined—Westminster abbey, the Speaker or the House? Perhaps we shall learn the answer from next year's Thomas Paine memorial lecture.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 7 December 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

BCCI

1. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on when Scottish local authorities which lost money in the collapse of BCCI will receive compensation.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): The Scottish local authorities that lost money in BCCI are in no different a position from the other creditors of the bank. I accordingly have nothing to add to the statements made by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Treasury on 27 October in response to a question from the hon. Gentleman about this matter.

Mr. Vaz: The Minister is aware that Scottish local authorities and other depositors in Scotland have been waiting since 5 July 1991 for compensation. As the Government are aware that a new compensation package has been agreed, will the Minister give an undertaking that he will write—either himself or through the Foreign Secretary—to the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi asking for $1.8 billion to be transferred immediately, and that, once it is received, it should be transferred to those Scottish local authorities and others who have suffered enormous hardship because of this unfortunate incident?

Mr. Stewart: It is always a great pleasure to welcome an English Labour Back Bencher to Scottish questions.

Mr. Norman Hogg: My hon. Friend is a Front Bencher on the Back Benches.

Mr. Stewart: The House knows of the long-standing interest and involvement of the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr.Vaz) in the matter. However, the payment of BCCI creditors, which it is public knowledge is reported to be 30 to 40 per cent. of their loss, is entirely a matter for the liquidators, the majority shareholders and the creditors.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my fellow St. Andrean agree that it would be quite wrong for taxpayers who lost money through BCCI to be asked to pay higher taxes to bail out short-sighted Scottish local authorities that had money on deposit with BCCI?

Mr. Stewart: There is no question of taxpayers bailing out the local authorities involved. My hon. Friend is correct. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State granted Western Isles islands council consent to borrow £24 million—the BCCI loss of £23 million plus anticipated interest of £1 million—and Ross and Cromarty district council consent to borrow £1.8 million to help it cope with its losses. My hon. Friend may be referring to allegations that the Scottish Office did a secret deal to compensate Western Isles islands council. I am happy to reassure the House that such allegations are complete nonsense.

Mr. McMaster: Does the Minister agree that BCCI is a financial success story compared with the record of the Secretary of State? First, the right hon. Gentleman gambles and loses £30 million on Health Care International, then he stands idly by watching the Scottish budget be slashed and axed and, finally, last night he led his own side into glorious defeat in the Lobby on VAT on fuel. Is it not time that he said sorry?

Mr. Stewart: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his ingenuity in raising those questions, but he is entirely wrong on HCI, as he well knows. My right hon. Friend's public expenditure statement is extremely fair for Scotland, in relation, for example, to local government expenditure. The hon. Gentleman, who is experienced in local government, will know that, on any measure, local government in Scotland receives far more help from the taxpayer of the United Kingdom than local government in England or Wales. Opposition Members should bear that fact in mind.

Violent Crime

2. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new initiatives he has considered to curb the increase in crimes of violence involving firearms.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): Very strict controls are already in place regarding the acquisition and possession of firearms, but provision to increase the maximum penalties for certain firearms offences is contained in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Those will be brought into force on a Great Britain basis early next year. With the assistance of the firearms consultative committee, the Government keep firearms control under continual review.

Mr. Clarke: I am disappointed by not only that answer but the answer in the letter that I received from Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, the Minister in the other place. I asked for an amnesty because in Bonnyrigg, in my constituency, Mr. Dunn, an innocent bystander, was shot and killed during a bank robbery in which all three of the bank robbers had sidearms. The use of sidearms in such crimes is escalating throughout the United Kingdom, and I ask, first, for an amnesty and, secondly, that after that amnesty people in possession of illegal arms be severely dealt with, with further penalties for anyone who has criminal intent. The people of Bonnyrigg, Midlothian and the rest of Scotland are asking the Government for action.

Mr. Lang: I understand about the tragic case in Bonnyrigg in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and I offer both him and those involved my sympathy. Nevertheless, we should keep such matters in perspective. The question of an amnesty is one for the police; it is essentially an operational matter. There was an amnesty in 1988, and I do not think that it would be a good idea to have them too often. However, I am sure that the police will always bear the possibility in mind. I deplore any such use of guns as much as the hon. Gentleman does, and I also deplore the alleged increase in use, but it is important to realise that statistics show that only two in 1,000 cases of all crimes and offences recorded in Scotland in recent years have involved the use of firearms. In many ways, using a number of Acts of Parliament, the Government have determinedly toughened sentences and other procedures in connection with firearms.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the problem is not those who hold firearms properly, with licences, but those who hold firearms illegally and use them? So long as there is no deterrent such as capital punishment, it will be difficult to prevent such activity from growing, because of the international dimension.

Mr. Lang: We should certainly always continue to seek ways of reducing that serious threat. The maximum penalty for possession of a firearm with intent to commit an indictable offence or to resist arrest is life imprisonment. We have increased the sentences for the unlawful possession of a firearm, including a sawn-off shotgun, and the sentences for the possession of a prohibited firearm. In those and in every other way open to us we shall continue to fight the growth in the use of firearms. I acknowledge that it is a serious potential threat.

NHS Bed Provision

3. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of NHS beds for frail elderly people.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): National health service provision for the frail elderly will vary from health board to health board, depending on the local assessment of need in each area. The aim always is to match local national health service and social work services to need.

Mr. Canavan: Will the Minister arrange to visit Lochgreen hospital, which is threatened with closure, and Bellsdyke hospital, where 155 beds for frail elderly people are similarly threatened, so that he can see for himself the high standard of patient care that is provided by the dedicated staff there? Will he intervene to stop the closures, especially in view of the increasing population of elderly people and the fact that the Government's so-called community care programme is so inadequate? If he does not, many frail elderly people will be deprived of the hospital beds that they require.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall certainly pass on to the Minister of State the hon. Gentleman's request for a visit. I have made inquiries about the two hospitals, and I understand that the board proposes to offer patients currently resident at Lochgreen hospital a choice in 1995. They will be able to transfer either to alternative NHS accommodation or to a suitable nursing home. The consultation will finish in January. We also look forward to seeing the board's strategy for mental health, which I understand will include proposals for Bellsdyke hospital involving the reprovision of care.

The board will go out to public consultation, and the strategy will require ministerial approval. I undertake that approval will be given only if Ministers are satisfied that the changes will lead to a higher standard of care for patients in more homely settings. I am sure that if the hon. Gentleman wishes to ask specific relevant questions, the Minister of State will be prepared to see him.

Mr. Gallie: Is my hon. Friend aware of the proposal made by Ayrshire and Arran health board to close the accident and emergency unit at the new Ayr hospital? Given the considerable investment made by the national health service in that hospital, is my hon. Friend not glad to join me in commending the trust management, who will fight this move tooth and nail?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Trust status has brought many benefits to many hospitals. Closures of key services, such as those my hon. Friend mentioned, have to be put to the Minister for approval before they can be agreed. The matter will be looked at in great depth.

Mr. McAvoy: Does the Minister recall that a long-planned and long-awaited national health service hospital for the elderly in my constituency was cancelled? It was removed from the plan and care of the frail elderly was turned over to Takare, a private health firm. Bearing in mind the fact that the reason for that decision was an alleged lack of cash for Greater Glasgow health board to build the hospital and bearing in mind the public money that the Secretary of State for Scotland put into HCI, does the Minister agree that the decision to transfer care of the frail elderly to a private company in my constituency was a disgrace?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are two considerations. First, the decision to invest in HCI was an inward investment decision that had nothing to do with funds provided for the national health service. Secondly, Greater Glasgow health board and its partners are seeking to improve care and facilities for vulnerable elderly people and to provide better alternatives, not to withdraw care. It is very important that, before patients are discharged, the proper support arrangements are put correctly in place. Any breakdown in those arrangements is contrary to official policy and should be followed up speedily so that mistakes do not recur.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister acknowledge that there is a great deal of concern about the definition of treatment and the definition of care for the frail elderly? Is he aware of the difference between people who are able to get treatment within the national health service and those who are decanted out of NHS beds because they are deemed only to require care, and who are then assessed in the context of social work, which requires their means to be tested? What steps is the Minister taking to clarify the definition of the two classifications? What steps is he taking to advertise the fact that if people are decanted out of free NHS beds, they may have to pay, using their meagre resources, to get the treatment that they require in the community?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Before patients are discharged, the care agencies must have been involved in a full assessment of all the needs of the patients concerned in terms of health, social welfare and housing. It must be ensured that all necessary support facilities are in place. Social work authorities have discretionary charging powers for day and domiciliary care. The principle that individuals should not pay more than they can afford is applied to discretionary charges and charges for residential care. There is considerable discretion for local authorities.

Mr. Ian Bruce: What is the increase in national health service resources in Scotland? How much extra has gone into care in the community through local government, and how do the figures compare with those for the rest of the United Kingdom?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Resources have increased considerably, by about 53 per cent. The total for health boards in 1994-95 was £3,234 million, which shows high spending. Spending per head on health is, of course, far higher north of the border than it is south of the border for a number of reasons. The health needs are more pressing in certain respects—the incidence of heart disease, for example, is far higher. We can readily justify the higher figure.

Mr. George Robertson: Is the Minister aware that all over Scotland today, thousands of frail elderly people, in hospitals and out of them, will cheer the news that the second phase of the increase in VAT has now been scrapped because they were worried sick by the prospect? Is it not true that the Chancellor snubbed and ignored the views of the Secretary of State for Scotland and Scottish Office Ministers on this issue? Will the Minister take the opportunity to welcome the fact that Parliament did what Ministers could not? Does he agree that scrapping the second iniquitous increase in VAT on fuel is extremely good news for Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Votes in the House of Commons have to be respected and, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the Chancellor will make a full statement tomorrow, but I can say that compensation for the first stage of VAT on fuel and power will most certainly remain. That includes 50p cash compensation, which was given in April, and the uprating due next April. I can also confirm that the extra funds for the home energy efficiency scheme will certainly not be scrapped.

Homelessness

4. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further measures he is taking to tackle the issue of homelessness in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local housing authorities are well resourced to tackle homelessness. It is one of the four key priorities that we have set them for the use of their housing capital allocations, which total £552 million in the current year. In addition, the supplementary capital allocations, which I announced on 13 October, included £2.6 million for about 15 new homelessness projects.

Mr. Welsh: As more than a quarter of Scottish households are affected by dampness, condensation or mould and a record 43,000 households were registered as homeless last year, why are the Government cutting the housing finance budget by 20 per cent. in real terms over the next three years? The Conservative party says that it cares for the family. Is this not a betrayal of families in the most dire need?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No, more than £2.8 billion will be made available for housing over the next three years—at least £900 million a year. Scottish Homes has a target to provide 2,500 housing units for the homeless in 1994-95 and some 8,000 new and improved houses, which will assist with the problem of dampness. The capital allocations of housing authorities total £552 million. Homelessness and dampness are two of the four key national priorities that local authorities are taking very seriously.

Mr. Galloway: Last Friday evening, with about 200 others, I slept outside on the ground in St. Aloysius college in my constituency to raise funds for the Simon Community to help the homeless in Glasgow. I have been ill ever since. Has the Minister any idea how long a night sleeping outside on the ground really is, how cold it is, how damp it is and how miserable it is? What message does he have, from the vastness of his many-roomed mansions, for the thousands of Scottish families who do not have a home this Christmas?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is top priority for all authorities in Scotland that nobody should be without a roof. Of course, there is a very great distinction between rooflessness and homelessness. The hon. Gentleman asked if I had slept out. I have done so with the Cameronians in the Army, and when it is pouring with rain it is a thoroughly disagreeable experience. Homeless persons officers—such as those at the Hamish Allen centre in the hon. Gentleman's district council—provide an extremely useful, valuable service in assisting applicants with problems in finding accommodation.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Scottish housing Minister explain why, when he faces a worsening housing crisis, with record levels of homelessness, he has remained silent and inactive while the Scottish housing budget has been slashed and plundered to pay for future tax cuts to save the Tories' electoral skins? Is he not ashamed that the most common sight on the streets of Scotland this Christmas will not be red-suited Santas, but young people, desperate, with no roof over their Heads, selling the *Big Issue*? Does he not understand that a party that describes as fair a settlement that leaves tens of thousands of Scots homeless deserves to be rated a contemptible 12 per cent. in this morning's opinion poll in Scotland? The Conservative party is not fit to govern, and it is seen by Scots as not fit to govern.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities have strategic responsibility for dealing with homelessness. As well as their mainstream allocation, we have provided £29 million in special allocations for more than 200 special homelessness projects in Scotland, which have been of assistance. As for funding, I have mentioned that £2.8 billion will be available over the next three years. Of course, we expect local authorities to give top priority to dealing with that pressing issue in their plans and in their workings every day.

Highlands and Islands

5. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the economy of the highlands and islands.

Mr. Lang: Good progress is being made in promoting economic regeneration and diversification of industry throughout the highlands and islands. The area is well placed to take full advantage of the wider economic recovery that is now under way as a result of the Government's prudent economic policies.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Secretary of State confirm that objective 1 status was conferred upon the highlands and islands because of the region's problems of persistent high unemployment, the sparsity of population, the remoteness of communities and poor communications? Does he agree that those factors should be the criteria by which objective 1 funding is allocated within the highlands and islands? Is he surprised to learn that the programme partnership is yet to devise a formula to ensure that that happens? Will he therefore urge the partnership to produce such a formula as early as possible to ensure that aid is effectively targeted?

Mr. Lang: I certainly hope that progression of the entitlement to objective 1 status is carried forward quickly. The highlands and islands obtained objective 1 status because, although the area did not meet all the criteria for objective 1 status as laid down, the Scottish Office persuaded the European Commission that the case deserved to be met under those criteria. As a result, £240 million will go to the highlands and islands over five years.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be as encouraged as I am by the fact that unemployment in the highlands and islands fell by between 5 and 6 per cent. last year and that it now stands at below the Scottish average, which, in turn, is below the United Kingdom average. That is a reflection of the strength of the regeneration of the economy of the highlands and islands, which was set in train by the Government.

Mrs. Ray Michie: I understand that the Northern Ireland Office is about to approve the spending of £5.2 million on the necessary infrastructure to establish a ferry link between Ballycastle in Northern Ireland and Campbeltown in my constituency. Will the Secretary of State urgently consider seeking Treasury and Highlands and Islands Enterprise approval for the necessary spending for the Campbeltown end, which, at £2.2 million, will cost much less? Crucial decisions must be made very soon. The right hon. Gentleman will agree that the link would give a tremendous boost to Kintyre, Argyll and Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I shall certainly look at any details that the hon. Lady cares to send me. I hope that she will be encouraged by the fact that, under the recent public expenditure announcement, the Government were able to find an extra £1.6 million to help the shipping and infrastructure of ferry services to the islands, the northern isles and the western isles. I hope, too, that she will welcome the announcement today that a new vehicle ferry service across the Sound of Harris has been approved and should go ahead for tenders to start construction next April.

Economy

6. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet representatives of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) to discuss the current state of the Scottish economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I look forward to meeting members of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) before long, when I expect the current state of the Scottish economy to be among the topics of discussion.

Mr. Salmond: Was this morning's interest rate rise an act of petulance by a discredited Chancellor, or does the Secretary of State claim that it was justified by economic conditions? Is the Secretary of State seriously telling the House that the Scottish economy is overheating? If it is not, is it not intensely damaging to have two consecutive interest rate rises without reference to Scottish economic conditions? Does the right hon. Gentleman have any role in interest rate determination, or did the Chancellor pay as much attention to his views on interest rates as he did to his views on the second tranche of VAT on fuel?

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, who is responsible for deciding upon the level of interest rates in consultation with the Governor of the Bank of England, has my full support on that policy, as he has my support for his Budget.

I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will reflect upon the success of the Scottish economy. For the first time since statistics have been kept, unemployment in Scotland is lower than in the rest of the United Kingdom. Scottish manufacturing output increased by 5 per cent. last year and is at an all-time high; exports increased by 19 per cent. last year and are at an all-time high; productivity increased by 5 per cent. last year and is at an all-time high; inward investment is at an all-time high and employment has increased in the last decade by about 150,000.

The Scottish economy is in fundamentally better shape now than it has been in living memory. That is something that even the Scottish National party should welcome.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is quite shameful for the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) to speak in the way that he does, given that the economy of Grampian—an area which we are both privileged to represent—is leading the Scottish economy, the Scottish economy is leading the United Kingdom economy and the UK economy is leading European economies? As Scots, we should be proud of that record. We should not create fabrications to talk down Scotland and her achievements.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I was delighted to hear the news from Amerada Hess today of an oil discovery named "Dauntless" in block 21.11, located 140 km east of Aberdeen.

Dr. Reid: In the months since the last Scottish Question Time, has the Secretary of State had time to reflect upon my accusation that in the awarding of the Samsung project to Britain he was outflanked, undermined and outwitted by his colleague the President of the Board of Trade? Will he accept and admit that up to £10 million of Government money was made available through English Partnerships from the Department of the Environment under a scheme presided over by Mr. Peter

Walker, an ex-colleague of the President of the Board of Trade and present adviser on inward investment to the Board of Trade?

How should we regard the Prime Minister's pledges that Lanarkshire will offset its disadvantages by special treatment when his colleague and possible leadership contender, the President of the Board of Trade, undermines those pledges with Government money in order to ensure that the biggest project to come to Britain in the last two decades did not go to Scotland but to the north of England?

Mr. Lang: Scotland's offer to the Samsung electronic group was every bit as good as the offer from the north of England. The regional selective assistance component was identical.

Whilst we cannot win every inward investment case that comes to the United Kingdom, the fact is that Scotland has won proportionately far more than its share. In the past five years we have won almost 350 different inward investment decisions, bringing in investment of between £2 billion and £3 billion and creating and safeguarding up to 47,000 jobs. That level of achievement reflects the confidence that the rest of the world has in the management of the United Kingdom's economy and Scotland's economy under a Conservative Government.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Secretary of State accept that increasing interest rates at this stage of economic recovery, when unemployment in Scotland is still more than 220,000, is a real indictment of past failures of Government policy—not least their failure to invest in skills and in education and capital investment? What effect will the latest interest rates increase have upon the Scottish economy in the next six to 12 months?

Mr. Lang: I believe that it will restore confidence which must have been shaken by the behaviour of the Opposition parties in the Division Lobby last night.

Unemployment in Scotland decreased by 18,000 last year and long-term unemployment fell by 9 per cent. My public expenditure statement made good provision, through the budgets of Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and in other ways, for continuing to build on our success in the training area. I believe that we have every reason to hope and expect that the Scottish economy will continue to outperform that of the United Kingdom.

Mr. McFall: Does the Secretary of State think that the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) will agree that gains from the national lottery pale into insignificance compared with the multi-million pound gains made by Mr. John Mather and his three Clydeport directors? At a time when the Scottish economy desperately needs a kickstart—not least for the benefit of the 220,000 unemployed—how can it be fair that that chief executive stands to gain more than £5 million from his £75,000 investment in a public trust company? In light of cases such as that, does the Secretary of State agree that when the Government talk about economic development in Scotland, the public perception is that they are more concerned with the prospects of a few privileged individuals rather than the nation as a whole?

Mr. Lang: The Government have been concerned in all their privatisation programmes to release the talent and quality of Scottish enterprise and of British enterprise, which has been constrained and suppressed by nationalised state ownership, introduced by the Labour party. Not a single utility or industry has not suffered drastically as a result of nationalisation. The electricity industry, the gas industry, the airlines industry and any of the other industries that have been privatised have been able to raise money in the markets, invest in modern plant and develop new prosperity and jobs.

Local Government Reform

7. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on local government reforms in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: As the House knows, the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Bill received Royal Assent on 3 November. I am delighted that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has rescinded its previous policy of non-co-operation on the Bill. I look forward to all those involved working closely to deliver new councils which will provide stronger, more effective and more accountable local government.

Mr. Shaw: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Can he tell me whether many people in Scotland will be pleased by the proposed abolition of Monklands district council? Is he aware that in the *Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser* recently it was stated that a letter had been sent by Councillor Brookes and other Labour councillors seeking to cover up and call a halt to my investigations into wrongdoing in Monklands district council? Is he aware that that letter was conveyed to the Privileges Committee of the House of Commons by two Members of Parliament with Monklands constituencies? Should not they be stopped from trying to cover up the wrongdoing on that council?

Mr. Stewart: I answer my hon. Friend's more general point by saying that in the course of receiving many representations from throughout Scotland about the reorganisation of local government, we were not exactly inundated with representations to the effect that Monklands district council should be one of the new unitary authorities. The single-tier system will enable a higher degree of accountability than the complexities of the two-tier system. That was acknowledged by the Wheatley Commission and, in principle, by all political parties.

I do not always read the *Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser* because many newspapers attract my attention. As my hon. Friend knows, the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) has for a long time been a close personal and political associate of Councillor Jim Brookes. That is public knowledge.

Mrs. Liddell: Does the Minister agree that, given the interest of his hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) in activities in my constituency and the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), it is absolutely reprehensible that the hon. Member for Dover has failed to make available to Professor Robert Black, who is chairing the independent inquiry, the 20 pages of information that he claims to have about those activities?

Does the Minister agree that the bluff of the hon. Gentleman has been comprehensively called? He should put up or shut up.

Mr. Stewart: I recall that during the Monklands, East by-election the hon. Lady did a massive U-turn and made public her own allegations about spending bias by Monklands district council. Perhaps she will put her evidence to Professor Black.

Mrs. Fyfe: Given that Government support to councils will be cut by £133 million in real terms next year, is there not a risk that there will be fewer, not more, nursery schools in Monklands and elsewhere in Scotland while such provision is still not a statutory duty? What happened to the Prime Minister's promise of more nursery schools and what reassurance can the Minister give to parents of children with special needs? Having disrupted local government, will he give us his word that, whoever suffers disruption in the months to come, it will not be children with special needs?

Mr. Stewart: As I said in answer to the hon. Lady's hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster), the settlement is extremely fair for local government, which in Scotland spends far more per head of population than is spent in England or Wales, for reasons that I continue to find incomprehensible. Details of provision are a matter for each local authority. I hope and believe that the hon. Lady's fears will be unfounded and I repeat my pleasure that local authorities in Scotland have shown excellent common sense in co-operating with reorganisation, against the wishes of the Labour Front-Bench team.

Community Care

8. **Ms Rachel Squire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline his proposals for the development of community care over the next 12 months.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Considerable progress has been made in establishing the framework for the successful development of community care policy. During the next 12 months implementation work will continue in order to secure the policy objectives set out in the White Paper, "Caring for People". In particular, community facilities will be developed for those leaving long-stay hospitals, support for carers will be encouraged and a flourishing mixed economy of care promoted.

Ms Squire: Does the Minister agree that, in the next 12 months, it is his intention to use local government reorganisation to break up existing community care arrangements and replace direct council services with contracting out and privatisation? Does he further agree that last night's Government defeat on value added tax on fuel was the best news for community care, because lower fuel costs will enable people to stay in their own homes and be cared for in the community?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I do not agree with the second point. Even after the first stage of VAT on fuel and power, gas and electricity prices are lower in real terms than they were two years ago and, as compensation will remain in place, people will already be better off. On community care, we want maximum continuity during the transition in local government arrangements and substantial resourcing has been made available. Resources available to housing authorities for community care will increase next year from £25 million to between £45 million and £50 million. Spending for Scottish Homes will rise from £78 million to £82.5 million in 1994-95 and for social care—providing for community care and other matters—it will increase from £345 million to £390 million. Total new resources for authorities will increase from £170 million to £241 million—a rise of 40 per cent.—so we take seriously the problems that could arise during transition by giving strong resourcing.

Dr. Godman: In relation to so-called community care, does the Minister agree that the care of elderly and frail people is too often left to unscrupulous owners of private residential and nursing homes? In a small handful of cases those owners double up as the residents' general practitioner. Will he give an assurance that that disgraceful doubling up of roles in relation to the care of elderly people will be halted as soon as possible, in the interests of those people?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall look into the matter that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, but discretionary charging has been in place under successive Governments and that will continue. Obviously we must look into the matter with great care—sensitivity must be applied.

Dr. Spink: Is my hon. Friend satisfied that Scottish local authorities have been able to manage their budgets properly over the 12-month period?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If I understand my hon. Friend correctly, I believe that local authorities will manage their budgets properly. We have a strong incentive to make certain that that happens, and the arrangements will be properly monitored. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State will issue guidelines where necessary if there are any doubts as to the best recommended practices.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: On the question of proper care for the elderly, will the Minister ensure that more resources go to Alzheimers Scotland? The organisation does an excellent job in supporting those carers—many of whom are elderly themselves—who are looking after loved ones with a difficult illness, with the result that the carers sometimes get only three or four hours' sleep. The organisation should be given every assistance and support by the Government.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is, of course, a mental illness grant of £14 million which has been made available, and I will look into that particular point. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Minister is well aware of the organisation. In the brief period during which I was responsible for the community charge, I exempted those suffering from Alzheimer's disease from the charge, as did ministerial colleagues from south of the border.

Local Government Reform

9. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Scottish local authorities with regard to area structure plans in the light of local government reform.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has received representations from three local authorities about structure plan areas. These representations have been taken into account in preparing a consultation paper, setting out our proposals for structure plan areas, which should be published within the next few days.

Mr. Kynoch: Is my hon. Friend aware of the planning chaos in my constituency which has been brought about by the failure of the Labour and subsequent Liberal-Scottish National party administrations of Grampian regional council to submit an area structure plan, thus blocking discussions on local district plans? Is he further aware that the consequent random planning applications from developers throughout the area are causing grave concern to my constituents? In light of the imminent advent of the single-tier authority, which is much welcomed in my area, will my hon. Friend reassure me that, before Grampian region's plan—whenever it is submitted—is finally adopted, it will be submitted for local consultation?

Mr. Stewart: I fully appreciate my hon. Friend's concerns about Grampian's structure plan. As he rightly said, the situation has been chaotic, although I cannot comment on the merits of the proposed strategies. We are keen to see an up-to-date structure plan for Grampian region in place as soon as possible, and I believe that that is in everyone's interests. We are encouraging the region to bring forward its proposals without further delay. I can certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks regarding consultation on the Grampian structure plan—when it is submitted—before my right hon. Friend reaches his conclusions on the matter.

Mr. Darling: Following local government reorganisation, does the Minister propose to ensure that there is a co-ordinated local authority response to the Government's plans to build another road bridge across the Forth, with its motorway network to the west of Edinburgh and its highly damaging environmental impact on the city of Edinburgh? Does the fact that the head of the roads directorate at the Scottish Office has now left signify that, at long last, Ministers have woken up to the fact that they are being taken for a very expensive ride by their own civil servants?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman's latter comment is beneath contempt. In relation to his general point, my right hon. Friend will be making a statement on the matter in due course.

Solvent Abuse

10. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland have died as a result of solvent abuse in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The General Register Office for Scotland recorded 12 deaths from solvent abuse in 1989, 10 in 1990, 19 in 1991, seven in 1992 and seven in 1993.

Mr. Bruce: Does the Minister acknowledge that solvent abuse is killing more young people than all other forms of drug abuse combined? More serious than that is evidence that the abuse of solvents is much more widespread than is generally known. The Minister will be aware that the Secretary of State received a letter from me following representations from my constituent Lorraine Morrice, whose son Colin tragically died after inhaling lighter fuel. Can the Minister assure the House that he will be making representations to increase awareness among young people of the risks of solvent abuse? Will he ensure that lighter fuel manufacturers put a proper warning on cans, and that shopkeepers are properly prosecuted if they sell solvents when they know that they are to be used for abusive purposes?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: First, let me assure the hon. Gentleman that we send our deepest sympathy to his constituent who sustained that tragic loss.

The hon. Gentleman has a considerable constituency interest in the charity Re-Solv. Meetings have taken place with my right hon. Friend the Minister of State about the possibility of its receiving a grant; a statement will be made soon, and the matter is being viewed sympathetically.

I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's aim in regard to warning labels. There is, however, a danger that an interest in solvents could be aroused in young persons. We are considering the issue, and a report will be published by the prevention working group of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, whose recommendations we shall examine immediately and carefully. We also have many educational programmes, including videos, to increase awareness of the problem. "Solvents: A Parent's Guide" was published earlier this year, along with "Drugs and Solvents: You and Your Child". We are doing all that we can to get the dangers across to those concerned through the medium of education.

Mr. David Marshall: Can the Minister say how successful the Solvent Abuse (Scotland) Act 1983—taken through the House by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston—has been in dealing with the serious problem of solvent abuse among young people? How much priority does his office give that worrying problem?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on taking the Bill through the House. I believe that it has had an effect: the figures are clearly much too high, but they have fallen in recent years. We must build on that with a strong programme of educational measures. The "Drugwise 2" educational package for 10 to 14-year-olds has been distributed free of charge to all primary and secondary schools in Scotland.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my hon. Friend agree that solvent abuse is not unique to Scotland? Nationally, two children a week die from it, and three quarters of a million are known to be experimenting with solvents. Does my hon. Friend agree that industry too has a role to play, and that it should be encouraged to carry out research into suitable solvent substitutes that are safe?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is certainly very desirable for industries that make solvents that could be misused to conduct research, and to act as responsibly as possible. If the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce)—or anyone else—has any information about shopkeepers who sell youngsters substances for which they can have no legitimate use, he should bring that information to the attention of the police so that the appropriate steps can be taken.

Water Authorities

11. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how he will require the new water authorities to take into account the ability of consumers to pay.

Mr. Stewart: Methods of charging for water and sewerage services will be a matter for the new authorities. Their charges schemes will need to be approved by the Customers Council or, failing that, by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Worthington: That is simply not good enough. At present, ability to pay is taken into account by reference to reduced council taxes and the size of people's houses. In England and Wales, by Government diktat, it is not possible to take council tax information into account in setting charge levels. Unless the new water authorities are given access to such information, they will not be able to take ability to pay into account. That will mean that the water charges of the lowest-paid workers—the worst off in the country—will double. What will the Secretary of State do to prevent that from happening?

Mr. Stewart: I can reassure the hon. Gentleman on that subject. Where the new councils are required to collect household charges in Scotland, as is proposed in the first year, the arrangements will mirror those for council tax, including the single-person discount. I believe that that makes practical and administrative sense and will ensure an easy and efficient form of collection, and I am glad to be able to reassure not only the hon. Gentleman but the whole House on that important point.

Mr. Graham: Is the Secretary of State aware of a recent university research study that shows that Inverclyde has one of the worst poverty rates and is one of the worst deprivation areas? Will he ensure that none of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and myself is cut off from the life-giving supply of water or the ability to clean with water?

Mr. Stewart: I can make it absolutely clear yet again to the House, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, has made clear, that water and sewerage authorities in Scotland have no power to disconnect water supplies because of non-payment. The new legislation, which has been passed by the House, affirms that position in relation to the new water and sewerage authorities.

Mr. Gallie: Is my hon. Friend aware that, in the past 30 years, Strathclyde regional council has failed to supply my constituents in Ayr with adequate sewerage facilities? If, at this late stage, the council proposes new capital schemes, will my hon. Friend give an assurance that those schemes are called in by the Scottish Office pending the taking over of the water authorities by the new water and sewerage boards?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend anticipates the answer to his question No. 20, and he will receive that in writing later this afternoon. I say to him at this stage that, first, I entirely appreciate his anxiety on that issue, which I think is absolutely genuine. However, it is, in the first instance, for Kyle and Carrick district council, as planning authority, to determine Strathclyde regional council's application.

Mr. George Robertson: Is the Minister aware that his refusal to guarantee that Scottish water bills will not climb to the astronomic levels being experienced in England and Wales is a revealing giveaway of the real agenda involved in quangoising Scotland's water? Given that the Chancellor has not yet said how he will fill the humiliating hole in his finances caused by the Government's defeat last night on VAT on fuel, and given that the Prime Minister himself would not rule out, in a letter to me in June, the possibility of putting VAT on water bills, will the Minister, this afternoon, give an absolute guarantee that VAT will not be put on Scottish water bills—or will that be yet another of the new Tory taxes from which we are already suffering?

Mr. Stewart: I have to say to the hon. Gentleman, as I have made clear on many occasions, that, as a result of the need for new investment in water and sewerage—which was widely recognised as necessary—in Scotland water bills will have to increase.

In general terms, however, I must say to the hon. Gentleman, in relation to the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, that he told the public that the Bill would be stopped because he was the master of the Maastricht rebels; he was wrong in that. He said that the Bill would not get through; he was wrong about that. He said that implementation of the Bill would be delayed; he was wrong about that.

The hon. Gentleman is wrong again. In fact, the only difference between the hon. Gentleman and the grand old Duke of York is that the grand old Duke of York led his men up to the top of the hill before marching them down. The hon. Gentleman could not get his team half way up the hill before they slipped down.

Driftnet Fishing

12. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received in respect of driftnet fishing for salmon off the east coast; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): Representations from angling and conservation interests continue to be received against the salmon driftnet fishery off the north-east coast of England.

Mr. Bellingham: When the Minister leaves the Chamber will he go to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and tell his colleagues that they are procrastinating? Surely the time has come to ban, with compensation, the north-east driftnet fishery and all driftnetting in European waters. That is the only way to stop illegal Irish netting off the west coast of Scotland. Surely salmon that migrate into Scottish rivers should be allowed to go through to those rivers to benefit the local communities.

Sir Hector Monro: I appreciate the strength of my hon. Friend's feeling—he ensures that he makes it known every Question Time. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is aware of the strong views held by Scottish Office Ministers because of the effect of salmon returning to Scottish rivers to spawn and the economic impact on Scottish towns where angling is carried out. That is why we are so concerned that the right decision—with the scientific evidence to back it up—should be taken. The number of licences has been reduced to 114 through the net limitation order, and we are having continuing discussions. The driftnet fishery in the Bay of Biscay and off the south-west approaches is being discussed by the European Union fishing committee and will be a matter for discussion at the next meeting later this month.

Bosnia

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement on Bosnia.

The situation on the ground deteriorated over the past month. Around the Bihac pocket, Bosnian Government forces launched an attack, but were then forced back by the Bosnian Serbs. The Bosnian Serbs, with support from Croatian Serb forces and rebel Bosnian Muslims, have taken the fighting into the United Nations safe area. That contravention of Security Council resolutions led the commanders of the United Nations force and NATO to call for and carry out air strikes to deter attacks against the safe area.

The fighting has also intensified in central Bosnia, with Bosnian Government forces making gains against the Bosnian Serbs. In the safe areas of Sarajevo, Gorazde and Srebrenica, the civilian populations and the United Nations contingents are short of supplies as convoys have been held up. More than 400 United Nations troops had their movements limited by the Bosnian Serbs. Some were effectively held hostage.

That was the situation which faced the Ministers of the Contact Group when we met on 2 December. The Contact Group countries—Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States—united in calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Bihac pocket, including the withdrawal of Bosnian Serb and Croatian Serb forces from the safe area. We also called for talks to begin on a comprehensive agreement to cease hostilities throughout Bosnia.

The Contact Group supported the United Nations Protection Force's—UNPROFOR's—mission, and demanded immediate freedom of movement for UNPROFOR and for humanitarian supplies throughout the country. Only once those steps have been taken and the Bosnian Serbs have accepted the Contact Group plan as the basis for a settlement can negotiations continue.

At the meeting last Friday night, the Contact Group reaffirmed the plan that we adopted last July. Under this plan, the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be preserved. The Bosnian Serbs would withdraw and hold 49 per cent. of the territory rather than more than 70 per cent., as they do today. The Bosnian Federation of Croats and Muslims would hold 51 per cent. whereas it holds less than 30 per cent. now.

We reiterated that the territorial proposal—the map of the 51 per cent. and 49 per cent.—could be adjusted by mutual agreement between the parties. Constitutional arrangements agreeable to the parties would also need to be drawn up—they would preserve the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and allow equitable and balanced arrangements for the Bosnian-Croat federation and the Bosnian-Serb entity.

We agreed that our officials would help the parties to reach a settlement on those issues. We did not discuss the lifting of the arms embargo or any change in the arrangements for the use of NATO air power in support of the UN.

Our purpose at that meeting was to re-launch the political process following agreement, which we hope will come soon, on a ceasefire. To carry this forward, I went to Belgrade with my French colleague, Mr. Juppé, for talks with President Milosevic. Mr. Milosevic welcomed the clarifications we were able to provide. He said that they would help him to put again to the Bosnian Serb Assembly the case for accepting the peace plan which he has accepted for some months.

The next day, Monday, more than 20 members—or more than a quarter—of the Bosnian Serb Assembly saw Mr. Milosevic in Belgrade, and afterwards they put out a statement saying that, in the light of the clarifications made to the Contact Group plan, the Pale Assembly should consider accepting it and entering negotiations on the map and the constitution to reach a final settlement. It is an encouraging step forward, but it is not enough, because the Bosnian Serb leadership has yet to accept the plan.

At the CSCE summit which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I attended in Budapest on 5 and 6 December, I met President Izetbegovic of the Bosnian Federation, President Tudjman of Croatia and the Secretaries-Generals of the UN and NATO.

The three Presidents all accept the Contact Group plan for Bosnia; they accept the continued presence of the UN force, and are all willing in principle to agree to a ceasefire throughout Bosnia—as are the Bosnian Serbs—although there remains a disagreement over its duration. We hope that the UN special representative, Mr. Akashi, will be able to make progress on a ceasefire this week.

Her Majesty's Government want the UN force to be able to continue its mission and the British contingent to continue to play a major part, but we must be clear about its role. It is not there to impose solutions on unwilling parties, it cannot fight on one side, and it does not defend one army's territories against the attacks of another. It is there to support the impressive aid effort—much of it British—to buttress ceasefires where they exist and, within its limitations, to underpin the safe areas and exclusion zones designated by the UN and NATO.

Withdrawal would be a difficult operation in itself, and the consequences for the civilians whom the forces are there to protect would be severe, but UNPROFOR can continue its mission only if it can do so without unacceptable risk, and if it can continue to fulfil its mandate. As with all military operations, planning is in hand to cover many possible events, including withdrawal, and the plans are constantly updated. The Government are not considering a unilateral withdrawal of the British contingent; we are working with our partners in NATO and the UN.

Our preferred way forward is clear, and I hope it commends itself to the House: first, a ceasefire in the Bihac safe area and throughout Bosnia; secondly, agreement on the free movement of UNPROFOR and for aid convoys; thirdly, resumption of urgent negotiations for a peace settlement on the basis of the Contact Group plan; fourthly, once agreement has been reached, withdrawal by the Bosnian Serbs from the land they hold to the new lines agreed.

Finally, I welcome some progress on agreement between the Croatian Government and the Croatian Serbs. Last week, they signed an economic agreement which provides for the resumption of oil, water and electricity links between the Serb-held areas of Croatia and the rest of the country, and reopening the highway between

Zagreb and Belgrade. This was achieved after months of patient diplomacy between Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg.

I hope that the agreement can be implemented soon. It improves the prospects for negotiations leading to a lasting political settlement in Croatia and for normalisation of ties between Croatia and Serbia.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): May I first express our appreciation for the fortitude and persistence which continues to be shown by all British troops in Bosnia? The whole House can take pride that, in the face of increasing tension, our troops have demonstrated the resolve to maintain aid to 2 million Bosnians who depend on the UN presence for food and fuel, and whose lives would be at risk if that presence was withdrawn in the worst of winter. May I also welcome the fact that both the European and the US members of the Contact Group now appear to be working to a common plan?

The Foreign Secretary, however, must be aware that the events of the past months have sharpened questions about the nature and the purpose of UN intervention in Bosnia. Will the Foreign Secretary recognise that the assault on Bihac has exposed the inability of the UN to defend safe havens which the UN itself has designated?

The Foreign Secretary's statement refers to action being taken to underpin the safe havens. I put it to the right hon. Gentleman that what is required is action to ensure that the remaining safe havens do not go the same way as Bihac. Does the Contact Group have any proposals to demilitarise the remaining safe havens so that they do not invite the same fate as Bihac? Does the United Nations have any plans to reinforce the troops around safe havens? Does the Foreign Secretary agree that critics in the US Congress and Senate would carry more authority if they were prepared to commit a single service man to defend those safe havens?

On the wider role of UNPROFOR, is the Foreign Secretary not concerned at the evident loss in authority of the UN's military presence? Does he understand the public frustration that soldiers of the world community can apparently be held to ransom by Bosnian Serbs with a total population of barely 1 million? Does it not encourage Bosnian Serbs to treat the UN presence with contempt rather than respect if they discover that hostage-taking is rewarded with concessions? Is that not the surest way to guarantee that hostage-taking will increase?

The Foreign Secretary will also be aware that public revulsion at the conflict in Bosnia is so strong because it is a war waged against the civilian population. Can we therefore be satisfied that only one person has yet been indicted before the UN war crimes tribunal, two years after it was set up in response to the horrors of ethnic cleansing and mass rape? Is there not a danger that the tedious progress of that tribunal is one more signal to the Bosnian Serbs that the world community will acquiesce in whatever outcome they can achieve by force of arms?

The Foreign Secretary will recall that, in the debate on the Queen's Speech, I expressed our view that any lasting, just peace must be based on the integrity of Bosnia's borders and the right of refugees to return to the areas from which they have been expelled. Therefore, will the Foreign Secretary clarify what is meant in his statement by

"equitable and balanced arrangements for the . . . Bosnian-Serb entity"?

Is he aware that the press have reported that as some form of confederation with Serbia? Would he himself recognise that any offer of association between Bosnian Serbs and the state of Serbia that compromised the sovereignty of Bosnia will be seen as an admission by the west that it has given up on trying to restore Bosnia as an independent state?

What future does the Foreign Secretary now see for the Muslim population of Bosnia? What equitable and balanced arrangements are now available to them, and can they have a viable future if they are confined to a broken state covering only a third of the former Bosnia and almost entirely surrounded by greater Serbia, in reality if not in name?

I began by saying that the House can take pride in our troops in Bosnia who have shown firmness and dedication. However, no hon. Member can be proud of the response to the crisis in Bosnia of the world community which has shown indecision and division. Let us at least ensure that any settlement should not sanction the conquest of territory by force of arms, should not isolate the Muslim communities of Bosnia, and should not weaken the authority of the UN to intervene the next time one of its members is the victim of aggression.

Mr. Hurd: I thank the hon. Gentleman for what he said about our troops. I am also glad that he pointed out one truth which has not always been so. I have had a strong feeling in the past few weeks that we are working together more completely with the US Administration on Bosnia than we have been for a long time. For example, a statement such as President Clinton's in Budapest two days ago that no one will win a military victory there, so we must work for a negotiated settlement, has, when we have made it in the past, sometimes been attacked. It is a good thing that that comes from the President of the United States, and is backed up by what United States diplomacy is doing.

I entirely share the hon. Gentleman's concern and the public frustration about which he talked. I also share his concern about the UN's loss of authority. All members of the UN, but particularly those who are troop contributors, have all the time to review and assess whether the difficulties, which the hon. Gentleman is undoubtedly accurate in describing, outweigh the good that can be done. If they do, and if the risks become unacceptable, the troops should be withdrawn; but, as I said, we do not believe that we have reached that point.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has just returned, and he tells me that, in central Bosnia, where most of our troops are, and where there is not much news because there is not much disaster, the situation has improved considerably. Thanks to our troops and to the UN, 90 per cent. of the towns in that part of the country now have electricity, running water and basic medical facilities, and roads that used to be blocked are now open, with supplies flowing freely along them. That would not have happened without our forces, and it would probably be at risk if they were withdrawn. That is the balance that we have to strike.

The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the war crimes tribunal. Such matters always move slowly; he will understand that from his knowledge of the profession. But, as he rightly says, there is already one case, and evidence is being collected for others.

[Mr. Hurd]

As for the constitutional arrangements, the hon. Gentleman will know that it has already been agreed in principle that the federation—that is, Muslims and Croats combined—could have a special relationship with Croatia. That was agreed in Washington in February. We are saying that it may be possible for the parties to agree that there should be a fair, balanced and equal relationship between the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia.

That has to be agreed; it cannot be imposed. We are not suggesting for the Bosnian Serbs anything that is not available for the Croats and Muslims, but it may not be possible to agree on that. We are talking not about a confederation but about constitutional arrangements within the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

There are certainly lessons to be drawn from all this, and when the war is over they will have to be drawn. I could easily detain the House for a long time talking about what they are, but our first priority must be to do what we can from the outside, which is limited. We must do what we can to create the ideas and pressures by which a negotiated settlement can be reached—meanwhile, so long as we can, saving lives and keeping some kind of life flowing and continuing in the parts of Bosnia that we can reach.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, as the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), said, there is indeed deep and widespread admiration both for our troops and for General Rose, who is trying to perform his duties in an agonisingly difficult situation? However, if the UN cannot defend its own safe areas and if UN personnel are being taken hostage, it is true that the time may rapidly come when the position becomes impossible and we have to prepare for withdrawal. I am glad that the preparatory arrangements are always in hand.

Does my right hon. Friend also accept that, whatever is decided in Bosnia, it does not justify the tearing down and the destruction of NATO? Will he explain to his American opposite numbers and to some members of the American Congress that what their magnificent forebears and predecessors built up with us over 40 years for the security of the Atlantic and of Europe should not be idly torn down simply because there are disagreements over Bosnia?

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend is entirely right. NATO is a collective security organisation, and its whole basis is that an attack on any one of us is an attack on all of us. That has to continue, because we continue to live in a dangerous world. Last week, in the NATO Council, we were devising ways in which that stability and assurance could be extended eastward to countries such as Poland and Hungary, while keeping or building up a partnership with Russia. That is the next NATO task.

What NATO is doing in Bosnia is trying to help the UN—enforcing a no-fly zone, which it has done, and seeking, as it has also done, to deal with the problems of heavy weapons—but always in consultation with the UN. That is a task that NATO has assumed in Bosnia, but it is not central to the continuation of the organisation. NATO is there as a collective security organisation, binding the two sides of the Atlantic together, and in our view it is essential that that should continue.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Arising out of meetings that the Secretary of State has had in the past week, especially those with senior members of the Clinton Administration, can he confirm that, if the withdrawal of our troops becomes necessary, there will be available to them the full and unstinted resources of NATO, including those of the United States?

The Foreign Secretary was right to draw attention to the entirely sensible observations of his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence about the fact that, away from Bihac, substantial good work can still be done. Can the Foreign Secretary confirm that, as long as that work can be done and as long as the mandates of the United Nations can be substantially, even if not completely, implemented, British troops will remain? Indeed, can he confirm that the British Government will neither withdraw unilaterally nor argue for such a withdrawal?

Mr. Hurd: American participation in the withdrawal of the UN force would be essential; that is accepted in principle by the United States Administration. As I have said, the actual planning is in hand; I do not think that I can go further than that. The hon. and learned Gentleman is correct: we are not talking about and we are not contemplating unilateral withdrawal, as I said in my statement.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend accept that, in the three years in which aggressive conquest has been building in greater Serbia, the international community in general, and the UN and NATO in particular, have had their credibility severely damaged? Now that everyone concerned, except the Bosnian Serbs, accepts the Contact Group's plan, should we not stop pretending to be impartial between the fire brigade and the fire? Would it not be appropriate for the Bosnian Serbs to be told that there will be massive retaliatory action from the air if they damage any further the concept of the safe area?

Mr. Hurd: NATO and the UN have worked out together ways in which NATO air power can be used to protect UN forces, to deal with heavy weapons in or around the safe areas and to enforce the no-fly zone. That has to be done with co-operation between NATO and the UN, because the UN is the responsible commander on the ground and only the UN can assess the impact on the ground of any particular action. That sometimes causes impatience among observers who especially favour stronger NATO action, but it is a reality which has to be accepted. That is compatible with the use of air power, as we have seen.

My hon. Friend, who has followed this matter with care and with fervent opinion through the years, somewhat exaggerates in his question the possible role of air power. Air power has its role, and I have just described what that role could be. The idea, however, that one can use air power to alter the policy of a Government or to bring recalcitrant people to the conference table is misguided, and has often proved to be misguided in the past.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The Secretary of State may be aware that, during the summer recess, I spent four weeks driving a lorry in a relief convoy in central Bosnia. Does he accept that it would be absolutely impossible to deliver essential supplies to 3 million people living in the area without the protection and support of UNPROFOR and without the peace that UNPROFOR has achieved between the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Croats?

Does he acknowledge that it would be reckless if all those achievements were jeopardised by the premature withdrawal of UNPROFOR as a result of statements by American politicians who understand little about what is happening on the ground in Bosnia? Has the Secretary of State had any indication from the Americans that they are prepared to deploy troops on the ground, or do they seriously think that they can solve the problem with air power?

Mr. Hurd: No, I have had no indication that the Americans would be prepared to put troops on the ground. The hon. Member, who speaks from experience, is right about what is being achieved in central Bosnia. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence confirms that. At the moment, convoys do not need military escorts because the roads are clear, but if the UN forces withdrew, those convoys would be at risk. That is one of the factors, although not the only one, that we have to weigh up.

The situation in Sarajevo is another. Last year, 1,500 shells daily landed in Sarajevo; they are now very rare. Sarajevo is not back to normal life by any manner of means—it is a skeleton town—but at least people are not being shelled and bombarded every day as they were before. Again, that is something that we must weigh up.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Will my right hon. Friend further confirm the Government's full support and approval, in spite of American criticisms, for the key role being played by General Sir Michael Rose in Bosnia? Does my right hon. Friend agree that General Rose's combination of patience, courage and deep humanitarian concern is in the very highest traditions of British military prowess being deployed in the cause of peace?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. I entirely agree with what he says. I saw the transcript of one particularly unjustified attack on General Rose yesterday morning by the Bosnian ambassador to the UN. I do not think that anyone will think the worse of General Rose because of that sneering attack. The only person of whom we may think worse is the person who uttered it.

I hold no brief for the Bosnian Serbs—they have shown themselves barbarous, brutal and often murderous—but the indignation and frustration at what they do, which builds up in all of us, especially, obviously, in their victims on the ground, should not lead us into rhetoric and illusion, let alone into attacking in words those who are doing their best to save lives in Bosnia.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): The response of the Contact Group to every Serbian advance or attack is simply to revise the Contact Group plan to make it more acceptable to the Serbs. Will the Foreign Secretary explain how that can give the Serbs an incentive to negotiate meaningfully? Surely they will not negotiate until they suffer military reversals themselves. Should not the western community be thinking about how to inflict such reversals on them?

Mr. Hurd: I do not know what the hon. Gentleman means by introducing new concessions to the Bosnian Serbs. We have not done that—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] No, we have not. We are on the same map, and we are talking as we did in the summer. The phrase about balanced arrangements, about which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) questioned me, was there in the summer.

We are not claiming any privileged position for the Bosnian Serbs. We are talking about equitable and balanced arrangements inside Bosnia-Herzegovina, with its present frontiers. We are simply trying to find ways in which to put this, of persuading the Bosnian Serbs that they will not have a settled or accepted future simply by trying to hang on by force to the villages and towns which they now hold. President Milosevic is trying to do the same.

My own feeling is that this situation will turn in the right direction once President Milosevic brings, in one way or another, his fellow Serbs across the border of Bosnia-Herzegovina to accept, as he has accepted, that the only bright or durable future for them lies in accepting our plan.

Sir Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Would my right hon. Friend say a little more about the approaches that he has had from President Milosevic? From the outside, it appears that greater Serbia is nearer to reality today than it has been, perhaps, for many years. Therefore, is my right hon. Friend satisfied in his own mind that President Milosevic is not co-operating merely to see the sanctions against Serbia further reduced and because he has abandoned the idea of a greater Serbia? What does my right hon. Friend think?

Mr. Hurd: President Milosevic has his own reasons. Undoubtedly, the imposition of sanctions is one of them, and he is seeking greater relief. The French Foreign Minister and I made it clear to him that we saw no prospect of further relief of sanctions against Serbia simply because Serbia accepts the Contact Group plan. He has had a bit of relief, as my hon. Friend knows. Belgrade airport is open and certain events which were prevented are now possible; but the main bulk of sanctions cannot be lifted—we have made this clear to him—until the Bosnian Serbs have accepted the plan and until this agreement, which I mentioned at the end of my statement and which is very important, between the Croatian Serbs and the Croatian Government, is implemented.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When is the Foreign Secretary going to realise that Britain, with its so-called grandeur of an imperial past, cannot poke its nose into the civil wars going on around the world? There are more than 25 going on at the present time. Why should any Serb, or a Muslim fighting another Muslim, believe that they have to listen to the authority of a broken-backed Government who cannot even control their own rebels, who have lost their majority, and who cannot raise their

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

taxes? One thing the Government want to be sure of is that, if they came forward with any legislation, the chances are that they would lose that as well.

Mr. Hurd: That is the kind of utterance to which I am accustomed from Mr. Karadzic rather than from hon. Members.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Did my right hon. Friend detect any significant change in attitude on the part of the Russians, particularly at the meeting in Budapest of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe? Was there not some difficulty in concluding an agreed communiqué with them? If that was the case, does that extend to their attitude to Serb ambitions in the former Yugoslavia, and could it be an impediment to peace in Bosnia?

Mr. Hurd: We spent several hours on Friday night with the Russians in the Contact Group. The Prime Minister saw President Yeltsin on the first morning of the conference in Budapest. I had an hour and a half with Mr. Kozyrev, some of it alone, yesterday. I am perfectly clear that the Russians are working, like the Americans, French, Germans and ourselves, for a negotiated settlement on the basis of a 51 per cent./49 per cent. split in the map and what we agreed in the rest of the document.

The Russians believe that President Milosevic is entitled now to further relief on sanctions than the international community has given him. That is the main difference between us. They know that that is not realistic at the moment. They are working, therefore, for the success of the international effort that I have described.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Why is it that, in 1991, the British Government, along with the German Government, were not prepared to respect the integrity of the former Yugoslavia, yet now we are told that we must defend the integrity of a state, Bosnia, which is not viable and which really requires partitioning so that the Croats and the Serbs can have a special relationship with Croatia proper and Serbia proper? Why was it right in one case to defy the integrity of an internationally recognised state, whereas now it is not?

Mr. Hurd: I will not go back to the history of 1991, which I have often debated with the hon. Gentleman. If we look at the ethnic map of Bosnia, we see that it is really not practicable—in my view, at any rate—to think of a partition plan. Leaving aside the morality of it, I do not think that it is simply practicable in effect, because of the way in which the communities are interspersed.

I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's thesis. I have much sympathy with what the Bosnian Government in Sarajevo say about the matter. For years and years, those people lived together in the former Yugoslavia, with all its faults, under the kings and under the communists. They joined the same professions, and they served in the same army. They were not hating and killing each other.

Now that has disintegrated, but it has to be reintegrated. That is why I believe that it is right to say that there should be a country called Bosnia-Herzegovina and that those are its frontiers, but, inside it, there have to be arrangements in which the three communities can live together.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I thank my right hon. Friend for his remarks about the use of air power. Will he refer all those who call for massive air strikes back to other occasions when we have had that ability—for example, the Ardennes and Korea—when a beaten army on the ground was still able to inflict massive casualties on our armed forces? There is no solution that way. My right hon. Friend knows it, and we all know it.

My right hon. Friend said that there was no military solution. All rational people in this House, and indeed throughout the world, know that that is the case, but can my right hon. Friend say that the same will apply on the ground? We are not dealing with armies that are working on a control system. They are operating of their own volition. It is a case of order, attack, disorder, counter-attack and attack again. In those circumstances, what chance can there ever be of our achieving anything? For once, I agree with the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—that, at the end of the day, the matter must be sorted out by the people on the ground.

Mr. Hurd: In answer to my hon. Friend's first point, there is a long history of over-optimism about air power. To the examples that my hon. Friend gave I simply add Iraq. We bombed Saddam Hussein intensively for a long time using the latest technology, but it was not sufficient to force him to withdraw from Kuwait. There is a long history of wishful thinking about air power, and it is sad that it has surfaced again, even among people whose experience should have taught them otherwise.

I agree with my hon. Friend's final point—indeed, I have made it often enough, and been accused of being an appeaser and a defeatist for doing so. The fighting will cease when those who are doing the fighting decide to stop and when there are no longer military leaders whispering in the ears of Bosnian politicians: "Don't compromise, don't talk, just give me a few more months and I will really smash the enemy." That advice has been listened to too often, and it is always wrong.

My hon. Friend is correct when he describes the intermingling and sometimes chaotic nature of commands and forces, and therefore the difficulty of having a tidy ceasefire. That is what the United Nations and the forces concerned frequently discuss and occasionally achieve. To a substantial extent, it has been achieved in the area where most of the British troops are deployed—in central Bosnia.

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Whilst accepting that all the units which have contributed to the UNPROFOR mission in the former Yugoslavia have performed their tasks extremely well, does the Foreign Secretary accept that this miserable and depressing episode reveals a deficiency in the way that the United Nations considers deploying force in support of Security Council resolutions? What thoughts and proposals does the Foreign Secretary have about finding a way to improve the delivery of force to support United Nations

Security Council resolutions? What consideration has he given to the permanent convening of the Military Staff Committee of the United Nations?

Mr. Hurd: I think that the Military Staff Committee—which was set up in 1945 in quite different circumstances—is not the right body to deal with the matter.

The hon. Member is quite right, and I will send him details of the proposals that we have made precisely for the establishment of a proper general staff at the UN, so that all the efforts which the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) scorns so mightily will have a chance of success.

Some efforts have failed, and some have succeeded, but problems will continue to arise, particularly in the form of savage civil wars in independent countries. The United Nations has to be better equipped with preventive diplomacy—that is the first thing—and, where that fails, with the quicker and more effective deployment of a force.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we face a problem in that we seem to be straddling two stools of humanitarian aid delivery and, to some degree, limited peacekeeping? As British forces are being taken hostage and our forces consistently come under fire, I press him to define slightly more clearly what he means by "unacceptable risk", given that the definition shifts continually and we must then change our sights each time.

Mr. Hurd: At the moment no British contingents are being held by the Bosnian Serbs or being prevented from moving, although other United Nations forces are currently in that situation. At the moment, the situation with our own forces has eased somewhat, although my hon. Friend knows that the problem might recur.

He knows the difficulty of defining "unacceptable risk". My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, his advisers and the whole Cabinet have to review it and weigh it constantly. We always tell the House the results of our striking the balance on each occasion.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not obvious that the Serbian warlords—many of them outright war criminals—are daily humiliating the United Nations and its authority, knowing full well that member Governments do not have the political will to resist what is happening in safe areas? Having listened to some of the exchanges in the House today, if one were to change the word "Bosnia" to "Czechoslovakia", it is easy to imagine what it must have been like in the House of Commons in 1938. The air of Munich pervades this place, which is very unfortunate when it comes to resisting aggression in other countries.

Mr. Hurd: That is a frequent but ludicrous comparison. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman comments out of ignorance, but he grotesquely over-simplifies the situation. He speaks of the "Serbian warlords". Is he talking about President Milosevic, who had a heavy responsibility for starting and abetting the war, but who is now seeking to prevent it? Or is he just talking about Mr. Karadzic, in which case I join with him? The comparison with Czechoslovakia and Munich is way out of line. We are seeking to get away from the type of illusion which the hon. Gentleman has, sincerely, promoted for a long time. Unless he shares the illusion about air power, he has never answered the question how the objective that he has stated is to be realised without the intervention of a huge semi-imperial army to impose a particular solution on the ground.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. Friend agree that two potential disasters must be avoided at all costs? One is a devastating humiliation of international law, and the other is a devastating humilation of NATO. Does he agree that it does not make much sense to signal to the Serbs that the worse they behave, the more likely it is that United Nations forces, which act as some constraint on their behaviour, will be withdrawn? Is it not a fact that it is an act of war to capture or take hostage troops of another power? Is it not about time that we made it clear to the Serbs that we make that interpretation of their recent behaviour?

Mr. Hurd: The job of the UN force has been clearly defined. It is defined in the Security Council resolutions, and it has been frequently defined by General Rose. He holds to that definition. People in relatively secure positions are always urging on him this tactic or the other. When he started, he gained a reputation for being tough with the Serbs. He gained ground in that way. Now he is being accused, wholly unfairly, of being over-soft and not doing all he could with the resources at his disposal.

The UN commanders are using to the best effect the resources at their disposal. I wish that there were more resources on the ground. I wish that the appeal which was made in resolution 836 and others had been listened to by more countries. I am glad that we and the French are the two main countries to have contributed. I hope that we can continue to do so.

I do not believe in changing the mandate so as to render the task impossible. I believe in maintaining the mandate and enabling those on the ground to maintain their work as best they can, which will not be perfectly, so long as they believe that the good that they are doing and the lives that they are saving outweigh the loss of authority that they are suffering.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Does the Foreign Secretary understand that his latest statement reeks of further betrayal of the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and of further appeasement of the Serbs of Pale and Belgrade? Does he understand that the advent of a greater Serbian confederation would be the final reward for aggression, genocide and ethnic cleansing? Does he understand that, if UNPROFOR is withdrawn, the troops will have to walk out, leaving behind their weapons and equipment, and that their humiliation will be entirely the responsibility of politicians in the UN, NATO and the European Union, who have consistently refused the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina the means of their self-defence?

Mr. Hurd: As far as I can tell from the hon. Gentleman's question, he suggests lifting the arms embargo and keeping UNPROFOR in place. He criticises both parts of our policy. His suggestion is wholly unreal.

[Mr. Hurd]

The idea that the west should start supplying one side in the war with arms yet seek to maintain a peacekeeping force in the middle of the war is completely unreal.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that events in Bihac have shown two facts which are uncomfortable for many hon. Members? They are, first, that those who claimed that United Nations safe havens were being used as launch pads for Bosnian Muslim aggression and should be demilitarised as quickly as possible have been proved right; and secondly, that talk of lifting the arms embargo has merely encouraged the Bosnian Government to continue fighting, much to their disadvantage, and scuppered the chance for peace.

Mr. Hurd: On the first question, the Security Council's resolutions on safe areas, resolution 836 in particular, did two things—appealed for more troops and, in a crisis, declared areas safe. In an orderly and logical world, one would wait until one had the troops before one declared the area safe, but the world was not logical. Bosnia was in crisis and the Security Council thought that it was important to do something at that stage to help and so it did that.

Of course it would have been better, and the situation on the ground would be more secure, if there were a fully equipped and organised United Nations force in Bihac, instead of 1,400 Bangladeshis and ditto in the other areas. Our troops are in Gorazde and the Dutch are in Srebrenica, but the response to the UN Secretary-General's appeal has never been sufficient.

On my hon. Friend's second point, no Government are pressing for the lifting of the arms embargo. There have been times when that moment approached, and times when the Bosnians pressed hard for it, but when they realised that it would mean the withdrawal of UNPROFOR, they said, "No, we don't want an immediate lifting of the embargo. We would rather put it off until the spring and see what can be done meanwhile." Although there is still support in principle for the lifting of the embargo, no Government are pressing for that immediately, and for very good reason.

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): May I press the Foreign Secretary on what he said about the future of the safe areas? What future does he think there is in Bihac? Will he respond to the questions that my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) asked on what is being done to make the remaining safe areas safer for the future? Finally, can he give us assurances about the security and availability of supplies to our troops during the winter? We know from the long history of this situation that that is a difficult time for the troops and the civilian population. I am sure that we would all welcome reassurances on that score.

Mr. Hurd: As regards Bihac, there has been no significant change during the past few days, as fighting continues around the outskirts of the town, and Bosnian Government forces are still in the town. There has been some shelling around the outside of the town, and fighting continues in the rest of the Bihac pocket. The United Nations is seeking to get convoys through. I think that a convoy reached Bihac the day before yesterday, and a British convoy got through to Gorazde. That is part of the essential process of keeping supplies moving for the United Nations forces and the civilian population, which is especially important as winter approaches, as the hon. Lady said.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on.

Points of Order

4.17 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This House operates on the basis that debates are answered by a Minister with ministerial, or at least departmental, responsibility. I do not want to make a party point of this, because I know that the situation would be exactly the same under a Labour Government, but the Crown Office has not been able to answer debates in this House for many years.

That becomes a very serious matter when, in the biggest case of murder in the western world, the lead Department, along with the Foreign Office, is the Crown Office. On Tuesday 13 December 1994, on the motion for the Adjournment of the Scottish Grand Committee, under Standing Order No. 94H(6), you have given me leave to raise the subject of the Crown Office in relation to the Lockerbie investigation.

I do not wish to be disparaging about him in any way, but, under the present set-up, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) will be the Minister to respond. To be frank—I am not in any way using pejorative language about him personally—he is a messenger in that matter. The Scottish Office has little, if any, direct responsibility for matters of the Crown Office.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): None at all.

Mr. Dalyell: As my hon. Friend says: that is precisely the situation. The Crown Office goes to endless lengths to say how separate it is from the Scottish Office, and that is indeed the position.

My point of order is that there is a very grey area, which I will raise under the new dispensation. The usual channels believed that part of the reason for the reforms of the Scottish Office and the Scottish Grand Committee was precisely that the Crown Office could answer directly for itself, and make statements. It can make statements, but surely Departments which can make statements can also answer Adjournment debates.

Has there been any approach to allow the Crown Office to answer the debate? If there were such an approach from the Scottish Office and from the Government, would you cast a benevolent eye on it?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman raised this matter in the House with me only last week, and I can only refer him to what I said on that occasion. The Standing Orders, which were agreed by this House only recently, do not allow the Lord Advocate to respond to Adjournment debates. That is what the hon. Gentleman is seeking.

As I told the hon. Gentleman last week, he must find a way to amend Standing Orders if he wishes the Lord Advocate to respond to an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In columns 243 and 245 of yesterday's *Hansard*, it is reported that I voted both for and against the Opposition amendment, while the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) is recorded as being absent from both Lobbies. Could this be put right, or—in view of the fact that the authorities appear not to have been able to record the votes correctly—could we have a re-run? We would then at least be able put the interest rate increases back in the bag.

Madam Speaker: The error has been noted, and an amendment has been made.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Under article 11 of the own resources decision, which we are about to debate with respect to—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will realise that that matter will be dealt with in Committee by the Chairman of Ways and Means. We shall now go into Committee, if the House will allow me to proceed. I must inform the House that I have not selected the instruction.

European Communities (Finance) Bill

Considered in Committee.

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

EXTENDED MEANING OF "THE TREATIES" AND "THE COMMUNITY TREATIES"

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the clause stand part of the Bill.

4.23 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. First, may I welcome you to the Chair for our deliberations? It is quite like old times, and there are many familiar faces here from the debates on the Maastricht Bill. We now have an extra party, over and above what we had then, but that can only enliven our deliberations.

Have you received any indication of the Government's intention to make a statement as to which of the new clauses that you have selected for debate represent essential matters of the Bill and which—in the Prime Minister's understanding—represent matters of confidence and which do not? If the House is to vote to bring down the Government, it perhaps ought to know when it is doing so.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): The Chair welcomes the initial comment from the hon. Gentleman, and also welcomes the prospect of getting on with the new clauses.

The Paymaster General (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. It may assist the House if I point out that the Government attach the highest importance to the passage of the Bill, and have asked my right hon. and hon. Friends to attend accordingly. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that the Bill must pass in all its essentials. That clearly refers to the clause 1 stand part debate which we will have shortly, and also to the Third Reading of the Bill.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Article 11 of the decision that we are to discuss within the context of the Bill says that the decision shall enter into force on the first day of the month following the receipt of the last of the notifications received from the member states in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements. It adds that the decision shall take effect on 1 January 1995.

It is crystal clear that the Dutch Parliament has no chance whatever of managing to complete its procedures by 1 January 1995; indeed, that may well not happen until the end of February. I should therefore be glad if some consideration could be given to the effect on the requirement of an overriding European legal position by virtue of the decision that the measure must come into effect on 1 January 1995 to be effective.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman will recognise that that is a matter of argument. My responsibilities are to the United Kingdom Parliament.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. It seems to have been made clear that votes on clause 1 stand part and Third Reading will in effect be votes of confidence, presumably with the full authority of the Government Front Bench—whatever that may be now. Does that mean that other votes, if they take place, will not be votes of confidence? I am sure that that is of great interest to Conservative Members. Is it absolutely clear that two votes will be votes of confidence—according to the Government Front Bench—while the others will not be?

The Chairman: As an experienced Member of Parliament, the hon. Gentleman will know that it is not for me to judge how many votes take place.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. My hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) made a passing reference to the debates that you chaired with such distinction during the Maastricht proceedings. My point concerns timing. Would it be correct to say that whether this debate continues after 10 pm is entirely up to the Government? It seems rather odd that it may do so, given that the Leader of the House is constantly telling us of the virtues of the Jopling report and saying that we should not sit through the night because people outside misunderstand. It would be useful if the Government would tell us now whether the 10 o'clock motion will be moved.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman has asked me a question to which the answer is yes: whether the motion is moved is entirely up to the Government.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 1 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. When you put the Questions on clauses 1 and 2, several voices—including mine—said "No". My hon. Friends the Members for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) and for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) both shouted "No". You completely ignored those three voices. There should have been a Division. It looks to me as if you are siding with the two Front Benches.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman's point of order was made distinctly; I could hear it clearly. I did not, however, hear a clear "No" from the hon. Gentleman, or from the hon. Members sitting next to him. Let me issue a plea to the hon. Gentleman that in future he speaks with his usual clarity—

Mr. Skinner: I did.

The Chairman: I regret to say that the hon. Gentleman did not.

New clause 1

ENTRY INTO FORCE (OWN RESOURCES)

'This Act shall come into force only when the House of Commons has come to a resolution on a motion tabled by a Minister of the Crown as to the measures the Government intends to take in order to implement Article 8(2) of the Council Decision of 31st October 1994 on the system of the European Communities' own resources.'.—*[Mr. Andrew Smith.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Andrew Smith: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also the following: New clause 4—*Own resources calculation: annual reports*—

'.—(1) In implementing the provisions of Articles 2, 4 and 10 of the Council decision of 31st October 1994 ("the Decision") on the system of the European Communities' own resources, Her Majesty's Government shall lay a report before Parliament in each year to the end of 1999, on the operation of the system set out in Article 10 of the Decision in respect of the United Kingdom; and each such report shall include an analysis of—

(a) the revenue which the United Kingdom would be required to provide as own resources entered in the budget of the Communities as compared to the revenue required be provided by other Member States, by reference to the percentages of annual GNP set out in Article 2 of the Decision;

(b) the methods of calculating the GNP of the United Kingdom and each other Member State and their accuracy; and

(c) the effects on the United Kingdom, were it to be implemented, of any re-examination made in any year by the Commission, under Article 10 of the Decision, of the correction of budgetary imbalances granted to the United Kingdom.

(2) Each annual report made to Parliament under the provisions of subsection (1) of this section shall be subject to approval by a resolution of each House of Parliament.'.

New clause 12—*Annual report to Parliament*—

'Each year Her Majesty's Government shall make an annual report to Parliament concerning the operation of the Decision in section 1 (e) above in respect of the preceding financial year, which shall include:

(a) a general presentation in text and tables of the financing and expenditure of the European Economic Communities in sterling equivalent and any common unit, which shall include comparable tables of income derived from each member state and expenditure therein in respect of each principal category of expenditure;

(b) an account of rebate mechanisms applicable to any member state;

(c) the operation of each article of the Decision;

(d) action taken by Her Majesty's Government in respect of financial discipline;

(e) the text of any regulation, directive or financial regulation relating to the operation of the Decision to which Her Majesty's Government has given its assent'.

Mr. Smith: I will begin with new clause 1. The article to which I referred—article 8(2)—states:

"Without prejudice to the auditing of the accounts and to checks that they are lawful and regular as laid down in Article 188c of the Treaty establishing the European Community, such auditing and checks being mainly concerned with the reliability and effectiveness of national systems and procedures for determining the base for own resources accruing from VAT and GNP and without prejudice to the inspection arrangements made pursuant to Article 209(c) of that Treaty, the Council shall, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament, adopt the provisions necessary to apply this Decision and to make possible the inspection of the collection, the making available to the Commission and payment of the revenue referred to in Articles 2 and 5."

That raises several important matters of concern to the House.

4.30 pm

We have emphasised time and again our anxiety, which is widely shared both in the country and in the House, about the inadequacy of present arrangements in the European Union for the detection or elimination of fraud and waste, and about the shortcomings in the working of the common agricultural policy. We have said especially that the common agricultural policy is wasteful and economically and environmentally damaging. We have also said that the Government have not done nearly enough to combat waste and fraud in the European Union budget.

As recently as last weekend, there were disturbing reports in the press of the way in which Ministers appear to have gone along with the cut of £3.9 million in the budget to counter fraud in the European Union. That was a matter of enormous concern to many hon. and right hon. Members because, if fraud is to be properly eliminated and the people responsible for it properly brought to account, the mechanisms have to be in place and they have to be properly enforced in each of the member states of the European Union. The fact that the Government accepted that cut calls into question the assurances given on Second Reading about the Government's commitment to eliminating fraud. I ask the Minister to reply specifically to that argument when he replies to the debate.

We believe that the House of Commons has a right and a duty to the people of Britain to scrutinise and, as appropriate, to amend the very important measure before us. We believe that the Government have sought, by the confidence motion and the other pressures that they have brought to bear, effectively to curtail the right of the House to determine the way in which money is paid to Europe, the uses to which that money is put and the extent of waste and fraud in its application. The new clause therefore seeks to insist that the Government bring a motion before the House showing the way in which article 8(2) would be implemented.

Article 8(2) mentions many important subjects. One of those touches on the United Kingdom abatement, because the article refers to articles 2 and 5 of the decision. I shall now mention an important issue. When we discussed the matter in European Standing Committee B, as long ago as 15 December 1993, I asked why papers were not available in the Vote Office setting out details of the United Kingdom abatement. In replying to my question, the former Paymaster General said something interesting. He said:

"The working methods paper"—

the paper governing the operation of the United Kingdom abatement—

"is a Commission document that gives detailed examples of how the UK abatement is calculated. The current paper was produced in 1988 following the own resources decision . . . in that year. It is still extant. It was the subject of an explanatory memorandum on 1 July 1988."

He continued:

"The Commission is working on a new working methods paper. So far no copy is available so we could not lay it before the Committee. As soon as we receive a copy, we shall do so."—[*Official Report, European Standing Committee B,* 15 December 1993; c. 7.]

I understand that there is now extant a paper SEC(92)/1412/final, dated Brussels 22 July 1992, about the United Kingdom abatement. Will the Paymaster

General say whether that paper updates the one to which the former Paymaster General referred in European Standing Committee B? Was it presented to the Committee for discussion in line with the undertaking that I was then given?

An interesting aspect of the working paper which will be of concern to hon. Members is its reference to a number of changes, described as technical changes, in the operation of the UK abatement. Page 11 of the working paper states:

> "Taking into account the combined effect of these changes which should reduce the abatement by over—1 billion ecus in 1997 from the 'No change' scenario, the Commission's proposals should thus contribute towards a diminution of the UK abatement relative to the EC budget. The size of the abatement would fall from around 5 per cent. to under 4 per cent. of the budget by 1997."

That raises an important question to which the House should have a full and comprehensive reply from the Minister. The working papers on the UK abatement are certainly complex and dense to wade through, as anyone who has sought to do so will confirm. If discussions and negotiations—even if they are described as technical—have been taking place about the UK abatement, that must greatly concern hon. Members in the light of the assurances that they have been given on the abatement and the importance of safeguarding the abatement. The Government should make the position clear.

Our new clause has other implications. Before the Act can be ratified, the House of Commons must pass a Government resolution on a motion setting out what steps the Government intend to take to ensure that the United Kingdom has the mechanisms to calculate accurately its contributions. Article 8(2) states that each country should have the mechanisms to calculate accurately its own contributions according to the terms set out in articles 2 and 5 of the decision. Those articles refer to gross national product at market prices and VAT—the VAT harmonised base—so that each country calculates its own GDP and VAT base in the same way as other member countries.

The question has been asked before as to how far variations in the adequacy of the arrangements in different member states affect the contributions that each member state is asked to pay. We can all think of examples of European Union member states where the arrangements for properly calculating the level of liability to VAT payments, the way in which they are collected and the measurement of gross national product are not so reliable as they are in this country. The system misses the operation of the informal economy, which is not properly recorded in the official statistics.

Will the Paymaster General tell us what discussions he has had with his counterparts in the other European Union states to ensure that common and high standards are applied to the measurement and assessment of those matters, which have an important bearing on the contributions that this country has to make to the European Union budget?

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Returning to his earlier remarks about what is happening in Europe and the concerns that have been expressed about certain practices in member states, does my hon. Friend believe that the weakness is within European legislation or within the member states?

Mr. Smith: There are clearly weaknesses in the operation of the regulation and the law both at European Union level and in member states. Clearly, procedures are more satisfactory in some member states than in others. Equally, there is a need for a binding convention in European law for fraudulent acts against the European Union budget to be contrary to the law in each member state.

A dual approach is necessary to tackle such a serious problem. We need to ensure both that there are proper arrangements in place in each member state and that European law is able adequately to cover the situation. We have advocated that the convention currently being discussed by the European Union should be enacted into United Kingdom law properly to tighten up on procedures and to bring those engaged in fraud to account.

We have also suggested that, where it can be shown that lax procedures operated by individual member states are responsible for shortcomings, fraud and waste, either because the basis for calculating payments has not been properly assessed, or because receipts of money from the Union have not been properly applied, it would be entirely appropriate to have a proper penalty regime which would require member states to pay money back, either by an addition to their required contributions or by a deduction from the revenues they receive.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): The hon. Gentleman will be aware that many Opposition Members and many of my hon. Friends have stood at the Dispatch Box and solemnly promised the House that they would get a grip on fraud, and are constantly talking about altering the mechanisms to do so. Has it occurred to the hon. Gentleman that much of the fraud cannot be eliminated without eliminating the system on which that fraud is founded?

The Chairman: Order. Before the Committee goes any further, the next group of amendments—new clause 3 and the new clauses grouped with it—is specifically about fraud. It would be appropriate to develop the arguments on that point when we get there.

Mr. Smith: I am, as ever, guided by your ruling, Mr. Morris, but the hon. Member's point is relevant to new clause 1. We are proposing the opportunity for the House, on a Government motion, to have further and proper discussion of the implementation of the decision in article 8(2).

That would give us the opportunity further to develop the case for precisely the reforms to which the hon. Gentleman was referring and, as we have emphasised, the crucial importance of reform of the common agricultural policy. Notwithstanding the agreements which have been reached in Europe and such reforms as have received commitments from member states, expenditure under the CAP continues to bang up against the ceiling that was agreed at the Edinburgh summit and which forms the basis for the Bill that we are discussing. It can come within the ceiling only by using the devices agreed at Edinburgh, whereby differences in the charges to the CAP accounted for by currency fluctuations allow dipping into Community reserves to provide extra resources for the agricultural guarantee fund. Nobody can be satisfied with that; it perpetuates waste, with all the examples that we shall discuss in the next group of amendments which is concerned specifically with fraud and waste and which worries so many Members of the House and members of the public.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Bearing in mind the fact that the Labour party has in recent years changed its view and become more enthusiastic about the European Union, does the hon. Gentleman share my concern that, given the primitive nationalism about Europe that one sees in Britain, particularly in the press, there is an attempt to negate the validity of the concept of the European Union and the Community having its own resources—money that belongs to the Community, having been passed over by member states under these complicated formulae? The suggestion is often made in some anti-European journals here that it is our money and we should have it back, notwithstanding that we are the only ones to benefit from the rebate. Will he assert categorically that Labour is very much in favour of the concept of own resources and that the Community budget remains a modest proportion of the total public spending, allowing for all the large amounts in the member states, and that that concept should be developed for the common good of everyone in the Union?

4.45 pm

Mr. Smith: We recognise the importance of the European Union having the resources that it requires to do its job, and there is important work to be done at European level. I shall not return to all the arguments on the Maastricht treaty, and I would be out of order if I attempted to do so, but we made it clear that in today's world, with the extent of interdependence of economies and peoples in Europe, it is clearly appropriate to have institutions, policies and resources operating at a European level for the common benefit of all European Union members.

I wish to make two important points about that principle. First, it should be governed thoroughly by the principle of subsidiarity. Government works best when it is closest to the people and some enthusiasts for the European Union endeavour have in the past overstated the case for those measures which need to be taken centrally. Proper subsidiarity should operate in that the conduct and implementation of policy should be carried out at the level which is most effective and closest to the people.

Secondly, nothing undermines people's confidence in common action throughout the European Union and its institutions more than the extent of the fraud, waste and the unnecessary bureaucracy to which the European Union Court of Auditors' report so frequently draws our attention. If those charged with those responsibilities in Brussels, in the European Union or in the European Parliament let too wide a gap open up between the project in which they see themselves engaged and the perception of the ordinary citizens in different member states and their experience of the European Union, as we saw in the reaction to the Maastricht treaty, not just in Britain and in Denmark but also in Germany, France and elsewhere, it sets up a reaction that is damaging to the concept of European co-operation.

We need to emphasise what can be achieved by popular co-operation which engages people in trade, visits and cultural and sporting exchanges which bring practical benefit to people in their day-to-day lives. The £20 a week extra that the average family in the country is paying to keep the common agricultural policy going and the extent of waste from food mountains, wine lakes and tobacco subsidies is unacceptable. Britain needs to assert that and to be much more forceful in pressing for change and reform. It needs to build alliances with others within the European Union who think similarly so that we can get the European Union on to a more sensible course which will benefit people in this country and in other member states.

I repeat from the Dispatch Box Labour's commitment to European co-operation and our concern to see that the European Union works properly in the interests of the people of Britain and throughout Europe. The new clause, which addresses the important issues that I have raised, would give the House, on a motion tabled by the Government, the opportunity more fully to consider the issues. I commend it to the House.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Chairman: Order. I remind hon. Members again that this debate is essentially about own resources, so they should resist the temptation to talk about fraud until we reach the next group of new clauses.

Mr. Cash: First, I want to follow up the arguments that have just been put to us by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) regarding the implications of article 8(2) of the Council decision on own resources. The hon. Gentleman said that that is based on the Edinburgh agreement, but that is not strictly true.

The decision arises out of what has been described as an international commitment by the Prime Minister, but it was taken only on 31 October 1994 and in what could be described as extraordinary circumstances, not least of which is that it was taken only 10 days after the Chancellor of the Exchequer was summoned somewhat peremptorily by the commissars in Brussels in order to get him to give in to the Italian blackmail perpetrated as a result of the fraud that the Italians had committed for which they were to be fined.

The consequences of giving in to that blackmail have tainted the Bill with the fraud to which we capitulated by remitting a degree of the penalty in order to get through the own resources decision. That is a great pity. We all want to ensure that we can prevent fraud. I hope that we will have some interesting and useful observations from the Prime Minister through the Minister when he replies and that we will have some reassurance that the British taxpayer will have better value for money as a result of proper investigations into the way in which own resources are dealt with, most particularly with regard to the United Kingdom.

There is another disturbing feature of the manner in which the own resources decision went through. As far as anyone can tell, the decision was in breach of the undertaking given by the then Paymaster General to the Select Committee on European Legislation on 24 April this year. The Select Committee told the Government, in response to the explanatory memorandum, that we would expect the Government to come back to the Committee if the proposal was amended and resulted in a substantial change to the arrangements that were previously thought to exist.

I was astonished to find that that scrutiny reserve, which goes to the heart of the Select Committee's scrutiny process, should have been broken on such an important

[Mr. Cash]

matter. The resolution of the House in October 1990 stipulates what is effectively a kind of veto by the Select Committee, and therefore the House, on the implementation of a decision. Therefore, the Minister who is our representative in the Council of Ministers should not, in almost any circumstances, make a decision when the Select Committee has put on a scrutiny reserve.

On 31 October 1994 the own resources decision was passed, it would appear in breach of the resolution of the House in October 1990. That is a pretty serious state of affairs. I raised the matter on a point of order yesterday and I hope that the Minister will deal with it when he replies to the debate.

In addition, the decision is in breach of our European manifesto. I fought hard, with great vigour and determination, during the European elections to support my local candidate and I remember well what the manifesto said. It used words to the effect that we would resist all pressure to raise the ceiling on public spending in the European Community.

We had the presidency conclusions of the Edinburgh summit in December 1992. We then had the European elections in May/June 1994. We know from the sequence that I have described that the decision was not made binding in any respect until 31 October 1994. It would have been perfectly possible to have done a Fontainebleau by saying that circumstances had changed, so we should change with them, just as the Prime Minister said that circumstances had changed when we were ejected from the exchange rate mechanism. We should have said on 31 October, in all honesty and fairness to the other member states, particularly having regard to the behaviour of the Italians in all this, that we would not agree to the provisions.

As I said on a point of order at the beginning of these proceedings, we know from the enormous row going on in Holland, rather unreported in the British press, that the Dutch are so concerned about the additional moneys that they might have to pay in order to implement the decision, that the measure may not go through until February. That throws considerable doubt over whether, in accordance with article 11 of the own resources decision, it would be able to come into effect at all. That is a remarkable state of affairs.

The pressure that has been applied to get the measure through by 1 January 1995 is liable to be vitiated by the behaviour or attitude being adopted in Holland at the moment. That is Holland's affair, but no one should be under any misapprehension that we are being told to get the measure through by 1 January, when on any reasonable reading of the situation in the other member states that will not happen.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I am listening to the hon. Gentleman's reasoning with some interest. Is he saying that if the Government had a later implementation date the measure would be acceptable to him? He is using a sophist's argument if he objects to the measure in terms of the trigger date if there are difficulties in other member states. The measure is either acceptable to him or it is not and that should be the basis of his argument.

Mr. Cash: I have made it clear that I intend to support the Bill although, as I have said, with grave reservations, one of which is the matter to which the hon. Gentleman has just referred. It is important to make that position clear.

Mr. Kennedy: Is the hon. Gentleman saying therefore that he has grave reservations vis-à-vis January, but not March?

Mr. Cash: No, I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman does not understand what I am saying. I support the Bill but it is at least relevant to consider the extent to which the situation in other member states will delay the Bill beyond the legal requirements that are laid down in article 11 of the own resources decision.

The Court of Auditors' report on fraud makes serious criticisms about the way in which the moneys that are received under the own resources decision are being handled.

I understand perfectly, Mr. Morris, if you would rather we elaborated those questions on the next amendment, but for us to understand the implications of the own resources decision we had to have accurate figures. As you know, I was deeply concerned because there was a serious omission from the letter sent by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to all hon. Members, which made the matter, unusually, a national issue. There was a £750 million gap, but I am glad to say that it has now been sorted out. Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer described my original figures as rubbish, he had to change his tune somewhat as the week went by, and fortunately the mistake has now been rectified by information later presented to the House.

All those aspects throw substantial doubt on the way in which the Bill has been brought before the House. However, we have to make the best of the situation as we find it—and that brings me to a question that has caused me much concern, arising out of the manner in which the mechanisms to investigate own resources will operate.

I have argued that the Public Accounts Committee ought to work in a spirit of mutual co-operation with the Court of Auditors, and be brought in to play a much larger role than it has so far been able to perform. I have been reading an excellent publication called "The Committee of Public Accounts of the House of Commons", which gives a full description of the functions of the PAC, and explains how it is set up under Standing Order No. 122.

5 pm

It is clear that it would be highly convenient for the British taxpayer to know with some certainty that the audit would be subject to the high degree of scrutiny and efficiency exercised by the Public Accounts Committee, the second most important Committee of the House. The Privileges Committee is the most important in terms of what is described as scrutiny seniority, and the Public Accounts Committee comes second. The Select Committee on European Legislation, on which I serve, is yet another Select Committee.

The degree of independence of those Committees is reflected by their composition, their chairmanship and the fact that they—or at any rate, the Public Accounts Committee and the Scrutiny Committee—are chaired by members of the Opposition, to ensure that their scrutiny is totally independent. That is significant because the scrutiny process, the audit of the accounts on behalf of the taxpayer, has to be done with the complete independence that will guarantee the public the right results from the mechanisms described.

New clause 1 refers to article 8(2) of the own resources decision.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Gentleman has just elaborated on the importance of the PAC. Every Member of the House would endorse what he said about that. New clause 6, which the hon. Gentleman tabled but which has not been selected, is also relevant. Has he noticed that new clauses 14 and 15, which have not yet been selected either, but which deal with the same issue, now appear as starred amendments? Does he agree that it would be useful and appropriate to the matters that he is now raising if those new clauses could come into play in a later debate?

Mr. Cash: I understand what the hon. Gentleman means, and I have much sympathy with what he says—but of course I defer entirely to your selection, Mr. Morris. However, it would be possible for a starred amendment to be selected tomorrow so that the matter could be considered then. But even now, as I shall explain, because article 8(2) raises the question of the mechanisms to be employed in investigating questions of audit and accounting, the provisions of Standing Order No. 122 could be extended to give the Public Accounts Committee that additional opportunity to consider such matters and to satisfy the British taxpayer.

Article 8(2) says:

> "Without prejudice to the auditing of the accounts and to checks that they are lawful and regular as laid down in Article 188c of the Treaty establishing the European Community, such auditing and checks being mainly concerned with the reliability and effectiveness of national systems and procedures for determining the base for own resources accruing from VAT and GNP and without prejudice to the inspection arrangements made pursuant to Article 209(c) of that Treaty, the Council shall, acting unanimously",

adopt those provisions, and so on.

In a nutshell, article 188(c) says that

> "The audit shall be based on records and, if necessary, performed on the spot in the other institutions of the Community and in the Member States. In the Member States the audit shall be carried out in liaison with the national audit bodies or, if these do not have the necessary powers"—

that is an interesting point—

> "with the competent national departments. These bodies or departments shall inform the Court of Auditors whether they intend to take part in the audit."

So even in article 188(c), which is referred to in the own resources decision, what I have been saying about the extension of the functions of the Public Accounts Committee is anticipated. All that we need to do is simply to turn the key and allow the PAC to take up those powers, which article 188(c) already anticipated might be necessary to make the system work effectively.

The article continues:

> "The other institutions of the Community and the national audit bodies"—

in this context I presume that that would include the PAC and the National Audit Office, on which the PAC relies extensively for its reports—

> "or, if these do not have the necessary powers"—

that is the defect that we hope to rectify—

> "the competent national departments".

I hope that the Minister does not mind if from time to time I suggest that the words "the competent national departments" might sometimes be changed to "the incompetent national departments"—for instance, in connection with the Treasury figures the other day. But I do not want to be too rude about that. The article says that the competent national departments

> "shall forward to the Court of Auditors, at its request, any document or information necessary to carry out its task."

That means that we have a good working opportunity to get the procedure straight, and that would be of immense value and importance to British taxpayers, who would be assured that we were not only working within the context of the treaty itself, as amended up to and including Maastricht, but ensuring that taxpayers' money, as it relates to United Kingdom matters, was properly covered.

There is another argument here. The Maastricht treaty contains an important declaration that national Parliaments should be more involved. What better opportunity is there to run all these things together than to provide a means of achieving those mutual objectives and to make the system work in the interests of the taxpayer? That would show the Government's good faith in tackling fraud and irregularities, and in ensuring proper accounting procedures.

I never thought that I should say this, but I must say it because I like to use all the weapons that I can deploy. Even that dreadful concept of subsidiarity could be applied to this issue in the sense that there would be an opportunity to ensure that we got the proper examination of accounts in our domestic sphere in conjunction, as I said, with the operations of the Court of Auditors.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the principles of subsidiarity, if we truly understand what that term means, is that individual Governments should make up their own minds and be masters of their own destinies on matters relating to the countries concerned? If we cannot rely on our European partners to tackle fraud in the rest of the Union, would it not be highly appropriate for our Government and this Parliament to exercise some control over British taxpayers' money that goes to the rest of Europe?

Mr. Cash: Absolutely. As I shall say when I move to the analysis of gross national product, we must ensure that we do not have two separate sets of books of the kind that are, apparently, well known in Italian domestic tax collection. There are profound reasons why we want to be sure that the arrangements that we propose through our Public Accounts Committee become a model of the manner in which these matters should be dealt with in other countries. The knock-on effect in practical terms of what happens if we do things properly and other member states fiddle the books is that we end up paying much more. It is not merely a question of fraud; it is also a question of mismanagement, the result of which is that we end up paying a much bigger contribution than we should. A lot of profound and important questions are tied up in the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason).

As I have said, a whole range of matters are laid down under article 209, which deals with obtaining the opinion of the Court of Auditors; that is the dovetailing exercise I have in mind. Article 209(c) says that the Council shall

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> "lay down rules concerning the responsibility of financial controllers authorising officers and accounting officers, and concerning appropriate arrangements for inspection."

There we have it in the European context, complemented by our arrangements with the Comptroller and Auditor General, the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee. It is really quite a reasonable package which could result from the Government being constructive and forthcoming in making a change to Standing Order No. 122.

I now refer briefly to Standing Order No. 122; members of the Committee may be interested to be reminded of it. It says:

> "There shall be a Select Committee to be called the Committee of Public Accounts for the examination of accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted by Parliament to meet the public expenditure, and of such other accounts laid before Parliament as the committee may think fit".

The words

> "and of such other accounts laid before Parliament as the committee may think fit"

are important. The Standing Order then says that the Committee shall

> "consist of not more than 15 Members, of whom four shall be a quorum."

Standing Order No. 122(3) says:

> "The committee shall have power to communicate to any committee appointed under Standing Order No. 130"—

Standing Order No. 130 deals with the setting up of Select Committees—

> "such evidence as it may have received from the National Audit Office (having been agreed between that Office and the government department or departments concerned) but which has not been reported to the House."

It so happens that the other accounts laid before Parliament include the reports of the Court of Auditors. We in the Select Committee on European Legislation consider those reports and they are then laid before the House.

Recently—I say this with some concern and I have been critical of this—the reports have been shuffled together with a lot of other reports and have not been given the single-minded, independent debate that we used to have. Those debates were extremely valuable because people focused on the reports and they were not lost in a welter of other documents. If anything sensible came from the Government on the [illegible] this evening, that point would be sorted out at the same time, thus giving the boxing blue clarity that I seek. Under Standing Order No. 122(3), the Public Accounts Committee would receive the evidence. Thus the whole package is neatly contained in my proposals.

5.15 pm

New clause 4 is grouped with new clause 1; I have examined new clause 1 to the extent that I wished. I raised the question of gross national product in the debate on convergence criteria some months ago. I happened to be rifling through my papers for the debate when I suddenly came across a table that took me a little by surprise. Our distinguished Chancellor of the Exchequer places much importance on the vital matter of convergence criteria and only yesterday, the President of the Board of Trade told us how wonderful it was that we were bringing down inflation, and so on. I had to point out to him that it was only because we were now out of the exchange rate mechanism which he so strongly advocated. You will be glad to know, Mr. Morris, that I think that we can skip over that one for the moment.

The fact is that this business of gross national product is really serious. In the debate on convergence criteria, which was prescribed under the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993, the position became clear. In the tables that deal with how convergence criteria are calculated, east and west Germany are treated separately. I found that pretty astonishing. I thought that the wall had come down and that we were now dealing with one country.

The report by the Court of Auditors, which has only just come out, gives special attention to the scope for manipulating the GNP of a country. The Court of Auditors is, rightly, deeply concerned about the way in which GNP is being calculated. I am prepared to say that there is a higher probability that we are accurate in the way in which GNP is calculated in this country. If GNP is calculated on a double-book basis by some other countries, in which case a shady GNP figure is produced, there will be a profound impact on the amount of own resources that are collected. That is a very serious matter. For many reasons, we want to be quite certain that the GNP is properly calculated in each of the member states.

New clause 4 puts the matter in a nutshell. It says:

> "In implementing the provisions . . . of the Council decision of 31st October 1994 . . . the Government shall lay a report before Parliament in each year to the end of 1999, on the operation of the system set out in Article 10 of the Decision in respect of the United Kingdom; and each such report shall include an analysis of—
>
> (a) the revenue which the United Kingdom would be required to provide as own resources entered in the budget of the Communities as compared to the revenue required be provided by other Member States, by reference to the percentages of annual GNP set out in Article 2 of the Decision;"

Secondly, the methods of calculating the GNP of the United Kingdom and each other member state and their accuracy should be put in a report. Finally, the new clause says that there should be an analysis of

> "the effects on the United Kingdom, were it to be implemented, of any re-examination made in any year by the Commission, under Article 10 of the Decision, of the correction of budgetary imbalances granted to the United Kingdom."

That final matter is gobbledegook for the Fontainebleau rebate. It may come as some surprise to hon. Members that, under article 10 of the own resources decision, to which our Government have agreed, it says that the Commission shall, not might, by the end of 1999, submit a report on the operation of the system, including a re-examination of the correction of budgetary imbalances granted to the United Kingdom—that is the rebate—established by that decision. It shall also, by the end of 1999, submit a report on the findings of a study on the feasibility of creating a new own resource, as well as on arrangements for the possible introduction of a fixed uniform rate applicable to the VAT base.

Bearing in mind the fact that under the Maastricht treaty as enacted, there will be economic and monetary union, if not for the United Kingdom, depending on our decision under section 2, certainly for the hard core of other countries, it is no exaggeration to say that by 1 January 1999 those countries will enter into economic and monetary union in the third stage. That is the failure of Maastricht.

However, if we combine the provisions in article 10 to which I have just referred with that 1999 situation, we arrive at a nuclear point. The new own resource system, which could well be produced under article 10, may well be the arrangements for a completely new financing of the European Community, in addition to anything that we now have before us—all of that by 1999. So, we need to know, through a Government report, what that means, because the own resources report does not say "in 1999": it says "by 1999".

If, for example, by some terrible misfortune, the Government were to fall and if, for example, the Labour Government were to be in power, they would whistle through section 2 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993 and, with the possibility to which I have just referred on the back of it, it is my belief that we could be in a very serious and difficult situation.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman has drawn to the attention of the House, and possibly the country, the importance of article 10 of the decision, which the Bill endorses. He is quoting properly from the *Official Journal* of the Community, No. L 293/9 of 12 November 1994. Is he aware that the words that he is pointing out are also on the amendment paper? If, in future, there were an amendment to include those words as part of a schedule to this new Act, it would be plain for all to see. If that amendment were ever selected, would the hon. Gentleman vote for it?

Mr. Cash: I do not believe in hypotheses, certainly not when confidence motions are floating around. It is difficult enough to make up one's mind when one is faced with a real vote. I shall certainly not engage in a hypothesis of execution as well.

The question of GNP is very important because in 1993, the European Community raised £52 billion from the 12 member states, of which the United Kingdom's share was £6.3 billion. Each member state's contribution arises from four sources: VAT, fourth resource payments, customs duties and agricultural and sugar levies. The relative importance of each of them is shown by the proportions which they represent. VAT represents 55 per cent. of the member states' contributions, fourth resource payments 22 per cent., customs duties 20 per cent. and agricultural and sugar levies 3 per cent. The first two items, VAT and fourth resource payments, account for 77 per cent. of the Community's own resources and they are assessed wholly or partially by reference to GNP.

If we consider the way in which article 2 is drawn, which is the basis of revenue for the own resources, we see that a change is taking place. In 1995, the percentage of GNP required of the member states is 54 per cent., but it is 53 per cent. in 1996, 52 per cent. in 1997, 51 per cent. in 1998 and 50 per cent. in 1999. A country's VAT contribution to the Community budget is capped by reference to the country's GNP, while the fourth resource payments are assessed and paid on the basis of a country's GNP as a share of aggregate Community GNP. At the Community level, the total size of the Community's budget has to be held within a certain percentage of aggregate Community GNP, which is currently set at approximately 1.2 per cent.

Therefore, the accurate measurement of each member state's GNP is of crucial importance on two counts—first, in determining the contribution for each member state and, secondly, in determining the overall size of the Community budget. The amounts of money involved are absolutely massive and an error of 1 per cent. only in calculating, for example, the German GNP, would mean a difference in her fourth resource payment alone of something like £30 million. The question is how accurate, and how fair between member states, is the measurement of each country's GNP? It is not that accurate and fair, as the Court of Auditors' report makes clear.

On the reliability of GNP measurements, the Court says:

> "The Commission's conclusions do not make it possible to form a clear opinion of the degree of reliability of the data currently supplied by the Member States."

That is not a joking matter. It is about the extent to which, and the manner in which the amount of our own resources will be calculated with regard to other member states. If anybody thinks that is a matter of little importance, all I can say is that the taxpayers do not think so. The Opposition, if I may so—I am sure that they would not want to fall out with me this afternoon—may take account of the fact that all their palaver about fraud and so on is relevant only in so far as they properly appreciate the amount of money that British taxpayers are expected to cough up in this exercise. That amount is calculated by reference to the country's GNP.

The Court of Auditors goes on to say:

> "It would therefore seem to be rather unrealistic to think that a pronouncement can be made with the necessary rigour, on the reliability and comparability of the GNP aggregates that the member states supply to the Commission."

In other words, the Court of Auditors is saying that the member states are cooking the books. The result is that if we do not cook the books and we come up with a proper and accurate assessment of our GNP, we end up carrying the can.

Earlier, in discussing the fact that estimates of GNP are out of date in general, with some countries' estimates being more out of date than others, the Court of Auditors goes on to say in paragraph 1.92:

> "For example, there is the question of the updating of national accounts, with regard to which there is considerable disparity between Member States and for which 'reserve' should have been issued concerning GNPs that were determined on the basis of data that were too old (Greece and Portugal)."

There is also the example of the GNP of the former German Democratic Republic. Its previous planned economy is bound to pose problems for the assessment and integration into the GNP of the Federal Republic of Germany. As I have said, most people thought that we had a unified Germany. It seems that that is not the position when it comes to paying money into the Community. It is an amazing state of affairs. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will provide us with an explanation.

The Court of Auditors states:

> Despite the fact that the four-year time limit has not yet expired (Germany was unified in 1990), it is still astonishing that the Commission has not issued a reserve with regard to this question. This is a very serious matter."

"Reserve" is a technical word for rectification and notification; actions which the Commission is supposed to take. Presumably it takes an incident of staggering magnitude to induce the Court of Auditors to use an expression such as "it is still astonishing", but it did.

What are we to make of all this?

5.30 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): We have seen some recent comment about these matters. It seems that the Commission thought that the Court of Auditors was behaving in an unhelpful way in issuing its recent report. The Commission felt that the court should be rather more careful. It felt that it was undermining the idealism of the Community by revealing uncomfortable truths. Is my hon. Friend aware of those observations from the Commission?

Mr. Cash: I certainly heard of them. As I am a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, I have had the opportunity to visit the Court of Auditors and to have private sessions with it as well as the more formal ones. One of the most senior members of the court, Mr. Carey, was so dissatisfied with the way in which these matters were being conducted that he—I believe that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) had the original letter—tendered his resignation. He thought that the whole thing was going off the wall. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will deal with that later. I hope that I have not misrepresented the position in any way. It was certainly deeply worrying.

Figures have been provided and the Select Committee on European Legislation in the other place referred to about £4 billion-worth of fraud, or £6 billion. I am coming to believe that we have no idea of the extent of the fraud and that the figure could be as high as £15 billion, or £20 billion for all anyone knows. The Commission has every apparent intention of putting the matter under wraps.

Mr. Budgen: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I hope that he will forgive me for using that term to describe him. He may remember that the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the figure of £6 billion-worth of fraud had been plucked out of the air. I know that my hon. Friend follows the Chancellor's observations with great care. What is the Government's figure for fraud in the Community?

Mr. Cash: If the Chancellor of the Exchequer's figures, as expressed in his letter—

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member is getting into full flight. We are dealing with own resources and not exploring fraud in depth.

Mr. Cash: Absolutely, but I was dead on the point until I was diverted by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen). I am delighted to refer to him as my hon. Friend.

The Chairman: The hon. Member is correct; he was in order until he was nearly tempted by his hon. Friend.

Mr. Cash: What are we to make of the GNP issue? The measurement of GNP and the way in which the Community raises money from member states are genuinely complex matters. I make no bones about that. If we read between the lines of the pronouncements set out in the recent report of the Court of Auditors, we find vast areas of what must be described as unfairness when it comes to assessing member states' contributions. If Portugal and Greece are still using 1970s data, as the court says, and if Germany is conveniently forgetting that unification took place, someone somewhere is being treated unfairly.

We can assume yet again that the country that the Court of Auditors does not mention in its catalogue of GNP sinners is the one whose Government want it to be at the heart of Europe. We are undoubtedly paying for that. The distortions in the figures show that as usual the United Kingdom is playing the game and that the other member states, according to the Court of Auditors, are not.

I say with some sadness that some hon. Members go pottering about claiming that people such as myself are inventing nightmares, goblins or whatever; that we are slightly off the wall; that we do not have any concept of what the European Community is or should be, and that we are a collection of ridiculous, pompous old bores. It might occur to one or two of those hon. Members, who have been grossly negligent in the way in which they have allowed the European Community to burgeon as it has, to reflect that some of us are merely trying to do the job that we were elected to do. We are examining what is going on. The figures that I have produced and the arguments that I have advanced have all focused on the relationship between the United Kingdom Parliament, the Court of Auditors, the European Parliament, the Commission and a mutual arrangement. If we are to make any sense of these matters, we must take up the arguments that I have been addressing. These issues must not be bunged under the carpet.

I am informed by unimpeachable sources that during the debate on the EC budget on 28 October, when the House considered cutting out the European Parliament's proposals for an anti-fraud measure, it was said that the Government believed that the "Council's Second Reading budget" was "acceptable". That seems to suggest—I would like to hear the Minister's view—that the Government were going along with that budget rather than putting up a fight to increase the number of anti-fraud arrangements, which included the expenditure of 96,000 ecu for a unit to co-ordinate action against fraud. I would much prefer the matter to be dealt with through the Public Accounts Committee, but the arguments that I have been advancing are extremely relevant to the manner in which the own resources system functions.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Paragraph 5 of the explanatory and financial memorandum states:

> "The new Decision has to be approved by all member states in accordance with their national procedures before it can enter into force. It will take effect as from 1st January 1995."

Everything that my hon. Friends and I have been trying to do has been designed to make sure that the House carries out its normal procedures and studies these matters, and that Committees are properly set up to do that as well.

Mr. Cash: Absolutely. If we are to have a Community that works—I have been writing recently about this—and a Community that we want to be a member of, one that does not bully, threaten and cheat us, it is essential that we have complementary arrangements that are enforceable in the other member states. Why should we have debates of this sort, scrutiny arrangements, sittings of the Public Accounts Committee and all our other procedures if the other member states are cooking the books and not properly scrutinising the arrangements? Surely we are not that idiotic. We must insist on complementary arrangements and proper scrutiny as preconditions to any movements within the intergovernmental conference.

Given the connection between monetary union and own resources, we should also say no to a single currency now. That would clear up much of the trouble.

I see you stirring in your seat, Mr. Morris, and I would not want to inconvenience you by causing you to stand to put me back on the straight and narrow. Accordingly, I shall make my final point. I have sought to explain my reasons for tabling my amendments and new clauses. I am deeply concerned that the Fontainebleau rebate appears to be up for grabs. I cannot understand how that could ever have been incorporated in an own resources decision which is at the heart of the Bill that we are implementing, in accordance, it is said, with our constitutional requirements. In our own Bill—in our own legislation—we are carrying out an obligation imposed upon us by the Government as a result of their not resisting the re-examination of the rebate, to open the question whether what was negotiated for at Fontainebleau should remain on the table. That is a very serious matter.

I hope that we hear from the Minister, to minimise the potential man-traps that lie ahead this evening, a clear statement that we will have the opportunity, through the Public Accounts Committee, to look into all those questions. If we do, we will be able to get the finances of the European Community on to a better footing and, with a bit of luck and determination, also get the other member states to realise that we are not just an old, obsolete dinosaur of a Parliament, that we have some teeth and guts, and that we are going to do something about it.

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) outlined in extenso, but most usefully, several matters to which the Committee and, indeed, the nation should pay attention.

We all know, I think, in outline form that own resources, which are the theme of the first important debate on this important Bill, relate to no fewer than three very complex and moving formulae: first, that which determines the maximum amount that the European Communities can spend in any one year; secondly, the formula that the nations of the Community contribute, which is an extremely complex affair dealing with levies, VAT and GNP; and, thirdly, the extremely significant rebate methods, to which the hon. Member for Stafford drew attention, whereby up to half of our contributions to the European Community are returned by way of rebates.

Each of those is an extremely complex formula—much more complex even than most people realise. The Bill authorises financial provisions that will last until 1999, at which point—the hon. Member for Stafford spoke of an atomic explosion—they will come to a head. In 1999, the whole caboodle will have to be renegotiated, and, under article 10, which is important, so will the recalculation and reassessment of the United Kingdom's own rebate mechanism. The Bill refers to and authorises a decision to which we will be committed.

The Government may accept the new clauses if they so wish as they are not essential to the purpose of the Bill. Indeed, Sir Michael, new clause 1, which was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), new clause 4, which stands in the name of the hon. Member for Stafford, and new clause 12, which stands in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), are essentially "glasnostic". They deal with the mechanism of the procedure, which is almost unbelievably complex, even for those of us who try to understand it and come back to it every five years or so.

The means by which the formulae are drafted, let alone how they work, are almost impossible to discern. Where does one find a textbook or a running commentary on how they have been worked out in the past five years? We had such debates in 1988, Sir Michael, although I do not think that there are many survivors of them, and we know that, in 1999, our successors—some of us might be here then, but probably not many—will face an enormous problem.

The new clauses, especially those on article 8(2), and the extensive requirements of new clause 4, will be an invaluable guide. In the intervening years, if the new clauses are accepted—and I see no reason for their not being accepted—the country will be able to trace a little more easily what is really happening. When the House debates the difficulties of 1999, which will be pretty bad—at least one very important nation in the European Community has said that the British rebate cannot remain as it is, and I heard that from an authenticated source—there will be the most colossal collision.

5.45 pm

I do not understand why the Government should not accept the new clauses. Are not reports to the House open government? Is that not what the Government are supposed to be about? Article 8(2), to which my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East referred, treads on the matter of fraud, which we must not debate yet, Sir Michael.

The Chairman: Order. There has recently been too much confusion of identity. I am not Sir Michael.

Mr. Spearing: I beg your pardon, Mr. Morris. I revert to the proper usage.

Why should not new clause 4 be accepted? I do not say that the Minister should accept it straight away, but, if it is not accepted, where else will such matters be raised? We can look with some sympathy upon at least the intentions of the hon. Member for Stafford. Even if the Government do not want the new clause, the issues that the hon. Gentleman has raised and the questions that he has asked, particularly in respect of the formulae of new resources, are tremendously significant. Indeed—dare I suggest it?—the sums involved might be as great as or greater than the sum involved in last night's dramatic Division. It is very easy to lose squillions of pounds in such formulae yet worry about the mere £1,000 million which we discussed last night.

I wish, in a relatively brief introduction, to refer to the terms of new clause 12, which you, Mr. Morris, have kindly included in this group. In view of its terms, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, and my hon. Friends who might catch your eye to back him up, will request a separate Division if the Government do not accept it. I shall chance my arm and suggest that the Paymaster General accept it. It is a very straightforward request for an annual report to Parliament on the operation of the great big decision. The first thing that we want is

"a general presentation in text and tables of the financing and expenditure of the European Economic Communities in sterling equivalent and any common unit, which shall include comparable tables of income derived from each member state and expenditure therein in respect of each principal category of expenditure".

[Mr. Spearing]

I have no doubt that at some stage the Paymaster General will say, "Oh, the information is all in some report." It might be, but I suggest that what is sought by paragraphs (a) to (e) of new clause 12 will not be comprehensively available. It will not be gathered together in one slim White Paper which is presented to the House and which is available in public libraries for people in universities, colleges and schools to read and understand.

I found it necessary to gather that information when I read some figures in respect of our contribution to the European Union. It is particularly important in relation to rebate mechanisms. We should remember that our rebate is paid for by another sub-formula of countries that have to adjust their own contributions by paying more for the British rebate and other offsets.

I tried to get some figures from the Library to show how the European Community's receipts of expenditure had expanded at constant prices from 1973 to the present and how our own resources contribution and rebates worked out. The Library produced a graph, which I suggest is the only way for any citizen to understand what has happened. It looks rather like an atomic explosion because, even at constant prices, the amount of expenditure and income has expanded rapidly. This decision will authorise further expansion.

Some cynics say that the only way in which the European Community secures agreement is by lubricating disagreements with more cash. That is one of the reasons why the Government and the Community require greater own resources contributions at a time when the Community is telling the Chancellor to watch his own expenditure, but that is an aside.

The importance of our rebate formula cannot be overestimated because it zips up and down from year to year, as we were told during debate last week. Another graph that I commissioned from the Library shows the fluctuations only too well. The proportion of our receipts to our payments, without the rebate, is extraordinary. In some years, our receipts amount to only about one third of what we pay and the rebate makes up another third. However, if the rebate were taken away—as is envisaged in the decision that we will endorse in 1999—we would be in real shtook. Monitoring, which is the "in" word, as described in new clause 12 is very important indeed, as are the account of rebate mechanisms, which apply to any member state.

New clause 12, proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, would require

> "the operation of each article of the Decision"—

how it is worked out in practice. One article in the decision—which, incidentally, I believe should be a schedule to the Bill—relates to the British rebate. As I pointed out in an intervention, it is printed in the report to the Committee of the whole House. As you know, Mr. Morris, an amendment was proposed that sought to write the whole of the decision into the Bill as a schedule so that it would be there for all to see.

Article 4 of the decision, which appears in the *Official Journal* and on the amendment paper, is quite extraordinary. It contains 30 lines of excruciating mathematical formulae, which I was tempted to read into the record. I do not think that I will do so, although it may be educational for hon. Members. Almost every one of the 30 lines introduces another mathematical element into the decision— the magical formula

> "multiplying the result by 0.66"

and so on. Paragraph 3 states:

> "The basic amount shall be adjusted in such a way as to correspond to the reference compensation amount",

whatever that may be. Article 4 will affect the country most crucially but, unless a schedule is passed on Report or in another place, its yearly operation will hardly be debated at all because it is retrospective.

Much was said in the debate last Monday and in previous debates about how much extra money will be paid to the European Union—I could not understand all that farrago. The press went batty, arguing about whether it was £750 million or less. I suggest that one cannot tell how much it will be because the article is retrospective. I see that the well-informed hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is nodding his head. The press farrago about how much the Government will pay is a matter of speculation; it is merely an estimate. Unless the Government are forced to report annually to Parliament, we will not have a retrospective report of how the amount was worked out. The paragraph about reporting is a very important part of new clause 12.

If it does not appear in the schedule and we do not receive a report, as proposed under new clause 12, where will we get the information? The *Official Journal*, which was wielded by the Member for Stafford, contains the extraordinary statement:

> "Council decision of 31 October 1994; Acts whose publication is not obligatory".

Fortunately, because the decision is an important one it is contained in the *Official Journal*. Regulations are regarded as being important and therefore have to be published, but decisions are usually much less important than this one, which amounts to a treaty, and may not be published. I suspect that this decision, according to strict European Community treaty law, did not need to be published, even in the *Official Journal*. I suspect that that is so, but perhaps the Paymaster General will seek advice and confirm whether I am correct.

I hope that I have persuaded the Committee, particularly the Paymaster General, that new clause 12 is a democratic necessity. Without it, we will not be able to find out what has gone on and the Government will not be able to tell us comprehensively about the operation of this decision, and the 1998 decision which has to be considered with it. The decision of 1988 and the decision of 31 October 1994 have to be read together in order to find out what is going on. The 30 October 1994 decision comprised three different decisions, including one about budget discipline, which is related to this decision but is not the same. Perhaps the other place will include in legislation the reference number of another amendment which was put down but not selected and which is quite important.

I challenge the Minister to explain why we should not have some British glasnost on this matter. What is the Treasury afraid of in opposing the proposed new clause? I cannot think of any possible democratic, financial or moral reason to refuse it.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): I am glad that the debate is proceeding without the drama of an impending general election or the mass withdrawal of the Whip. Of course, it has lost a little excitement in the process, but that is more than compensated for by the very pertinent comments made by the Labour Front Bench, my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

The three proposed new clauses—Nos. 1, 4 and 12—are an attempt by the House of Commons to at least have a presence in European Union decisions. Through the actions of this and past Governments, we are bereft of what are traditionally considered to be appropriate powers. However, that surrender has not taken place with total acceptance on the part of the House. Euro-scepticism is alive and vigorous, and—foolish or wise—believes that the future belongs to it. The more we travel with the evolution of the Union in post-Soviet collapse circumstances, the more we realise that the original blue paper judgments of the treaty of Rome are increasingly inappropriate.

Therefore, the questions that we consider this afternoon are how the House can be better informed about resource allocation within the European Union and where the net balance of political judgment lies. Above all, that must be underwritten by the Treasury Bench and not secured by reading *The Financial Times* or *The Independent*. That is an important and legitimate aspiration. Knowledge will be the precursor of repossessing greater parliamentary authority in the decision-taking processes of the Union.

6 pm

I hope that my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench will feel generous towards the arguments that have been made, and will accept that we are trying to establish a partnership between the House of Commons and the Executive in the conduct of European policies. I say that because I believe that it is a matter of constitutional significance and one that will move in an evolutionary way, although not with high drama. As the hon. Member for Newham, South said, a few years from now people will look back and mark these debates. They will see what arguments were deployed and how they related to the way in which the Union has proceeded under the impact of our sister European nations.

The way in which the Union will proceed is a matter of speculation on our part. I believe that the forces operating against centralisation within the Union are powerful and will mesh with the attitudes that have been expressed this evening.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): I have followed the right hon. Gentleman's arguments with some care. Is he saying that, in reviewing the way in which the House of Commons votes money for the European institutions, it is right that we should consider how those institutions spend that money? Is not his argument that the House of Commons should have that opportunity when European institutions also have that opportunity? The European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council examine both how the money is raised and how it is spent. Does he not find it curious that the Bill deals only with how the money is raised and not with how it is spent?

Mr. Biffen: That is an interesting point. I have no wish to widen my area of dialogue with the Front Bench. I think that I am doing reasonably well on the present basis, but I take account of what the hon. Gentleman says.

There are great dangers in supposing that we can be some missionary force in the conduct of European fiscal affairs, and that the way in which we do things will eventually be accepted by our sister European countries. They all have their own traditions. One of the problems will be how those traditions relate to one another in a collective framework. Therefore, I am cautious about saying that we will stand out and have remarkable power in influencing future behaviour on such matters in Europe.

I do not intend to make a long speech. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford and the hon. Member for Newham, South properly concentrated on the role of the gross domestic product in the calculation of the allocation of resources. As the hon. Member for Newham, South said, GDP is presented in the European Council decision in the most fantastic, sophisticated manner, running to heaven knows how many places after the decimal point.

In reality, the concept of GDP is hit or miss. It is not possessed of immense sophistication. I am led rather pedantically to quote the American economist Morgenstern, who said:

"Qui incipit numerari incipit errari."

That is perfectly true. One has only to look—*[Interruption.]* I assume that the Latin tongue is well known on the Opposition Benches, but I will supply a translation for the Treasury Bench if it is thought appropriate. *Hansard* is well able to cope with these matters. It is when I lapse into Welsh that difficulties arise.

The concept of GDP is a matter for serious consideration. When substantial transfers of money from one country to another take place through a doubtful mechanism such as the present mechanism or whatever, do not suppose that there will not be eventually sharp political consequences. I see some Scots Members on the Opposition Benches. They will remember the days of rating revaluation. Something that ought to have been perfectly clear and manageable gave rise to a tremendous political furore.

How do we measure the black economy? How do we measure something which, by its nature, cannot be measured? How do we think it operates in Italy, Greece or other countries possessed of the Latin culture, as opposed to countries such as Denmark or Germany, which are Nordic in their traditions?

I do not see the point in any xenophobic way. It is a sheer practical consideration when we consider how we proceed with governmental co-operation, when the most intimate matters of resource allocation are decided by such dubious mechanisms. I will tell the House what will happen. There will be conflict and recrimination in all layers of government. The press will be expert in explaining how we are being ripped off by our partners. We see it already. We are forcing an arrangement which will compound all those difficulties.

I believe that it is perfectly possible for beneficial circumstances to result from resource transfer. Of course I do. The Marshall plan was easily the most successful

[Mr. Biffen]

internationally mounted system of resource reallocation. It was done without any of the absurd formulae which will be but an apple of discord for the future.

The conclusion I draw is that what we are being asked to nod reverentially and acquiesce to is the blueprint for the next phases of European co-operation, which will produce exactly the opposite outcome to that intended. It is bad enough that the mechanism has to deal with the present budgetary ambitions of the European Union. If it is to be the fulcrum for the transfer of resources to bring about economic cohesion and the preconditions for a single currency, it will simply lead to disaster.

Of course, I shall give the Treasury Bench all the support that it requires of me. But do not let it ask me to say that I have been intellectually convinced by Maastricht, by Edinburgh or by this Bill. For it simply will not stand the most severe testing—that of time.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) had a short dialogue with those on his Front Bench. Perhaps I may have a short one with mine.

I commend the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith). He will be surprised to hear that. Some of us were critical of his approach during the Maastricht debate, but his reply to the intervention of the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who tried to trap him into a complete defence of own resources, gave some of us Euro-sceptics some encouragement.

As my right hon. and hon. Friends see the doors of government opening and getting ever nearer, before long we on the Opposition Benches who have been the Euro-sceptics will gradually move to the main stream of the Labour party's attitude to Europe. All my hon. Friend needs to do is attend a session of what used to be called the Budget Council—I do not know whether there is still a Budget Council. The Budget Council is not about the budget, and its members cannot have any influence over spending decisions. In 1977-78, all the money went on the common agricultural policy, so there was not much point in going to Brussels for the Council. That is part of the problem—spending is set.

I understand that surpluses can be carried forward. The Treasury used to shudder at the very thought of carrying forward surpluses, or money not spent, from one year to the next. That system does not provide any sensible control over public expenditure.

I predict that, once my right hon. and hon. Friends get into government, the Labour party will move back to its original Euro-sceptic state. Whatever Government are in power, at some time they will have to stand up and defend British interests at the Councils of Ministers.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the main point that so differentiates this budget from a domestic budget is the simple fact that, if we did nothing today, or on Third Reading, the Community would still get its money year on year? The increase is the only thing that it would not get. If a domestic budget is not voted through, there is no money for the following year, and therefore there can be no control.

Mr. Davies: I understand that very well. The object of this debate is to make a charge on the Consolidated Fund. It is that terrible thing, hypothecation. A chunk of money—about £2.5 billion net next year—is hypothecated. The Chancellor is scrabbling around to find £1 billion as a result of what happened last night. He can touch all other areas of public expenditure—I do not think that he can touch judges' salaries, as they also have their backsides on the Consolidated Fund—but he cannot touch the Euro-budget. That is the object of this sort of exercise.

To return to the own resources debate, I must inform the Paymaster General that I was intrigued with article 8(2) of the European Council's decision, whereby the Commission is given certain powers to do certain things to apply the decision. I do not understand what that means. I am sure that the Paymaster General is well briefed, and will tell us what it really means from a technical point of view.

On the abatement provisions, I was a great admirer of Lady Thatcher and those people who negotiated the Fontainebleau agreement. It was not an easy thing to do, and our contributions decreased for a while. Now, that agreement is written into the document under discussion, as it presumably was in 1988. It is codified, and has been taken away from Fontainebleau and become part of article 4 of the Council's decision.

When the document comes to the end of its life, the Fontainebleau agreement will do so also, and there will have to be more negotiations. On top of that, article 10 of the decision states that the Commission has to do something about it by 1999. It is therefore slightly disingenuous for the Government to say that they have preserved the Fontainebleau agreement, because it is up for grabs again.

I do not know what will happen in 1999, or even before then. I do not know what will happen in 1996—the yea of the intergovernmental conference. Perhaps new institutions and new common policies will be created, as well as new work found for the old institutions. Article 2(2) refers to common policies and new charges Presumably, if a new policy is created, new money will have to be obtained.

6.15 pm

I wonder whether what we are debating is really a sacrosanct as the Government seem to think. If substantia changes were to be made in 1996, it might give th Commission the opportunity to slip in a few figures, rais the ceiling a little and gain more powers for certai institutions.

The history of this European centralised state has bee the history of the battle to acquire power between th institutions. It is the Europe of the institutions and not o the people. The struggle is not between nation state an centralised European state, but within that centralise state for more power and more money. Power need money, and more money produces more power. I woul not be as sanguine as the Government that everything all right until 1999. That is not how such things wor The Commission is adept at finding itself more money- not necessarily to spend for itself, but because of th power that goes with expenditure.

The cost of the CAP is increasing. Perhaps it is smaller percentage of the budget than it used to be, b the amount spent on it will still have increased by 199 As I said on Second Reading, some people seem to thi that the Poles will save us from the CAP and that the will smash it when they join, but they will need region and structural funds. Enlarging the Community with countries from the east, which are poorer than ours, will not mean a smaller budget or getting rid of the CAP.

The balance of payments is not a fashionable subject these days. The Paymaster General is present: he probably writes the cheques once a week, or whatever it states in the agreement, which probably also states, "If you don't, the Commission will come down on you like a ton of bricks." So he has to write the cheques. I imagine that they are in ecus or deutschmarks. I do not suppose that they are made out in pounds. Presumably the money comes out of the exchange equalisation account. Perhaps things have changed, but that used to be the case.

If our net contribution is to be £2.5 billion next year—I know that one cannot identify a particular year, because money goes in and comes back out—in my book that is £2.5 billion on the balance of payments deficit. In his Budget speech, the Chancellor said how wonderfully the balance of payments was doing. I am not so sure. I found in the Red Book that we would have a deficit of £6.5 billion on manufacturing industry and £7 billion on something called "other", which is in effect food and drink. That is a total of £13.5 billion, but it will be reduced by about £2 billion or £3 billion in invisibles and £5 billion in oil, as it has doubled in the past few years.

Old oil is being called on once again to save the Conservative Government, although it is probably too late on this occasion. Earnings from invisibles and oil bring the total down, but the £2.5 billion has presumably been subtracted, and it amounts to half the surplus on oil exports. That sum of money is not merely public expenditure, as it goes across the exchanges. Perhaps it will do so less and less if we move to a single European currency. The great advantage of such a currency would be that no one would have to worry about such matters any more.

The hon. Member for Harrow, East is nodding. He is very pleased. There would be no problems about a balance of payments deficit with Europe, or a large manufacturing deficit. Unemployment is the problem in my constituency, but I do not expect the hon. Gentleman to worry much about that. The problems will appear in different ways, but they will not appear in the balance of payments.

Mr. Dykes: Unemployment is a separate problem, which needs to be dealt with by a separate mechanism. The programme on jobs, growth and employment was the beginning, and that is why more resources are needed to reduce unemployment. It still remains a modest amount of money in comparison with what other member states do.

Mr. Davies: We have heard that speech so often. People say that more resources are required to counteract unemployment, and it is not very much really. As unemployment increases, more and more resources have to be found to combat it. Who has to pay? Constituents like mine, many of whom are unemployed anyway.

If I may digress a little, I am surprised that the hon. Member for Harrow, East is considering unemployment in terms of little Europe. Perhaps we can debate the matter again. The world is passing us by, and moving away from Europe. We have the general agreement on tariffs and trade and a global economy, yet the hon. Gentleman is still stuck in that old groove.

The Chairman: Order. We are certainly not discussing the global economy in the debate on this new clause. The right hon. Gentleman must get back to own resources.

Mr. Davies: I accept that we are talking about the European Union own resources decision, and nothing more global than that. The Library has assessed that we have spent £22 billion since 1974 across the exchanges on being a member of the club, or on having a seat at the top table. I am not quite sure what the justification is supposed to be. By 1999, it is projected that we will probably add to that another £13 billion. Let us round it up. It is just £35 billion—not very much to the hon. Member for Harrow, East, who thinks that that is a small amount in terms of total Government expenditure.

That is the money that we have spent, but I do not know why we have spent it. Other countries have not spent similar amounts. As I said on Second Reading, my constituency is at the far end of Wales—Dylan Thomas described it as west Britain—far away from Brussels and further away from Berlin.

I do not have the figures for Ireland here, but the Irish do marvellously. We talk about GNP—part of the GNP of the southern Irish economy comes from us. It comes from some of my constituents. The figures for income per head around Dublin are probably much higher than the income per head in Llanelli, Merthyr Tydfil or the Rhondda valley. Luxembourg does just as well as Ireland, and it has the second-highest per capita income in the European Union. That is the nonsense that we are discussing in the context of this new clause.

The more information and control we have in the House the better. I would have thought that somebody would have to say that the ceiling should come down, and that, if we believe in subsidiarity, the ceiling should not go up. The battle between the centralised European state and the nation states will go on.

I agree with the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North. I think that the tide is turning, and that it will not be long before even the Labour leadership recognises that change is necessary.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): It strikes me as one of the ironies of my political life that, way back in 1979 when Lady Thatcher first formed her Government, I suddenly found myself made a Parliamentary Private Secretary to my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). He was already known as a fairly strong Euro-sceptic, while I was clearly on the Europhile wing of my party. That difference between us has not changed in the intervening years.

My right hon. Friend tolerated me as a PPS with great good humour, until Lord Howe's Budget of 1981 when I resigned for not supporting the retrospective tax elements in it. My right hon. Friend tolerated my little rebellion. In those days, the resignation of a PPS earned about three lines on page 17 of a major newspaper, and my resignation did not make headline news. But he tolerated my departure with great good wit, just as, I am sure, the Front Bench will tolerate any rebellion by my right hon. Friend today.

[Mr. Tim Renton]

I have always found that, despite our philosophical differences about the EC, my right hon. Friend and I have many other things in common. I agree very much with what he said about the need for greater transparency in the issues which we are discussing this afternoon. Clearly, that is not easy to achieve.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash)—he is temporarily not in his seat—and the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) bring to the issue enormous experience from sitting on relevant Committees, such as the Select Committee on European Legislation and the Committee on the Maastricht Bill. Most of the rest of us—myself included—do not have that experience. There are times when they are speaking—however wise the speech may be—when a certain miasma or a fog of lack of perception comes over one, simply because one does not know the details. That is one of the troubles with a debate such as this.

The greater the transparency, the better. The House of Commons and all hon. Members need to be informed, no matter whether they have sat on the relevant Standing or Select Committees or not. I certainly accept that. Putting the issues of fraud or financial mismanagement aside to a later debate—that is what you want us to do, Mr. Morris—this first debate is therefore in search of transparency.

The debate is about two prime questions: the first concerns the formula of own resources, and whether it can last until 1999, while the second is about the competence of the institutions that already exist to deal with the checking and control of the funds disbursed by the European Union.

I shall deal with the resources question first. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford—in a lengthy but well-informed speech—did somewhat exaggerate the problems of using GNP as a measurement of each country's proportionality or its suitability for contributing to own resources. That is borne out by the comments in the Court of Auditors report.

The report carefully looks at whether the current, different definitions of GNP are adequate, but the court's summary on the issue states that employing a statistical concept such as GNP that does not correspond to a fiscal base that can be checked with reasonable certainty may provide a means of ensuring that the financial responsibilities of the European Union are fairly divided up between member states; the report states that the use of GNP may provide a fair division.

To be fair, the report then goes on to say that the use of such a concept requires a considerable effort from the Commission and member states to ensure that national accounts are reliable and harmonised, and thus to ensure that the budget and the policies of the European Union are managed rationally. That is a far cry from the picture that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford painted—that, as a result of conscious or unconscious distortions in GNP, the UK could find itself paying perhaps 1 billion ecu or 2 billion ecu more a year than was justified. My hon. Friend may have had his tongue in his cheek when he arrived at that over-dramatic conclusion.

Of course GNP can be improved as a formula, and there is a necessity for the formula to be harmonised throughout member states. I do not believe that the formula has in it—either at the moment or inherently—the degree of distortion which my hon. Friend painted. I do, however, agree much more readily with those who wonder whether the present own resources formula which is encapsulated in the Bill—clause 1 of which we passed with extreme rapidity—will last until 1999.

The accession of the Visegrad countries—which hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber hope and believe will happen—is likely to increase the common agricultural policy budget by 50 per cent. and the regional budget by perhaps 100 per cent. By the time the British budget comes up for renegotiation in 1999—which is the present aim—the picture will be totally unrecognisable and different from the present situation. That should be put on the record, as we agree to the new higher limits based on an individual country's GNP.

The second point is about the efficiency of the existing institutions to check on the disbursement of funds, and how carefully they are spent. It is remarkable that, during this interesting debate, no one has given credit to the European Parliament for having set up the Court of Auditors, which it decided to do in the early 1980s. I think we would all agree that that was very much a step in the right direction.

As the hon. Member for Newham, South said, there is clearly friction between the Court of Auditors and members of the Commission. The Court of Auditors produced a fairly critical report, comprising 450 pages of detailed analysis of what, in many cases, constitutes financial mismanagement rather than fraud. Members of the Commission immediately stated, in print, that they considered some of the criticisms unfair and not properly based.

6.30 pm

On one point, however, the Commission and the Court of Auditors established common ground. Shortly after presenting his annual report in Strasbourg on 15 November, Mr. Middelhoek, president of the Court of Auditors, said:

> "eighty per cent. of the European Budget is actually spent in the Member States so eighty per cent. of the problems come within the remit of the Member States".

But what precisely does that word "remit" mean?

The underlying thought, surely, is that if 80 per cent. of the money is passed on to the member states—remitted to them—by the Commission, it is up to those states to check that it is properly spent. Judging by some of the comments that I have heard, I think that there may be a gap in our present mechanism, which we and other member states must fill ourselves.

I have never been a member of the Public Accounts Committee, but I fully appreciate its importance and its seniority in the pecking order of the House. Hon. Members have asked why the PAC is not empowered to look into the disbursement of European funds in this country, along the lines suggested by Mr. Middelhoek. What, in fact, is to stop it from doing so now? What is to stop the Comptroller and Auditor General from examining—at this very moment, if he so wishes—the way in which European funds are spent in this country, and establishing whether those funds are spent efficiently, fairly and honestly?

Mr. Spearing: The quick and rather brutal answer to that question is that new clauses 14 and 15, and another tabled by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), have not been selected. I understand that those new clauses would have done what the right hon. Gentleman asks.

As for the 80 per cent. figure to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, it is difficult for a member state to say that the amount has been improperly distributed to some of its areas, regions and towns. The right hon. Gentleman might ask his city council, and I might ask mine, but it would be difficult to say that money sent by Brussels to perform—supposedly—many good works had been improperly sent by Brussels. It would be hard to question both the distribution of the money and the advisability of sending it.

Mr. Renton: The hon. Gentleman has considerable experience in this context. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will comment when he replies, but surely it would not be difficult for the Comptroller and Auditor General to examine the issue. Nowadays, for instance, bypasses are often built and little signs are put up, saying, "This bypass has been built in part with funds from the European Union." Surely it is easy to check whether the funds have been properly and fairly spent.

This is, I think, very relevant to the common agricultural policy. As the CAP grows, which it is bound to do, with the accession of the Visegrad states, there is likely to be increasing demand for each member state to be responsible for CAP disbursements made within it—responsible in the sense of checking financial irregularity.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): I should like the position to be as the right hon. Gentleman has described, but it is not, and I cannot see how it will be. The CAP does not involve British Government money; it is not part of any estimate in any individual Department. The accounting officer in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is not responsible for CAP money, and is therefore not responsible for that expenditure to the National Audit Commission or the Public Accounts Committee. That is very sad: it represents one of the ways in which the House has lost control over the expenditure of large sums. I am afraid that the PAC is not the answer, however, although I should like it to be.

Mr. Renton: Perhaps this is a genuine lacuna. Later this evening, we shall debate the PAC's role. New clauses which some of us tabled referred to it specifically, but they have not been selected.

As a non-member of the PAC, I do not see any statutory bar that would prevent the Comptroller and Auditor General from examining the disbursement of the money. Furthermore, I believe that there will be increasing pressure from the Court of Auditors and the Commission on member states—not just because of the principle of subsidiarity but because of a genuine wish for the work to be done efficiently—to become more involved in checking that there has been no financial mismanagement.

Mr. Duncan Smith: My right hon. Friend has said that a problem exists, and that it should therefore be scrutinised. He should approach the issue from another angle. The real problem lies in the fact that money passed to Brussels is then redistributed back to the nation states, where all accountability is lost. Surely the money should not go to Brussels in the first place, but should be disbursed in the nation states originally. Brussels should then adjudicate.

Mr. Renton: That issue lies at the heart of the way in which subsidiarity will develop in the years ahead. I strongly believe in the strength of the European Union and its ability to do some things better than individual nation states, but I think that because financial mismanagement—if not fraud—clearly accompanies international subsidy in particular, there will be a growing demand for better methods than subsidies to be found to redress regional or national imbalances. We do not yet know what that better way will be, but I think that allied with the pressure that I have mentioned will be pressure for fraud or mismanagement within member states to be the subject of redress within those states.

The 450-page Court of Auditors report is an immensely impressive document; its authors have done a fantastic amount of work. The question now is this: how do we and other national Governments—and the Commission and the Council of Ministers—ensure that some of the report's many recommendations are implemented, and that problems are put right?

I have been told, although I have not checked personally, that at present fraud against what are loosely defined as the European Union's financial interests is a criminal offence only in Germany, Italy and Portugal. If that is so, it means that there is a gap in the criminal justice provisions of individual countries, including our own. We should make certain that we have the legal and penalising weapons to ensure that, when we know that funds have been mismanaged, we have the capacity to right the position domestically when that is possible.

I wholly agree with hon. Members who have said that the matter is deeply important to those of us who believe in the European Union. We know that, unless we get it right, the Union's image will be increasingly tarnished.

Mr. Rowlands: I listened with considerable interest to the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), and all his speech demonstrated to me was the sad and tortuous way in which we are now realising exactly how much power has gone and is going from this place.

I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity now, although the issue of control of public expenditure and its disbursement should arise when we discuss our next set of amendments, to clarify whether I was right in saying, when I intervened on the speech of the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex, that there is no means by which the accounting officer in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—the permanent secretary—can be hauled before the House of Commons or the Public Accounts Committee over expenditure on the common agricultural policy, because it is not part of any estimates in any Government Department. I shall illustrate that argument to him later, with the example of a Department for which he had some responsibility, in overseas aid.

The right hon. Gentleman also, I think, left out a major aspect in his speech. He said that there were two issues—first, how money was raised and, secondly, the control of its disbursement and the competence and accountability of disbursement. There is one stage between those two—where the money is spent. The other aspect that requires transparency is the expenditure that will be given, as a result of the Bill, to the European Commission and Commissioners.

[Mr. Rowlands]

An important feature of new clause 12 is that we say that not only own resources but the expenditure that will flow from those own resources should be the subject of annual reports. If you have any doubts, Mr. Lofthouse, paragraph (a) of new clause 12 covers the point clearly.

I therefore draw to the Committee's attention the aspects of expenditure that we shall approve. However, first I should like to say something to the Paymaster General. I listened to the Budget last week. I sat and listened to the Chancellor boasting about the degree of financial and Budget discipline that he had managed to instil and obtain. One of the key successes that he claimed in our last Budget was that he had stopped carrying over expenditure; the savings resulting from lower inflation had been clawed back, and that is why the public sector borrowing requirement was decreasing. That was one of the central things that he said. How could the same Minister and the same Cabinet likewise approve article 7 of the own resources decision, which reads:

> "Any surplus of the Communities' revenue over total actual expenditure during a financial year shall be carried over to the following financial year"?

That means that there will be, presumably, built-in continuing expenditure, irrespective of whether one can find meaningful plans for spending the money and whether it will be efficiently spent—it does not matter. The money will be carried forward from year to year.

How can the same Government who, in their national Budget, argued passionately that they had achieved that form of budget discipline approve an article of that type? We might want to carry money over to spend, but how can a Government who actually preached about prudence of that character, endorse and support article 7 of the own resources decision?

Mr. Spearing: I suggest a possible answer to my hon. Friend. It is the old style of secret package bargaining. They have said, "And if you do not agree with that, we will not maintain your rebate."

6.45 pm

Mr. Rowlands: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

There is another matter to which I draw the Committee's attention because it has not been discussed tonight, although my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) mentioned some aspects. The other part of the bargain that was made was the determination of the expenditure that will arise from those own resources between now and 1999. It is not true that, one of these days, we shall decide where the money is to be spent. That matter was also determined at Edinburgh. It should be the subject of annual reports of the character that we suggest in new clause 12.

I should like the Minister, when he replies, to tell us the status and nature of the "Financial perspectives 1993 to 1999—Appropriations for Commitments" which was attached to the own resources decision after the Edinburgh conclusions, which said not only, "This is how we shall raise the new money and the new own resources," but, "This is where it will be spent."

Let me draw the Committee's attention to those commitments and decisions. For example, it was decided that there would be an increase of no less than 19 per cent. in real terms in administrative expenditure. The current Government, who have said that administrative savings must be made so that all pay and salary increases in the public services may be met from increased productivity in each Department, support a policy that the administrative expenses of the Commission, and so on, should increase by 19 per cent. in real terms.

Where is the consistency in the approach? Why is there that complete set of double standards—that we have to have the greatest possible control of the administrative costs of running the public services in this country but we shall endorse, as a result of the Bill, a 19 per cent. increase in the Commission's administrative expenses? I honestly do not understand how one squares those arguments.

We were left with the major impression that somehow we had capped CAP—that we had capped the costs of CAP. But a commitment—as I understand it, a legally binding commitment—of the same kind and character as the Bill makes on the own resources decision was contained in the Edinburgh decision, which ensures that, far from the expenditure being capped, there will be another increase in CAP in real terms of about 9 per cent. between now and 1999.

I considered the two aspects that should matter most to a constituency such as mine. Initially, I was pleased to note that the cohesion fund will increase by 73 per cent. between now and 1999—again, as I understand it, a legally binding commitment to spend the money which we are raising in the Bill, and which is being raised in the own resources decision, on the cohesion fund. I was pleased, that is, until I found out—this is why we need reports of the type suggested in new clause 12—the way in which it has been rigged. The criteria that will be used for cohesion funds ensure that only three or four countries will benefit. Communities such as those in parts of Mid-Glamorgan whose gross domestic product per capita is as low as that of many communities in Spain or Portugal will not be able—partly as a result of the present Government's policies—to qualify for any expenditure under the cohesion fund.

I should have been delighted at the 39 per cent. increase in structural funds; here, at least, some money might be repatriated back into communities of the character of those in my constituency. However, one finds that the whole of Wales is ruled out of objective 1 status and therefore will not qualify for anything but a fraction of that 39 per cent. increase in structural funds. In fact, one encounters such problems repeatedly.

The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) said that those moneys could be used to improve the lot of the constituents of Llanelli and of Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney. I want to tell him the sad story of RECHAR—of trying to obtain funds for coalfield communities such as mine when the pits were closed. We bargained and haggled. Haggling between the Government and the Commission went on and on until such expenditures were way behind the closures. They were supposed to be lifelines; the lifelines came very late indeed as a result. So, even when we have tried to manipulate and utilise the expenditures that are envisaged in the decision, we have found them horrifically bureaucratic and difficult to apply.

Finally, I draw the Committee's attention to the aspect that is the most extraordinary result and consequence of the Edinburgh own resources decision, and therefore makes necessary the reports which are provided for in our new clause 12. Did any Minister come before the Dispatch Box between the Edinburgh summit and May 1994 to tell the House that, as a consequence of the determination of the expenditures that I have described, more than 50 per cent. of the overseas aid budget will be spent by agencies outside the United Kingdom? Was any hon. Member informed by any Minister at the Dispatch Box that the consequence of agreeing those guidelines, those appropriation commitments, legally bound the overseas aid budget to increase and increase in European terms although the United Kingdom's sum total has been capped?

We shall be in an extraordinary situation. Next year, because of expenditure in the United Nations, but primarily because of the increases in the European overseas aid budget, which we shall be legally bound to pay, more than 50 per cent. of a major Department's public expenditure will be spent by agencies outside the control of the House and the Government. That is extraordinary.

Ministers who grappled with the problems of financial accountability should be horrified. I believe that the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex was once responsible for the aid programme. He should be horrified at such Government expenditure and the fact that most of the money is now spent on agencies outside the control of the House, without any accountability to the Public Accounts Committee in the way that he suggested.

Mr. Renton: For the record, I should put the hon. Gentleman right. The Minister responsible for overseas aid to whom he referred was my good friend and namesake, now Sir Timothy Raison, not Timothy Renton.

Mr. Rowlands: I apologise—I thought that, in his Foreign Office days, the right hon. Gentleman had some responsibility for such matters. However, I hope that he is similarly horrified by the results of such policies.

According to the table on the appropriations for commitments, the European external aid budget will increase by 42 per cent. in real terms between now and 1999, while the British overseas aid budget will be capped, held at the same level or given a marginal increase. More than 50 per cent. of the aid budget will be spent on external matters outside our control.

More interestingly, 45 per cent. of the European aid budget is outside the control of the European Parliament because it belongs to the European development fund, which is not part of the budget. We do not control, supervise or scrutinise money from the European development fund—the European Parliament does not have any right to do so either, because that fund is not part of the budget. That is extraordinary, and all the more reason why we need information and knowledge. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) said that knowledge was power. Information would warn us and we would see the pattern of expenditure developing. We would not be in our present position, where we find that decisions made in 1992 have led to extraordinary figures on overseas aid expenditure, with the House lacking control over them.

It is time for us to assert ourselves, not on a party basis but on a cross-party basis. This is a parliamentary matter and we need the information and reports on which to try to re-establish some degree of accountability and scrutiny—at least to know the consequences of the decisions being made. We did not know the consequences of many of the decisions made in Edinburgh in 1992. I thought that it was unfortunate and unfair when, on Second Reading, the Chancellor chided his Conservative Back-Bench colleagues—I think that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was one of them—for not raising various matters about the 1992 Edinburgh decision. In fairness, the information was not available to the House. It was only gradually, as a result of questioning in Committees and vigilance, that we became aware of what was happening, what would happen and the consequences of some of the decisions.

Mr. Spearing: The Government seem to have forgotten that about a year ago in European Standing Committee B, they dealt with the matter and there was a Division. One day later, on the Floor of the House, there was another Division on a measure being taken forthwith, and more than 40 Opposition Members voted against the sort of proposals contained in the legislation. Ministers have probably forgotten about that—they probably did not even know that it happened.

Mr. Rowlands: Every time we discuss such matters I become more worried. I was a slow learner, but on Second Reading I found myself becoming more sceptical as I began to realise how accountability was moving from the House as a consequence of the decisions being taken.

We are entitled to ask for the sort of information that we demand in new clause 12. Will the Paymaster General tell us the status of the appropriations for commitments that I have been describing and outlining to the Committee? Are they legally binding commitments to expenditure? The own resources decision is a legally binding commitment on which the Government are unable to renege. Are the expenditures that were forecast and the commitments attached to the own resources decision legally binding? When it investigated the overseas aid aspects of the Edinburgh decision, the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs was told that those commitments were legally binding and we could do nothing about them.

Over and over again, the European Commission has failed to spend quite a lot of the money and has carried it forward or held it in account until it can find appropriate projects. Anyone who has begun to look, not at the corruption but at the waste and incredibly divided management of the European aid budget, will understand what I am saying. The Select Committee has been uncovering such problems in the past few weeks and hopes to report to the House soon. Without important changes to the management and accountability of the programme, the Committee would not agree to a 42 per cent. real terms increase in the European overseas aid budget. There will be an opportunity to raise those issues in our discussion on the next set of amendments.

We are calling for greater transparency and information so that we do not get caught unawares. We want to foresee the consequences of the decisions made in 1992.

Mr. Allason: I rise to support new clause 4 in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and a number of others, including myself.

I have no enthusiasm for the Bill, but it does not have the constitutional implications of the Maastricht treaty. New clause 4 is important because it will enable the House and the public to understand the matters that will be decided at the intergovernmental conference in 1996. We are seeking a sort of annual report which will describe our contributions precisely and in simple terms so that

[Mr. Allason]

comparisons can be made with other countries. That is significant because it is in line with the traditions of the House in scrutinising all our expenditure.

Our traditions are not automatically accepted or followed by our European partners. Baroness Thatcher used to boast of her twice-weekly visits to the House to answer Prime Minister's questions. She would then remind her European partners that her Spanish counterpart, the Spanish Prime Minister, had the sole constitutional responsibility of visiting the Cortes just once a year to answer questions.

Scrutiny by the House is of enormous importance; it goes back to the principle of no taxation without representation. The issue before us today is taxation without information. We are seeking to ensure that the maximum information is placed before the House in a manner which enables us to scrutinise expenditure. If that is not allowed to happen, we shall certainly be moving towards taxation without representation. The issue of representation falls outside the scope of the subject of own resources, however, and I shall therefore not expand on it.

It is important that the public should have confidence, not necessarily in the fact that the money is well spent, but in the acceptance of all the principles of subsidiarity. Elected Members of Parliament should have the right and the ability to scrutinise where and how tax is being spent and to ensure that there is maximum transparency and scrutiny of the fraud that we understand has taken place in the European Union in recent years and thus to seek to minimise the disappearance of significant amounts of taxation.

The Minister was eloquent on the subject of fraud. I know that it is a subject close to his heart because I heard him on my car radio on Friday afternoon when he emphasised the information that had been laid before the House. In an interview with Nick Clarke on "The World At One" he got the better of his interviewer by demonstrating that some rather abstruse items of information had been laid before the House. He clearly believes that the availability of information is important; that is also at the heart of new clause 1.

7 pm

It is our desire to ensure that the maximum information can be laid before the House. There is, of course, a danger in misinformation. Christopher Booker has written numerous columns about interference from Brussels and the ridiculous bureaucratic rules that are produced by directives. Apparently, they are the guiding light for environmental health officers up and down the country. If Christopher Booker is to continue his campaign, it is essential that the information he uses is accurate. We heard yesterday that he was uncharacteristically incorrect in saying that VAT on domestic fuel was a requirement of the European Union. Apparently that is not the case; Brussels makes no demands in that direction, so in those circumstances Christopher Booker would appear to be wrong.

Mr. Spearing: Without looking at the records, perhaps the Paymaster General would agree that our zero rating arrangement will come to an end in 1998 or 1999, when we shall have to negotiate whether a zero rating continues. In other words, there is a presumption under treaty regulations that we shall have to give it up or obtain an exemption in the future.

Mr. Allason: The hon. Gentleman is quite correct when he says that 1999—the date mentioned in new clause 4—is the date when all bets are off and all the assurances received in Edinburgh will be up for grabs. That is a cause for great concern, particularly as by then we shall already have experienced the intergovernmental conference, which has often been described as Maastricht 2. Who knows what kind of European structures will be developed as a result of Maastricht 2. I have no objection to having a debate on the subject and discussing in the House and elsewhere what Maastricht 2 will entail, but if we are to have that important debate with all its constitutional implications, it is essential that the House should have access to the information. There is only one way to get that information, and that is to ensure that it is included in the legislation by putting new clause 4 into the Bill.

The Minister clearly supports maximum transparency, and it is of enormous importance as we run up to this second critical time when the Maastricht structure will be reconsidered. The implications for Britain are enormous. There is no doubt that we went through an extremely dramatic trauma—I certainly did—over the Maastricht issue. If we are to repeat that exercise, it is essential that the public are reassured that they and their elected representatives have access to the maximum amount of information.

The question is how can that be achieved. New clause 4 does not describe the mechanism for that scrutiny. We have heard today all the problems related to fraud, all the problems related to how we judge gross national product and our doubts about Mediterranean practices in accountancy. We know what the problems are; the question is what our solution is.

All hon. Members on both sides of the House who have spoken today have praised the experience, skill and dedication of the Public Accounts Committee. It is held in very high regard and its status as the second most important Select Committee is recognised by the House. So the solution must be to allow the House to scrutinise the books by requiring the Public Accounts Committee to do so.

Accordingly, I call upon the Minister to think carefully about including new clause 4 in the legislation. It is not a wrecking amendment; it would receive enormous support in the country because the bottom line is that those who elected us would have confidence that the House is exercising at least a degree of control over the expenditure—the vast grant that we are giving the European Union. Perhaps equally significantly, we must also ensure that the Public Accounts Committee takes those statistics and figures to pieces and makes annual reports to the House. That would be welcomed in all parts of the House and, more importantly, by the voters who—goodness knows—have little enough faith not just in the legislation but in the European Union.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): In considering the accounting mechanisms for own resources, I agree with right hon. and hon. Members who have stated clearly that we cannot engage in that exercise without examining the demands on those own resources.

I also agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) that a continued majority demand on those own resources is the common agricultural policy. It is no coincidence that at the same time as the own resources decision was taken by the Council of Ministers on 31 October a decision was taken on budgetary discipline. The two are very much intertwined.

We are talking not about fraud, but about expenditure that at the moment is envisaged. We are talking about expenditure and demands on own resources that at the moment are planned. Of course, the House can speculate all it likes about what is to happen over the next few weeks or months to the planned expenditure and, therefore, the demand on own resources, but at the moment when we are asked to take this decision I suggest that the votes of right hon. and hon. Members must be determined by the information that we have.

New clause 1 is therefore vital. It says, in effect, that cross-party concerns are involved and that there are serious matters to consider when we examine own resources and the demands made on them, particularly by the common agricultural policy.

Why can we not have a report? Perhaps a motion to the House over the next few weeks would help to clarify the position. We have to remove some of the uncertainties. That would give us an opportunity to put the Government to the test—to test their sincerity and their commitment to ensuring that the demands on own resources are kept within the constraints already described to us. We cannot calculate properly through the own resources mechanism what is required by the Community unless we consider its expenditure, not only in terms of the expansion of expenditure but in terms of its control. At present, we are not in that situation; I will give some examples to show why.

As I understand it, the Government are saying, as of today, that expenditure is likely to be 2.6 billion ecu in excess of the agricultural guideline. The Government also say that we need not worry because they have measures in hand which are likely to remove that. I wish them luck. They may be successful. On the other hand, they may not. Demands on own resources will therefore be far greater than we are told at the moment.

In the course of the next few weeks we shall, I hope, know whether the Government have been successful. They have told me that alternative measures—appropriate steps—may have to be taken to raise a further 919 million ecu. They say that olive oil payments of 1.2 billion ecu to southern member states will be deferred until next year and are not contained in the present budget.

In those circumstances, how can we tell the Government that we trust them, that they should go away and do their best and that we will give them what can be described only as a blank cheque for own resources? That is not sensible. It should not be acceptable to the House, not in the interests of any right hon. or hon. Members, but in the interests of the House as a whole and the public whom we are here to represent.

I do not know how hon. Members will be able to tell their constituents that they voted for an own resources resolution that puts demands on the British taxpayer, but that they do not know how 2.6 billion ecu—about £1.8 billion—which is in excess of the present agricultural guideline, will be found. The Government tell us not to worry because they have the matter in hand and are not prepared to accept that. That is fine. I am prepared to take them at their word, although many of my right hon. and hon. Friends may castigate me for so doing.

If we are prepared to put the Government on trust, what is so unreasonable about asking them to accept new clause 1, which asks them to trust us, too? If they are so determined to clarify the issue and to ensure that demand on own resources is kept within the budgetary guidelines and disciplines that they have accepted, why can they not trust us a bit? Why do the Government insist that it is they who need a blank cheque?

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): Would the new clause allow the House to scrutinise what is happening right now, when taxpayers' money to the tune of about £20 million is being spent on advertising to discourage smoking while £1 billion—I think that it is pounds and not ecu—of resources which come mainly from the British taxpayer is being spent in the European Union on producing tobacco which is completely unusable and has to be buried or burnt?

Mr. Stevenson: Without going into the detail of particular expenditure headings under the common agricultural guarantee fund, I have tried to show the crucial relationship between own resources and expenditure. The two cannot be divorced. We cannot say that we will concoct an amount of revenue to be spent, but that we are not sure how it will be spent.

In a letter sent to me today by the Paymaster General, the Government admit that they are not sure how a significant part of that demand—2.6 billion ecu, which is about £1.8 billion—will be met. That sum is made up of 919 million ecu which may have to be obtained by what the Government describe as appropriate measures but which they do not specify, 1.2 billion ecu in olive oil payments which have been deferred to future years and 500 million ecu of the monetary reserve. The Government say that the 500 million ecu monetary reserve cannot be included in the calculation because it is there to be used in any case. But it is outside the agricultural guideline and outside the discipline that the Government have accepted. It is therefore financial sleight of hand, to say the least, for the Government to seek the support of the House for own resources when they are using expenditure that is outside the budgetary guideline that they have accepted as the limit of expenditure.

7.15 pm

If one accepts that the two elements of the equation cannot be divorced, as I argue strongly that they cannot be, the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question must be yes. It is therefore crucial that new clause 1 be accepted. It is also crucial because time is not on our side. If the Bill goes through unamended, the system will come into force on 1 January 1995. Unless new clause 1 is accepted and the Government are required to report back to the House on the implementation of article 8(2) of the Council decision, the Government will have, if not a completely blank cheque, a cheque with a significant number of noughts missing from it.

The British people expect nothing less than that we should tell the Government that we want to know exactly how they intend to control demands on own resources before we are prepared to support own resources as put to us at the moment. That is perfectly sensible and reasonable. As I have said, we are asking the Government to trust us a bit. We cannot get away with calling on the Public Accounts Committee to scrutinise the issue at this time—it is not practical to argue for that—but new clause 1 is a reasonable attempt at asking the Government to come back to the House and show us what they have done; if they have tried their best and made some progress, hon. Members may then support them. But to go ahead in this sort of blind-alley fashion cannot be right.

For those good reasons, I urge all right hon. and hon. Members to support new clause 1.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The group of new clauses that we have been considering for the past few hours falls into two parts. New clause 1, which was tabled by the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), states that the Act shall come into force only when the House of Commons has come to a resolution on a motion tabled by a Minister as to the measures that the Government intend to take in order to implement article 8(2) of the new own resources decision.

The other two new clauses, which I shall deal with in due course, call on the Government to publish annual reports on various aspects of the own resources system and the Community budget. But first I shall dwell a little on what may be called the lead amendment, concerning article 8(2), which is about the detailed provisions necessary to put the own resources decision into practice—in other words, the implementing mechanism for giving effect to the own resources decision that is the subject of the Bill.

First, I believe that new clause 1 is based on a misunderstanding, because it refers to the Government implementing article 8(2) of the new own resources decision, whereas in fact it is the Council of Ministers that agrees measures to implement that article. The Government have an effective power of veto over any measure that they find unsatisfactory, but they do not implement measures on their own, as the new clause implies. Of course the Government will be vigilant in using that veto if it proves necessary, and the House has a right to expect that.

Secondly, there is nothing new in article 8(2). The text introduced in the new own resources decision is virtually identical to that in the existing ORD dating from 1988, but a few cross-references have been altered because of changes to the underlying treaty.

However, the most important point, which has been overlooked by the Opposition, is that there are no plans to revise the existing implementing regulations. So article 8(2) will not be used as a consequence of the new own resources decision, or at any rate not in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Hoon: The Paymaster General said that there was consistency between this decision and previous decisions on own resources. Will he explain why the original draft decision that gave rise to the decision we are debating contained specific reference to "fraud and irregularities" in connection with the Community budget, and the preliminary clause went on to detail the Commission's role in improving national VAT registration, calculation, recovery and control procedures? That was in the original draft, but it is not in the version that we are debating. Why was there a change, and were the Government responsible, in Council, for making that change?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is not clear whether the draft that the hon. Gentleman is talking about is a Labour party document or one of ours. He owes it to the Committee to be a little more specific in providing a reference if he wishes to ask a question. But when we deal with future new clauses or amendments, if they are debated, I shall endeavour to answer his question.

What I am saying is important to the Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen, because their new clause is postulated on the idea that a number of revisions will be made in the implementing regulations. That is simply not in prospect. In 1988, there were quite profound and radical changes to the implementing directives and legislation. There were two large regulations and a directive, which profoundly changed the system whereby own resources were raised.

The 1994 own resources decision makes no such radical change. It simply changes the figures within the programme. The programme itself is rolled forward into the new own resources decision. Indeed, that is specifically required and provided for separately by article 11(2)(a) of the new own resources decision, which explicitly provides the legal authority to continue using the earlier legislation.

However, in due course new changes may be necessary to the implementing legislation, and any such decisions taken by the Council must be taken unanimously. That is a safeguard for the House and for this country. Any proposals from the Commission along those lines would be subject to the scrutiny requirements of the House. I believe that, on reflection, the hon. Member for Oxford, East will agree that it makes no sense to make the coming into force of what I hope will be an Act dependent on a resolution that contains nothing, because there is nothing at present to introduce under that heading.

The hon. Member also talked about the United Kingdom abatement. He was joined in that concern by several other hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), and I believe that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) raised the issue as well. The Committee is right to be extremely vigilant about the British rebate.

First, I shall answer a specific question asked by the hon. Member for Oxford, East: the new working methods paper on the United Kingdom abatement that the hon. Gentleman mentioned is set out in Council document 5455/94, and an explanatory memorandum was provided to the Scrutiny Committee on 22 February this year. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the formula by which the United Kingdom abatement is calculated has remained unchanged since 1988.

Of course the Commission and many other member states would love to change and undermine the British abatement in one respect or another, and that brings me to a point raised by other hon. Members. There is nothing sinister in the requirement in the ORD that the Commission re-examine the British rebate by 1999, because it exactly replicates a similar requirement in the 1988 own resources decision. Indeed, the British rebate was examined in 1992.

However, the crucial fact for the Committee is that the abatement continues in force until it is changed, and it can be changed only by unanimity. As such a change would be contained in a new own resources decision in 1999 or later; and as the change can come into effect only through the constitutional requirements on member states, in this country that means that it can come into effect only through primary legislation. It therefore follows that not only the Government of the day but the House of Commons will have a veto over any alteration in the British rebate.

I share the concerns expressed on both sides of the Committee about whether the Government of the day will maintain their position on the abatement. Opposition Members have reason to doubt their own Front-Bench spokesman, because the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said in 1992 that the British rebate would have to be up for renegotiation. So if the House is concerned to maintain the British rebate in its existing form—certainly I am—it must ensure that a Conservative Government are in charge in 1999.

Mr. Andrew Smith: Having heard that allegation previously, my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) has made it clear that he did not say that. Does the Minister accept that? Moreover, my hon. Friend has made it clear that it is and has been Labour party policy to maintain the United Kingdom rebate. I therefore hope that there will be no repetition of that charge by Conservative Members.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is no comfort for me to know that that is claimed to be Labour party policy. Labour party policy changes week by week. What I do know is that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said on a radio programme listened to by millions of people that the British rebate was a matter for renegotiation. That shocked the House.

Mr. Smith: Will the Paymaster General give way?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman, because I am answering the point he raised with me before.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, said on the radio programme that the rebate was to be a matter for renegotiation. He may wish that he had not said that, and he may claim that it is no longer Labour party policy. I am illustrating to the Committee the fact that we get certainty and consistency on these matters only from Conservative Members.

7.30 pm

Ms Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): The Minister really should accept Labour's assurances about what my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) said. We can give him chapter and verse. On the radio this weekend, the Minister made claims about his tackling of the budget in the House last week which were not borne out in *Hansard*. We pressed him on what he had done about the European Parliament's amendment on fraud which was before the Council, and he refused to answer. However, on Friday or Saturday, he said on the radio that he had never been asked about that and that he was not pressed about it. I know that he was in some distress in the debate last week, but I also know that he was pressed and that he never answered.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am not sure what all that was about. I was referring to remarks made by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. If he has changed his mind, I welcome that. Consistency comes from Conservative Members.

Mr. Smith: How many times do we have to say it? We have made it clear, and my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East has made it clear, that he did not say what the Minister alleges he said. We have made it clear that it has consistently been Labour party policy to uphold the abatement procedure and the United Kingdom rebate. We have given those pledges in good faith. I now call on the Minister to accept them, and to desist from repeating falsehoods.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The record will stand for itself. If the Labour party has changed its mind about the importance of the British rebate, I welcome that. I give an unqualified welcome to that. All my right hon. and hon. Friends welcome a sinner that repenteth.

I now move on to a number of other issues raised in the debate. Serious points were raised about the GNP statistics, on which a great deal rests, especially the contributions from each member state. Again, this point was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford and, in truth, by the hon. Member for Oxford, East. I am glad to say that the Commission takes seriously the need to harmonise and to verify national GNP statistics. A GNP management committee set up in 1989 has led to improvements.

It was correctly said that the statistics emanating from former East Germany were unreliable immediately following reunification. It is not the case that the contributions from Germany as a whole are assessed separately from former East Germany and former West Germany. They are based on the whole country. It is, of course, true that the change from a command economy threw up great difficulties in correctly and accurately estimating GNP statistics. As the world now knows, they were all made up before Germany was reunified.

The other point raised in the debate has been the role of the Public Accounts Committee. The Committee is right to pay tribute to the work done by the PAC, and to raise the possibility of extending its remit to cover some of the matters that have been debated during the passage of the Bill.

The National Audit Office may have a more direct and continuing interest in the actual auditing of the figures. It already has close links with the European Court of Auditors. When I met members of the court in London early this year, they went on to talk to and exchange ideas with the NAO. That does not undermine the case that has fairly been made out this evening for looking for ways in which to involve the PAC more intimately in this work.

The PAC has a present remit which allows it to take a considerable interest in these matters. I may be able to be of assistance to the Committee, and especially to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford who raised the matter specifically. It is a possibility that we could look again at the Standing Orders governing the PAC to see whether

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

changes might be appropriate to give it this wider remit. My right hon. Friend the Lord President is amenable to doing that.

I have to put down the proviso that the PAC is a Committee of the House and not a Government committee. Decisions and discussions, therefore, of this nature will have to be conducted through the usual channels and. indeed, with the Chairman of the PAC. That very constructive suggestion has come out of the Committee, and it will meet some of the points raised in the debate.

Mr. Rowlands: As I understand it, the PAC is triggered off by the responsibility of the accounting officer—the permanent secretary of each Government Department. How will it be possible for the permanent secretary of any Department to be responsible for money that has been handed over to Europe and spent by the European Commission?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I must not mislead the hon. Gentleman. I am not suggesting that the PAC can have a remit out of this country in pursuing expenditure in other member states. That would be stretching the terms of reference of the PAC to breaking point. That is not what I was suggesting.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful for the indication that my hon. Friend has given. I have been given to understand that the points he has just made resulted from discussions today with the Prime Minister. Furthermore, I was given to understand that a specific undertaking would be given that the intention that the PAC should be involved in the process was something on which I could rely in good faith.

If my hon. Friend put it in terms of an undertaking, I would then seek leave of the Committee to withdraw the motion. It would be a significant Euro-realist step for the PAC to be involved in dealing with fraud and own resources. That would indeed be a watershed in the whole European saga. I should be grateful for the words that I have asked for to be put in terms of an undertaking.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have already explained that neither I nor my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister can direct the PAC, which is a Committee of the House. What I have already undertaken to do—I have the agreement of the Lord President—is to examine and to give a fair wind to changes in the terms of reference of the PAC, if the PAC considers that the terms of reference are a restraint on its action in this respect. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is certainly aware of this. He believes that tackling fraud and mismanagement, and getting better financial disciplines into the workings of the Community, are among the highest priorities that he takes into discussions in the European Union.

I turn now to points raised by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), among others, on the connected but separate issue of reports to the House and the opportunities that the House has for scrutinising not only the Government but the workings of the European Union. The hon. Gentleman has a long and honourable role in defending the privileges of the House in this respect. I can give him some of the assurances he seeks. First, however, I would like to point out to the Committee just how regular and numerous the reports already made by the Government to the House are.

My hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) said that he was a strong advocate of information and transparency on such matters. I strongly agree. I believe that the House has a right in that respect. I must say, speaking as a former deputy Whip, that it is not always frightfully easy to get people to sit on the Committee to undertake the scrutiny. Indeed, some of the debates held on such matters are rather thinly attended. But that does not detract from the fact that the House has a right to the information. Indeed, many right hon. and hon. Members attending this debate have, over many years, taken a close personal interest in these matters.

I emphasise that the quantity of information given to the House is seen by some as being too much, and of an indigestible nature, rather than too little. The figures for the net contributions to the EC budget are given out in the Red Book and at Budget time. In addition, the departmental report of the Chancellor's Departments is an expansion of the information in the Red Book and is presented around March each year.

In addition to that, there is an annual statement on the Community budget, which takes the form of a White Paper. The statement for this year was published in March and it gave further information. There are also the Government's six-monthly White Papers on developments in the European Union, and an enormous number of explanatory memoranda on the Community budget. On European matters in 1994 alone, 673 explanatory memoranda have already been submitted to the House, 59 of which covered budgetary matters. They triggered no fewer than 31 scrutiny debates.

In answer to the point raised by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) on the expenditure—

Mr. Spearing *rose—*

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: May I answer the point raised by the hon. Gentleman's hon. Friend on the expenditure side of the budget? That was, of course, one of the matters that we considered last Monday, when the 1995 budget was under discussion in the House.

I would assure the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney that the overall discipline on the European Union is a ceiling on contributions, which cannot be breached. If one allies that ceiling on contributions with the fact that the European Community cannot borrow, it is a very real discipline on its expenditure. It has a financial perspective, which is an agreement between the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, which, although not legally binding, is a political agreement, which sets limits for each category of expenditure year by year. However, a number of legal agreements cover matters such as structural funds and the cohesion funds.

I can reassure the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) one more time that the agricultural guideline will not be breached because it requires unanimity, and we will not sanction a breach of the guideline this year or next year. It is up to the Commission to organise its expenditure to fit that upper limit. We have long gone beyond the years during which revenue was set to cover all expenditure.

Mr. Stevenson: I am grateful for the Paymaster General's undertaking, as was communicated to me by letter, that the agricultural guideline will not be breached. First, does that include not deferring expenditure from this year to future years simply to keep within the guideline? Secondly, does that mean that such elements as the monetary reserve, which is not within the guideline, will not be used?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As the hon. Gentleman fairly says, I have corresponded with him about this matter. I have explained the purpose of the monetary reserve and the fact that, if it was used for specified purposes, it would not be a breach of the agricultural guideline. I hope that he will accept that reassurance.

7.45 pm

Mr. Spearing: I think that the Paymaster General was responding to new clause 12 earlier. Despite what he says, does he not agree that the five sets of publications which he mentioned are disparate, come out at different times of the year and are not a comprehensive Command Paper? Indeed, the memoranda are many, duplicated and not easily available to the public. What objection does he have to new clause 12?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I want to make a suggestion to the hon. Gentleman. I think that I have shown the Committee that what almost amounts to a deluge of information descends on the Scrutiny Committee. I pay an incidental tribute to the members of that Committee, who presumably have to read the stuff and decide whether it is to be debated in Standing Committee—or, indeed, recommended for debate on the Floor of the House. It seems that most hon. Members find the sheer volume, complexity and detail of that information extremely difficult to cope with. I therefore suggest that the annual report on the Community budget should be expanded into a report rather along the lines of what I think the hon. Member for Newham, South is suggesting.

It has to be owned that the report is not a best seller. It has been published annually for some 14 years, largely without alteration. I understand that it was published initially at the request of the Public Accounts Committee, so it is not a statutory requirement but a request that the Government have granted every year. To make it more accessible, it could be expanded and made more what one may call Member-friendly, and put into a form which could become the basis, if the House so wished, for a debate on its content.

I think that that would meet the terms of hon. Members' requests, which are not so much for more information as for better information in a more accessible way. It does not require legislation, and it does not require a new clause. It requires an undertaking from me, which I am very happy to give. If that satisfies the Committee, I invite it to reject the new clauses.

Mr. Hoon: At the outset, it was suggested that this debate was reminiscent of some of the Maastricht debates, but the one significant difference is that, with the exception of the Paymaster General, almost every hon. Member is in agreement. The right hon. Members for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) and for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and, I think, every Opposition Member have agreed about own resources. They agreed that a vote and a debate on an increase in own resources for the European Union should be accompanied by a discussion of how that money is to be spent and whether it is to be spent consistently, properly and in accordance with the normal rules of expenditure that we expect in the United Kingdom and with those set down by the various European institutions. That issue united hon. Members: only the Paymaster General took exception to it.

The Paymaster General took exception by using a very narrow construction of new clause 1. If he looks in more detail at new clause 1, as well as at article 8(2), he will see, especially in the final three lines of article 8(2), that the Council is enjoined

> "to make possible the inspection of the collection, the making available to the Commission and payment of the revenue referred to in Articles 2 and 5."

As a member of the Council of Ministers, it is obviously incumbent on the Government to play their part in ensuring that the revenue is made available on the basis of a proper system of collection and that appropriate inspection is available to those who are responsible for ensuring that member states make their appropriate contributions to the European Union's budget.

In a sense, that approach links hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber. Everyone has said that there must be a proper system for expenditure. The first part of article 8(2) ensures that there are proper systems for expenditure and for collection. As we are debating an increase in own resources to be available to the European Union, we should consider the system that bears on the collection of revenue and on how that revenue is spent.

As much as anything else, article 8(2) is concerned with maintaining a consistent system of raising revenue across the European Union, which is crucial under the new system of calculating own resources. A proper understanding of the ceiling on own resources will be achieved only on the basis of a GNP calculation. At the same time, if we are properly to concern ourselves with ceilings on own resources for the European Union, we must be confident that every member state has a proper system for calculating GNP.

It is easy to refer to other countries' difficulties in calculating GNP, but from time to time GNP in Italy, for example, has fluctuated dramatically. Sometimes the fluctuation has been the result of concern about Italy's contribution to the European Union's budget. It is well known that at one stage an adjustment was made because the Italian Government were extraordinarily concerned that Italy was paying more into the European Union's budget than had been anticipated. Given the size of the GNP that had been recorded, Italy was receiving less by way of commitment from that budget. It was not entirely surprising that there was a significant adjustment downwards of Italy's GNP for the following year.

It is important that in voting extra funds for the use of the European Union—this view has been expressed by everyone who has spoken in the debate apart from the Paymaster General—we have regard to how the funds are spent. I am not advocating a wide-ranging, Budget-style discussion during which we consider every heading in the European Union's budget, but in being asked to make further contributions to the European Union's budget, British taxpayers should not be concerned that the budget

[Mr. Hoon]

contains significant elements of fraud and some elements of waste. They should be satisfied that there is an effective system of delivering an agriculture policy for the European Union.

It is difficult to understand how anyone in the House of Commons could object to that approach. I assume that even the Paymaster General is sympathetic to my argument, yet the Bill contains no reference to the matters that I have raised so far. It would have been open to the Government, in implementing the decision by which, I accept, they are bound under European law and an international obligation, to ensure that many of the provisions that have been discussed by hon. Members were incorporated in the Bill.

The Paymaster General has defended the Bill, and that is understandable, but the Government could have included provisions of the sort that have been suggested to ensure that the House has opportunities for proper debate, which the European Union's institutions have already.

The Government say that we must debate the Bill, but not more than the Bill. They say that we must debate only how an increase in own resources should be implemented. At the same time, the European Parliament, the Commission and even the Council consider own resources as they consider budgetary discipline and fraud. Curiously, an earlier draft from the Commission contained a specific reference to fraud, which was deleted only after the adoption procedure in Council. I am talking not about a Labour party draft or the publication of a quango or pressure group but about the text of a document that was agreed by the Commission. As I have said, it contained a specific reference to fraud, which showed that the Commission was concerned about fraud in terms of spending alongside own resources.

New clause 3 refers specifically to a Council regulation on the protection of the Community's financial interests. That regulation is not restricted to the raising of revenue or the spending of revenue, for both issues are raised in the same document. Fraud is defined in the regulation as being a "diminution" of the Community's own resources or other revenue. The document refers to fraud in the raising of revenue in terms of own resources, and it treats fraud in expenditure in the same way. That is what all hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have invited the Government to do, with the exception of the Paymaster General.

Mr. Stevenson: Perhaps my hon. Friend will reflect on the question that I put to the Paymaster General, to which he did not respond. We are talking about how revenue is expended as well as how it is raised. I argue that transferring significant parts of agriculture expenditure from one year to the next constitutes a de facto breach of the current guidelines.

Mr. Hoon: I shall not be tempted to go along that path too far, but where there are clear decisions of European Union institutions— such as the decision on budgetary discipline, which set out a framework for spending— and the guidelines are breached, surely that is a matter for consideration by the House of Commons, especially when we are considering the payment of extra funds to the European Union.

We do not need to investigate in detail as part of the budgetary debate precisely how each and every ecu in the EU's budget is spent. We should, however, have the opportunity of considering the broad framework within which the European Union spends its funds. It follows from that—I hope that this is consistent with what is happening in the EU—that we in the House should be considering the broad outline of the budget as we consider how the budget is raised, how own resources are secured and, in a general sense, how they are spent.

The essential question for the Government to answer, having introduced the Bill, is why they have not made that consideration possible. Why cannot we have provisions in the Bill that allow the House, along with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, to consider the broad outline of how funds are spent when the British taxpayer is being asked to devote significant sums of extra money to the European Union?

Mr. Bill Walker: I welcome the opportunity to speak, and the Committee will be pleased to know that I shall be brief because my hon. Friend the Paymaster General has taken up the concerns that I and others have felt.

I am pleased to see my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on the Front Bench. He will know that I and others have been concerned about how the House can scrutinise European funding so that it becomes transparent.

There is no doubt that our constituents are concerned about how the moneys that they contribute in taxes are used within Europe. With that in mind, I intervened on my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Second Reading to draw his attention to the explanatory and financial memorandum. I make no apologies for returning to the matter.

Paragraph 5 of the explanatory and financial memorandum states:

> "The new Decision has to be approved by all member states in accordance with their national procedures before it can enter into force. It will take effect as from 1st January 1995."

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have been trying to ensure that Parliament knows what is going on. That calls for transparency and scrutiny of expenditure by the House. That is what we have been after; we have not been attempting to torpedo the Bill. I felt very upset about being accused of attempting to do so, when, in private conversations, I had made it perfectly clear what my objectives were. I said that I would be brief, and I shall say merely that I welcome what my hon. Friend the Paymaster General said. I take his assurance for what it is worth, and believe it.

8 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I listened with care to the Paymaster General. He was more forthcoming on some matters that have been raised than on others. He took seriously the point that was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) and by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash)—that is, the importance of obtaining a correct, unified and uniform definition of GNP. The plain truth is that the component of own resources, which is now being taken up by GNP contributions, is growing. It was about 20 per cent. of the total some years ago. It certainly is destined, under the new arrangements, to rise to about 45 per cent.

of the total. Therefore, it matters very much that there is a uniform, reliable definition of the GNP of the different countries.

I listened with sympathy to what my hon. Friend said about the Italians not always being entirely measured in their GNP figures. It is well known that they have a substantial black economy, and of course it is very difficult anyway to integrate that into the true picture of the GNP. Nevertheless, I broadly welcome what was said about efforts to establish, in a uniform way, the GNP of the member states.

On the role of the Public Accounts Committee, the Paymaster General rightly said that anything that he said tonight had to be in reference to the Committee itself. Indeed, it is for the Public Accounts Committee to decide whether it wishes to have its terms of reference extended in the way that has been suggested. I was glad to see, however, before my hon. Friend finished his remarks on that matter, the presence of the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. I am sure that he has taken on board, I hope, sympathetically, what was suggested.

I hope that it will be possible for the PAC, which is a very senior Committee of the House and one whose judgment and expertise we have come to value, to play a part in assessing expenditures made in the United Kingdom from the Community budget and the contributions that we make to that budget.

On the matter which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and spoken to by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) dealing specifically with new clause 12, I was not so happy with what the Paymaster General said. He rightly reminded us that several disparate reports, which come out at different and unpredictable times of the year, deal with the financing of the Communities. As he rightly said, the net contribution that is made by the United Kingdom is set out in the Treasury Red Book. Hon. Members have seen the Red Book for this year. It is true that we receive a departmental report in March.

Frankly, most of all, we are interested in our contribution to the European Community budget. Our contribution—that is to say, our gross contribution as well as our net contribution—how it is changing over time and how it compares with the gross and net contributions of other countries are of great importance. Although the Paymaster General expressed willingness to expand the Budget report in future to take account of some of our propositions, I do not think that that is quite good enough.

We gave some thought to what we are urging, and we have a new clause with a number of component parts, all of which we wish very much to see enter the annual report for which new clause 12 calls. It is an annual report which is necessary for one overwhelming reason: there is no annual debate on the United Kingdom's contribution to the European Community's budget. It is only at approximately five-yearly intervals, when a new European Communities (Finance) Bill is required, that the figures are revealed. As we recall, as a preliminary to the debate on the European Communities (Finance) Bill 1994, the Chancellor published what the Treasury described as an

"updated forecast of the UK's contribution to the EC Budget and a detailed paper describing the EC's Budgetary framework".

There is much information in that publication which we do not normally see. Table 1, for example, gives the gross payments of the United Kingdom. I am not aware that that information is published in any other document on a regular basis. We know from table 1 of that Treasury document that there has been an enormous increase in our contributions, from £5,800 million in 1989-90 to an estimated £8,308 million in 1994-95, rising in the Treasury forecast to £10.5 billion in 1997, which is virtually double in seven or eight years. That is significant.

As was argued on Second Reading, it is not good enough simply to have the net figures—although we have those and they are important and relevant—because they reflect the priorities of the Community in spending money in its budget, not necessarily how we would wish that money to be spent. That is why, in new clause 12(a), we ask for

"a general presentation in text and tables of the financing and expenditure of the European Economic Communities in sterling equivalent and any common unit, which shall include comparable tables of income derived from each member state and expenditure therein".

That is a matter of considerable importance. We know that Germany is by far the largest net and gross contributor. We are certainly, massively, the second-largest gross contributor, and certainly the second-largest net contributor. Whether or not the new formula for own resources will lead to a change in our relative position, and whether or not we see Holland and perhaps France and Austria overtake Britain as net contributors, which is something that we would welcome, the only way of obtaining that information is through an annual report of the kind for which we have asked.

I hope that that first requirement will be met, but it is not the only one. The Treasury report has helped to give us a real account of the rebate mechanism which has been used in adjusting Britain's net contribution. That is a very useful piece of information, as is the composition of own resources as between the three major components of agricultural levies, sugar levies, customs duties and VAT and now GDP, as the fourth component.

We need that information. In paragraph (c) of our proposed new clause 12, we ask for the operation of each article of the decision of 31 October 1994. Perhaps the most important of the new articles—the one that we would certainly keep an eye on—is article 10, which the hon. Member for Stafford referred to in his speech. It contains proposals for a new additional own resource component. That is a very important matter and we want to contribute to the thinking behind it at an early stage. Any proposals for additional own resources should be reflected in the annual report for which we have asked.

We have also asked, I think quite properly, for a report on any action taken by Her Majesty's Government in respect of financial discipline. Much has been said about financial discipline and more will be said about it in subsequent debates, but surely it is reasonable for the House of Commons to demand an annual report about financial discipline: what the British Government have proposed and how successful they have been in securing improvements in financial discipline.

In paragraph (e) of our new clause 12, we ask for

"the text of any regulation, directive or financial regulation relating to the operation of the Decision to which Her Majesty's Government has given its assent."

I do not think there is a problem with that; we can expect to receive the information as soon as the European Community has made a decision under article 8(2).

[Mr. Peter Shore]

I think that the precise categories of information for which we have asked are wholly reasonable. I think that they reflect the House's need to keep a close eye on the financing of the European Community, particularly as it affects the British contribution and British net receipts. I hope that we will be allowed to press the new clause to a Division tonight.

Mr. Andrew Smith: I do not wish to detain the Committee for long, although I think that it has been a very useful debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) said, there is a large measure of agreement on both sides. Hon. Members are not satisfied with the way in which the collection of European Union resources is supervised and they are not satisfied with the way in which expenditure is scrutinised. Many hon. Members referred to fraud and the need for better controls.

When the Paymaster General replied to the debate I noticed that he did not answer the question which was put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) about balances being carried forward from one year to the next. He asked whether that was consistent with the degree of financial control that the Government are seeking. Could the Paymaster General answer that question now?

As Labour Members have said, we are not satisfied with the system of collection and calculation of European Community resources. Conservative Members also referred to the implications of inconsistencies in the way in which different member states calculate gross national product and VAT bases. They drew attention to the inequity in the amount of money paid by different member states. That, in itself, is a good reason to press our new clause to a Division.

The Committee should also acknowledge that, in replying to new clause 12 proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) about an annual report to Parliament, the Paymaster General said that a good measure of the proposals could be incorporated in the annual report made to the House about the budget. But the Paymaster General will not incorporate some very important aspects of my right hon. Friend's new clause.

The information which is detailed in new clause 12—rather than the great pile of documents that the Government bring to European debates— would be very useful and enlightening. The public would find it very interesting reading. Why does the Paymaster General think that certain parts of new clause 12 are unacceptable? We intend to support my right hon. and hon. Friends if they wish to press the matter to a Division.

We also face the rather extraordinary prospect of the Paymaster General giving concessions to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash)— concessions which were not given in the normal way in response to the debate, but which were negotiated at Downing street. That is a quite extraordinary turnaround for a Government who last week were going to beat the rebels and Euro-sceptics into the ground. All of a sudden, they are now negotiating with them at Downing street about terms. I suppose that the Government have learnt from last night that awarding concessions five or 10 minutes before a 10 o'clock Division does not work. Perhaps they are trying a more structured approach.

8.15 pm

This style of governing—making all sorts of last-minute concessions—reveals the Government's total disarray and confusion. The Government's tactics are as confused as their Whips must be, if last night's vote is anything to go by. The Government are in as much mess as the European Union when it comes to controlling fraud.

The Government have not responded adequately to the very powerful arguments for improved scrutiny and control of finances which were made on both sides of the Committee. In new clauses 1 and 12, my right hon. and hon. Friends advance the case for proper scrutiny by the House of what happens to money which is raised in this country and spent by the European Union. The public have a right to expect that control and scrutiny, and we intend to push the new clauses to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 259, Noes 318.

Division No. 13] **[20.17 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria

Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Mon)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, Bill
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton South East)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Byers and
Mr. John Cummings.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick

Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bowen Wells and
Dr. Liam Fox.

Question accordingly negatived.

8.30 pm

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Before we move on, I advise the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) that, when the time comes, I am prepared to allow a separate Division on new clause 12, if he so wishes.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. You and the Chairman will have heard the many references to the Public Accounts Committee. Indeed, in his reply the Minister referred to the Government's willingness, if the House permits, to take some action in that regard. May I draw your attention to starred amendments Nos. 14 and 15, which may be relevant to any future selection when the stars are removed?

The First Deputy Chairman: For the moment, the Chairman has decided that those amendments are not selected.

New clause 3

ENTRY INTO FORCE (PROTECTION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS)

'This Act shall come into force only when the House of Commons has come to a resolution on a motion tabled by a Minister of the Crown as to whether the United Kingdom Government should adopt a Council Regulation on the Protection of the Community's Financial Interests.'.—*[Ms Quin.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also the following: New clause 10—*Annual report on fraud and waste*—

'Each year Her Majesty's Government shall make a report to Parliament on the proposals it has made and the progress achieved in combating fraud and waste in Community expenditure as documented in the relevant annual reports of the Court of Auditors.'.

New clause 13—*Fraud in the European communities: annual reports*—

'Her Majesty's Government shall make an annual report to Parliament on their efforts to eliminate fraud in the spending of the European Communities' General Budget.'.

Ms Quin: New clause 3 is important because it allows the important subject of fraud to be discussed in this debate.

The new clause states:

"This Act shall come into force only when the House of Commons has come to a resolution on a motion tabled by a Minister of the Crown as to whether the United Kingdom Government should adopt a Council Regulation on the Protection of the Community's Financial Interests."

We know that such a regulation is being mooted, and I think that on this occasion the Government will claim to have been active in proposing it. I understand that the regulation was partly a British initiative and dates back to the early part of the year, when the British Government said that they wanted the rest of the European Union to consider the protection of the Community's financial interests, how money is spent and how best to crack down on fraud. I also understand that there have been discussions in the Council of Ministers as a result.

As is often and frustratingly the case, it is difficult for hon. Members to get any information about what is happening in this important area. I understand that protection of the financial interests of the European Union was on the agendas of the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 1 December and the Economic and Finance Council on 5 December.

Perhaps the Paymaster General can give us an update on the Council's consideration of that important matter when he replies to the debate. Any information that he can give us could greatly influence the attitude of hon. Members on both sides of the Committee towards that important issue and whether we feel that there is any real chance that fraud and financial mismanagement will be taken seriously.

The results of the discussions at the two Council meetings were unclear. What seems clear, however, is that the Council of Ministers has simply come out in favour of a resolution on the protection of the financial interests of the European Union. As we know, a resolution is a very weak instrument in the Union. Apparently, the Government are in favour of a regulation on the legal protection of the Community's financial interests, as I am certain that we would be. Perhaps the Paymaster General can give us an update on the progress that has been made towards such a regulation. I understand that the matter might be discussed at one of the meetings taking place as part of the Essen summit. We would be extremely interested to know what progress is being made on that important matter.

From recent debates and the long-standing interest of many hon. Members on both sides of the House, it is clear that hon. Members take the question of fraud in the European Union very seriously. None the less, I repeat that it is often difficult to get adequate information about what has been taking place.

In an intervention on the Paymaster General, my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong) rightly mentioned the rather murky negotiations about fraud which took place as part of the Budget Council on 16 November, when Britain apparently agreed to a cut in the European Union's anti-fraud budget at the same time as the Government were trying to persuade suspicious Conservative Members that they were trying to deal with the problem of European fraud. The fact that that was revealed in the press was especially frustrating to Opposition Members, including myself. I had tabled a written question to the Treasury, asking the Government to make a statement on the outcome of the Council held on 16 November. In the written answer that I received from the Paymaster General, which went into a certain amount of detail, there was no mention of the discussion of fraud. There is therefore a lack of transparency in the information that the Government are prepared to give the House on that important issue. I want the Paymaster General to deal with that matter.

Press releases are issued at the end of each European Council meeting. The release issued after the Council on 16 November has just been made available to us. Again, there is absolutely no reference to the discussions on anti-fraud measures that we now hear took place, or to the fact that the Council failed to increase the funds available to combat fraud and, indeed, cut anti-fraud measures in the Union. We want an explanation of why Members of Parliament and the general public are refused information about the Council of Ministers. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House have rightly complained about undue secrecy in relation to Council of Ministers proceedings and this would seem to be a flagrant example of such secrecy when it is clear that members of the public as well as Members of Parliament want information on the fight against fraud and the measures that need to be taken.

From the documents before us today, it is clear that the European Court of Auditors feels frustrated at the difficulty that it faces in getting information from the Council of Ministers. That comes over in the opinion of the Court of Auditors on the proposals for a Council decision concerning budgetary discipline.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I am sure that my hon. Friend knows John Tomlinson, who is a Member of the European Parliament. He issued a press release on 18 November 1993—12 months ago—which stated that, at a meeting which took place two weeks prior to that press release, the Council of Ministers failed to increase the budget to deal with fraud. One wonders whether that occurs every year, and whether the Council is now calling the same tune.

Ms Quin: My hon. Friend is right to detect an alarming trend, and the information that he gives to the Committee is correct. It is certainly true that, a year ago, the Council of Ministers was also prepared to cut anti-fraud measures in the European Union at a time when clear incidence of fraud was increasing at an alarming rate. The Court of Auditors report, which is produced annually, has made severe criticisms of fraud in the European Union for a number of years.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Is the hon. Lady aware that in a recent debate in Strasbourg, criticism was voiced about the reticence of the Commission in dealing in an upright and forthright way with the quaestors?

Ms Quin: The hon. Gentleman pre-empts a comment that I was about to make. I had started to refer to the difficulty that the Court of Auditors has in receiving information from the Commission and from other parts of the European Union about the extent of fraud, and in having the figures in good time to make timely comments about the problems which are arising.

[Ms Quin]

The court's comments on the Council's decision concerning budgetary discipline say, in relation to article 2, that the proposal provides for the monitoring of expenditure to be tightened up and for statements of expenditure by chapter presented by member states to be sent to the European Parliament and the Council for information. The Court of Auditors understandably says that the paragraph in the proposed Council decision relating to the matter should be amended to include the Court of Auditors, so that it could receive data promptly.

When the Council decision was made on 31 October 1994, the request from the court for a change in the Council's decision was ignored. The court, even now, is in the frustrating position of not being able to get information in time to make criticisms at an earlier stage than it has been able to at present. In many ways, the court feels greatly frustrated by the fact that it has had to complain so long after the event. That makes its task in trying to get corrective measures adopted much more difficult.

8.45 pm

The Commission is castigated generally for its weakness in its approach to fraud, although it does have undoubted difficulties because so much fraud occurs within each member state. Lax controls within certain member states often give rise to many problems.

In that respect, I can understand the comments made in relation to the earlier group of amendments on the role of the Public Accounts Committee. The way in which the Government reacted was disappointing, although I take the point made by the right hon. Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) that the Public Accounts Committee could take certain initiatives without waiting to be cajoled by the Government. It is an area to which I am sure that the Public Accounts Committee will be paying close attention in the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has referred to the Government's record on fraud. The Government like to give the impression that they are the leading fraud-busters. In fact, as my hon. Friend pointed out, their record is not quite so glossy. It is certainly true that the Government have voted against anti-fraud measures in the Council of Ministers, and a great deal more could have been done by the Government to campaign for reform of the common agricultural policy, which causes so many of the problems of fraud in the European Union.

Although this may seem to be a minor point, the Government have failed in another respect—by conniving with other Governments to perpetuate the European Parliament's position of meeting in two different places. Many of us feel that a certain amount of useful money could be saved if the European Parliament was not forced into that expensive travelling circus. It is a great pity that the Edinburgh summit in 1992 confirmed the dual nature of the seat of the European Parliament. Of course, some elements of the Parliament still have their base in Luxembourg. The situation is absurd, and members of the public feel that it is quite crazy. Perhaps if there were more publicity about it, there would be more pressure to put an end to that waste of money in the European Union.

The question of the common agricultural policy is crucial to any discussion on fraud in the European Union. The Court of Auditors report gave many examples which were fully quoted in the debate that we had a couple of weeks ago. None the less, they are staggering. For example, there was the money paid out for the destruction of trees which are in fact still standing. There was the tremendous scandal of the wine lake, and the amount of money claimed in export refunds for wine supposedly exported from Italy to the countries of central and eastern Europe, when eight times more money was claimed than could be backed up by the figures for exports to those countries. It seems a strange and unjust system whereby the Italians and other wine-producing countries in the European Union can export with subsidies to countries in central and eastern Europe which are trying to build their own economies and in many cases have potentially excellent wine industries of their own but find themselves being undercut by that type of activity in the European Union.

A similar situation exists with regard to the olive oil industry, where substantial fraud has been reported in the Court of Auditors report. Sub-standard olive oil was none the less claimed for as though it were of a high standard and high quality. It is a very sad situation when people notice how expensive olive oil is to buy at a time when there is a huge level of production in the European Union and a huge amount of money is being spent on subsidising that production.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): If what the hon. Lady is saying is right, why have Labour MEPs voted to double the increase to the future European budget that is proposed in the Bill? They did not make any of the provisos for which she is asking in new clause 3.

Ms Quin: The provisos in new clause 3 have been pressed consistently by Labour MEPs since 1979. I can inform the hon. Gentleman of that fact, partly because I was a Member of the European Parliament from 1979 to 1989 and I took part in the debates, and partly because of the efforts of the Labour members of the budgetary control committee in the European Parliament: John Tomlinson has already been mentioned, and Terry Wynn is also active on that committee. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that what we are proposing here is fundamentally in line with what we have said on many other occasions, both here and in the European Parliament.

Mr. Stevenson: Is it not strange that Conservative Members should make the comments that they have, given that a Conservative Government have presided over and agreed to a £5 billion increase in common agricultural policy expenditure since 1992-93?

Ms Quin: It is indeed. The Conservatives—particularly in the European election campaign—claimed to have tackled, for example, the scandal of costly food mountains; yet, at the time when they made that claim there were about 200,000 tonnes of butter, 112,000 tonnes of cheese and 430,000 tonnes of beef in store. As my hon. Friend points out—he is in a good position to do so in view of his experience on the agriculture committee of the European Parliament—agricultural expenditure has increased greatly. In certain sectors, production has continued to rise, despite the measures that have been taken.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The hon. Lady will know that I, too, am a Member of the Strasbourg Parliament and I can confirm that Labour Members of the United Kingdom Parliament have continually opposed those developments on the Floor of the House.

Ms Quin: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comments. I believe that he has been a Member of the European Parliament since 1979; he will therefore have participated in many debates of this kind and will know what was said on those numerous occasions.

I could give many more examples. For instance, there has also been a great deal of fraud in relation to tobacco. A large amount of money has apparently been spent on subsidising unusable tobacco; given the health problems that tobacco causes, subsidising usable tobacco may be slightly worse than subsidising unusable tobacco, but in any event it is scandalous that tobacco should be subsidised to that extent in the European Union.

It seems crazy that tobacco farmers—if that is the right word—can obtain export credits for tobacco that is sold nowhere because it is unusable, and can then simply dump the tobacco. It would be cheaper to provide them directly with a livelihood without their having to produce the substance at all—not that I am suggesting that that should be done in the European Union, but it seems crazy that adopting such an approach would save money for the EU budget. It is regrettable, to say the least, that the Court of Auditors' report on tobacco fraud and misuse was ignored by EU Agriculture Ministers.

The common agricultural policy itself is, unfortunately, a fraud-friendly system. There has been a huge increase in CAP fraud. Even the legal operation of the policy is tantamount to fraud: an absurd circular system of subsidy can arise, so that a farmer may be paid a subsidy for not putting one field into production while being paid another subsidy for increasing the yield from another field. We also know of the policy's negative effect on the trading for third world agricultural products.

It is clear from the report that there are huge inefficiencies and irregularities in the use of European Union funds, that the administration of the European guarantee fund in agriculture is ineffective, that fraud is encouraged by weak internal systems and complex legislation, that there are no proper clear and fixed objectives for expenditure, that there are breaches of rules in contracts with third parties, that there is confusion between administrative and operational spending, and that the Commission's delegation of financial management to national Administrations and third parties has led to a serious loss of control. That reinforces the point made earlier about the Commission's culpability.

It is vital for member states to improve their accounting, internal control and auditing of European Community operations. The whole saga adds up to gross weaknesses in what should be sound financial management, and very poor value for money. That explains why so many hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed concern about the issue recently, and why the new clauses have been tabled.

New clauses 10 and 13 call for annual reports on fraud to be presented to the House of Commons, which I think would be very sensible. I can foresee some of what the Paymaster General will say: he will say, for instance, that there are already many opportunities to raise such matters. There is, of course, a six-monthly report on events in the European Union, as well as the various procedures and documents that are considered in Committee—often, I may say, with inadequate media attention. Much of the work done in European Standing Committees is worthy of much more attention that it receives.

Given the interest that the House has expressed in the issue, it strikes me as sensible to hold an annual, focused debate on it alone. I believe that we should continue to hold such annual debates until the fraud problem ceases to exist in the European Union; we all look forward to that time, but it seems unlikely to arrive in the near future.

Earlier, my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) forecast a certain meeting of minds between Euro-sceptics and those who are more positive about the European Union. I am not sure whether his forecast will be proved right, although I respect his experience: he has been in government, and has seen some of the matters that we are discussing from the viewpoint of the Council of Ministers. I know, however, that there is a great deal of cross-party agreement on this issue; I therefore hope that new clause 3 will receive the maximum support not only from Opposition Members, but from Conservative Members.

Mr. Dykes: I shall speak briefly. I welcome the interest and support expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber on endeavours to deal with the thorny problem of fraud in the European Community. I have no quarrel with anyone who suggests that that is necessary, although I remain sceptical about whether these or, indeed, any amendments to existing legislation are needed, or will deal with fraud in the best possible way.

I do not condone fraud either in member states—including this country—or in any of the Community transfer payments. Far from it. I am a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation—the Scrutiny Committee—and fraud is naturally one of our main concerns. It is a regular subject of discussion and deep examination, to the extent that we have the necessary information to hand. My quarrel, as emerged from the debate on Second Reading, is with putting it together with this legislation. That is why I would object to the proposed amendments, or any that were along similar lines.

The Bill should not have been opposed by any hon. Member because it was a routine Bill, dealing with a very modest increase in own resources as agreed at the relevant summit meeting in Edinburgh. I shall not repeat the Second Reading debating arguments for that, but it remains a literal truth about the text, and the two clauses are entirely routine and should not even be gone over in that way. However, we know why that happened—for a totally different reason, and that is why fraud has been built into the argument as a wonderful way for anti-European Members of Parliament here, and the press especially, to have a tremendous field day. Interestingly, the press are not here tonight—that is a different point—but they certainly were here on Second Reading because they anticipated trouble and enjoyed the anticipation thereof.

[Mr. Dykes]

To hound the European Community and say that it is riddled with fraud is a good, populist thing to say, but it is totally untrue. No one would condone any fraud at the margin anywhere, including in member states, and substantial fraud takes place in the United Kingdom that has nothing to do with the European Community. That needs to be tackled energetically by the various relevant authorities as well, and I hope that that will happen.

For the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) to be so optimistic as to say that fraud could be eliminated, either between member states of the European Union and the Commission handling all those payments in a complicated budget, or in the individual member states, is perhaps a little bit naive. I am afraid that there are some wicked people in the world. Unfortunately, our skill at financial techniques in this country, allied with agricultural payments, agricultural activity and other aspects, means that this country is full of people who practise those things, and that happens in the other member states.

9 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dykes: At the moment, I do not intend to give way at all, because I want to be brief, to give other hon. Members a chance. I shall not give way at all unless I am deeply moved by an especially unusual and esoteric intervention. However, as, by definition, I shall not know that until I have given way and heard it, it is unlikely that I shall do that tonight. I want, therefore, to be brief, if the hon. Gentleman, with his extravagant obsessions about disliking the European Union, will forgive me on this occasion.

That problem also applies in the other member states. I gleaned from my visits that each one is equally concerned with national domestic fraud that has nothing to do with the European Union and with the fraud that occurs in the European Community.

However, let us keep the matter in perspective. Let us get rid of the hysteria. Let us get away from the £6 billion figure that was bandied about in the press, with no evidence to that effect; that equalled, by the way, the amount of money that the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer wasted in trying to defend an exchange rate mechanism rate that was untenably high, because we should not have entered at such a high rate against the deutschmark.

Perhaps £6 billion is a leitmotif figure for all those seeming political and financial scandals, and will be repeated in other areas as well. However, in our own report—

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Mr. Dykes: I have already said that I shall not give way.

In our Select Committee reports, and in the explanatory memorandum provided by the Treasury and signed, I think, by my hon. Friend the Paymaster General, it emerges repeatedly that fraud is a legitimate and serious preoccupation of all of us—but at the margin the size is grossly exaggerated by the anti-European propaganda—that the Commission has responded to the Court of Auditors' regular admonitions and references to those matters; and that the main problem is mishandling and mismanagement of financial payments, as was also discussed in the debate on the previous group of new clauses, rather than huge amounts of fraud in vast areas of the Community budget zones. That remains the literal truth. Therefore, it is a matter for the House of Commons to be extremely worried about, but let us keep it in perspective.

I quote from the latest report that the Select Committee had on the latest Court of Auditors' report. We referred in paragraph 56 of our report to the Commission's response:

> "The Commission accepted a number of the Court's findings and"

has

> "taken steps to implement them. The Commission's response to the main features of the report are detailed below".

Then, in a specific example:

> "The Commission comments that for Own Resources it is aware of the importance and value of post-import clearance checks and agrees with the Court that the effectiveness of the checks depends on the adoption of methods based on risk analysis. It is in contact with Member States to promote their use. The Commission does not accept that the overall GNP figures are not reliable but agrees that further efforts need to be made to ensure harmonisation of the national accounts."

In the "blue-top weekly Europe bulletins" that we receive from the various local Commission offices in the capital cities, the matter was also put in perspective with the leading paragraph in the edition of 24 November:

> "Commission rejects fraud allegations. Commission Secretary-General David Williamson has rejected media allegations that fraud was widespread in European budgetary spending. Commenting on the recent Court of Auditors report, he said that the document was not about fraud but about financial management"

or mismanagement.

> "It mentioned fraud only once in its 484 pages"—

Mr. Duncan Smith: Will my hon. Friend give way? It is esoteric.

Mr. Dykes: I am not giving way.

> "It mentioned fraud only once in its 484 pages, referring to just one transaction in Denmark. It was completely wrong to bandy about figures suggesting that fraud amounted to £6 billion or more, Williamson said. The Court of Auditors makes the point that more than 80 per cent. of EU funds",

as brought out in previous debates, on the Opposition Benches as well,

> "are managed on behalf of the Union by the Member States".

I do not think that anyone in the Committee would regard Secretary-General David Williamson as anything other than a man of great integrity. He is an honest public servant with much international experience—a serious senior figure in the European Commission. He is from this country and I believe that he was a permanent secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food many years ago before he went to Europe. He is a credit to this country and to the European Community and not the sort of person to tell lies. He should not apologise—he is not the sort of person who says that he agrees with *The Sun* and the *Daily Star*, and the gutter filth and poisoned propaganda against the European Community that one regularly reads in those journals and, sadly, elsewhere.

Let us keep the subject in perspective. When Ministers deal with such issues, they should not succumb to the temptation to stir up hysteria about fraud by saying that it is connected with the legislation. To be fair to them, Ministers have not done that, but the Opposition should not do so. The Opposition made a basic mistake—it is perfectly reasonable for, and open to, the Opposition to raise the subject of fraud in Europe or national fraud at any time without connecting it to the Bill. They have done a disservice to the cause of Europe in the House, where there is a natural, built-in majority for further developments after Maastricht among all parties. If there were free votes instead of the three-line Whip clamps put on by our nervous Whips—I understand why they do that nowadays—there would be large majorities in favour of all significant new developments in the Community. That is the important point on which to focus.

Keeping matters in perspective means being rational and pragmatic, not hysterical. I have a good example that is directly linked with domestic fraud. I believe that social security fraud—allowing for all systems, including income support and unemployment fraud—amounts to about £4 billion per annum. Would it be wise and right for payments to genuine and deserving applicants of whatever sort within the social security protection system to be denied financial assistance pending the resolution of the problem of fraud?

In the private sector, the Serious Fraud Office is, rightly or wrongly, under a great cloud of suspicion; it is suspected that it has adopted the wrong sort of investigative methods. Many people would be concerned if the SFO were too weak and had inadequate resources to do its job properly. Fraud also occurs when various spivs and crooks misuse public sector funds. There is fraud by way of tax evasion, not just avoidance—one can talk to any senior Inland Revenue officer about that. The sums involved amount to billions of pounds. Does that mean that ordinary, honest taxpayers should be penalised and brought into that category? No. Ministers should put the correct record on Europe in a balanced way. Newspaper propaganda and poison against Europe are moving from the merely alarming to the positively dangerous.

I do not think that I shall be out of order if I refer to some articles that refer, at least tangentially, to fraud. Two recent examples fill me with gloom and foreboding if they reflect future standards in the British press. The examples are not taken from *The Sun*, the *Daily Star* or the *Daily Sport*, but from serious journals. One example comes from *The Spectator* of 3 December—

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): A Tory comic.

Mr. Dykes: I agree with that, and I thank the hon. Gentleman, who described it as a Tory comic. It is perhaps a right-wing comic. I am not sure that many of those Tories are genuine Tories in the old sense that I still respect.

I love the story of the British mother whose children were taken to Germany by a recalcitrant and difficult father. The theme of the article is that the case is the direct responsibility of the European Union. The writer wonders how the wicked Germans and Europeans dare to take the wonderful children away from their mum in Britain. It is nothing to do with the European Union—that is poisoned propaganda—

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. This does not have much to do with the new clause either.

Mr. Dykes: I agree, Dame Janet. Although I shall not detain the Committee at great length by reading from the article, in other passages it refers, tangentially, to fraud. Were other hon. Members alarmed by the futuristic article in the *Daily Mail* last Saturday? It certainly referred to fraud. *[Interruption.]* I am grateful for the advice from the Opposition, but such matters are important because the press are doing it more and more. What the press do—in concert with some of our hon. Friends, because they all work closely together—is to repeat poisoned propaganda against the European Union. It is a self-feeding process which would be easily reversed and dealt with if the Government had the necessary boldness and courage to deny such allegations, put the matter into perspective and restore the traditional enthusiasm for European Union developments on which the Government were partly elected, although the main policy areas must have been domestic, economic and social policy.

As you are looking at me rather severely, Dame Janet—and understandably so—I shall conclude. If the Government give a balanced lead, acknowledge that these issues are important, reject the amendments, which are unnecessary and would not be an useful change to existing legislation, and express their determination to deal with matters where justified but keep them in a balanced perspective, they will get more support from all parts of the Chamber.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I want briefly to intervene to tell the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) that I simply cannot understand his attitude. Like me, he has spent most of his life advocating support for the Community. He must see the dangers of a referendum and he must accept that if there is a referendum by the end of the decade, the likelihood is that it will be fought on the issue of fraud and not on the ballot paper, if that is what it will be called. If it is fought on fraud, we shall lose and there will be a major crisis in terms of our membership of the European Community. The strongest advocates of the European Union have a special responsibility placed on their shoulders to deal with the issue before it destroys a principle that we have advocated for most of our lives.

I was not here when my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) made his speech, but I understand that he saw some consensus developing between those of us who are concerned as supporters of Europe with those who have historically taken a position in opposition. I recognise that a consensus will develop because it is in all our interests to resolve the issues.

The Lords European Communities Select Committee has now produced three reports of which I am aware: the 1989 report, "Fraud against the Community", the 1992 report, "The Fight Against Fraud" and the 1994 report, "Fraud and Mismanagement of Community Finance". The reports point to the problem within the Community. They are all set against a background of repeated attempts over the years by Labour and, if I am honest, I must admit, by Conservative Members of the European Parliament to deal with such issues. They recognised, particularly

[Mr. Campbell-Savours]

Conservative supporters of the Community, that the problem had to be dealt with before greater damage was done. Yet nothing has happened apart from measures being introduced as a result of the passing of the Maastricht treaty.

The problem is whether the will is there: some of us believe that it is not. Even if measures are introduced under the provisions of the Maastricht treaty, some countries within the European Community may set out to undermine whatever arrangements are made because their reasons for membership are selfish. As we heard in the previous debate, they are prepared to adapt their national statistics to ensure that they are beneficiaries.

I want to draw the Committee's attention to three particular pieces of information. The hon. Member for Harrow, East referred to a newspaper article. I shall refer to a Commissioner, Mr. Peter Schmidhuber, whom my hon. Friends will know. The EC Commissioner responsible for fraud prevention told MEPs in 1992 that the Commission was seeking to improve co-ordination between its own departments and member states. He told a public hearing of the European Parliament's budgetary control committee that

> "Brussels is examining whether to pay rewards for information on fraud, or offer performance-related bonuses to investigators."

I have asked the Minister to take note of my request as I shall be seeking a response from him. Those two propositions were considered by the Commission. What was the result of that consideration, and will the fraud measures that we understand are to be introduced include those two provisions, which will go some way towards dealing with the problem?

In 1992, Mr. Peter Schmidhuber went on to say:

> "Demands for a further 35 fraud-busters have had to be shelved because of a general financial squeeze"—

I find that remarkable in the context of the EC budget—

> "and the effective devaluation of the Ecu, in which the EC budget is calculated, against the Belgian franc, in which most staff salaries are paid."

9.15 pm

Are we to believe that the Community, which seems to spend its money lavishly in many areas, could not find the resources to pay 35 fraud-busters? That is a Commissioner responsible for fraud prevention speaking to the European Parliament budgetary control committee.

Mr. John Tomlinson, Member of the European Parliament, in a press release in 1993, said:

> "'European Community Ministers are attacking funds for fighting fraud in the Community budget—at the insistence of the British Government', said John Tomlinson Labour MEP today in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. 'This will be resisted most strongly and a row is certainly brewing between anti-fraud campaigners in the Parliament and the Council of Ministers. The first move was when the Ministers slashed 25 million ECU (about £20 million) from the anti-fraud funds in next year's European Community budget.'"

Again, nothing happened.

On 10 March 1994, in a letter to the editor of *The Independent*, Terry Wynn said:

> "Can I make one or two comments following Douglas Hurd's remarks about fraud in the European Community. In July last year at the Council of Ministers first reading of the 1994 EC Budget, the Council made sweeping cuts throughout the budget. However, when it came to agriculture, which accounts for half of the £56 billion budget of the EC, the only cut they made was to take 20 million off the anti fraud line at the insistence of the British Government. At their second reading, the European Parliament had allocated funds to create 50 extra posts in the Anti Fraud Unit, they voted against this also. Mr. Hurd should remember that under the British Presidency, the Edinburgh Council insisted that the European Parliament continue to meet in Strasbourg, which means Parliament pays about £100 million per year for this decision, rather than being centralised in Brussels. He really should remember that when it comes to fraud, Member States have the prime responsibility for preventing, detecting and prosecuting fraud against the Community Budget and for recovering sums unduly paid out."

We all know what has happened about that promise. Many of us see it as a vague promise arising from the passage of the Maastricht treaty.

The truth is that unless we deal with the problem we will lose the Community because it will be destroyed and discredited. I tell the hon. Member for Harrow, East that it is all right trying to ignore it—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman's speech suggested to me that while he may be concerned about the problem, he believed that it was exaggerated. I believe that we are looking at only the tip of the iceberg.

I have spent much of my life in Italy. I lived there as a child, I have friends and contacts there now and I go there regularly. Fraud is rife not only in Italy but in Greece, Spain and in parts of the CAP budget in France—

Mr. Dykes: And in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes, and in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dykes: Everywhere.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: If it is, it should be dealt with. If we do not deal with it, we will lose the Union. That is why we have a special responsibility.

This issue will surface at the top of the British parliamentary agenda, not because we are anti-Community but because many of us are concerned that the Community might be wrecked unless the problem is dealt with.

Mr. MacShane: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Court of Auditors report, which many hon. Members have mentioned, shows that there were more fraud cases in the United Kingdom than in France or Italy? The sums were larger in France, because the French defraud in a more concentrated way there, but let us pay tribute to the British firms, farms and organisations that go out and show how to milk money from Brussels.

Sometimes I wonder whether we should put ourselves in the position of a German or a French parliamentarian ranting on about fraud in England. How quickly our xenophobic press would pick that up. Parliaments in the rest of Europe, however vigorous and vicious they may be, debate the issue in a rather more measured way.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I can tell my hon. Friend why there is a higher incidence of fraud, if that is the right way to put it, in the United Kingdom. It is because we detect it. In some other Community countries, people simply do not want to detect fraud.

Mr. Dykes: Very naive.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman may think that I am naive, but last year members of the European Standing Committee were heavily briefed on the subject, and I spent several days reading the material. One report in particular, which I have been trying to find, dealt with the different reporting mechanisms in the various European states, and showed how in some states there is resistance within the Administration to identifying fraud. The hon. Member for Harrow, East may shake his head at that; clearly he thinks that the source of the material was poor. But if I remember rightly, the document came from the Court of Auditors. If I find it after I finish my speech, I shall intervene and tell him what it was called.

Mr. Dykes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No; the hon. Gentleman did not give way to me.

Mr. Dykes: But the hon. Gentleman keeps referring to me. Will he give way?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: All right.

Mr. Dykes: I know that I did not give way to the hon. Gentleman, but that was because I was trying to be brief, and I had said that I did not intend to give way to anybody. However, the hon. Gentleman is repeatedly referring to me, so I am grateful to him for letting me intervene briefly.

As a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation I know that we scrutinise the annual report of the Court of Auditors. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who does more homework than most hon. Members on such matters, knows that too. Every one of those annual reports says that there is fraud in every member state, including the United Kingdom. In many areas the incidence of fraud is greater here than in other countries. Detection systems and cultures vary, but I have visited all the other member states and, with one or two exceptions—deliberately, I shall not name them now—every country thinks that it has the best detection systems, and that others are cheating more than it is.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: That is the hon. Gentleman's view, but it is not mine. If I find the document, I shall give him the reference.

I have here a document, the Thomson report, which is about EC agricultural policy for the 21st century. Ministers have repeatedly told us in Parliament that we could not see that report, because it dealt with reform of the common agricultural policy. We have been told again and again from the Dispatch Box that it is a Commission document and is not available to us. My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) tried to get access to the document before he left the European Parliament, and I understand that several other hon. Members have tried to get hold of it. Finally, I got my local Member of the European Parliament for Cumbria and Lancashire, Tony Cunningham, to extract it from the Commission by one means or another.

The document is extremely significant, and I advise all hon. Members to read it because it deals with reform of the CAP and makes many interesting proposals that should be debated in the House. If we really intend to deal with fraud in the Community we must tackle the structures and frameworks within which that fraud takes place. We must reform the CAP; it desperately needs reform.

I have been in the House for 15 years now, and the problem is that year after year Members get up and talk about reforming the CAP, but nothing ever happens. Ministers speak from the Dispatch Box in annual agriculture debates. We used to have an annual statement on the settlement, at which hon. Members always asked Ministers for assurances that work was going on to reform the CAP. Very little has happened. All that has happened is that larger amounts have been being spent despite the fact that we have been given undertakings that, over the longer term, there will be reductions in the CAP budget.

We must address the issue and there should be open debate. Documents should not be the unique preserve of Commission officials. The material should be made available to Members of Parliament so that we can deal with the issues. That is the only way in which we shall see proper reform in the Community.

Mr. Duncan Smith: I find myself in pretty near full agreement with the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). He had a more honest and clear view of the problem than did my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who spent most of his speech trying to hide away some of the problems. He seems to think that we should ignore them because we have to get them in perspective. The reality is that, unless these things are dealt with, there will not be a European Union, because it will have collapsed under the weight of its own inefficiency and fraud. If we wish to continue to see a marketplace here, we would not necessarily wish that to happen.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East went on to say something along the lines that one of the Commissioners had said that fraud was out of all proportion, and that it was really a question of mismanagement. I tell my hon. Friend and other hon. Members that I used to be a business man. When running a company, I would have looked at mismanagement of finance in the same way that I would have looked at fraud. Deliberate mismanagement is the same as fraud.

The point about the report by the Court of Auditors is simply that the court is not able to find out how much of the mismanagement is really fraud. In truth, the structures are such that mismanagement is endemic. The mismanagement is part of the system, and leads to further fraudulent mismanagement of money.

The argument for an annual debate on the finances of the European Community is now strong. Each year, we rightly discuss the Budget and the Finance Bill, when the Government seek money for the next year. Yet the reality is that each year, we sit here quietly while European money flows through the Consolidated Fund straight into the European Community. Until the Heads of Government get together to decide whether there should be any more money, Parliaments are denied access to the debate. It is ironic that we should debate the matter here, when the reality is that we do so on the basis of the increase and not the total budget.

The timely arrival of the report by the Court of Auditors has made the debate even more interesting. I looked at the executive summary of the report; the main book is very detailed. It is interesting that, at the beginning of the report, the authors talk about comparing the findings with the annual report for 1983. Even glancing through, one is struck by how little has changed. We have talked about the powers that Maastricht gave the Court of Auditors in

[Mr. Duncan Smith]

the whole investigative process. From looking through the reports in 1983, one finds that the present report mentions essentially the same things. The court did not have all the extra powers in 1983.

There is no demonstration that the powers under Maastricht have suddenly opened this can of worms. The can of worms was on display; it is just that nobody had the political will to discuss it. There was not the drive. It is only now that we see the inexorable rise of money that the drive has come to find out where the money is going. The report says:

> "it is clear that many of the problems then identified in accounting and financial management of the most important areas of Community expenditure have not yet been overcome."

The report talks about the Commission having "made efforts" and about the

> "proper level of financial management and control necessary in the complex environment of Community finances."

Nothing has changed. The court was saying the same things back in 1983.

The report talks about mismanagement and about inducements; it touches here on the agricultural side. I know that the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) went into detail on that point. I shall not go down that road, but will simply reiterate the point. The report says:

> "Agricultural management measures are still failing to achieve balanced markets."

The report talks about how aids for distillation, appropriate for temporary production surplus, have been made into permanent encouragement to the reduction of unsaleable wine. It goes on to say:

> "the permanent abandonment of vineyards are offset by others which encourage investment in the sector."

It is the particular part which talks about temporary production surpluses made into permanent encouragement which suggests a quiet slide across in practice. That is endemic. It was allowed to happen.

Another part of the report is even more fascinating. I ask the Committee to think about the matter as though I were talking about a local council, and that it were an investigation of how councillors were carrying through their practice. The paragraph says:

> "The audit continues to discover breaches of the rules governing the placing of contracts with third parties . . . The financial controller's department has sometimes accepted that expenditure be charged to the wrong account or that a single operation be covered by several small private treaty contracts instead of one large contract which would have been put out to tender."

I looked at that, and I could not believe it. I immediately thought that, if it had been a reference to a council in this country and we had been talking about councillors, the Audit Commission would have recommended surcharging them and their disbarment.

That is not only mismanagement. It is now entitled mismanagement, but it is fraud, because it is a misuse of moneys which the Community has no right to abuse and misuse. It is not a case of hiding the problem or pretending that it is out of all proportion: it is a reality. It was just the same in 1983. The travesty is that it is still happening.

9.30 pm

The report even goes on to say:

> "The Commission's central accounting system is supported by inadequate documentation which fails to provide a clear 'audit trail'".

That is accountants' doublespeak. On numerous occasions, I have seen business accounts vetted by accountants who talk in the first instance about difficulty in finding documentation; a lost trail. That is them giving hint to the fact that it has more than probably been deliberate, that in fact documents have gone missing which nicely hide the reality of the figures.

The report goes on:

> "the Commission needs to devote a significantly larger proportion of its staff resources to securing the necessary improvements in the performance of its own services".

I shall come to that matter later, because I want to ask the big question at the end: to whom will those people be accountable, and about what?

There are two other sections with which I want to deal briefly. One section, on the financial audit, makes very interesting reading. I recommend that right hon. and hon. Members read it. It says:

> "Cases of avoidance of the rules and tenders, the granting of approval ex post facto by the Financial Controller or officials who are not authorised to do so, the absence or inadequacy of supporting documents, items which are not booked in accordance with the provisions of the regulations and various book-keeping procedures are all weaknesses in the internal control system."

They are not weaknesses: they are disasters. Over that period of 11 years, there was no drive to tighten up those aspects.

It is not that we now have people looking into matters and saying that it is a problem. Nobody, at any stage, who controls the money—those same upright individuals about whom my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East talked—once asked themselves why they were living with those weaknesses, why they were not doing something about it, why they needed a policeman to come along to tell them it was wrong. If they did not intend it to happen, why did they not stop it earlier? It is the same for our own Government practices, and we should hunt those flaws down on the same basis. However, those disasters come through as

> "weaknesses in the internal control system."

The section of the report entitled "European Parliament Building Expenditure" is enlightening. I know that the hon. Member for Gateshead, East said that it was ridiculous that there were two buildings, and possibly a third, and I fully agree. I do not think that anybody in this Committee would for one moment believe that there should be more than one building.

However, in the midst of that discussion, we suddenly find a little gem. The report says:

> "It was found that there had been no prior invitation to tender for the execution of the project"—

the building of the Parliament. That is quite incredible. In other words, somehow that invitation was known about, quietly slid along and, somehow, the right people tendered a bid. It goes on:

> "The Parliament is obliged to review these aspects for the purposes of obtaining long-term financing for the project at the lowest cost."

The funny thing is that, when one reads the report, one begins to get the feeling that one is almost re-reading through some eastern potentate's book of accounts, because one begins to see the number of palaces growing, people with largesse and large salaries. It is as if we are talking about something that is both anti-democratic—

Mr. MacShane: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Duncan Smith: With all due respect, I shall not give way. I am aware that others wish to speak. I wish to draw my remarks to a conclusion.

Some information has been given to me by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), who is now in his place, about Pieter Dankert, who I believe was the president of the European Parliament. The information stems from the debate that took place on the Court of Auditors. I gather that Mr. Dankert said—I am paraphrasing—that it was strange that the Commission seemed not to have co-operated fully and speedily when the Court of Auditors was producing its report. He seemed to say that somehow the process was slowed down.

We must remember what was going on when the report was being written. A number of nations were applying to join the European Community and were holding their referendums. There were Austria—Switzerland rejected membership—Finland and Sweden. The process that I was describing was not completed until shortly after Sweden held its referendum.

I am not trying to suggest that an attempt was made to stop the Swedes knowing about the "company" that they were about to join, but the situation was rather like taking part in a company as a director, for example. Would such a person sign himself in only after he had read the accounts? Applicant countries did not have that opportunity, and they will now be saying, "What have we said we shall join?"

Rev. Ian Paisley: I can confirm what the hon. Gentleman has said, and what Mr. Pieter Dankert said. As the hon. Gentleman has said, Mr. Dankert was a president of the Strasbourg Parliament, and so could not be called a Euro-sceptic. He said that it was interesting to note that, if someone wanted to join a company, he would always examine the books, but in the instance to which the hon. Gentleman was referring the books could not be opened until the referendum took place.

I was a member of the Bureau of the Strasbourg Parliament. During a meeting of the Bureau, the French argued that, unless the issue of the new Parliament building was dealt with quickly and quietly, they would stop the European elections altogether. It was said that the members of the Bureau should not let the matter out of the meeting.

Mr. Duncan Smith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. He told me earlier that he wanted to make the specific point.

Time and again, hon. Members on both sides of the House reach the point when they say, "There are problems. There is endemic, deep-seated fraud." As the hon. Member for Workington said, we cannot rely on the figures of some countries when they investigate fraud.

Like the hon. Gentleman, I have lived and spent a long time in Italy and various other countries, and have done business with them. I know the culture, which does not lend itself to the genuine examination that I have witnessed in the United Kingdom and in some other countries. There is endemic fraud in certain countries, and it is their structures that have given rise to it. It is those structures that we must tackle.

It is no good saying that we should level police on police so that they can investigate each other. That will mean allocating even more money for the next structure that investigates the structure below it, and so on. That is exactly the problem with the Community now. The different structures are not co-operating but hiding themselves from each other as part of a game.

The common agricultural policy, for example, is no longer viable in its present form. Indeed, it has not been viable for a long time. So what must we do with it? The main problem is that moneys go into the Commission and then out to member states. There is no control at Commission level. The members of the Commission are the policemen, and at the same time they control the moneys that go out to member states. It is clear that they are not under any pressure to resolve the problem.

The issue could be settled by repatriating much of the control of the Commission back to member states and leaving the Commission, as it should have been in the first place, adjudicating between nation states. That would give the real cause and the real drive behind checking on fraud. Essentially, in that and all other matters throughout the cohesion fund and every other mechanism in the Commission, at present we give it that money in the first place and then watch it recycled back, through various means, to us and to others.

In reality, restructuring or changing is the answer, not a continual demand for more police, because they will not find out any more. They will just do in 10 years what they have done over the past 11 years, and that is to say, "Oh, surprise, surprise, there is fraud in the European Community, but we cannot obtain a full answer because we do not have full co-operation." Let national Parliaments ask their Governments why we are paying more tax.

Forums across Europe will be the right ones to investigate using their own versions of the Public Accounts Committee, not trying to give central control and central investigation. I therefore urge my hon. Friend the Minister to drive this matter forward into 1996 and reform root and branch the structures that exist in the Community; otherwise, as has been said, we shall inevitably watch the disintegration of what exists there at the moment.

Mr. Shore: I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) said. It contrasts very starkly with the remarks by the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). The hon. Member did not do his cause any good by seeking to minimise the extent and gravity of fraud in the European Community. He would have done very well indeed to have listened to the good advice of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

One of the most telling phrases during the debate came from my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin). She said correctly and pointedly that the CAP is a fraud-friendly system. It is. No one who has turned his or her mind seriously to the character of the CAP would deny that.

[Mr. Shore]

I do not know whether I may formally move new clause 10 in my name, but we are calling for—

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The right hon. Gentleman cannot do so at this stage. Debate is possible, because new clause 10 has been grouped with new clause 3. If new clause 10 were moved, it would have to be moved in the order in which it appears on the amendment paper.

Mr. Shore: I may, however, refer to its terms. We say that

> "Each year Her Majesty's Government shall make a report to Parliament on the proposals it has made and the progress achieved in combating fraud and waste in Community expenditure as documented in the relevant annual reports of the Court of Auditors."

No one who has followed the annual documentation by the Court of Auditors on fraud, waste and inadequate financial control in the Community over the past decade can fail to see the need for such a new clause. The hon. Member for Chingford made a telling point when he said that the recent report of the Court of Auditors itself made the point that nothing has really changed in the past 10 years. That is a tremendous indictment not of the Court of Auditors but of the Commission and the national Government authorities which should be concerned with combating fraud.

To the dismay of the Government, no doubt, the Court of Auditors published its annual report for the year 1993 as recently as 24 November. What the Court of Auditors and the House of Lords Select Committee had to say in the two major documents to which I shall refer is very telling.

It is absurd for the hon. Member for Harrow, East, who is unfortunately not in his place, to refer to "poisoned propaganda". The Court of Auditors is a professional and competent body which can hardly be challenged by the people whom it has been appointed to investigate and whom it has found it necessary to censure. The Commission's defence is very unconvincing indeed.

9.45 pm

The Court of Auditors said a great deal about CAP and the overseas aid programme. At the beginning of its very gentle general summing up it says:

> "Overall, it would be fair to say that the development of Community activities has not been accompanied, either in the Commission or in the Member States, by a commensurate development of the necessary financial management and control systems".

It goes on to say:

> "insufficient resources, both in quantity and in quality, have been allocated to ensuring the best use of public money and accountability for it."

They are very measured words, but the charges are documented over and again in the 480 pages which form the report.

I find the last of the House of Lords European Communities Committee reports very convincing— the idea that it is "poisoned propaganda" is simply ludicrous. The report was published on 19 July this year, so it is very recent indeed. I draw the Chamber's attention to the report's summary, which says:

> "The Committee's main conclusions are as follows: the Commission's new anti-fraud strategy is inadequate. It is an action plan with no plans for action."

Its next finding states:

> "there is not enough emphasis on fraud prevention as distinct from fraud detection . . . The former should be an objective of policy and much more attention should be paid to fraud-proofing regulations and schemes".

The Committee's next conclusion says:

> "the Commission must accept its responsibility for ensuring proper administration of Community funds and must specify precisely the procedures and controls to be followed by Member States acting as its agents".

Mr. Rowlands: Did the Government accept this?

Mr. Shore: I will come to that point in a minute. I wish to finish with their Lordships' conclusions because they are highly relevant. They continue:

> "the Court of Auditors must be strengthened".

They said that in July this year, knowing full well what had gone into the Maastricht treaty and what additional powers it had given to the Court of Auditors. They go on to say:

> "the whole of the European Parliament should play a more active role in the fight against fraud and Member States should pay more attention to reports from the Budgetary Control Committee".

Another important conclusion states:

> "public opinion needs to be informed and motivated".

The public must not be misinformed nor should the truth be hidden from them, as the hon. Member for Harrow, East, who is not in his place, would have us accept. The final conclusion states:

> "the present step-by-step approach is not producing sufficient results. A Task Force of outside experts should be appointed to undertake a fundamental review of the way the Institutions are discharging their financial responsibilities and in particular the matters referred to in paragraph 53. Failing that, the European Council must insist on the Commission undertaking such a review itself with the help of outside professionals."

That is a series of quite powerful recommendations. Those conclusions were reached after careful study by a body whose members could hardly be accused of being Euro-sceptics. On the contrary, they are very responsible people who, for the most part, are friends of the European Union.

My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has prompted me to ask how the Government will respond to the House of Lords Select Committee report. I think that the whole House would like to have that response.

I conclude my dealings with the report by quoting paragraph 56, which says:

> "We emphasise, as we have done in previous reports, that there has hitherto been a lack of political will in the Community to take remedial action, with the result that the integrity of the Community's financial statements is in doubt."

I know that hon. Members on both sides of the Committee will concur fully with those words. It continues:

> "It is Europe's honest taxpayers and traders who bear the huge sums"—

the Committee's words—

> "lost to fraud against the Community. These losses are a public scandal. Unless the measures described above are set in hand boldly and resolutely, adverse reports will continue to be issued by the Court of Auditors year after year, and such reports will inevitably fail to give the assurances required by the Maastricht Treaty. The Community in the meanwhile will continue to suffer grievous losses through fraud and irregularity. We do not think that any responsible Government would wish to allow that state of affairs to continue."

Those are pretty weighty words. They fully express the proper anxiety that has been articulated in today's debate by hon. Members on both sides of the Committee about the extent of fraud and the difficulty that has been found so far in combating it.

The Government's response to that report is something that we would be interested to hear. The Government have not helped themselves or their reputation by turning down those sums of money which have been offered in two member states to help deal with fraud. My hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor cited some items during his speech on Second Reading. Only yesterday or the day before the political editor of *The Guardian*, Michael White, had this to say of recent meetings of Budget Ministers on 16 November. The article reads:

> "Mr. Heathcoat-Amory agreed to a £3.9 million cut in the anti-fraud budget for 1995, currently set at £100 million and far less than demanded by the European Parliament."

If the Minister agreed to cut £3.9 million from the anti-fraud budget, that undermines his credibility as a Minister who should take such matters very seriously.

The now absent hon. Member for Harrow, East quoted defensively the extraordinary reaction of the European Commission to the Court of Auditors' censure of it. He quoted Mr. David Williamson, the Secretary-General of the European Commission, who made an unwise and foolish statement. He went out of his way to diminish the impact of the report. That is not what he should have done as a person very much involved in the reputation of the European Community.

Reference has been made in the debate to the regulation and convention for the protection of the Community's financial interests. That occurs in the new clause moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East. It is obviously germane to the problem of fraud and financial irregularities. A regulation and convention for the protection of the Community's financial interests is now being negotiated within the Community. There is great difficulty in achieving an agreement on the content of that regulation and, indeed, that convention.

The regulation is that part of the procedure of the Community that comes under the old provisions of the Rome treaty and, if agreed unanimously, it would be imposed on us. The convention for the protection of the Community's financial interests has been negotiated on our behalf, under the third pillar arrangement of the Maastricht treaty, by the Home Secretary with the Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs of other Community countries.

The great difficulty is the lack of any agreement on what fraud is. If one cannot reach an agreement on a definition of fraud, frankly, one will not get far with legislation of that type, whether it be a regulation or a convention.

As the Committee will recognise, in new clause 10 we ask the Government to make an annual report to Parliament on their proposals and the progress achieved in combating fraud. That would precisely focus the attention of the Government on what we want to hear from them—not merely the extent of fraud, but what they are doing to combat it. Our proposal makes the Minister's reply a very important contribution to this debate, especially in relation to the recommendations made by the House of Lords Select Committee.

I have another proposal, which must have occurred to many hon. Members. Fraud should be given the high profile and urgent attention that it needs. Goodness knows, we have enough Commissioners—we do not know quite what to do with them all. One would have thought that the Commission should accept that a senior Commissioner should be given, as his main or only task, the responsibility of combating fraud and imposing adequate financial controls. It would be beneficial for the Commission and for all of us.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): A Commissioner is already responsible for tackling fraud—Mr. Schmidhuber, whose name was mentioned earlier.

It was interesting to see how several hon. Members dealt with an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). They said that he was trying to ignore the problems of fraud in the European Union. In fact, my hon. Friend was absolutely right. The report of the Court of Auditors is a report not on fraud but on financial management in the Union as a whole. In the information note attached to the report, which picks out the highlights, fraud is cited only once.

The interesting aspect of coverage of that subject in the United Kingdom is that we constantly hear references to a figure of 6 becu, which is said to be the extent of fraud in the Community. That figure has no basis in fact. Its origin can be found in a report carried out by a German academic some years ago, in an extrapolation of an estimate of 10 per cent. of the Community budget which is possibly lost to fraud. He based those calculations on a specific slaughter premium scheme and extrapolated the amount to all parts of the budget. As such, the example and the amount are totally without justification.

The Court of Auditors' report strongly criticises member states, including the United Kingdom, on financial management. The president of the court pointed out that, as Governments of member states effectively manage about 80 per cent. of the Union's budget, to some degree they are responsible for its proper management. We all know that there are differences in standards of financial probity in member states, but we must bear it in mind that, as the Secretary of State for Social Security has told the House more than once, we have sufficient fraud in our social security system without its negating the whole system. When discussing such matters, we have to take care that we do not debase the institutions themselves when labelling everything in the European Union as fraudulent and dishonest. Hon. Members should not forget that one third of the budget of the European Union is spent in disadvantaged regions of the Union, and that much is spent in the north-east of England, where I come from, and in Scotland. Since 1989, £30 billion has been spent in that way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) has said that it is interesting that, as greater financial contributions are made to the European Union budget, there will undoubtedly be greater scrutiny of the expenditure of the Union. That is only right. After all, each directorate in the Commission has its own computer system which has been contributed by different member states. I do not know which member state introduced the computer system—

It being Ten o'clock, THE SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business),

That, at this day's sitting, the European Communities (Finance) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Again considered in Committee.

Mr. Devlin: I shall return to the point which I briefly wanted to make. I have spoken for only three minutes so far. *[Interruption.]* I shall see my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) later. *[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues his speech, may I say that I deprecate what appears to be the post-prandial gossip which is taking place in the Chamber? If hon. Members wish so to engage, I suggest that they leave the Chamber.

Mr. Devlin: It is nice to know that some hon. Members are making such a contribution to diminishing the European wine lake.

The point which I wanted to make briefly is that the systems within the Community can be scrutinised heavily. The situation regarding computers is that each directorate has selected a computer system from a different Community country. For instance, the education directorate's computer system has been installed by Greeks, and its software was written by a Greek. It is not one of the most worthy computer systems, and is prone to certain inefficiencies.

Across the Community institutions as a whole, there are a large number of well-paid officials who, frankly, are not finding enough to do with their time. Consequently, we could be looking for further productivity improvements from them.

We also have an historic opportunity with the joining of three new countries—Finland, Sweden and Austria—to the Community. A shift will take place in the Community which will give this country a fundamental opportunity. Up until now, the French-speaking countries have had a hold over the institutions in the European Union. We are seeing a shift, and a number of senior policy positions will be taken over by Germans, Austrians and other nationalities.

With the influx of Austrians, Finns and Swedes, English will be used much more as the working language in the Community. We are also seeing a massive improvement in information technology, most of which is written in English. That will have a serious effect on the management of the European Union, because it will mean that the standard of financial management which we have grown used to in this country will be much more amenable to the operating systems within the Union. With that in mind, we can see that there will be a much greater improvement in the future.

Let me finish by identifying an area in which an early improvement in financial systems would be very welcome. I refer to the allocation of European social fund objective 2, 3 and 4 status, and the management of the funds. In my constituency and throughout my region in the north of England, a number of local authorities, voluntary organisations and other institutions have applied for ESF objective 2 funding, but they will not find out until half way through the financial year—or even later—whether they will receive that money.

Organisations in my constituency that applied for funds for their projects in January still have not heard whether they will receive those funds. They are, however, required to spend their money evenly over the year; so they are speculating, taking money that they have earned from other sources—or borrowing money—and then spending it in the hope that later in the year they will receive the funds that they confidently expect. It is not a happy system, because it may mean that a number of worthy organisations are left out in the financial cold.

I look forward to further reforms in the future, but I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East that the whole question has been blown very much out of proportion. We must try to preserve the integrity of the European initiative without necessarily dressing it up in an erroneous cloak of fraud.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I should have thought that the best way of preserving the integrity of the European initiative was by demonstrating the extent of fraud. That would show whether we can have faith in Europe's control systems and institutions. Rather than saying, as the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) seemed to say at one stage, that it is okay as long as some of the money comes to the north-east, we should want all the fraud to be detected so that we know what we are dealing with.

At present, unfortunately, fraud and the European Community are synonymous in the minds of a vast number of people. Indeed, the European Union could almost be called the European Union of fraudsters and related trades. Examples of fraud have been brought home to people by television reports and reports from the Court of Auditors. There is, for instance, the massive olive fraud in Italy: for years, people went around counting the olive trees on the estate and plotting them on maps; then they moved on to superior technology—aerial spotting of olive trees. Subsequently, that technology was itself improved: the spotting was done by means of ortho-chromatic, pan-chromatic, infra-red and ultra-violet film. By that method, all the olive trees could be minutely counted.

The comic aspect only gives ammunition to people like me who are strongly critical of the Community. It generates an atmosphere of alienation—a general belief that the Community is all about fraud. Other examples are the piggy-go-round, and the export rebates on goods that never leave the country or else return to it by some roundabout route. I am not talking only about the common agricultural policy, although it is a fraudsters charter that accounts for half the budget. The CAP, along with the enormous fluctuations in commodity prices, gives great scope for fraud, as does tobacco.

Our new clause 10 mentions waste as well as fraud. We need to deal with waste. We have spent £1 billion on growing tobacco in Greece, and more billions on expanding the wine lake. We have provided subsidies to cut wine production, and production has increased. All those examples are endemic in the CAP, but trading schemes are also a problem. An element of corruption is present in the Commission itself, and we must ask whether the European Parliament is an adequate means of dealing with fraud. Building contracts for the European Court are an example, as are the travel expenses claimed—fraudulently, in some cases—by Members of the European Parliament. Some claim the full fare and then pay a cut-price fare. Wasteful overseas trips are made. How can anyone have faith in an institution that is so redolent of fraud, when so many examples of it are hitting the newspapers?

The sad fact is that policing of that fraud depends on national Governments, who often have a vested interest in sustaining the fraud, or not revealing it because it will draw attention to what is happening, and national Governments who, in some cases, are corrupt.

The example of what is happening in Italy was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). One cannot claim that fraud is not endemic in a system in which politicians are interrogated about fraud and politicians are carried off to prison as a result of fraud.

Perhaps, in passing, I should commend the example of Italy to the Government, because the effect of carrying politicians off to gaol has been a collapse of confidence in the lira; the lira has fallen and Italian exports and Italian manufacturing are booming. It is a precedent that the Government might well choose to follow, given the incompetent way in which they handled our own exit from the exchange rate mechanism.

One cannot assume that, in a system where that is happening in national politics, fraud and corruption are restricted to national politicians; they must be endemic in the society. If they are endemic in the society, we cannot know the scale of what is happening to the European Community's spending in that country.

Italian fraud, Spanish practices and the Irish beef scandal are all examples of a corrupt system that is essentially a fiddlers charter. Other problems are the huge scale of spending, which gives enormous scope for speculation, the conflict between European authorities and national authorities, and the pork barrel mentality whereby, as long as funds are channelled into the "Club Med" states and the poorer states, corruption is accepted. A conspiracy of silence develops in relation to it.

We do not know the scale of fraud. The Chancellor of the Exchequer says, with his usual insouciance, that it is on a small scale—peanuts—but he thinks that of so many things. Our budget contributions are on a small scale—peanuts. Only tomorrow, when he comes to the House with a package on a much bigger scale, shall we discover his definition of something that is not peanuts. It is all peanuts to the Chancellor—but what are the estimates?

The Court of Auditors produced an estimate of fraud and waste last year of between £600 million and £4 billion. I am happy to accept any estimate, provided that it is high enough. The fact is that we do not know. My estimates, from a prejudiced point of view, are as good as the estimates of people whose attitude to the Community is favourable.

That is the aim of the new clauses. It is simply to shed light on the issue from all points of view, as my hon. Friend the Member for Workington said. From the point of view of people who are enthusiastic about and loyal to the Community, it is important that the true scale of fraud, a cancer eating away at the heart of the Community, which is alienating public opinion on a considerable scale, should be known, just as it is important from my point of view that it should be known.

The true scale of fraud might be high, in which case it will probably fuel my frenzy; it might well be low, in which case it will fuel the enthusiasm of those people who are committed to the Community. We need to know, if we are to deal with the problem adequately and in the effective way in which we tackle fraud in this country; the public want to know, and it is essential for the enlightenment of the public that they be told the scale of the problem. There is a connection between the widespread alienation from Europe which exists, and which is shown by public opinion polls in this country, and the pervasive feeling that what is going on there is a fraudsters charter.

It is hypocrisy for Governments to come back, as the Government have done, year after year, and tell us, "We are strengthening the procedures for fraud, we are voting more money to deal with fraud," and then be found to be voting in the Council for cuts in the provision for tackling fraud. It happened last year, as was revealed by John Tomlinson—our Government supported a £20 million cut in the provision for tackling fraud. When the European Parliament suggested in this year's draft budget that 50 additional staff should be provided for the anti-fraud squad in Europe, the squad was cut with the concurrence of our Government. Such double-talk leads to a collapse in belief in terms of what people say about Europe—one thing is said here and another elsewhere.

What we need and what the new clauses will provide is more light on the subject. Much of the secrecy is due to the Council of Ministers, which is one of the obstacles to dealing with fraud. It will not provide the information to the Court of Auditors or to us. Our new clause 10 simply provides for a report to Parliament on what is being done to combat both fraud, which is endemic, and waste, which is an even more serious problem. New clause 13, tabled by the official Opposition, does not mention waste and does not cover all Community expenditure as our new clause does; it merely deals with the general budget.

10.15 pm

I would expect a Government who are trying to persuade Parliament to agree to raise the ceiling on European expenditure to support the new clauses, and to defend and promote them. If we are giving a concession to the Community by raising the ceiling, it is surely essential to use that as a negotiating counter and say that we have to take action to deal with fraud. The Government have lavished money on the big six accountancy houses, including Coopers and Lybrand and Price Waterhouse. I do not know why the Government do not propose that one of the big six firms of auditors should audit the expenditure and financial procedures of the Commission and the Council.

I had a moment of hope when it was proposed that Sir James Goldsmith should draft into the Commission a team of 200 auditors to find out what is going on. What a good thing that would be. Why do the Government not propose that? Why do they not send Coopers and Lybrand to Brussels to deal with the problems and tell us what is going on? We are asking for more light and more information. If our new clauses are agreed to—they are an essential concomitant of the increase in expenditure and fraud—we shall have achieved that.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I can at least agree with the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) that we

[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory]

are debating a serious issue. Over the past 10 years and more, the United Kingdom has often ploughed a lonely furrow in encouraging and arguing for prompter and more resolute action against fraud and mismanagement in all its forms. We believe not only in direct action to fight fraud, but in tightening up financial discipline at all levels in the European Community and introducing better systems of budgetary management to stop fraud arising in the first place. That is why we are extremely glad that a number of other European Union institutions now take the issue with the same degree of seriousness.

The European Parliament sometimes has a reputation for running a sort of global foreign policy rather than looking after the interests of taxpayers. It is extremely welcome that members of that Parliament are grasping the issue and using their own powers to bring the European budget under better control. Member states are also becoming interested, which may have something to do with the fact that more of them are becoming net contributors. Before the end of the century, in terms of net contributions per head, we shall be overtaken by France, the Netherlands, Sweden and Austria, with Germany remaining by far and away the largest net contributor. Italy too is becoming a contributor to the budget so the attitude of those countries towards the need for better financial control has been transformed in recent years.

New clause 3 does not make a great deal of sense because it assumes that it is the United Kingdom that adopts Council regulations. It is not; the Council of Ministers adopts them. We have a veto over their adoption because they must be agreed by unanimous vote, but that distinction is a important one. The regulation specified in new clause 3 has already been submitted to the Scrutiny Committee. That happened on 5 October and it has been recommended for debate, so we do not need a new clause to ensure that that draft regulation is properly scrutinised.

The Opposition sometimes speak as though the draft regulation against fraud were the only one that exists. It is important because it will bring into effect a European Union-wide system of administrative penalties which we very much welcome. A great deal has been happening quite separately from that initiative. For instance, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary put forward a British proposal under the third pillar of the Maastricht treaty which requires inter-governmental action. It suggested a series of measures to ensure that fraud against the interests of the Community is subjected to appropriate sanctions under national laws. Indeed, it was largely at his prompting that the Justice and Home Affairs Council has now agreed a resolution that will go forward to Essen to be considered by the European Council next weekend.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin), who introduced the debate for the Labour party, sought to suggest that the United Kingdom had voted against anti-fraud measures. I want to put that myth to rest. In the draft budget for next year, the Commission asked for anti-fraud resources of some £102 million. That was virtually granted in full by the Council. It is true that it represents a small cut on 1994 but that is because the 1994 budget for anti-fraud measures includes a number of start-up costs and one-off studies and the purchase of capital equipment which obviously do not have to be repeated every year, but the operational effectiveness and the number of people deployed on the ground against fraud will remain, and in some cases be enhanced.

Of course the European Parliament, as so often is the case, sought an increase in expenditure for this category as for many others. It wanted some £2 million more spent on agriculture to make sure that the inspection of animals in transit was enhanced. That did not find favour with the Council of Ministers. Another suggested item of expenditure would insert into the operational section of the budget a number of administrative expenditure budgets. Those two items were taken out by the Council of Ministers. If it is of any assistance to the hon. Lady, I can give her the categorical assurance that the United Kingdom did not vote for any cut whatsoever.

There is a wider point, however, that action against fraud is not simply a question of spending more public money. We want more preventive measures and better regulations in Community legislation. We want to improve the discipline of the budget to stop fraud arising in the first place. It is too often the instinct of the European Parliament and Opposition parties to meet expenditure with more expenditure and to judge any organisation simply by the amount of money being spent on it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What about social security?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The anti-fraud measures in the European Commission and elsewhere are properly funded and have the required degree of political momentum behind them.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am responding to the hon. Gentleman, who spoke earlier in the debate.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the Thomson report on agriculture. I think that he has a copy, but he can also obtain one from the Library where I believe that it was recently deposited by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It is entitled, "European Agriculture in the 21st Century". I believe that it is a rattling good read and I commend it to the House. There is no question of the United Kingdom Government wishing to suppress well thought out and constructive contributions to the debate about CAP reform which itself has an important part to play in reducing the incentives for fraud.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) wanted an annual debate on this and in my final remarks I shall mention an idea along those lines. First, I want to assure him that the United Kingdom Government were instrumental in obtaining for the European Court of Auditors full status as an institution of the European Union during the Maastricht negotiation and ensuring that reports from the European Court of Auditors are not simply filed in the bottom drawer in the Commission but are responded to and acted upon.

Mr. Shore: I hope that the Minister will address himself to the House of Lords Select Committee's July report which particularly mentions, as their Lordships saw it, the lack of powers of the Court of Auditors after the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I was coming to that very point. The right hon. Gentleman rightly drew attention to the good work that has been done in another place on the question of fraud and how to fight it. The Government will be responding in due course to their Lordships' latest report, but I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that already many of the constructive proposals that they put forward, including strengthening the European Court of Auditors, are being put in place. I met the European Court of Auditors in London earlier in the summer and I gave it an assurance that it would receive the full support of the British Government and, I presumed, of the House in the good work that it does.

I end by responding to the point about reports to the House. It is an essential task of the Government to keep the House fully informed about what we are doing on the question of fraud and mismanagement. At an earlier stage in the debate I mentioned the annual report submitted to the House on the Community budget. Starting from next year, I propose to expand the statement to include what is being done on budgetary discipline and mismanagement and to counter fraud. A point picked up by other hon. Members but suggested by me was that in some ways the House suffers from a surfeit of different reports, not all of them being properly scrutinised. Therefore, there is merit not in triggering yet another report as a consequence of today's debate, but in incorporating it into a single annual report which will draw together all that the Government are doing on this important issue.

Ms Quin: Despite what the Minister has just said, the Opposition consider that the new clause is still important and that it would be right for the Council to adopt this regulation on the protection of the Community's financial interests so that all of us could feel that something was being done to tackle the problem effectively. For that reason, we shall press the new clause to a Division.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 255, Noes 319.

Division No. 14] **[22.28 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown; N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Mon)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff Central)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, Bill
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry

Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Is'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Ms Tessa Jowell and
Mr. John Cummings.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim

Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Micheal
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bowen Wells and
Dr. Liam Fox.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Shore: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. I raised the matter with Dame Janet Fookes when she was in the Chair. It was my clear understanding that there would be a Division on new clause 10.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I know of no undertaking being given.

Mr. Spearing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. We accept your ruling, of course, but would it be possible for you to read the relevant passage in *Hansard* tomorrow?

The First Deputy Chairman: I shall certainly read *Hansard* tomorrow.

New clause 11

HOUSE OF COMMONS APPROVAL OF SUBORDINATE ACTION

'No Minister of the Crown shall give assent to any Regulation, Directive, or other instrument relating to the operation of the decision of 31st October 1994 in the Council of the European Communities in section 1(e) above, unless the text of that instrument has been approved by a Resolution of the House of Commons.'.—*[Mr. Spearing.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

10.45 pm

Mr. Spearing: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The clause deals with the powers of the House of Commons in the voting of money. I shall not speak for long— *[Interruption.]* That is partly because the Conservative Members who are jeering and laughing should quickly understand that they have been sent to this place to do a job of work. If they do not examine taxation and how it is used, their party will not be pursuing its constitutional and parliamentary purpose. The clause would ensure that that purpose would be pursued.

The clause turns on how the House of Commons decides where taxpayers' money goes. We all know from previous debates that about £10 billion of taxpayers' money may be allocated to the European Communities in the next year or so. Some Conservative Members may feel that that is a good deal. I shall not deal with the merits of membership, because I wish to confine myself to whether the House controls taxpayers' money. *[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. It is difficult to hear what the hon. Member is saying. The Committee must settle down.

Mr. Spearing: As I was saying, Mr. Lofthouse—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Shortly before the most recent Division, the Paymaster General gave an assurance that a certain document had been placed in the Library. I understand that those in the Library, having been requested by a number of Members to produce the document, undertook an extensive search but found no reference to it, except for one last March, when two Members of the other place asked for a copy to be placed in the Library. Perhaps the Minister would care to qualify what he said earlier. We cannot find the document that he assured Parliament was available to Members.

The First Deputy Chairman: That is not a matter for the Chair. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has the floor.

Mr. Spearing: An essential question is how the House of Commons votes money. The Chamber is crowded at Budget time, especially when it comes to debates about whether value added tax is to be reduced, for example. When it comes to voting up to £10 billion a year to the European Communities, we demonstrate a failure to take control. Conservative Members who are talking while in their places and perhaps not understanding the purpose of the clause may demonstrate a greater understanding when we come to 1999, when perhaps a third of the rebate that we were debating earlier will disappear. The hapless Government of the time will be faced with an extremely difficult situation.

The Bill authorises the maximum amount that the Community can impose on its members. It does not provide, however, how much each annual budget will be. That is a matter for annual procedure, in which the Paymaster General is a key figure. The Chancellor of the Exchequer watches to see how much each year the Communities are to spend. The details come before the House of Commons, where they are scrutinised in what is usually a take-note debate. That debate usually takes place late at night, and is usually attended by relatively few hon. Members.

[Mr. Spearing]

The moneys for the 1995 budget were debated on Monday evening, and I do not think that more than 20 hon. Members were present. That shows the extent to which hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber are unaware of the power that is potentially in their hands, or rather in the hands of the Government, that is not being used.

In the past couple of hours, we have had a long debate about fraud. If one is not satisfied with the bookkeeping of a company or organisation to which one subscribes, the ultimate weapon to ensure that fraud is diminished or tackled properly—clearly, in this case, it is not—is to say, "No. Next year we will not vote you any more money. We will not cut you off, but we will not vote any increase at all." Conservative Members support a Bill which says, "We will give you virtually carte blanche to increase our contributions up to £10 billion gross a year, without any practical possibility of saying that, in any one year, we are not going to provide any more."

New clause 11 would ensure that, before a Minister of the Crown agreed to the annual budget in Brussels, the Government presented an instrument to the House and obtained approval of that budget, not just in a take-note discussion in respect of a document when it is of perhaps even greater import than some previous Budget motions.

We want some control. The only way of doing that is by agreeing the new clause, which says that no Minister shall give assent to expenditure for a certain Community year unless the proposal receives, by resolution, the assent of the House. At present there is a take-note debate and a bit of discussion, and the Minister goes off and does more or less what he likes. That is preven by the revelation of a previous Paymaster General, when we discussed this very matter in 1988. He said:

> "I fully accept the need for the Government to take careful note of the views of the House whenever possible before agreeing directives or regulations linked to the new own resources decision, but—I do not intend the next remark ironically, although it may be so taken—I nevertheless urge hon. Members to reject the new clause"—

which is virtually the same as new clause 11—

> "as it would impose an excessive and unnecessary constraint on the Government's freedom of action."—*[Official Report*, 24 October 1988; Vol. 139, c. 129.]

That is freedom of action to send to the European Communities, after negotiation, what they consider suitable.

In doing that, the Government are throwing away most of the power to ensure proper prevention of waste, proper prevention of fraud, and even their bargaining power in the Council of Ministers. If the Government went to the Council and said, "Our House of Commons will allow only a certain amount," they would have real muscle behind them. Instead, the budget of the Community expands year on year because there is a mutual back-scratching exercise for everybody to obtain a bit more, so that they can agree and then go home and tell their Parliaments and nations how well they have done, and how much they have, at the expense of an ever-expanding budget and an inability to tackle fraud.

It is even worse than that. Many hon. Members have talked about waste. I shall conclude this relatively brief speech by giving an almost breathtaking example. The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who knows much about the Community, decried people for talking about waste, and said that there are scare stories in the newspapers and so on. I shall give an example of how a resolution such as we suggest would actually bite.

I refer to expenditure, which will almost surely occur, of £6 million by the European Community. The money will be spent to tell us something which most of us know already: lifelong learning is important. All hon. Members will agree that we continue to learn, and in these modern times we have the opportunity to learn to a relatively late age. We learn new facts and new ideas and gain new insights every day. There is no dissent about that.

The European document of 29 September 1994 under the name of Mr. Klaus Kinkel, President of the Council of the European Union, advocates a year of European lifelong learning. The "year" will spread over one year of preparation and a second year of expenditure. It will cost £6 million, but it will not suggest any procedures for lifelong learning. It will simply produce a number of conferences, logos and surveys in order to impress upon the citizens of the member states of the European Union the importance of lifelong learning.

According to the explanatory memorandum which accompanies the document, it is based on articles 126 and 127 of the Union's treaty of Maastricht. In other words, the treaty has given it a form of legislative and statutory basis.

Mr. MacShane: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Will he provide details of the document to each Member of the House? We would like to see a little of that £6 million spent in Rotherham. A lifelong learning scheme would do all of us a power of good.

Mr. Spearing: I think that my hon. Friend misunderstands what I have said. Unfortunately, I gather from the raw document that not a pound of the £6 million will be spent on the sorts of excellent adult education schemes that they have in Rotherham. The document explains what will happen under the proposal. It says:

> "Contents: Actions wholly financed out of the Community budget.
>
> Organisation of European conferences on the abovementioned themes to launch and close the European Year.
>
> Organisation of meetings in the Member States in order to stress the contribution made by the European Union to the abovementioned themes.
>
> Community-wide information and promotional campaigns involving: the designing of a logo and a slogan for the European Year of Lifelong Learning".

If the project were confined to grants for adult education or lifelong learning it might be a different story, but I am afraid that my hon. Friend has been taken in by the document's title; it is an advertising campaign.

Mr. Lofthouse, if you and I heard about the proposal and started up a consultancy or put in a bid to run the campaign in Britain— I presume that about £1 million will be spent on this rather curious exercise— we might be in the money; particularly if we had warning of what was going to happen.

The project is not an example of fraud, but it will generate enough money for someone to do quite well. We do not want to see the Commission financing that sort of project, even if, like my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane), we are very much in favour of the Union.

My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) talked about certain schemes which did not do the Union any good. I suggest that the project is a bad use of public money. That sort of thing can be stopped only if the Chamber uses its power to vote money—just as it does on voting Supply to the Crown, or on voting, as we did last night, on measures which will make money for the Government. Unless and until we get a grip on the European Community's finances, there will be trouble ahead for the Chamber, the Government and, above all, the people of this country.

11 pm

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I open by answering a point raised by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), although he does not seem to be in his place. He is probably back in the Library trying to find his book. I did not give an undertaking that the book on European agriculture was available. I said that I understood that it was in the Library. I had been told such by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. If it is not in the Library, I apologise, and I shall make sure that it is placed there at the earliest possible moment. I repeat that it is not the intention of the British Government to suppress the book. It appears to be a useful contribution to the issue of reform of the common agricultural policy, which has been led by the Government and by Britain.

Although I sympathise with some of the points made by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), I cannot accept his new clause 11. It is potentially extremely wide. The House will accept that already a huge quantity of documents is submitted to the House and is available for parliamentary scrutiny. Earlier in the evening, I quoted the figure of 673 explanatory memorandums submitted to the House in 1994 alone, of which 59 applied to budgetary issues. So Ministers who go to Council meetings and negotiate on behalf of the British Government already provide the House with a great deal of information. The Scrutiny Committee sifts through those explanatory memoranda and recommends some for debate.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): This is an important point. This morning in one of the European Committees the House was asked to examine four major directives on the training of marine employees, safety at sea and pollution. We made it clear that it was not in the interests of the House of Commons that such major pieces of legislation, which will have the effect of law in this country if they are passed, should be allowed to go through in one block sitting without proper examination or any opportunity for the House of Commons to vote against any amended resolution brought to the Floor of the House.

It is all very well the Minister saying that more than 600 memoranda have been looked at. If that is the sort of scrutiny they receive from the House of Commons, neither the Government nor the House should be satisfied that we are monitoring what is happening in the Community.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is up to the House to order its scrutiny proceedings in order to give proper attention to the memoranda put before it. I emphasise that the Select Committee, not the Government, decides which shall be recommended for debate. I assure the hon. Lady that, when a draft directive or regulation is submitted to the Government, it is in turn provided to the Scrutiny Committee by way of an explanatory memorandum before final decision, and often before any decisions are taken in discussions in Council meetings in Brussels or elsewhere.

So the Government are most anxious to supply the House with all necessary information, although it has been observed in the debate that the very quantity of explanatory memoranda means that they do not individually receive the attention that they deserve. I have already made the suggestion that we should consolidate some of the information into an annual report, which could perhaps receive more concerted attention from the House as a whole.

The effect of new clause 11 would be to mandate Ministers at each stage of every negotiation in Council meetings. That is simply not realistic. A negotiator must be able to speak for those he represents. Obviously, during negotiations positions have to shift; opening bids retreat or advance; and objectives are secured by giving concessions elsewhere. If, at every point in the negotiations, reference had to be made back to the House and another resolution passed before they could proceed, they clearly could not proceed in any realistic sense of the term.

Any hon. Member who has negotiated in any forum will appreciate that it is unwise for a Government to reveal their negotiating position in full before exchanges take place. I think that the House accepts that it is consistent with our scrutiny proceedings that Ministers should go to Council meetings with the knowledge of where the House stands on important issues, but free to negotiate the best deal possible.

One should not forget that the negotiations are international discussions, and it behoves Ministers and officials negotiating for this country to get the best possible deal. They are conscious of the need to keep the House of Commons informed, but that position would be undermined by new clause 11, and I recommend that the House reject it.

Mr. Spearing: With the leave of the House, Mr. Lofthouse. I shall be brief, but I think that the Minister is not absolutely clear about the meaning of new clause 11 in respect of the decision.

I believe that it might be desirable—the Minister thinks it undesirable—for Ministers to be bound by decisions of this House in scrutiny debates, because all the things he mentioned will be a consequence. The resolution required by new clause 11 relates to the Council decision of 31 October, which concerns finance and the voting of money. I suggest that that changes the position.

[Mr. Spearing]

Inadvertently or otherwise, the Paymaster General has been most frank in revealing the nature of the constraints that would be applied by the House and that he and any Minister would be placed under. He used the words "advance", "retreat", "negotiating positions", "concessions" and "concessions elsewhere". I hope that he means elsewhere in a regulation, but I am afraid that he means elsewhere in other matters of policy.

Since the negotiations take place in secret, who is to know what minority interest in this country—employment in one hon. Member's constituency, or capital appreciation somewhere else—has been sacrificed. Hon. Members and the people of this country would be unaware of that.

The Minister could come back and say, "I've done the best for the United Kingdom." The reason why any Government—including one whom I supported strongly, who said virtually the same—would say that is because the nature of the constitution of the European Union makes it thus. It mixes up the important matter of legislation, which we do openly and in public in this House, with negotiation, which is a matter of policy formulation between sovereign states. In their reply to the new clause, the Government admitted that mix, which is poisonous to the spirit of democracy, if not to its actuality.

The hour is late, Mr. Lofthouse, and the Government in their wonderful democratic way, having allocated two days to debate the matter, appear to want to press on. I do not want to give them too much, but by refusing the new clause, with its deep, underlying constitutional principles, they have revealed the fix they are in, the fix that any Government would be in, and the nature of the treaties to which successive Governments have adhered and advocated to the House. Given the opportunity, I would negative the new clause, then we can perhaps move on to the next business.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 50, Noes 312.

Division No. 15] **[23.10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Betts, Clive
Burden, Richard
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'I)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Gerrard, Neil
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hoey, Kate
Illsley, Eric
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Mackinlay, Andrew
Mahon, Alice
McAvoy, Thomas
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mullin, Chris
Olner, Bill
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody and Mr. Austin Mitchell.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth< Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 12

ANNUAL REPORT TO PARLIAMENT

'Each year Her Majesty's Government shall make an annual report to Parliament concerning the operation of the Decision in section 1 (e) above in respect of the preceding financial year, which shall include:

(a) a general presentation in text and tables of the financing and expenditure of the European Economic Communities in sterling equivalent and any common unit, which shall include comparable tables of income derived from each member state and expenditure therein in respect of each principal category of expenditure;

(b) an account of rebate mechanisms applicable to any member state;

(c) the operation of each article of the Decision;

(d) action taken by Her Majesty's Government in respect of financial discipline;

(e) the text of any regulation, directive or financial regulation relating to the operation of the Decision to which Her Majesty's Government has given its assent.'.—*[Mr. Shore.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Motion made, and Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 73, Noes 308.

Division No. 16] **[23.21 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Betts, Clive
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Mackinlay, Andrew
Mahon, Alice
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
McMaster, Gordon
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis

Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody
and Mr. Austin Mitchell.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*

Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Bill reported without amendment.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Heathcoat-Amory.]*

11.33 pm

Mr. Shore: It would be absurd if we were to allow the Third Reading of this contentious and, in many ways, memorable Bill to be taken on the nod, and we have no intention of allowing that to happen.

The Bill will enter the annals of parliamentary history for several reasons. First, it has been a memorable Bill for the passions that it has excited, not least among Conservative Members. It has also been a very puzzling Bill because of the curious tactics employed by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet in order to secure its passage. When people return to the Bill, as they will again and again, they will want to know why on earth the Government thought that it was necessary to get the measure through. They will ask, too, why amendments of a most reasonable kind were not accepted in Committee—why on earth the Prime Minister thought it was so worth while to get the Bill that he threatened electoral suicide and a general election, and why, in pursuit of the same cause, he was prepared to turn his elected majority Government into a minority Government. Those are truly amazing events, although we shall, over time, come to understand them a little better.

The Bill is about increasing the Community's own resources from 1.20 per cent. to 1.27 per cent. over a five-year period. That is an increase of about 5 per cent. in its total budgetary or tax yield. Five per cent. of about £60 billion, which is spent now, is a yield of about £3 billion over that period.

People will ask, why on earth was it necessary to have the Bill at all? What were the increased expenditures that it was designed to cover? We find, of course, that the principal item was the so-called cohesion fund in the Maastricht treaty, under which, in contradiction of an accepted regional policy, special funds were made available to Greece, Portugal, Spain and Ireland—not to particular regions in those countries but to the countries themselves.

We know why that pledge was made and those funds have been raised. It was not because of the particular needs of those countries—they would be covered properly by regional policy—but as a kind of general bribe to bring them along into the Euro-federal camp to get through the other far more dangerous and contentious parts of the Maastricht treaty. I have nothing but good will in my feelings towards the four countries concerned, but I do not think that it is right that they should be the recipients of a cohesion fund.

The House of Commons has a long tradition of careful scrutiny of finance, taxation and expenditure and has always insisted that grievances be remedied before it voted Supply. The Court of Auditors report, although we may argue about the precise amount, reveals waste, lack of financial control and fraud amounting to 10 per cent. of the Community budget or a sum equal to £6 billion. People will ask how the House could consider increasing the Community's finances by £3 billion when up to £6 billion could be saved if we had proper scrutiny and checks on the waste, the fraud and the other failings of the budgetary system. It is difficult to understand why no such amendments were approved, despite the fact that they were proposed.

What argument carried the Bill through the House of Commons? I think that, above all, it was a false but important constitutional argument: that the Prime Minister felt that this had the status of a full treaty and that the agreement that he had entered into in Edinburgh in December 1992 was not the Prime Minister giving his consent, subject to the approval of Parliament, but his giving consent, as Ministers have in the past when signing a foreign treaty, by the use of prerogative power, which is seldom challenged in the House after it has been used. But this is not a treaty. How can we go on accepting that agreements arranged between Community countries should have the status of a full-blown treaty? That is absurd, and it is simply a means of ensuring that we lose democratic control.

Agreements are being made all the time in the European Community—agreements or "decisions". Are we to be told the same every time an agreement is made? The document is not called a treaty; it is called a decision—the decision of 31 October 1994. Are we to be told in future that all the decisions taken in the European Community have the status of treaties, and that those who have signed them feel so strongly and passionately about them that they are prepared to resign en bloc and force a general election if they do not get them through?

It is constitutionally improper that such threats should be made, and if those threats are effective, Parliament is reduced in power and influence in a totally unacceptable way. We shall constantly be threatened with the use of a treaty power, when we should be treating such agreements as if they were normal pieces of legislation.

It is interesting that in the so-called decision of 31 October, after the usual prelude, with the long list of "whereas this" and "whereas that" that precedes Community doctrines, the articles of the decision are introduced by the following passage:

> "Whereas the European Council provided that this Decision should take effect on 1 January 1995,
>
> HAS LAID DOWN THESE PROVISIONS, WHICH IT RECOMMENDS TO THE MEMBER STATES FOR ADOPTION".

The Council "recommends". That is not the language of a treaty; it is the language of an ordinary decision, almost equivalent to a piece of domestic legislation.

The Bill is memorable for the reasons that I have given. It represents a major constitutional innovation, and in order to get it through the Government have behaved as no Government, in my recollection, have ever behaved. It has been introduced at a time when its purpose is clearly under dispute, and it coincides with a massive indictment of fraud and waste in the Community.

I hope that the House will never again allow a decision made within the Community to be given the status of a treaty, thus denying the House the right to object, to amend and to turn it out if need be. I hope that we shall all come to that resolution. Although I do not believe that I shall defeat the Bill on its Third Reading I shall certainly vote against it, and I shall do so with enthusiasm.

11.42 pm

Ms Armstrong: I echo what my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said about the amazing procedure that we have seen and been through during the passage of the Bill.

We have always made it clear that we support the principles agreed at Edinburgh, but that we believe that the Government can do far more to examine and scrutinise properly fraud, waste and the common agricultural policy. At the moment, scrutiny is insufficient and ineffective, and much more could be done. Speeches made during the passage of the Bill have made it clear that hon. Members on both sides of the House believe that much more can and should be done.

It was always clear to us that the Government would get the Second Reading of the Bill, because despite their Euro-sceptics there was sufficient support for it in the House. Yet it seems as though the Prime Minister decided that this was the time when he had to show his authority. This was the time to show that he would tolerate no more, and that he would not have people constantly disrupting his Government. So, in spite of what common sense should have told him, he decided to make the Bill an occasion for a great show of strength. The result was—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Hon. Members ask why not. A politician has to decide when it is time to take such action and when it is not necessary. What happened last week was that the Prime Minister showed incalculably bad judgment, which has split his party and left him with a minority Government. It led to his Government being defeated last night and today, it has led to ignominious, backstairs dealing—[HON. MEMBERS: "Say it again."]—backstairs dealing to get a shabby agreement from those who, last week, were prepared to vote and to stick with their consciences and who, today, were doing deals with the Prime Minister to sell out what they had supposedly gone to the stake for last week.

Many people outside the House will wonder what all the fuss was about last week. We know now that the party in government is in a shambles. The Government do not know how they want to govern, they do not know what their priorities are and they do not have the confidence of their own party, let alone the confidence of the country.

The debate today began interestingly, with the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) making a long speech to draw out from the Paymaster General and to get on the record exactly what the shady deal had been. As I said, he and his colleagues disappeared; we have seen no more of them. Their determination to scrutinise disappeared and we can only guess at what was said within No. 10 Downing street about it. That is no way to run a Government. What a shambles and what a disgrace to British democracy!

The people of this country want to see a Government who scrutinise effectively the raising of money from them and the way in which that money is spent. They have the right to expect that and we in the House have the right to expect that. That is what the new clauses were all about. The Government have wavered today, not sure quite what they were going to do until they were sure that the Euro-sceptics had been bought off. Once the Euro-sceptics were bought off, the Government wanted to run and to get home quickly. I know that they have had too much of this place this week, but the country has had too much of them.

The Government will get their Bill tonight because, as I have said, we agree with the principle, but they have lost their credibility and their competence to govern. Many hon. Members now believe that the Government are unfit to govern.

11.48 pm

Mr. Rowlands: As a preamble to the Bill, every hon. Member was sent a letter by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in which he explained what a minor and minimum sum was involved in the Bill. As the explanatory and financial memorandum states, the figure will be a mere £75 million net additional cost in 1995-96, rising to £250 million. Frankly, the reason why I did not believe that letter and why I believe that we are being conned is based on my own experience in this House. I came here in 1966, years before we were a member of the European Community. I voted in the referendum in 1975 to stay in the European Community and it is interesting to note that in that year, the gross contribution made by the United Kingdom to the EC budget was £341 million. The public sector receipts from the European Community were £398 million. The only year in which we were net beneficiaries of the whole system was 1975, when I voted to stay in the European Community and when we were net beneficiaries by some £57 million as a result of transitional arrangements and so on.

It is worth reminding the House of what I have seen those figures become. We have been asked to agree that the Bill represents a mere £75 million now and a mere £250 million by net increase next year. In 1975, the year I voted in a referendum to stay in the Community, the gross contribution was a mere £341 million. The gross contribution in 1994 is £7,203 million. As a result of the changes in this Bill, the gross United Kingdom contribution will reach £10 billion by 1996-97.

If I look back again at the time when I voted in 1975, the net contribution was minus £57 million. In 1994, it will be £1.3 billion and by 1996, net contribution to the European budget will become £3.53 billion. So, we have every reason, if one takes into account about a 20-year period since the key decision was made in 1975, to wonder about, question and worry about whether we should pass a Bill on the basis of a Chancellor's letter that tells us that we will be paying a mere £75 million extra this year and a mere £250 million next year.

I have lost any belief that Governments have meaningful control over the UK contribution. I am an old-fashioned parliamentarian. I came here because I thought that this was where influence and power lay. As a parliamentary historian, before and during my time here, I believe passionately that this House matters and that the procedures, means and the basis on which we have built parliamentary traditions in this House are based on scrutiny and control of public expenditure. The term that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) used about redress before Supply was old-fashioned, but good nevertheless. It was the basis on which this House was created, formed and became a continuous institution. Before then, it was an occasional occurrence when the House met. Years would go by when Parliament did not even meet. Problems of annual estimates and the creation of the first Public Accounts Committee occurred 300 years ago this year, in the 1690s, as I said on Second Reading. From there, annual Sessions were perpetuated.

Others may not care a damn about whether that tradition matters. I believe that it does. I believe that it is very important. It gave people the confidence to give Government money because they knew that there was

[Mr. Rowlands]

some method and degree of parliamentary accountability. What do I see now? I witness a gross, growing erosion of that basic fundamental power of control over expenditure.

One of the worrying beliefs which I have heard expressed tonight is the illusion, which has been gradually created between the Minister and his Back Benchers, that, somehow, our Public Accounts Committee will be able to get a handle on the issue. I raised the matter with the Minister and he said that it was a House of Commons matter and not one for him, but when replying to earlier debates he offered the idea that the Public Accounts Committee would be able to get involved in the detailed control and scrutiny of European expenditure. I ask him again: how?

Public Accounts Committee procedure is based on the simple principle that the permanent secretary, as the accounting officer of the Department, is ultimately responsible to the PAC, the National Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General. As I understand it, no individual permanent secretary will be responsible to the House for a penny of the expenditure that is involved in the Bill. It would seem that the same comment could be made in respect of the PAC. If I am wrong, I hope that the Minister will tell me, but I do not think that I am. No estimates flow from own resources. The financial prospectus, as it was called, that was attached to the Edinburgh accord, or conclusions, was a five-year forward budget for individual items, not one of which will be subject to parliamentary accountability. No permanent secretary, as the accounting officer of a Department, will be responsible and answerable to the PAC.

Money is being handed over to another body to spend. The permanent secretaries of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Trade and Industry will not be responsible for structural funds or the CAP. There is no connection between the money being handed over and the system of parliamentary accountability that we have devised. The Paymaster General was offering an illusion when he suggested to Conservative Back-Bench Members that the PAC would be able to become involved. The Minister should not try to kid us or persuade us that a new form of accountability will emerge as a consequence of the "promises" from the Government Front Bench to Conservative Back-Bench Members. Perhaps the Minister will care to tell me by what procedures it will emerge.

The system of permanent secretaries becoming accounting officers was one of the consequences of Treasury changes that were introduced in the 1920s, and related to the estimates of Departments.

I questioned the Paymaster General about the financial prospectus. We have been much concerned about own resources but alongside them is a five-year projected budget. The prospectus for 1993-99 lists various areas of expenditure, including the increased expenditure that will take place. The Minister told us that it was a political agreement, not one that was legally binding.

Will the Minister tell us in future that the prospectus was not legally binding, but that it was politically internationally binding on the Government that the figures be observed? Will we be told that there can be no fundamental alterations in the budgets that were laid down at Edinburgh? That will mean that the 41 per cent. increase in the structural operations, for example, is laid down and will have to be spent. There will not be a major alteration unless all parties agree.

Will the Minister tell us, just as we were told on Second Reading, that the own resources part of the Bill was a matter of confidence and had to be driven through unamended? Will he say that because the Government have given their word, we are bound to the own resources decisions and to all of the budget arrangements for the next five years and the expenditure there outlined? Are those arrangements immutable in the sense that they have been signed and agreed politically? Are they binding on us unless all parties agree to alter them?

Irrespective of its not being legally binding, does the political agreement which was created at Edinburgh have the same moral force of an international arrangement of the kind that the Paymaster General has tried to sell us and to which we are committed in terms of own resources? If it is, for the next four or five years, the way in which the money will be raised and where it will be spent will be outside our control. We cannot alter the various budgets. The Government are binding us not only to resources but to a four or five-year expenditure programme.

I should like to believe that my constituency will be a beneficiary, but I am growing increasingly disillusioned. Anyone who was involved in RECHAR or structural funds, and anyone who has tried to beg money from the European Commission in the past couple of years goes away feeling very sorry. Anyway, it is only begging for money that we have sent. It is only trying to obtain a small proportion of the gross contribution that we have made. We are major net contributors. Even the curious recycling process is elaborate and bureaucratic. We are now told that the financial perspective is a political agreement, and that that, too, is as unalterable as the own resources decision.

I have been slow in waking up to the matter. I said on Second Reading, and I repeat on Third Reading, that I was a slow learner on the European Community. I did not appreciate what was involved. Other hon. Members who are much more perceptive than I am spotted the arguments earlier. I am a good pupil, and I have learnt my lesson. I will not support a Bill which has been driven through in such a way, with its consequences for expenditure and parliamentary and public accountability. I will not be conned by the letter which the Chancellor sent to me before the Bill began its progress or by the promises of a Minister who obviously does not know much about parliamentary procedure and who is offering a fig leaf by way of control of public accountability through the Public Accounts Committee. For those reasons, I shall certainly oppose the Third Reading.

12.1 am

Mr. Charles Kennedy: I wish to contribute briefly to the Third Reading debate. It is a fair indication of the confusion at the heart of the Government on this and many other matters that a Bill which began its life with its Second Reading becoming a motion of confidence, which threatened to bring down the Government and send off the Prime Minister to see Her Majesty the Queen to seek an immediate dissolution and a pre-Christmas general election, all within the space of 10 days, has its Third Reading moved formally by the Minister. That is a breathtaking constitutional development in little more than one working week at Westminster.

As has been said, in the past 10 days, the Government have technically turned themselves into a minority Government. We saw the Minister, when he replied to his hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash)—I do not know whether he is one of his hon. Friends at the moment—offer a palliative via the Public Accounts Committee. That was a clear sign that the Government are desperate to get the rebels back on board.

If there is one group of people who have shown consistency in this matter, it is the Conservative Euro-sceptics. I have said it before, and I repeat, that they stick to their guns and they argue their case. They did so again in the Lobby last night, and we must respect them. I completely and utterly disagree with them. They are wrong on the European issue and they are doing great damage to the country's interests because of the influence that they are exerting within their own party at the moment; but I must respect the fact that they stick to their guns and argue their case.

I just wish that we had a Prime Minister who knew what his case on Europe was. I wish that he would argue with conviction and consistency, but alas the Prime Minister does not. We have now reached the Third Reading of a Bill of which, had there been a free vote on Second Reading, 500 hon. Members would have voted in favour.

The Prime Minister managed to turn the vote into an issue of confidence. He has not just sundered what should have been all-party support for the principles of the Bill on Second Reading, but in the process he has allowed the Back-Bench sceptics to have still more influence over the Government on matters European. We have seen hopeless parliamentary tactics and very poor political leadership from the Prime Minister in the past 10 days.

The Government are in the utterly farcical situation—not seen since the days of Denis Healey— of having to deliver a mini-Budget tomorrow afternoon as a result of a defeat which can be traced directly to the Bill's Second Reading and to the way that the issue was mishandled by the Conservative party. That is a matter of internal grief for the Conservatives, but the problem is that this country will pay a heavy price in terms of its interests.

If the Conservatives hang on to power for another year or 18 months, the sceptics will have more influence over the Government's stance vis-à-vis the 1996 intergovernmental conference. I predict that two things will happen. First, the Government will have to come out in favour of a referendum on the European issue. I believe in that myself. I voted for it during the debate on Maastricht; I thought that we should have had a referendum about that issue. There should be referendums to decide any constitutional implications arising out of the IGC, such as the single currency issue and the like.

Secondly, as we saw in the Prime Minister's speech to the Conservative women's conference at the end of last week, the Government will adopt a more chauvinistic and nationalistic approach.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Could we hear a little about something that is in the Bill?

Mr. Kennedy: I contend that these are the implications which flow from the approach which the Government and the Cabinet have taken to the Bill. Therefore, my comments are absolutely generic to the case.

As a result of the way in which the Prime Minister and the Chancellor have handled the Bill, the stance that the Government will adopt at the next IGC will be damaging to our national interests. At the end of the day, the Prime Minister will be more concerned about appeasing a vocal and determined minority within his own ranks than he will be about addressing the broader issues of greater integration, greater democracy and greater decentralisation for European institutions as a whole. Regrettably, that is the price that we will pay.

Pressing the nuclear trigger in the form of the confidence vote, technically losing an overall majority in the House and finally losing the vote on the Budget measure last night and having to come up with an emergency package tomorrow will be seen as the beginning of the end for the Prime Minister, and I hope the beginning of the end for the Government.

It is a great shame that a Bill which should have commanded all-party support cannot do so because the Government have quite erroneously turned it into an issue of confidence. It is impossible for the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats, who support the principles of the Bill, to vote for it because of the Government's stupid handling of the issue.

12.7 am

Mrs. Dunwoody: I shall not follow the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) in his remarks. Whatever my views about the Conservative party, if there comes a time when the House of Commons does not listen to the differing opinions of Back Benchers there will be absolutely no point in having democratic elections.

The House has control over taxation. It has the power to increase taxes, to decide priority spending areas and to monitor whether taxes are paid. That constitutes the basis of House of Commons procedure. The majority of hon. Members come to this place because we have priorities about those things that we believe are of concern in our electorates. I believe that constant erosion of the House of Commons' power to examine in considerable detail where taxation money should be spent would frighten those whom we seek to represent. That is increasingly the situation in which the House of Commons finds itself.

I have the honour to sit on a European Committee that is charged with the responsibility of looking not only at the constant flow of directives and regulations but at the precise monetary implications of the legislation which is brought before us. We are failing to examine in sufficient detail what is happening within the Community. We are certainly failing to examine the flow of moneys, over which we have little control, from the United Kingdom into the Community.

It is all very well to use slightly sophisticated and superficial phrases such as, "If you belong to a club, you have to pay the subscription." It is tremendously important to understand that the Bill means a great deal more than a subscription. It is the movement of a very large amount of money raised from the British people by taxation, but not controlled by them or by the democratic Government who are elected by them. Indeed, the money is not even supervised by the Members of Parliament for whom they have the opportunity to vote.

Throughout the coming years, it will become clear that the priorities for the use of the money will not be those set by the House. Monitoring of the proper use of that

[Mrs. Dunwoody]

money will not be undertaken by the House. The Government seek to mislead if they imply that we will have extra powers which will enable us to examine in detail what is happening.

I deplore the way in which the Bill has been handled. I certainly deplore the fact that a major piece of legislation should be handled at this hour with such superficiality. That approach is defended by the Government, giving the impression that a few Members of Parliament seek to detain the House without having a legitimate political reason. I believe that simply being a democrat and being proud to be a Member of Parliament is enough reason for me to detain the House. I am deeply worried by what we are doing tonight. I am frightened that in the near future the House of Commons will have real reason to rue the decisions that we are about to take.

12.11 am

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I agree with the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) that the Bill has moved from crisis to cursory contempt. The cursory contempt has been shown in the way in which it has been pushed through tonight. The Bill started out with the most incompetent piece of parliamentary management that has been seen this century. It has overwhelming support in the House, although not from me. About 500 Members might well support the Bill.

The episode ended last week with the farce of having to push the Bill through on a vote of confidence. That guaranteed that the Liberals were desperate to grovel and to support any initiative from Europe. The Labour party, which is now communautaire and friendly to all things European, was forced to vote against the measure because it has been handled in such an incompetent way. The Bill could have been passed easily. The matter has been turned into a tremendous difficulty, which ends only tonight. That is insane incompetence. It has ended in a squalid scuttle, as the midnight hour passes and most people are sensibly at home in bed.

"Oh what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!"

That has been the progress of the Bill. The Government have got their legislation. The Prime Minister gave his word at Edinburgh and that word is upheld by the House by the procedure that I have described, but at what cost? No trust. Trust has been broken. It can never be glad, confident Major again, if it ever was. The Prime Minister has cashed in all his credit chips to get this measure through in such a fashion.

The Prime Minister cannot get any support from that section of his party that he has treated so contemptuously and stupidly. He will get the Bill on the back of a widespread realisation that it has been pushed through by what amounts to a confidence trick on Parliament and on the British people, by using the treaty power to push through a measure that will tax the people, against their consent and without that of Parliament.

If the money is justified, why not ask the people for it honestly? If belonging to the club brings them benefits, they will be prepared to pay the contribution. Why should the case not be put before the people and before us, and our honest consent asked for? Why should it be treated in such a deceitful and half-baked fashion, with the legacy of ill-will and hostility that that builds up? I am happy that it builds up that feeling in the Conservative party, but it has also built up unease outside because the people see what has been done and how. They might not have a clear understanding of the deceit that has been used, but they are uneasy and unhappy about what has happened. The Government are trying to build a commitment to Europe on that unease.

The Bill has been dealt with contemptuously and without any safeguards, checks, audit, justification or controls. The Government have rejected all the controls in the amendments that were tabled. There are no safeguards. The Bill is just the latest part of that long, humiliating and embittering experience that is our relationship with Europe and our membership of the European Union.

It is no wonder that every poll shows a widespread hostility, distaste and dislike for Europe. The people sense that the relationship has brought them no benefit—in fact, they know it from their experiences with jobs, food prices, regulations, interference and the unjustified actions imposed on them. They know that they are asked to pay an accumulating total—£22 billion net since the relationship began—to belong to a club that is doing damage to the economy, jobs and food prices. They are asked to pay a contribution that cannot be justified, and the bill will increase—to £10 billion in 1996.

Because that cost cannot be justified and the Government cannot explain why the people should pay that money to have damage done, we are forced into what amounts to an agenda of lies in the democratic dialogue of this country. It has become a dialogue of lies and of half-truths. We have to pretend that loss is benefit, that drain is success and that humiliation is triumph. All that has to be reinterpreted for the British people because they know instinctively what is wrong and they cannot be told the truth.

The Bill prolongs that process. It is no longer Lady Curzon's motto on matters sexual, "Lie back and think of England," but "Lie back and think of Europe." That is the only justification that the Government can give for the Bill and for the half-truths, distortions, dodges and the Chancellor's letter. That becomes a culture—a habit of lies and dodges like the ones used to push through as a treaty a measure that should have been scrutinised, audited, costed and controlled.

I am concluding, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Long tenure of power makes one contemptuous, and an even longer tenure of power makes the Government absolutely contemptuous of the Parliament, the people and, worst of all, their own party—an instrument that has been so badly messed about in pushing through the Bill.

The Bill, and that relationship, has been an embittering experience. Fortunately, that experience carries its own nemesis because it is building its own antibodies, alienation, dislike and mistrust for the institution in whose name all that is done and for the Government who are doing it.

12.19 am

Mr. Spearing: My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) properly asked why we have had such extraordinary political and constitutional contortions about this Bill. The answer, I think, is that the Conservative party has got itself into what might be termed a form of political crack. It has a certain amount of muscle when operating along the traditional lines, but those traditional lines no longer work. That is why the Conservative party is proposing the Bill in the form of an extended crisis on two or three fronts.

The main reason for that is that the power which the Government once had in this House as sole decision makers as to what money should be spent and what money should be taxed has gone elsewhere. No longer is the Conservative party—nor, indeed, any party holding a majority—in the position in which it might have been even in 1975 when we had the referendum.

I put it to the Government Front Bench that there have been two ministerial statements of untruth in the media in relation to the Bill, one of which was made in this House. The Chancellor tried to make out in the House that there was an international or treaty obligation that the Bill should be passed. As recently as this week, the Secretary of State for Defence—I gave the right hon. and learned Gentleman warning that I intended to raise the matter in the House—said the same thing.

We had better get it straight. The claims of those Cabinet Ministers are wrong. Either they do not know the treaty, or they have been misinformed. Article 201 of the treaty—we should get this firmly on the record in the closing minutes of debate on this important Bill—says in relation to own resources:

> "To this end, the Commission shall submit proposals to the Council. After consulting the European Parliament on these proposals the Council may, acting unanimously, lay down the appropriate provisions, which it shall recommend to the Member States for adoption in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements."

The treaty was signed on the basis of an option to this House. It may be that the Government have given some undertaking, but that was not the constitutional last decision, which is for this House alone. Yet the Chancellor, the Secretary of State for Defence and possibly other members of the Cabinet pretend otherwise.

I suggest that the wording of article 201 gives a clue as to what we now have. We have a cascade of coercion in which the Prime Minister himself is entangled, as is the Chancellor and any hon. Member who goes along with the principle of the treaties that we have signed. Why is that? It is because that article says that the Commission shall propose what taxes will be. The last word is not with the Commission, but it is the originator of any proposal for own resources taxation.

The article then says that the Council will take that proposal up. The Council may do that but, in secret bargaining inside the Council, there is coercion on the back markers, who must take something which they do not want because they have to pay for something else. In relation to that, individual Governments—whether they wish to or not—must go to their respective Parliaments or assemblies and say, "We have got the best deal we could. Here are the tax proposals. Please will you pass them?"

We then go down to our constituents and tell them that they will have to pay the taxes, extra heating charges or VAT to supply the money which was first proposed by the Commission. In other words, we are back to the constitutional position that we were in before 1688, when proposals for expenditure came from the Crown and not from the revolutionary representatives of the House acting on behalf of a neutralised Crown. Our new Crown is primarily an amalgam of the Commission and the Council. That is the constitutional position and I challenge any Conservative Member to controvert it in absolute principle. It lies behind the reason why the Government—and, I believe, members of any future Conservative Government—will find themselves in considerable difficulty.

That was illustrated by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), who demonstrated in his speech that we are now being asked to pay the price of the sort of Maastricht treaty that the Prime Minister—after a great deal of negotiation—thought that he could recommend. That treaty arose from the much fiercer, more tightly bound treaty proposed by the Dutch presidency, which was changed. The Prime Minister managed to persuade his party to accept it only because the Foreign Secretary said, "It is not a great unity; we have the pillars—we have the trunk. The court cannot get at the whole thing, nor can the Community institutions." He tried to make out, in fact, that the Union was bigger than the Community.

There is a technical and legal difference, but is there such a difference in practice, in the Council of Ministers? I doubt it very much. The Prime Minister had to pay for that opt-out—that modification. He also had to pay for a temporary, theoretical opt-out from the requirements of economic and monetary union. The third thing that he secured, and perhaps the most controversial of all, was a so-called opt-out from the social chapter—or so we are told, although that is not what the treaty says.

Indeed, there is no social chapter in the Union treaty that was agreed at Maastricht. It is in the Single European Act, and we have to pay for it with the money on which we are now voting. That is why I speak of a unity: the measure that we shall pass tonight constitutes a decision to pay for the whole Community and all its works—not just to pay for a few things in future, but to make payments to which we are already committed.

The Community's stability is fuelled only by libations of additional cash. Agreements can be reached only if everyone wins more money—more grants. Problems with the common agricultural policy, for instance, are solved by surpluses. That is the only way in which negotiation can be reasonably successful for everyone. Everyone gets a prize, says the president of the Commission. The Community staggers on, and is stable—up to a point—only because of that inherent instability, fuelled by the cash that the Bill will provide in the future.

If that were not so, common sense would dictate that the Community should remain at its institutional level and that we should find out how things are going before we go on to the next stage, instead of which we go on and on and on—[HON. MEMBERS: "And on, and on, and on."]

[Mr. Spearing]

Indeed. We go on and on to lose the powers that Conservative Members, and the rest of us, were elected to exercise.

Legislation is now encompassed in an invisible cage of existing regulation. Taxation relates increasingly to the EC; the allocation of expenditure relates more and more to the EC; administration becomes more like that of county councils year by year; and adjudication, the other function of sovereign Governments, is increasingly a matter for the European Court.

The passing of this Act, and especially the passing of the European Communities (Finance) Act 1988—which initiated own resources—mean that we are returning to the constitutional position that obtained before 1688. We are losing not only our own financial resources—the source of our power, as my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) admirably noted—but the sources of our own democracy, because we now have to bow to what is fundamentally an authoritarian system, over which we have lost, and will lose, more and more control.

12.29 am

Mr. Salmond: I was moved to speak, not so much by the prospect of keeping so many Conservative Members of Parliament from their beds, attractive though that prospect is, but rather by the comments of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), who a few moments ago estimated that about 500 Members of the House of Commons basically supported the legislation. I should think that that is an underestimate. I believe that at least 550 Members basically support the legislation. I cannot believe that there are any more than 100 fundamental Euro-sceptics in the Conservative and Labour parties who would really want to vote against the legislation.

It is worth reflecting on the extraordinary progress of the legislation in the past few weeks. I know that many Conservative Members were not in the Chamber at the start of proceedings this evening, but I was, and I heard the Minister define what we were doing and say that there would be two votes of confidence this evening. The first was to be on the Question that clause 1 stand part of the Bill, which we then did not actually vote on, if I remember correctly, and the second was to be on Third Reading.

I thought that I was entitled in those circumstances to turn up for the Third Reading debate and to participate in that vote of confidence, as defined by Ministers. I am not sure why the other votes that we had this evening were not to be defined as votes of confidence. I have reached the conclusion that the Conservative party Whips Office is now so incompetent that it could not do the basic arithmetic and realise that it was not in any conceivable danger of losing any of the earlier votes this evening. None the less, as defined by the Government Front Bench, the vote on Third Reading of the legislation is a vote of confidence, which is why I find myself in the extraordinary position of being more in support of the legislation than, I believe, the vast majority of hon. Members on the Conservative Benches, but none the less having to vote against it if, indeed, a vote is forced in a few minutes' time.

How can we arrive at a position in which a Government defeat on part of their Budget legislation—which happened yesterday evening—is not defined as a vote of confidence and not even placed on the Order Paper as a formal vote of confidence while the vote on the legislation before us now, supported by about 550 Members of the House of Commons, is defined as a vote of confidence?

I leave the following thought with Conservative Members: if the Government are now in the extraordinary position of having such enormous difficulty in forcing through the House of Commons a piece of legislation which carries the support of 550 Members, how on earth will they progress the business of the rest of the Session, which might be more contentious? I hope that the more thoughtful Conservative Members—which may be only a few of the people on the Conservative Benches—will reflect on that when they go to their beds tonight, because I do not think that they will have a happy new year to look forward to.

12.32 am

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There has always been a majority in the House in favour of the Bill, and only the opportunistic manoeuvres of the Opposition parties tried to block the Bill on Second Reading.

The Bill gives effect to the financial arrangements agreed at the Edinburgh Council two years ago. That agreement was not legally binding, and no Member on the Conservative side of the House has suggested otherwise, so I can assure both the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) that they are correct: we have always agreed that that Edinburgh agreement needed to be given legal effect by the Bill. That is the precise purpose and intent of the Bill before the House.

The abatement is safe under the Bill. Our contribution will increase between now and the end of the century in line with the projections in the own resources decision, adding seven hundredths of 1 per cent. of Community gross national product to the budget. We shall pay a lower share of the total cost than many other member states.

Today's debate has shown the seriousness with which the House takes the issue of financial mismanagement and the related issue of fraud. The fight against fraud will not be won by grand gestures, by setting up new institutions or even by the involvement of the Public Accounts Committee in this country, although I welcome that possible development. It will be won by relentless and grinding vigilance, by attention to detail and by giving it the highest possible political impetus and attention, as has been promised by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I am pleased that that attitude has received the full support of the House today and I hope that the House will also give the Bill a Third Reading.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 295, Noes 23.

Division No. 17] **[12.35 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James

Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Willetts and
Mr. Michael Bates.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Canavan, Dennis
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth

Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Hoey, Kate
Lewis, Terry
Mackinlay, Andrew
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
McAvoy, Thomas
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Pike, Peter L
Salmond, Alex
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Austin Mitchell and
Mr. Ted Rowlands.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Opencasting (Leeds Green Belt)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

12.46 am

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): I am most grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to raise a subject of vital importance to my constituents, albeit at a late hour and in a very interesting week in politics. It is a subject, as I say, that is of great interest and importance to my constituents, as I believe it is also to yours, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to those of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), who is in his seat tonight.

My purpose in seeking the debate is to focus attention on the effect of the revision of mineral planning guidance note 3 this summer on opencast applications in the green belt and to seek clarification of what those changes mean. I am concerned particularly with its impact on the east Leeds green belt, but what I have to say will have wider implications for similar areas.

I am aware that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot comment on the facts of individual cases, but I shall have to refer to some to identify the issues of principle that they raise. However, I say at the outset how pleased I am that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has agreed to visit my constituency to see the area for himself that has been affected by a recent spate of opencast applications and to discuss what needs to be done as far as the planning framework is concerned.

It has been clear for some time that MPG3, the planning guidelines governing opencast applications, were out of date and needed fairly radical review. I and many others submitted evidence to the Secretary of State in the consultation process on that review. Many of the ideas that I and others submitted were incorporated into the revision that was announced in July, and I welcome that.

However, the first appeal decision to be made by an inspector under that revision, by H.J. Banks Ltd., related to land at Garforth in my constituency, and my concern is that, if that decision is a valid precedent, the new thinking in the MPG3 revision is not working out in practice as was intended and as I believed at the time when it was raised in the House.

The old position was that, in the national interest, there was a presumption in favour of opencasting. That is clearly no longer true, as there is a massive surplus both of coal being produced and of coal reserves. That presumption was removed, first by a ministerial statement and then, by way of confirmation, by the MPG3 revision.

Rightly, there is now no overriding requirement in the national interest that coal should be extracted simply because it is there. The correct test now is principally one of environmental acceptability. But that must carry a special significance for the green belt, where there are especially strong environmental factors.

Although it is true that coal can be worked only where it lies, it is equally true that houses can be built only where there is appropriate land available. Now that there is no national priority for extracting coal, there is no more logical reason for treating that activity more favourably than any other kind of development in the green belt. In other words, it should be allowed only in exceptional circumstances.

Let me make it clear that I do not oppose opencasting in the right circumstances; nor, for that matter, does Leeds council. Several years ago, the council granted consent for a very large site at St. Aidans, a site in the green belt in my constituency that borders your constituency too, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The development required the diversion of the River Aire and its associated canal, and I sponsored a private Bill through Parliament to enable that to take place.

That happened under the old MPG3, but I believe that it would have been equally justified under the revised MPG3. The site was derelict, and a potential health hazard. It was dangerous, and only by opencasting could the problems be properly addressed. There will be a massive improvement in the environment when the extraction has been completed.

It is vital to be able to determine clearly what is environmentally acceptable and what is not. If environmental acceptability is now the key test, what exactly does it mean? To whom should a development be acceptable? How does the new test, expressed in the context of MPG3, impact on other planning guidelines, such as those on green belt? Does the existing case law affecting planning need to be redefined?

It is at that point that the experience of my constituency shows up the weakness in the current position. One would have expected that the revision of MPG3 would have reduced the number of opencast applications, especially in green belts. One would have expected that appeals to Department of the Environment inspectors would face more stringent tests. But the opposite seems to have happened. Apart from the St. Aidans site that I mentioned, four separate applications have been made in the green belt in or around the south of my constituency.

The Banks application at Barwick road, Garforth, which was made during the run-up to the revision but decided afterwards, was rejected by the council but allowed by an inspector on appeal. Following that, Leeds council granted an application for a site in Methley lane, allegedly on the basis that, after the Banks decision, it had no choice. At least two more applications are threatened or pending in the Garforth area, at Barrowby lane and at Hawk's Nest wood.

At this stage, it is necessary to examine the issues on which the Banks inquiry turned. The original rejection by the council took place under the old MPG3, and was on very limited grounds. The public inquiry took place in the summer and was completed just before the announcement of the MPG3 revision. The inspector's decision was announced in August, after the revision was published.

The council claimed that it was inhibited from expanding on the limited grounds that it had used to reject the original application and from bringing in wider issues of policy. I gave evidence at the inquiry, in which I reminded the inspector that he could reopen the public inquiry after the publication of MPG3 if he wanted to hear evidence on the changed criteria.

At the inquiry, the application was opposed by myself, as the Member of Parliament, by the council, by all the local councillors, by the local Member of the European Parliament, by local industry, by the Department of Transport, by a local action group and by a number of individuals. Why was there such unanimity?

In the Garforth area, there has been no mining for many years. Its green belt is one of the most sensitive in the Leeds area, because it prevents the Leeds conurbation from expanding and swallowing up the surrounding towns and villages. It attracts long-term, high-quality investment from international companies, which is prejudiced by opencasting.

One such company, which I worked hard to help bring to the Garforth area, opened two years ago and now employs almost 200 people in the textile industry, which, we hear from so many sources, is under threat in the United Kingdom. The company is now planning further expansion. It has submitted evidence that it would have to invest heavily in air filters if opencasting was allowed, to protect the quality of the white polyester yarn it produces at the factory. Why should such a company have to compensate for environmental degradation? Is it sustainable development when long-term, world-class investment in jobs is threatened by an ephemeral opencast application?

Against that background, great play was made by the opencast developer of the sterilisation of coal reserves that would follow due to the imminent building of the A1-M1 link road over the site. However, the Department of Transport opposed the application, because it feared that opencasting would delay work on the road, which is massively important to my area, from both an environmental and an economic point of view. It will open up access for industrial operations and it will remove heavy traffic from congested villages. What on earth do the concepts of environmental acceptability and sustainable development mean when consent for opencasting is given by the inspector against that background?

The inspector gave that consent without warning in August, when many people, including myself, were away on holiday. A petition was raised, which was signed by most of the local inhabitants, which I passed on to the Secretary of State for the Environment. I was told by his office that he had no power to intervene, and that the decision was the inspector's alone. Many local people find it difficult to believe that, and I should be grateful if the Minister could confirm that that was the situation. How unsatisfactory that is. This is an issue that cannot be decided on that narrow basis alone.

Indeed, the problem was that the only group that could, in practice, have objected was the council. It could have applied to the court for judicial review, but it chose not to do so. It was not helped in that decision by the fact that there was a limited time for appeal, which was fully taken up with the holiday period. That in itself was bad enough. We have now moved on from that situation to one in which the council is inclined to grant further opencast applications without serious opposition, as it has at Methley lane, arguing that it is bound by the Banks decision.

That is simply not acceptable, especially when the council owns, directly or indirectly, a great deal of the land in the area and stands to make a great deal of money if opencasting expands, or if the fear of opencasting forces an area of the green belt out of the green belt and into other kinds of development. All this is a very long way from the principle of environmental acceptability, and it is politically unacceptable as well.

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

I am aware that the council can prepare a minerals plan, defining where opencasting would be acceptable and where it would not be. That is sensible, and the council should get on with it, alongside the current unitary development plan for Leeds. However, even if we can get over the council's conflict of interests, that will not help us in the short term, with the current and pending applications for opencasting and others that will be stimulated by the success of previous applications. Nor does it set the right background for the preparation of the minerals plan.

Against that background, I should like to hear what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say. I look forward to the visit by the Secretary of State to the area, and to being able to show him at first hand exactly what is at stake. Most of all, I look forward to action to resolve the uncertainties. There is uncertainty about what environmental acceptability means in the context of a sensitive green belt. If that requires further clarification or amendment, so be it. The current situation in my constituency is simply unacceptable.

12.59 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir Paul Beresford): First of all I should like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), in spite of the hour, for raising this quite important matter. He has been extremely diligent in pursuing the interests of his constituents over this matter.

I understand the concerns of my hon. Friend and his constituents about opencast coal mining. It is those concerns and similar concerns that influenced the thinking behind the guidance we published in the new MPG3 in July. That guidance emphasises that development should be allowed only where the development can be carried out in an environmentally acceptable way or where there are overriding—I must emphasise—benefits. But it is not, and should not, be the intention to stop all opencast mining.

The aim of the new guidance is to ensure that the extraction of coal can take place in accordance with the full and proper protection of the environment and the principles of sustainable development. The new guidance was not produced rashly. It was drawn up after extensive consultation with the industry, planners, environmental groups and local communities. As has been mentioned, that consultation included meetings with my hon. Friend, a delegation from Leeds city council, and the Yorkshire Opencast Objectors Group.

As my hon. Friend graciously recognises, the new guidelines respond to many of the concerns that were expressed. The strong presumption in favour of opencast mining has been removed. The guidelines emphasise a development plan-led approach and tests of environmental acceptability for individual projects. There is a tougher approach to the assessment of impacts with an annex addressing each one in turn, including such matters as dust, noise and visual impact. We are committed to monitoring the implementation of the guidance through the research programme.

The development plan-led approach ensures that decisions on land availability and use are debated fully and openly at local level. That must offer the greatest certainty for industry about where coal extraction and spoil disposal is likely to be allowed. Similarly, however, communities where coal reserves exist will have a clearer idea about where such activities are likely to take place and over what period. This new approach, which responded to many of the concerns raised, has been generally well received, but I need to expand a little on it.

Planning policy needs to be formulated within the framework of the Government's energy programme. That programme, or policy, is to ensure diverse and sustainable supplies of energy in the form which people and businesses want and at competitive prices consistent with wider economic policies and the full and proper protection of the environment. The Government believe that that can best be achieved through the operation of a competitive and open market. In that context, it is not for the planning system to seek to set national limits on or targets for any particular source or level of energy supply, nor to predetermine the appropriate levels of coal to be produced by underground or even opencast mining.

The Government believe that coal can be mined economically and in an environmentally acceptable way, and that it is an important indigenous energy resource. The aim of the guidance is to ensure that development that can be carried out in an environmentally acceptable way is not inhibited. While it is for the industry to make decisions on the level of output that it wishes to aim for in the light of market conditions at the time, the acceptability of individual projects will be determined by the land use planning system.

My hon. Friend expressly refers to the test of environmental acceptability and how that is to be discharged. As he will realise, there is no simple answer to that question, but what is clear is that, first, the development plan has to provide a policy lead. The preparation of the development plan provides an opportunity to test the acceptability of national guidance to local circumstances. Secondly, in considering individual proposals, planning authorities need to weigh up on one hand the benefits of the development and, on the other hand, the environmental impact.

As I have already said, the new guidance gives comprehensive advice on the specific impacts that may arise and how to deal with them. Those include such matters as visual impact, noise, as I have already mentioned, blasting, dust, water pollution, transportation, land use and built heritage and nature conservation. The MPG3 also makes it clear that the guidance it contains is relevant to the consideration of planning applications whether or not the development plan is up to date.

My hon. Friend referred to the decision to grant planning permission for opencast coal mining at Garforth. As he said, that decision was issued on appeal by an inspector in August, following a local inquiry in June. Although the inquiry was held before the new MPG3 was published, the inspector took account of the revised guidance in reaching his decision. The inspector, as has been mentioned, has delegated powers to issue decisions on behalf of the Secretary of State. That was the situation in this case.

My hon. Friend will understand that it would be improper for me to discuss the merits of a decision. The pros and cons were argued at the local inquiry and the reasons for the decision are set out in the inspector's letter. I can say, however, that the decision appears to fall well within the revised guidelines. The project is of short duration— 13 months— and avoids the sterilisation of coal by allowing its extraction in advance of the construction of the three-lane M1-A1 link road.

The planning inspector has imposed tough conditions on the permission. These conditions relate, for the most part, to the timing, preparation, operation and restoration of the site, together with measures for the protection of local amenity, including controls on noise and dust.

My hon. Friend mentioned other cases in the area— one which has already been approved and two which are pending. He expressed concern that the appeal decision at Garforth had created a precedent and fettered the planning authority's discretion. That is not the case. I cannot comment on applications currently before the planning authority, but I should point out that, in his decision letter on the Garforth case, the inspector stated:

> "Nor do I consider that an approval in this case has any bearing on other proposals for opencasting in the wider area that might come forward in the future".

That is clear. The fact is that each case must be determined on its merits in accordance with the relevant provisions of the development plan and all other material considerations.

I turn to mineral working in the green belt, which was raised by my hon. Friend. Green belts have been a cornerstone of the town and country planning system. They will remain so, serving us in as good if not better stead as we enter the 21st century. Now, more than ever, we need to remember that we hold the environment in trust for future generations, and to take decisions wisely.

Green belts have served us well in preventing urban sprawl and ribbon development. They are probably the most popular part of our planning system. They have been emulated widely abroad, from the Netherlands to South Korea. Let no one doubt that the Government remain as firmly committed as ever to green belts. Since 1979, their extent has more than doubled. They now cover 12 per cent. of England, or about 3.8 million acres.

Inside green belts, development is normally restricted to agriculture, forestry, open-air leisure and sport, and other uses appropriate to a rural area. There is a general presumption against inappropriate development within them. Very special circumstances are required to justify permitting any development which is not normally appropriate in a green belt, or removing any land from the green belt. We expect shortly to publish a revision of planning policy guidance note 2 on green belts. This will confirm the overriding importance that we attach to their protection, and further strengthen green belt policy.

But there is no bar to making planning applications for development in the green belt. Nor do we intend to introduce a presumption against mineral working in green belts. The simple fact is that minerals can be worked only where they are found, and are a temporary use of the land. Their extraction therefore need not be incompatible with green belt objectives.

However, applications for mineral working in the green belt should be examined very carefully, and development should be allowed only where the highest standards of operation and restoration can be achieved. MPG3 does not encourage applications for green-field sites, but provides that priority should be given to proposals that involve the clearance of dereliction. Operators will need to demonstrate that real benefits will accrue from their proposals if they wish to work sensitive green-field sites.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on the way in which he has presented his case and represented his constituents. In addition to the debate, he has met my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. As my hon. Friend has said, he is to visit his constituency. I know that my right hon. Friend is particularly well aware of my hon. Friend's concerns; hence his acceptance of the invitation.

I emphasise that the purpose of the new planning guidelines, as set out in MPG3, is to ensure that mining and spoil disposal are carried forward in an environmentally acceptable way through the planning system.

The guidelines aim to provide a balanced approach. On the one hand, they provide a positive steer in terms of national policy for the extraction of the resource. On the other hand, they give planning authorities the responsibility of indicating how, where and at what pace the resource should be developed through the development plan system. Within that framework, each proposal must be considered on its merits according to the circumstances of the particular case.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nine minutes past One o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 8 December 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *[Lords]* (*By Order*)
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 15 December.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Battery Hens

1. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he proposes to improve the welfare of battery hens.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Angela Browning): Regulations implementing directive 88/166 setting out minimum standards for the welfare of laying hens kept in battery cages will come fully into force on 1 January 1995.

Mr. Lewis: Notwithstanding that reply, does the Minister agree that a comprehensive labelling system might be better for birds than those regulations? There is a great deal of misleading information in our shops about farm fresh or country fresh eggs. Would the welfare of battery hens not be improved if the shopper knew the exact origin of the eggs that he was buying?

Mrs. Browning: We believe that it is important that the consumer is not misled in any way. We shall continue to monitor carefully any claims made on egg packaging.

Mr. Riddick: Is my hon. Friend aware that many poultry farmers feel that we are applying the new regulations on cage sizes for battery hens much more stringently than our European partners? Why is it that we always seem to abide by the rules while our so-called partners appear not to do so?

Mrs. Browning: I can assure my hon. Friend that the welfare of battery hens is of paramount importance. We have pressed for much higher standards, particularly in respect of cage sizes, which will apply, for example, to cages containing fewer than three birds. Therefore, although I sympathise with my hon. Friend's claim that other countries do not keep to the rules, we do, and we want to bring their standards up to our extremely high levels.

Mr. Morley: Does the Minister agree that it is not enough just to monitor the labelling of eggs? Is she aware that the National Opinion Poll organisation found that 34 per cent. of consumers thought that eggs labelled "farm fresh" were free range when they were, in fact, battery eggs? Does she agree that it should not be left to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to introduce schemes such as the "Freedom Food" scheme, excellent though it is? We need less monitoring and more action.

Mrs. Browning: I was discussing this matter with the industry only this week. It, too, is aware of the problem and is anxious to show the consumer that claims made on packaging are true and to ensure that the consumer is correctly informed. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall continue to monitor the matter carefully.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Will my hon. Friend continue to try to raise standards of welfare for battery hens in Europe while bearing it in mind that we are operating within a single market? Will she ensure that the Government do not introduce unilateral new regulations which would undermine our competitiveness?

Mrs. Browning: Yes, I can assure my hon. Friend of that, but she will be aware that the directive which I mentioned requires the Community to review its detail. We shall be asking specifically for significantly increased cage sizes and for the enrichment of cages by means of perches and scratching bars. We shall also ask for the regulations to pay particular attention to the welfare of laying hens which are not necessarily battery hens.

York Offices

2. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his Ministry's new office at King's Pool, York, will open; and how many staff will be recruited from the York area to work there.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. William Waldegrave): The new offices at King's Pool opened on schedule on 10 October 1994. Around 250 local staff now work in these offices.

Mr. Bayley: I am told by the personnel department at King's Pool that it is well pleased with the quality of the staff whom it has recruited locally. In just over a year, the Ministry will be recruiting staff for the central science laboratory at Sand Hutton just outside York. How many local staff does the Minister expect to recruit then, and will the Ministry again give priority to providing jobs for other civil servants, principally those from the Ministry of Defence, who are being made redundant in north Yorkshire?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Ministry is, indeed, extremely pleased with the quality of people, which may surprise the hon. Gentleman. The estimate is that between 150 and 250 locally employed staff will be needed at the central science laboratory when it is completed in 1996, if it is still relevant then. As in the case of the development in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, we will see whether we can employ people, particularly from the Ministry of Defence, in the area where we have taken on a number of people—about 100, I think.

Mr. David Nicholson: I commend the ancient northern capital to my right hon. Friend, as my wife was at university there. Will he ensure that his Department's officials, wherever they are located, work hard in conjunction with those in the Department of the Environment on studying where the next generation of farmers will come from, particularly as so many present farmers are near retirement and many sons and daughters—

Madam Speaker: Order. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will explain to me—but later—how that refers to the area of York. It was a good try, but even in the season of good will, I cannot allow that.

Mr. Nicholson: I am referring to the work of officials situated at York.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman might make that clear at the beginning. We are not terribly interested where his wife was educated, provided that she was educated.

Mr. Nicholson: I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker. Will my right hon. Friend's officials at York work hard on this important matter and will they pay particular attention to the problems posed for the new generation of farmers by the present price of leasing milk quota?

Mr. Waldegrave: My officials based in York and elsewhere will, of course, take those matters seriously. I can assure my hon. Friend that the strength of the young farmers clubs in the area of York means that there is a supply of good farmers coming from that neighbourhood.

Infant Formulae

3. **Mr. Faber:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he plans to lay before Parliament the final version of the infant formula and follow-on formula regulations.

Mrs. Browning: We hope to lay these regulations shortly.

Mr. Faber: Is my hon. Friend aware that the continuing delay is causing grave uncertainty for companies such as Cow and Gate in my constituency? Can she at least give them some reassurance that when the regulations are laid before Parliament, they will contain none of the ludicrous over-regulation contained in the draft regulations last year, in particular a proposed ban on the marketing and advertising of baby milk, which would deprive millions of mothers of the right to choose how to feed and bring up their children?

Mrs. Browning: I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest in this subject, particularly as he raised it in an Adjournment debate in April. I can assure him that we have received a wide range of submissions, both for and against. That is why there has been a delay; we really do need to consider them all carefully. I hope that it will not be too long before we are able to give him a decision, but I can assure him that all the points that he has raised today are being taken into consideration.

Mr. Flynn: Will the Minister not be persuaded by the arguments of commercial interests, many of which are profit hungry, and remember that all the studies prove that the best, the most effective and the healthiest way in which to feed infants is the natural way?

Mrs. Browning: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that there are already some voluntary restrictions in that area. Although, of course, we would not disagree with his suggestion that breast milk is the most favourable method, we are aware that there are mothers who unfortunately cannot breast feed, and I would not wish from the Dispatch Box to make them feel that they were under some pressure in that area. All views will be taken into account.

Apples

4. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what actions he took on apple day to help the apple industry.

5. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to encourage British shops to sell British apples, in place of foreign imports.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): On apple day and at the Marden fruit show, as on other occasions, I have taken part in initiatives to promote British apples in order to assist their greater sale.

Mr. Lester: My hon. Friend will agree that British apples are among the best in the world, particularly the Bramley apple, which comes from Southwell in Nottinghamshire. Will he consider mounting a national apple pie competition, of pies made with Bramley apples, so that those who do not understand how good those apples are and how scrumptious are apple pies made with them can do so?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend, who comes from Nottingham, the home of the Bramley apple, is entirely in apple pie order. At the start of the promotion of Bramley apples this year, I took part in an apple pie-making activity and will certainly commend his very excellent idea to those in English apples and pears who do such a marvellous job in promoting our excellent apples.

Mr. Butler: Does my hon. Friend accept that, although it is welcome, the awarding of grants for the grubbing out of redundant orchards has not yet tackled the problem? Will he urge the Commission to put into effect its current proposal to reduce the intervention price of apples? Furthermore, does he agree that French Golden Delicious, which have invaded our shores, are—being French—tasteless, and are neither golden nor delicious? [HON. MEMBERS: "Super!"] Does he agree that English Coxes are the best?

Mr. Jack: I certainly agree with the findings of my hon. Friend's discerning palate, and not with the somewhat disparaging cry of "Super!" from Opposition Members.

My hon. Friend went to the heart of the matter when he mentioned the grubbing grant. We have had 166 applications in this country for 1,600 hectares, but it is crucial that, in the long term, taking out surplus apples has the maximum effect in Italy and France, where apples are grown not for the marketplace but for intervention purposes. In the long term, we should phase out intervention altogether: it distorts the market unnecessarily.

Mr. Enright: In his pursuit of British apples, will the Minister also not discriminate against English rhubarb? Will he set up a rhubarb day involving rhubarb pie, and take to making that dish?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that I grew up in Yorkshire, and know a good bit of Wakefield rhubarb when I see it. Last year, my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) received a delegation of rhubarb growers, and he has done his best to promote that excellent vegetable—and, indeed, not to talk rhubarb.

Mr. Graham: The Minister will remember one of the finest slogans ever used—"An apple a day keeps the doctor away". I have been eating apples in order to lose four stone, and I can recommend them as part of a healthy diet. We should do everything possible to help the British apple, because—as the hon. Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) said—they are some of the finest apples produced in the world.

Mr. Jack: I am delighted that the English apple industry has contributed to the hon. Gentleman's robust and healthy looks. He is absolutely right: the potential for more fruit consumption, which is mentioned in a recently published report by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy, shows just what can be done. Fruit consumption in this country is too low, but with the hon. Gentleman as an advertisement I am sure that more will be eaten.

Common Agricultural Policy

6. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for the further reform of the common agricultural policy.

8. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to reform the common agricultural policy.

12. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his policy group on the reform of the CAP.

Mr. Waldegrave: I meet my European colleagues regularly to discuss all aspects of the common agricultural policy, including current proposals for the reform of those sectors not covered by the 1992 reform agreement, such as wine. However, in the long term, we will need a more fundamental reform. On 6 December, I announced the names of a group of independent experts who will help the Department and me to develop our thinking.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Is he aware that the Leader of the Opposition has said that he will never allow this country to become isolated in Europe? Does he agree that there are times when we must stand apart, be independent and fight for Britain's interests?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend gives a wise example. Although some voices in the European Community are beginning to support us in regard to fundamental reform of the CAP, for a long time we were alone in arguing for it. In that instance, Britain was right to be alone. The argument that we should never be isolated is very foolish, and would often lead to decisions that were not in Britain's best interests.

Mr. Robathan: My right hon. Friend used to be Secretary of State for Health, and I know that he disapproves of the European Community's subsidising tobacco. I understand that the Department of Health spends £20 million on encouraging people not to smoke. What plans will my right hon. Friend present to stop the Community from spending £500 million or more on tobacco growing?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right about both my personal views and the Government's policy. I think it is wrong for us, and some other countries in Europe, to campaign against smoking if the CAP then adopts a regime that subsidises the growing of tobacco. I hope that, over time, we shall win over more allies to the idea that we do not need such a regime.

Mr. Lidington: Has my right hon. Friend assessed the likely impact on the CAP of the accession to the European Union of the Visegrad countries of central Europe? Is there any sign that the European Commission and other European countries are taking seriously the gravity of the challenge that that move will impose on the CAP?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend has put his finger on what will be the cause of further fundamental change in the CAP, of which I am glad. I do not see how the CAP can take on board countries of central and eastern Europe—which, before the war and before the communists ruined their agricultural systems, were extremely powerful agricultural producers—without further fundamental reform. Some parts of the European Commission seem to be beginning to recognise that. Directorate-General II has recently issued a good report, known as the Munk report, that advances many of the same arguments as the Government. In his speech at the Royal Institute of International Affairs conference last Friday, however, Commissioner Steichen did not seem to recognise the scale of the challenge that faces the agricultural part of the Commission.

Mr. Stevenson: Does the Minister agree that the sugar sector would be a crucial part of any CAP reform and that any reform of that sector would heavily depend on our commitments under the general agreement on tariffs and trade, which requires the European Community to reduce its sugar exports by about 36 per cent? Does he further agree that the two basic ways of achieving that are to reduce the quota or to reduce price? If those are the two basic elements, will he ensure that any quota reduction takes place in European Union countries whose quotas are in excess of their production requirements and that imports from African, Caribbean and Pacific countries are protected, because they need that protection to develop?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. By far the best way of reforming the regime would be to bring down the price while protecting imports from ACP countries. The Commission's proposals are not nearly radical enough. Within what the Commission proposes, I shall do my best to ensure that British quotas are not discriminated against—after all, we consume up to the limit of our quota. I do not find anything with which to disagree in what the hon. Gentleman said.

Mr. Tyler: Will the Minister confirm that nothing in the current CAP milk regime prevents him from taking action on the spiralling cost of the milk quota, including milk both for lease and for sale? Is that not a home-grown problem rather than a CAP problem? Will the right hon. Gentleman also confirm that nothing in the CAP regime prevents him from using his powers to confiscate unused quota from non-producers who hoard it for speculative purposes? Is he aware that many dairy farmers are on the brink of bankruptcy because of the problem?

Mr. Waldegrave: It follows, just as night follows day, that, if the milk price goes up, the quota value goes up—that is what a market is all about. The hon. Gentleman is not right to say that this is a home-grown problem, because part of the problem derives from the fact that the national quota is lower than national consumption. If we could achieve the transferability of milk quota across national boundaries in the European Community, as many people have argued we should, a great deal of good would be done to relieve the pressure on people who are having to pay more for quota than they would like.

Mr. Dafis: Does the Department have any information on the degree of equability in the distribution of farm support, both among different-sized farms and among different regions in the United Kingdom? Does the Minister accept that any CAP reform must aim for greater equability in that regard and for the retention of at least the present level of employment in agricultural farming? Will he consider carefully the recommendations in the recent Friends of the Earth report entitled "Working Future" in relation to that matter?

Mr. Waldegrave: We have to be careful about this argument because what we call small farms in the UK are large farms in terms of farm holdings in Europe. If we begin to accept the language of bias towards what Europe calls small farms, we shall ruin British farmers, large and small. Although it sounds an attractive slogan, I do not think that it is helpful in terms of British agricultural structure. Nothing will better maintain the welfare of people in the farming sector than the removal of as many quantitative controls as possible, which have grown in the short term, in a more fundamental, long-term reform of the CAP to bring it closer to the market and to allow people who have good products to sell them freely.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend use all his influence to try to ensure that CAP 3 takes all the rural economy into account and not just agriculture?

Mr. Waldegrave: With my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, I have launched the process that will lead, next year, to the production of a White Paper that will cover the rural economy more generally. I therefore sympathise with what my hon. Friend has said, because when we consider the health of rural areas, we should look not only at agriculture but at a number of other sources of income and constraints on prosperity.

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

7. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if steps are being taken by the Ministry to restrict BIV-infected livestock from entering the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Browning: The Government have considered that very carefully, commissioning research and consulting not only independent scientific experts in this country, but the leading researchers in north America and Europe. There is no scientific evidence relating to BIV that would justify placing restrictions on livestock to be imported into the United Kingdom, and we are not aware that such restrictions have been imposed by any other country.

Mr. Cox: Although I note that reply, is the Minister aware that that view is not held by many in the farming community? There is clear evidence that cattle from central Europe, which are imported here via western Europe, are infected with BIV. In view of the high quality of British cattle stocks, will the Minister assure the House that the quality and health of animals imported to Britain will be subject to rigid control?

Mrs. Browning: I can indeed assure the hon. Gentleman of that. He will be aware that harmonised EC regulations governing the importation of cattle and animals are now in force. They require that an imported animal must have a certificate of health, signed by a veterinarian from the exporter country, and put the onus on the importers to ensure that they are satisfied that that animal is healthy and has the necessary certification.

Mr. Martyn Jones: Does not Milk Marque take a different view by refusing to purchase milk from the BIV-affected farm in Cheshire? If it turns out that that strain of BIV is particularly virulent, is it not irresponsible of the Government not to take any precautions now, before the results of the investigation are known? They should make the disease notifiable, compensate the farmer and undertake an in-depth study of the disease. The potential danger posed to the dairy industry by that disease is disastrous.

Mrs. Browning: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman takes that line, because it overstates the importance of the virus. We would not normally discuss the farm in Cheshire in detail, but given that the owners have made public the information relating to their animals, it is important to make the case clear. The decision by the Milk Marketing Board and, subsequently, Milk Marque not to purchase the milk is purely a commercial decision between those organisations and the owners of the milk.

For many years, the virus has occurred in numerous cases in America, Canada and, in particular, Australia. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we have not been advised by those countries to restrict the sale and use of milk. I can also assure the hon. Gentleman that, even if the virus is detected in raw milk, it is killed by pasteurisation.

Rural White Paper

9. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he has made on the rural White Paper.

Mr. Waldegrave: An interdepartmental group of officials has been set up, led jointly by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Department of the Environment. We have been in touch with more than 200 organisations to request their views. A very wide welcome has been received from interested organisations.

Mr. Arnold: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the rural White Paper is a magnificent opportunity for our rural areas—in particular, their towns and villages—to make considerable progress? Should we not broaden the scope of the White Paper to take in other Departments of State, so that they, too, consider their services to the rural areas?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is a good opportunity. For many years, people have argued for a White Paper that looked across the board at policy affecting the rural economy. I agree with my hon. Friend that other Departments should be involved. The steering group is based on the two principal Departments, but others, such as Education, Transport and the Home Office, will be closely involved.

Dr. Strang: Before the Government start to write the White Paper, will the Minister remove the sword of Damocles that he is hanging over the heads of hundreds of thousands of rural workers? Since the report by the London School of Economics, which the Government commissioned, has repudiated any adverse link between minimum wage rates and employment levels, will the right hon. Gentleman now abandon his plan to abolish the agricultural wages boards and, instead, retain them as they stand?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman knows that we are still considering the replies which we have received, which were not unanimous. There are two views on the matter, which I am considering.

Sir Kenneth Carlisle: Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is good news that he and the Department of the Environment are working closely together to take policies forward? Does he agree that one of the most beneficial things for the countryside generally would be the spread of farm woodlands? Will he and his Department ensure that pressure is put on the Commission to allow the planting of farm woodlands to count against set-aside?

Mr. Waldegrave: Immediately after questions in the House today, I shall be meeting the German Minister, Herr Borchert, who holds the presidency of the Agriculture Council. I shall be raising that matter with him in the hope that we can at least get an agreement in principle on what my hon. Friend is arguing for in the Council next week.

Agricultural Tenancies

11. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has had indicating support for the Government's proposed changes to agricultural tenancies.

Mr. Waldegrave: During the last 18 months my Department has received 185 representations via hon. Members and a further 28 addressed to Ministers directly. The majority of these were supportive. The proposals in the Bill are based on an agreement between the Country Landowners Association, the National Farmers Union, the Tenant Farmers Association and the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs.

Mrs. Knight: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that an independent survey has estimated that, as a result of his proposals, there will be an increase of 10 per cent. in the land available to let? Does he agree that that will give significant encouragement, particularly to young farmers to enter the industry?

Mr. Waldegrave: There has been an immensely wide welcome for the proposals, and I can confirm that there has been such an independent survey. The Institute of Chartered Surveyors said that there may be 1 million acres of land under management by its members which are likely to come forward for new tenancies as a result of the measure. That is welcome indeed.

Common Agricultural Policy

13. **Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the net United Kingdom contribution to the common agricultural policy for each of the last 10 years as measured in current prices.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom does not contribute to the CAP directly but to the Community budget as a whole.

Mr. Simpson: Is the Minister aware that, as part of our contribution to the budget as a whole, we have been contributing to the accumulation of a wine lake which amounts now to 19 billion bottles of wine? That could provide a Christmas gift of 500 bottles of wine to every adult in the United Kingdom. Does the Minister agree that—while he is not in a position to distribute the surplus freely—it is a wasted accumulation to which we ought not to contribute?

Mr. Jack: A voice of irreverence behind me has suggested that the hon. Gentleman might like to contribute to removing some of that lake himself.

On a more serious note, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be including in his discussions with the German presidency the question of the reform of the wine regime which the Community must and will address.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does my hon. Friend concur that the contribution is by no means a one-way street? In this country, out of £600 million pounds of compensation payments, £100 million comes from the Treasury and £500 million from Europe.

Mr. Jack: I think that my hon. Friend is referring to issues connected with hill farms and her analysis, which points to greater receipts from Community schemes to hill farmers of both sheep and cattle, is absolutely right. I was also delighted by my right hon. Friend's announcement that we were able to maintain unchanged this year's hill livestock compensatory allowance payments.

Dr. Strang: The Secretary of State's think tank is all very well, but when will the Government seriously tackle common agricultural policy fraud? Does he recognise that fraud is inherent in the market support mechanisms of the CAP? Will he now take the bull by the horns and come out unequivocally against the open-ended state intervention buying of all agricultural commodities?

Mr. Jack: It sounds to me as though there is a typical Opposition stance on this: pull out the rug from underneath the farmers, with no idea whatever. The Government, at least, are thinking carefully about the future of the CAP. Judging by the hon. Gentleman's question, he has not a thought in his head. I heard him interviewed on "Farming Today". When asked what he would do, there was a bit of radio silence. I am disappointed that the hon. Gentleman does not acknowledge what the United Kingdom has done in leading the fight against fraud. If he were keeping up with affairs, he would know that only yesterday we agreed the beginning of a Community black list to stop fraudsters illegally claiming money in different parts of the

Community when they are under investigation. With our support, more than 50 new members of staff have been allocated within the Community's anti-fraud unit. I could go on. The Conservative party takes the fight against fraud extremely seriously.

Research

14. **Sir Peter Emery:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sum was spent by his Department on research for the last three years; what percentage this was of the total annual budget; what is the budget for the forthcoming year; what percentage this is of his total budget; and what additional new research is to be undertaken.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry has spent £121.5 million, £132.9 million and £137.3 million respectively. This represents 17 per cent., 18 per cent. and 19 per cent. of the total annual budgets for those years. Funding for a wide range of research and development in 1995-96 will be around £140 million or 17 per cent. of the total budget.

Sir Peter Emery: The increase which the Minister announced is obviously welcome. What part of it applies to the west country? Will he ensure that aspects of research on grasslands, which are important in terms of milk production, will continue?

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend refers to the £140 million, which represents a maintenance of our resources for research and development following successful negotiations by my right hon. Friend the Minister. We do not allocate research and development funds by region, but the type of project on silage to which my right hon. Friend refers will benefit not only west country farmers but dairy farmers throughout the United Kingdom. Such work is safeguarded by our excellent settlement on research and development.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Has the Minister commissioned, or will he commission, research into the use of the flavour enhancer monosodium glutamate, which is now used in almost every manufactured food product, including bread? It has no nutritional value and there is strong evidence that it builds up a severe allergy that is affecting many people. Is not the time now right to take a proper look at the matter?

Mr. Jack: I am not aware of any research that I have commissioned on that subject. On food safety, great care is taken before an ingredient is allowed to be used. However, if the hon. Gentleman knows of research that he believes should be evaluated, I shall ensure that a scientist does that job.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend aware that at Mylnefield in Tayside, we have one of the finest crop research centres in existence? It is important that it continues its good work, particularly its research into raspberries and other crop fruits but also into potatoes, which are vital to the Tayside economy.

Mr. Jack: I am glad that my hon. Friend gives yet another indication of how Government-funded research is helping to boost prospects, particularly for British horticulture. As we said earlier, the opportunity for our raspberries—*[Interruption.]* If hon. Members are not careful, I shall blow them one. The work being undertaken is resulting in increased fruit consumption. I hope that the research to which my hon. Friend referred will enable our raspberry growers to take full advantage of those commercial possibilities.

Carcase Meat

15. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to promote the export of carcase meat.

Mr. Jack: We continue to support the Meat and Livestock Commission's excellent promotion of meat products and exports.

Mr. Miller: Does the Minister agree that, if he banned the export of live animals, the British slaughterhouse industry could cope with the increased throughput of some 2 billion animals? Does he agree that such a step would not only remove some of the barbaric practices in the transport of live animals but stop the export of British jobs?

Mr. Jack: Sadly, the hon. Gentleman's question does not relate the enormous amount of work that my right hon. Friend the Minister is undertaking to try to find a Europe-wide solution to improve the welfare of animals in transit. However, I gather from the nature of his question that the hon. Gentleman would, at a stroke, do away with a trade worth £200 million to British farmers, and farmers will have noted carefully the terms in which he put it.

The Meat and Livestock Commission is working extremely hard to open up new opportunities for sales of carcase beef, and the work that we have done on bovine spongiform encephalopathy has kept European markets such as Germany open to us. It is sad that, on the day that we announced the new opportunities for young beef cattle to be exported from the United Kingdom, the hon. Gentleman does not refer to that in his question.

Mr. Marland: Can my hon. Friend confirm that exports of British meat have almost doubled since 1991, thereby emphasising that, internationally, British meat is seen to be of the highest standard? It is important to keep that industry alive and vital. Does my hon. Friend agree that, in 1976, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) introduced statutory succession rights for tenants, that he thereby denied new entrants the opportunity of coming into the farming market, that it was a disgraceful thing to do and that we should quickly undo that bad work?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The meat industry will be worth £891 million in exports this year and it is certainly true that the reform of agricultural tenancy, which hon. Members on the Conservative Benches unequivocally support, will open the door to new, young, innovative farmers who will be able to take advantage of the excellent opportunities for exporting British meat.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister join me in congratulating the animal welfare organisations and the travelling public on putting such pressure on the ferry companies that most of them have banned the carrying of live animals across the channel?

Mr. Jack: What I will do is join those people who support my right hon. Friend the Minister in his attempt to find a Europe-wide solution to ensure that continental practice is brought up to the standard of the United Kingdom. I am disappointed that, in spite of his tremendous efforts, people have unilaterally withdrawn an important transport link for our cattle producers. It is perhaps a sad day when they have not listened to what the Minister has done, especially in working to develop a code of practice, to regulate the movement of live animals into Europe.

Nitrates

16. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to defend United Kingdom interests in respect of new EC provisions on the level of nitrates in leafy salads and vegetables.

Mrs. Browning: We have firmly opposed the proposal and demanded its withdrawal. It is now blocked while the Commission examines the comprehensive dossier that we have sent in, challenging the scientific basis for the measure and detailing the serious economic implications that it would have for our glasshouse growers.

Mrs. Roe: Does my hon. Friend agree that British lettuces are perfectly safe and nutritious, and that distinguished scientists have shown that there is no public health problem that justifies a regulation?

Mrs. Browning: My hon. Friend is exactly right. In the UK, intakes of nitrate in vegetables are well below the acceptable daily limit and are calculated on a very sound scientific basis. We want to share that scientific information with our partners in Europe, where we believe that the scientific basis has not been as sound as our own.

Mr. Cohen: Do not British farmers use far too much pesticide on their lettuces and salad items, and should not the Minister concentrate on telling them to use less, rather than attacking the Common Market?

Mrs. Browning: The specific problem relates to lettuce grown in glasshouses, not lettuce grown in the open. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are sure, from our scientific basis, that British lettuces are quite safe to eat. In fact, I would encourage hon. Members to eat more of them, because British lettuces are good for you.

Agricultural Tenancies

17. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the likely effect of the proposals in the Agricultural Tenancies Bill on the supply of farmland available for rent.

Mr. Waldegrave: Recent research carried out independently by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors suggests that, if enacted, the proposed reforms could be expected to increase the area of let land by up to 10 per cent. of its current level.

Mr. Tredinnick: How many tenancies were lost as a result of the 1976 tenancy laws, and are there any provisions in the Bill to enable tenants who improve their land to receive adequate compensation when they give up their tenancies?

Mr. Waldegrave: One of the important reforms in the Bill is the strengthening of the hand of the tenant in relation to compensation for investment that he may have made during his tenancy. That will equalise the position. My hon. Friend is correct to say that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) wrongly predicted the outcome of the Bill that he introduced, I am sure in good faith, in 1976. He said then that there would be no significant drop in the supply of tenanted farms. As he will be honest enough to admit, there has been a catastrophic drop in the supply of tenanted farms. I hope that he has learned from the mistake that he made at that time.

Coastal Defences

18. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much his Ministry is spending this year on improving coastal defences against flooding from the sea.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department expects to provide some £19 million in grant towards the cost of improving coastal defences against flooding from the sea in 1994-95.

Mr. Whittingdale: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his answer. I welcome the work that the National Rivers Authority is doing to evaluate different means of sea defences, including managed retreat. But will my right hon. Friend confirm that it remains the Government's policy to protect, not just populated areas, but prime agricultural land?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can, indeed, confirm that my hon. Friend is right. There may be areas where it is better not to waste money on defences that will be overwhelmed. The importance of defending both human habitation and prime agricultural land is always taken into consideration.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Wilshire: Will my right hon. Friend convey my best wishes to the officials who will be leading the negotiations tomorrow with Sinn Fein-IRA? Will he also accept my congratulations on the way in which he has handled the peace process? Could he ensure that, on day one it is made crystal clear that there can be no real progress unless all paramilitaries give up weapons and intimidation? Will he also make it crystal clear that there can never be any question of an amnesty for murderers or bombers?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right to feel strongly about these matters. Our position is clear: those people convicted of criminal offences will serve their sentences and an amnesty for murderers simply does not arise.

Sinn Fein must accept unequivocally the rules of democratic politics. Guns and bombs need to be taken out of commission and intimidation must end—that is, of course, equally true for the loyalist paramilitaries. We have invited the loyalist political representatives to begin a separate exploratory dialogue with the Government on

15 December. I hope that both they and Sinn Fein will show a serious commitment to exclusively peaceful methods so that we can ensure that a peace remains and becomes stable in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Blair: May I say how much I support what the Prime Minister has just said on Northern Ireland?

Does the Prime Minister recall that last year he said that he was unequivocally against a referendum on Europe—a view that he has repeated this year—yet last night he said that he did not rule one out? What has changed?

The Prime Minister: I continue to welcome the right hon. Gentleman's support on Northern Ireland. It is a strength to the peace process that it carries the support of hon. Members in all parts of the House. On the subject of a referendum, let me make clear the point that I made yesterday—there are many people who see the referendum simply as a tactical device. I strongly suspect that that is true of many Opposition Members. But I do not see it in that fashion; we have to consider the constitutional implications for British democracy of referendums generally—there are advantages and there are disadvantages. What I have said and what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has said is that we are not prepared to rule one out.

Mr. Blair: Is not it clear that what has changed is not the Prime Minister's belief about a referendum, but his ability to unite his party without one? Is that not his problem and that of the country—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Blair: I see that the yobbos are out in force today. Is not this the right hon. Gentleman's problem? Whether it is the referendum, or VAT, or Post Office privatisation, or the Tory rebels, is not his problem the fact that the Government's decisions are now being taken by a Cabinet of crisis managers, driven by each day's headlines, making or unmaking policy according to the tyranny of the factions—when what this country is crying out for is a Government who will serve the national interest?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps if the right hon. Gentleman feels that way about referendums, he will explain why he is committed to referendums for Scotland and for Wales. Perhaps it is to heal divisions among his right hon. and hon. Friends.

As to the question of country and party, that is a sound bite which the right hon. Gentleman has been trailing around from studio to studio over the past day or so. Let me make it entirely clear to him: we shall put the country first, as we always do. It is precisely because we have put the country first that we have not shrunk from difficult decisions. This country is now in position for the longest, most sustained recovery for all its people that has been seen for many years.

Q2. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Spring: Is my right hon. Friend aware of a number of important initiatives to combat crime in rural areas such as Suffolk, including the introduction of a rural inspectorate in addition to cluster neighbourhood watch schemes and parish constables? Will he join me in welcoming the fact that crime in the Bury St. Edmunds sub-division has fallen by 15.2 per cent. so far this year, and, in the Newmarket sub-division, by a full 22.2 per cent?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted to hear those statistics on falling crime; they are mirrored in some other parts of the country. I understand that my hon. Friend was instrumental in setting up a drugs prevention initiative in Newmarket, and I hope that many other people will follow the same sort of idea in other parts of the country. The reduction in crime to which my hon. Friend refers demonstrates the effectiveness of a community-based approach.

Mr. Ashdown: Let me remind the Prime Minister of his actual words, used in answer to me in June 1992. He said:

> "I am not in favour of a referendum in a parliamentary democracy".—[*Official Report*, 3 June 1992; Vol. 208, c. 830.]

Are we to take it that that was not a statement of principle but yet another flexible policy from our eternally flexible Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman accuses me one day of being inflexible and criticises me on the next for being flexible. I suppose that that shows that he himself is unsure whether flexibility is good or bad—just as he is unsure about every single policy that he advocates in one House one day or his hon. Friends advocate in another House another day. They change from hour to hour, from day to day, from House to House and from Question Time to Question Time.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Did my right hon. Friend have the chance to read yesterday's *Daily Mail*, about what £60 would buy today? Does he agree that £60 for a haircut is a bit much, even for the Leader of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: As it happens, I did not read the *Daily Mail* yesterday, so I was certainly not aware of the right hon. Gentleman's haircutting exploits. Indeed, it would be indelicate of me to refer to them.

Q3. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Prentice: Has the Prime Minister visited Dudley, West yet? If not, does he intend to do so? Is he aware that his candidate there said on television last night that he wanted to fight the by-election exclusively on local issues? Today of all days, are there no national issues on which to engage the electors of Dudley, West?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman had cared to look even at today's news he would have seen that there is another record set of export figures, that industrial production is rising yet again, that over recent months unemployment has been falling consistently, that there is a growth rate of over 4 per cent. and that there is an inflation rate of 2 per cent. He would see prospects for this country that his party in office has never managed to produce. I suggest that that is a good prospectus for people at any by-election at any time and certainly for the one at Dudley, West.

Mr. John Marshall: As chairman of the all-party Friends of the Northern Line group, may I welcome today's announcement of 100 new trains for the Northern line? That is good news for London and will be warmly welcomed. *[Interruption.]*

The Prime Minister: There seems to be a voice of dissent—the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)—but I think that most people who use the Northern line will be pleased to see this substantial investment and the improved rolling stock that will be available for many millions of Londoners and others.

Q4. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gunnell: Given the Prime Minister's claim to support small business, and recognising that over the past 10 years British Coal Enterprise has created or expanded 5,000 companies in coalfield areas, would the Prime Minister now guarantee the future of British Coal Enterprise?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman, in the way that he posed his question, shows what an excellent record we have on small businesses, because he quoted the number of extra small companies that there are. That is true of other parts of industry and in other parts of the country, and I am sure that they will continue to grow.

Q5. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is always welcome when parents exercise the right of choice in education for their children, a choice which only the Conservative party has introduced? Does he further agree that it is contemptible for most Opposition Members to seek to deny that choice from which so many of them and their children have benefited? Does he agree that this is a case of, "You're all right, Tony, pull up the ladder"?

The Prime Minister: I am always delighted to see people exercising choice in all areas, and it is certainly right to exercise choice in favour of one's children to ensure that they get the best possible education. The point about education generally is that there is no choice where only bad schools exist. That is why we have introduced a range of measures, including regular inspection, and a range of education policies, to raise standards. I am delighted that, despite its past hostility to those policies, the Labour party is increasingly recognising that our education policies are right and is now following them. I recommend to the Opposition that they begin to follow some of our other policies on a whole range of issues.

Q6. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Jackson: Does the Prime Minister accept that last Thursday he misled the House in claiming that the disposable income of all people at every level had risen, and that the facts are that the bottom tenth of the population's real disposable income has fallen by 17 per cent. since 1979 while the incomes of the top tenth have gone up by 62 per cent? Does not that demonstrate the unfair society that we shall be left with following this Tory Government? Will he now put the record straight?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady is playing with statistics and she knows it. *[Interruption.]* The statistics that she quotes incorporate all sorts of people who run businesses and declare no income but whose spending pattern is way above the average. That is how she produces those statistics. The people at the bottom end of the scale are those who exist completely on social security payments. The hon. Lady knows that they have risen in value and she should not try and pretend otherwise.

Q7. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thompson: Returning to the subject of education, will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to commend the good work that is being done in independent schools throughout the country? Will he also confirm again the Government's commitment to the assisted places scheme which has done so much for children from less well-off families? Is not it surprising that the new modern Labour party should once again attack freedom of choice in education and, indeed, make it more difficult for its leader to exercise choice for his own family?

The Prime Minister: It is entirely apt that my hon. Friend should ask that question when the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) has just been talking about people at the bottom of the income scale. The assisted places scheme is a way to help people at the bottom of the income scale and the hon. Lady opposes it, as do her right hon. and hon. Friends. Parental choice is a fundamental principle of our policy. We choose to exercise it for everyone, not just for some, and I fail to understand how members of the Labour party, which claims to pride itself on equality of opportunity, would deny the opportunities under the assisted places scheme to some of the poorest children in Britain. What it shows yet again is the gap between what they say and what they practise.

Tax Revenue

3.31 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, I should like to make a statement. It is a statement, not a Budget statement. I regard it as a corrigendum to an earlier Budget, on which the House has decided to change its mind.

Following the vote on Tuesday night, I told the House that the Government remained committed to taking all the necessary measures to put the public finances on a sound footing.

The reductions in the public sector borrowing requirement that I announced were welcomed at the time by the business community, by the financial markets and by the House. During the course of our Budget debate, very few right hon. and hon. Members questioned that judgment.

To keep those borrowing plans intact, I said on Tuesday that I would be bringing forward measures to make good the gap in the public finances from holding the rate of value added tax on domestic fuel and power at 8 per cent. I can now tell the House what those measures will be. A press note filling out the details of my proposals will be available from the Vote Office as soon as I have sat down.

Holding the rate of VAT at 8 per cent. will reduce revenue by about £1 billion in 1995-96 and, as a result of the quarterly profile of payments, £1.5 billion in subsequent years. Those are the amounts I have sought to recover.

As VAT on fuel will remain at 8 per cent. it would be quite wrong to increase social security expenditure by providing the full compensation package previously announced to help people with VAT at 17.5 per cent. We will adjust the amount that would have been paid had VAT on fuel been increased. By adjusting that amount, we will save about £200 million in 1995-96 and subsequent years.

We will, of course, keep in place the help already given for 8 per cent. VAT on domestic fuel and power. We will increase benefits fully in line with the relevant cost of living index, including the component reflecting the impact of last year's VAT increase. After those adjustments, pensioner couples will receive help of at least £1.05 a week from next April. This will be more than the average weekly cost to pensioners of paying 8 per cent. VAT on fuel. I am also keeping unchanged the increases in cold weather payments and spending on the home energy efficiency scheme which I announced in the Budget and in last Tuesday's debate.

That small change in the previously announced pension rates has a knock-on effect to the national insurance system, since the lower earnings limit is automatically linked to the single pension. National insurance contributions will therefore start at £58 rather than £59 a week from April 1995. The upper earnings limit will be unchanged. That will raise receipts from national insurance contributions by about £50 million next year.

So the remaining gap for 1995-96 amounts to about £800 million. My first option was to look at public spending. In my last two Budgets, I have been able to find savings of £43 billion in public spending over the four survey years. That is much larger than the increases in taxation that we found it necessary to make to restore healthy public finances after the recession. We have managed to find those savings while increasing spending in real terms on key public services, such as the national health service and the police. My objective remains to reduce Government spending to below 40 per cent. of total national output. Both Budgets made that objective much more achievable.

The details of this year's extremely tight public spending settlement have already been announced by the relevant Secretaries of State. I do not consider it practicable or sensible to reopen those settlements today. At the time of my Budget, I struck a balance between spending and revenue designed to ensure that the economy remains on track for steady and sustainable growth. Nothing that has happened since has led me to change that judgment for this year's settlement.

The next area that I considered to recover the shortfall in revenue was direct taxation. Since 1979, the Government have reduced the basic rate of taxation from 33p to 25p in the pound. We also introduced the new lower rate of 20p—one fifth of all taxpayers now pay tax only at that lower rate of 20p. When seeking to raise revenue in the 1993 Budgets, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) and I considered it necessary to freeze personal allowances and reduce the married couple's allowance and the mortgage interest relief allowance.

I considered then that those increases in direct taxation were a sufficient and reasonable contribution to our revenue needs. That remains my view today. I do not intend to reverse my decisions to index the personal allowances and to over-index above inflation the elderly person's allowance and the 20p band.

As my next option, I also considered raising additional revenue through business taxation— *[Interruption.]* It is my clear impression from the debates that I have been listening to that hon. Members need to be taken through the options for the consequences of their votes. They need to be taken through them— *[Interruption.]* It is all very well voting at the behest of Conservative Euro-rebels, but certain consequences do follow.

I also considered raising additional revenue from business taxation. In my Budget, I provided as much help as I could for the business community. The reason was simple—strong and thriving businesses are essential for a strong and thriving economy.

During last week's debate, I also listened to the Labour party's proposals for closing loopholes and introducing a windfall tax on utilities. I have done some work to study them. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) asked me to do so.

The proposals are not serious options for revenue raising. This Government have never been a friend to the tax avoidance industry. Conservative Chancellor after Conservative Chancellor has closed loopholes, year after year. The last two Budgets speak for themselves. I will raise nearly £3.5 billion between 1994-95 and 1997-98 by closing loopholes. The hon. Gentleman's proposals on loopholes are undesirable changes in taxation on legitimate business. I have considered his proposal on executive share options many times. The policy behind the existing tax relief for such share options is geared to encouraging companies to motivate key employees and to benefit all shareholders. Executives are liable to capital gains tax once they sell their shares. The hon. Gentleman's suggestions totally exaggerate the cost of the scheme. He claims that I could raise £200 million by reforming it. The actual total cost of the relief is estimated at around £50 million to £60 million, which is all one would gain by abolishing it.

The suggestion of a windfall tax is, by definition, a one-off tax—a one-off sum of money. It could not replace permanent annual loss of a flow of revenue. In any event, it appears to be based on the suggestion of taxing profits on gains, which, as the right hon. Gentleman appears to have discovered in this morning's press, are already liable to taxation. A windfall tax would simply be another tax on a particular sector of industry. Like other taxes on business, it would inevitably have adverse effects on that business sector's investment and prices.

My third and remaining option for 1995-96 therefore has been to look to indirect taxation. As the House has rejected an increase in indirect taxation to which the House had previously agreed, it is wholly consistent with my Budget strategy, and it preserves the shape of the Budget, to fill the hole with increases in indirect taxation. I have decided to bring forward certain increases in taxation in addition to those announced in my Budget, and the increases will take effect from midnight, 31 December 1994.

I propose that the duty on tobacco products, with the exception of hand-rolling tobacco, will increase by just under 4 per cent., equivalent to a further 6p on a packet of 20 cigarettes. This further increase in tobacco duty is consistent with our policy of increasing prices to discourage smoking.

I also propose that the duties on road fuels will rise by a further 1p a litre. I have kept these increases to the minimum to limit the burden on business users and the rural motorist. Even after these increases, petrol will still be cheaper in real terms than it was a decade ago, and it will still be cheaper than in our main European competitors.

The increase will also play a part in our strategy for curbing emissions of carbon dioxide. We remain fully committed to the target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000, as do the Opposition.

Finally, I propose that duties on alcohol will rise by around 4 per cent. This is equivalent to 1p on a pint of beer, 5p on a bottle of wine and 26p on a bottle of whisky.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): What about champagne?

Mr. Clarke: Eight pence on champagne.

For the reasons set out in my Budget statement, I had hoped to spare these industries any increase in duty this year, but in present circumstances, as a result of my need to raise revenue from sources other than value added tax on fuel, I have reluctantly judged it necessary to raise some additional revenue from them.

Taken together, these increases will raise £180 million in the current financial year and nearly £800 million in 1995-96. In total this is sufficient to meet the shortfall next year. I therefore expect the public sector borrowing requirement next year to be the same as I announced in my Budget statement.

Let me turn now to the following year, 1996-97. For that year I need to raise £1.5 billion. The tax measures that I have announced today will raise an additional £850 million. The impact of the higher duties that I have announced today on the retail prices index will not be as great as the impact would have been from the second stage of VAT on fuel. Inflation will therefore be very slightly lower than expected, leading to further public spending savings on benefits of around £160 million in 1996-97 and in later years, and there will be savings of around £200 million from the withdrawal of help to compensate for the second stage of value added tax.

There will therefore remain a further gap of around £300 million to be filled in 1996-97. I propose to finance this gap by reducing the public expenditure control totals for those years. For the time being, I will score that reduction through a reduction in the provision that I have made for the reserve. The eventual consequence for departmental programmes—of course, there must be a consequence for departmental programmes—will be addressed in next year's spending round. Again, I expect the public sector borrowing requirement to be as I announced in my Budget statement in 1996-97 and in subsequent years.

Resolutions under the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968 to hold VAT on fuel at 8 per cent. and to increase other taxes with effect from 1 January 1995 will be tabled very shortly. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will then be arranging a debate before the House rises for the Christmas recess.

I said in my Budget speech that the British economy is currently facing the most favourable set of economic circumstances that it has seen for many years. Trade figures published only this morning show that exports are up 14 per cent. in the last year, and are once again at record levels. The trade deficit is the lowest that it has been for almost 10 years. The outlook for jobs and future prosperity for men and women in this country is improving day by day.

The House and the political leadership of this country have an obligation to behave responsibly and to keep this healthy recovery on track. We have an obligation to act responsibly and not be tempted by short-term populist measures which would undermine confidence in the Government's commitment to public finances. The measures that I have announced today ensure that that commitment is fulfilled.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): While the whole country will be relieved that the House has forced the Government to abandon the rise in value added tax on fuel, it will now ask why they had to take 18 months and four Budgets to bring forward the alternative measures—including the indexation of tobacco taxation which we will support—which the Government could have proposed in the first place. Does not today's statement show why the House of Commons was right to inflict a defeat on the Government on Tuesday?

On the compensation for pensioners, will the Chancellor confirm in specific detail that he expects pensioners to continue to meet fuel bills that are up by £1 a week on average as a result of the VAT that remains—*[Interruption.]*—yes, they are up by £1 a week on average—with only 50p cash compensation in their hands and only £36 a year, even after price indexing, to meet average fuel bills of £505 a year?

Will the Chancellor now explain to the country's pensioners why he is withdrawing not only the 25p a week that he promised his party on Tuesday evening but the 30p a week that he promised last year, which was announced in the social security uprating and which has

[Mr. Gordon Brown]

been written into pension books that are now being sent out? Will he confirm that it is true that the Government are now recalling pension books that have been issued?

Will the Chancellor now explain to 10,000,000 pensioners and others on low income why he is so out of touch and his priorities so unfair that he is clawing back the compensation for pensioners while he insists on going ahead with cuts in the price of bottles of champagne? Will he explain why he is punishing pensioners when it is the Conservative party that should be paying the price for its mistakes?

As for public spending cuts, will the Chancellor confirm that he plans to cut £320 million next year and £255 million the year after? Will he explain where he is planning to make those cuts and how he squares them with his promise that there would be no cuts in public investment, and with the Prime Minister's statement at the election that cutting public spending was "not economically right"?

On taxation, will the Chancellor confirm this: that, on top of the national insurance rise that people are already paying, on top of the income tax rises resulting from the mortgage tax relief being withdrawn and the cut in the married couple's allowance, and on top of the other five tax rises, the effect of the tax rises that he is announcing today is another 43p a week for the typical taxpayer? Will he confirm that that means that the typical burden faced by millions of people as a result of all the tax changes that the Conservatives have made is now £875 a year, which is in breach of election promises that there would be no tax rises at all?

On alcohol, will the Chancellor confirm his assessment of the number of jobs that will be lost as a result of his complete U-turn on the price of beer? *[Interruption.]* I am referring, as Conservative Members know, to beer and to the lobby that the Chancellor should listen to about the effect on jobs in the industry as a result of his changes today.

As the Chancellor raises questions about the alternatives that the Labour party would put forward, will he now confirm in detail that, if removed—on the recommendation of the deputy chairman of the Conservative party, who said that they were unfair—executive share options and the tax privileges would raise not only the money that he saves from capital gains tax but the money from the spouses of people who hold those executive shares, and that the true figure, as calculated by all the experts throughout the country, is not £45 million, but £200 million in total? *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members opposite do not want to listen, because they do not understand the unfairness of a Government who put up the taxation of ordinary people while refusing to deal with abuses in the tax system.

Will the Chancellor confirm that, as far as the de-merger of the national grid is concerned, which he mentioned in his statement, the Government are in a position to raise £1,000 million in capital gains tax and corporation tax, and that that has not been included in the public expenditure and taxation estimates that have been brought to the House? Will he also confirm that it is not only the Large Energy Users Council but a former Tory Member of Parliament—the secretary of that council—who said that the case for a windfall tax on the utilities is now pressing and that it should now be introduced?

If the Chancellor says that our measures are a one-off, let me ask him in conclusion: is not the underlying truth of his Budget measures today that, to pay for the sole remaining policy that the Conservative Government now have—tax cuts next year—they will contemplate any tax rises? They will even take money that they promised to pensioners. They will contemplate additional reductions in living standards this year. Will he tell us specifically whether he agrees with the Governor of the Bank of England, who said this morning that the price of tax cuts next year could be interest rate rises as well?

This latest Budget statement shows a Government who have been stumbling from crisis to crisis, from panic measure to panic measure—a Government who are at their core incompetent and unfair. They are no longer fit to be in charge of our nation's finances. They are out of touch. They should now be out of office.

Mr. Clarke: I believe the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) to be an intelligent and thoughtful man. If I did not, I would have come to the conclusion by now that he was completely unable to master his brief on either taxation or the economy. As I think that he can master it, I believe that he is trying to deceive people by pretending that there are accountancy devices that would produce money from nowhere to enable him to answer the questions that he is incapable of answering about the consequences of his own votes and his own irresponsible behaviour.

I deal first with the measures that I announced today, some of which the hon. Gentleman implied at one point he might support. They are not my first options; they are my second, and the hon. Gentleman has discovered that there are disadvantages with some of them. I shall tell him why I limited what I had already done in particular areas.

In the case of tobacco taxation, I had already committed myself to over-indexing it in the interests of health promotion, but there is a serious smuggling problem with tobacco, which is why I exempted hand-rolling tobacco, where the position is getting particularly bad. I had already increased tax on petrol and diesel, but had gone as far as I wished to go, bearing in mind the interests of the rural motorist and of business. I had been able to freeze again the tax on alcohol, again because of the smuggling problems, which we are going to tackle most vigorously by making our customs effort more effective, as it was yesterday.

I do not understand how the hon. Gentleman can have the nerve to start addressing me about the disadvantages of the measures that I have presented. Let him go and tell the Scotch Whisky Association, the Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association and the rural motorist why my statement had to be made. According to my recollection, only a handful of my hon. Friends were involved in the move to this second option. The hon. Gentleman has discovered rather late in the day that indirect taxation in other areas has disadvantages.

Then the hon. Gentleman has the nerve to claim that I am withdrawing more compensation than is consistent with my judgment. He talks of my withdrawing compensation related to next year's VAT increase—an increase that has now been cancelled. He says that pension books have been sent out; 6,000 or so have been sent out, but obviously they will be withdrawn and replaced.

The hon. Gentleman wrote to me this morning; I have his letter before me. It stated that I must meet important requirements. Let me read out the most relevant:

> "The Budget should ensure that there is proper compensation for pensioners and those on low incomes for the 8 per cent. VAT rise."

The hon. Gentleman then has the brass neck to get up and demand compensation for the 17.5 per cent. charge as well. He has cost us the compensation for that charge; I shall deal with the effect on pensioners.

I have already said that the compensation for the 8 per cent. increase that we have allowed for a couple will pay the average bill. The average bill is paid by prosperous pensioners with large houses and incomes; they will pay large bills. Poorer pensioners tend to pay below-average bills, and many of them will be over-compensated. It is absurd for the hon. Gentleman, in his most populist mode, to say cheerily that they should receive more on top of that over-compensation.

The hon. Gentleman asked me where I would find spending cuts. I do not know how he has the brass neck to lecture Conservative Members on the need for public expenditure control, which he votes against at every opportunity—every time a proposal for such control is presented to the House. The Budget debate was littered with criticisms from Opposition Front Benchers of the public spending control that we were exercising on matters for which they were responsible.

The fact is that we are going to find more public spending cuts. For two years, we shall be controlling public spending within our present constraints. As I have made clear, we shall recover the £300 million—on top of whatever else is required—in years two and three of a properly and professionally conducted public spending round.

The hon. Gentleman referred to various measures. He is straightforwardly wrong about share options. As for the tax on the national grid, the national grid has not yet been sold. We do not know what capital gain will be made, but whatever gain is made will be subject to capital gains tax.

The hon. Gentleman appears to imagine that I can start making guesstimates now of the bill that a particular taxpayer might pay next year, and start adjusting the Budget to take account of it. That is infantile. The hon. Gentleman is still talking about a windfall tax for industry, on top of the tax that industry is already paying—thereby tackling the gains that have been made, including the 3 per cent. downward effect on its charges.

I cannot believe that someone who graces the title of shadow Chancellor has come here and said that he has read in the newspapers that a particular taxpayer might pay a large bill next year, which might or might not affect the estimates that we have already made for corporation tax. That, apparently, is how a complete Budget should be altered to compensate for a loss of a tax.

A previous Labour Chancellor was fond of using the phrase "silly billy". I think that that is an accurate description of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House will recall the Chancellor of the Exchequer saying that we shall have a debate on this matter before Christmas. I inform hon. Members that I shall not let the debate on the statement run a long time, so I want brisk questions and answers from now on.

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his maintenance of tough action on the deficit will be welcomed by the financial markets? Is he further aware that his analysis of the choices available and the choice of tobacco and petrol duty are the right ones? But is not the reaction of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) extraordinary?

It is true that, as a result of the vote the other night, some pensioners will lose. It seems odd, however, that the hon. Gentleman should then come here and complain about it, given the way he voted. Is it not the case that my right hon. and learned Friend's approach to pensioners, generally speaking, has been sympathetic, and that they should welcome the overall effect of the Budget?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Despite the extraordinary and excited events of the past fortnight, we have kept confidence in our policy in the financial markets. We have kept confidence in our policy in the business community. That matters to a much wider group of people. I am not a man from the City or from the business community. It matters to men and women around the country who are trying to earn their livings and to make their jobs safer in the fevered political climate that is coming out of the House of Commons.

I agree that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will neither tell us what he would do nor take responsibility for his actions when he cast votes against measures that we had already proposed.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) says, we are compensating pensioners. The campaign about VAT on pensioners was accompanied by pictures in some of the newspapers of little old ladies who would be taxed sitting in small rooms with bar fires. Those people with below-average bills were over-compensated by our proposal. The people at the very bottom end—the poorest pensioners with the smaller bills—have lost money as a result of the vote that the House cast earlier this week. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East will not face up to the need to find £1,500 million of revenue to replace that which we have lost.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does not the Chancellor of the Exchequer realise that he is demonstrating before the House this afternoon the politics of pique? He had in his Budget £1 billion, which he could have used, if he had chosen to do so, to prevent the VAT increase on fuel, without the need arising of having to come back to the House today. He chose not to do so. Is it not also extraordinary that he replaced one tax increase with no fewer than three, which demonstrates the enthusiasm with which the Tory party now increases taxes?

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain why he chooses to increase the tax on whisky and gin, which we make, while protecting the makers of champagne, who are not British? Will he not recognise that he could have found all that money with no extra tax increases if he had cut waste in Government Departments on consultants, on advertising and on entertaining? He simply demonstrated

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

the politics of pique, and the pain and anguish could have been avoided if he had only listened to the people in the first place.

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, we have a strong and recovering economy, and the Liberal party and Labour party sound like the sort of politicians who ruined South American countries' recoveries when their economies got out of hand. I have the hon. Gentleman's letter about his policies. He is into share options as well. He does not like the duties that I am raising, but one of his suggestions is:

> "extend employers' national insurance contributions to benefits in kind."

Does he realise the consequence for small employers of having to account, in calculating national insurance stamps, for all the benefits in kind as if they were an income tax? That is an extraordinary proposal for him to make, which would be costly to business. He has no alternatives.

Again, I can scarcely believe my ears when the hon. Gentleman talks to me about cutting waste in Government Departments. What I have announced in this year's public spending plans means level central Government running costs in cash terms over the next four years. I do not believe that the Liberal party could achieve that in a thousand years. Nor does it ever speak about any way in which it could do it. Despite the totally irresponsible behaviour of both Opposition parties, we have a package of measures and a Budget to keep the recovery on the rails and to help people out there in the real world, earning their livings and making this country more prosperous.

Mr. Peter Brooke (City of London and Westminster, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is one of the laws of human affairs that, if one proceeds with one's eyes firmly fixed on the ground, looking for windfalls, one increases the danger of hanging oneself up on a loophole?

Mr. Clarke: I quite agree with my right hon. Friend. I hope that, between now and next year, some homework is done by the Labour party. My right hon. Friend and I welcome the serious challenge and various responsibilities that we have faced. Next year, perhaps someone from the Opposition will explain precisely their alternative, or at least give us another source of innocent merriment to match that provided by my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that the Red Book reveals serious errors of £10.5 billion each year in assessing the PSBR? Why is he seeking a spurious accuracy? He talks about £800 million when he makes errors of £2.5 billion every year. Could he not have waited? Why this frantic rush to try to achieve a spurious accuracy?

Mr. Clarke: I am not claiming a spurious accuracy. The PSBR estimates in the Red Book are properly worked out. I query them and go through them. We produce the best judgment we can of the profile for the PSBR. A wide margin for error exists on either side, because, as everyone has discovered, economic forecasting is a rather difficult process. The margin of error is around a calculated mean. If one raises that by £1.5 billion, the margin of error at the top and bottom goes up by £1.5 billion.

The right hon. Gentleman is arguing that, if we lose £1.5 billion, as we did in the rather extraordinary circumstances of Tuesday, we should ignore it. He is a former Treasury Minister and he knows perfectly well that he would never have advocated such an irresponsible step—or perhaps he might have done, given the Chancellor for whom he worked.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): May I say how pleased I am that the Chancellor has maintained his Budget stance, so that we will have a Budget surplus within the next three to four years? He will not be surprised, however, if I am slightly saddened that all the burden of filling the gap has fallen on the taxpayer, while no further cuts have been made in expenditure. I am rather mystified that we should attack the brewing and distilling industries, especially when we have a problem with smuggling, whereas expenditure on overseas aid and the heritage budget is sacrosanct.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is always consistent and extremely clear in the strategy that he urges. I know that he welcomes the fact that more than £40 billion has been saved from public spending plans so far. As I have made clear to him, a further £700 million—two sums of £350 million—will come out of those public spending plans in the next two years, quite apart from any judgment we may make about the practicability of making further cuts in those plans.

I assure my hon. Friend that I looked closely at the prospects for further cuts in year one, on top of the £28 billion in total Government spending already announced in my recent Budget. At this stage of the year, all the decisions have been announced, the plans have been made and budgets are being set by local authorities and health authorities, so one cannot resume a full public spending round. The only way to approach that would be by making a discretionary cut across all programmes to try to raise the necessary money. That would pose difficulties for defence, the health service, the police and many other services.

We are responsible for competent government, and the decisions we have taken, which have dramatically reduced public spending, have been made as a result of properly conducted public spending rounds. That is how we will get the £700 million required in years two and three, but at this stage it is obviously necessary to raise revenue. As I have already said to my hon. Friend, I regret the necessity to raise the revenue. It is my second choice. It would not have been my first choice, or that of my hon. Friend, but given that he has supported the Budget judgment so strongly, I hope that he will accept that it is necessary to raise that revenue to keep the recovery on course.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): As the Government have trouble in getting their financial measures through the House, would not it be sensible to consult the Opposition as well as Tory rebels before bringing forward such measures?

Mr. Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman counts my attendance at various stages of the Budget debate, I suppose that I have spent five days consulting the Opposition, and answer came there none. So far, we have had no difficulty in getting this year's Budget measures through, and we have had no difficulty in getting previous years' Budget measures through. But the Opposition—because they did not have very much to say about this year's Budget—irresponsibly decided to readdress the question of VAT on fuel. *[Interruption.]* There was a difficulty, and I have accepted the wish of the House. I am sure that the hon. Member for Durham, North (Mr. Radice)—with his views on Europe—will accept that it was a very curious coalition indeed which defeated the Government on Tuesday, and it certainly was not one with any economic expertise.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): May I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's recognition that there is a problem with the smuggling of hand-rolling tobacco? May I suggest to him that the higher the profit that is to be made from alcohol and smuggled tobacco, the greater the availability, and hence the greater long-term effect on health. Other than prevention—which does not work—how does my right hon. and learned Friend propose to deal with the problem of smuggling?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to say that we recovered an extremely successful haul yesterday, and serious charges will flow from that. We are being increasingly succesful in tackling organised smuggling, although I accept that a lot of revenue and trade has been lost through the differentials which legally apply in legitimate cross-border trading. Those must be addressed by trying to get an approximation of duty levels as soon as we reasonably can in the single market.

Our review of Customs and Excise is concentrating on further improving the effectiveness of our efforts to counter smuggling. There have been some criticisms, from the Opposition particularly, about some of the manpower consequences of the changes, because random checks and so on are not the most effective ways of dealing with the problem. One requires modern technology, efficient organisation and improving the flow of intelligence, and I hope that yesterday's news underlines to my hon. Friend that we are determined to tackle what I wholly agree with her is an extremely serious problem for legitimate traders and manufacturers.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): On the right hon. and learned Gentleman's last point, surely he should explain why the cuts are taking place in Customs and Excise when the organisation needs to be strengthened. How can the Chancellor justify what he has just said to the House?

Mr. Clarke: The right hon. Gentleman is assuming that the only way to intensify effort is by increasing manpower. *[Interruption.]* I understand the campaign from the trade unions which are involved, and Opposition Members are perfectly entitled to represent that. *[Interruption.]* That is the case—Opposition Members are bound to argue that.

If one is looking to improve the effectiveness of an organisation, one must target its efforts to those areas where it is obvious that one is having the most effective results. One must also make sure that those aspects of activity which produce the best results have the proper resources and are taken further. Customs and Excise has an enormous job to tackle today, and I congratulate it on the steady stepping up of its efforts, which are beginning to produce spectacular results.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree and accept that there will be widespread admiration for a very astute, exemplary and sound package of measures which he has announced this afternoon? Will not the whole country draw the obvious conclusion from the fact that the shadow Chancellor got his sums shambolically and embarrassingly wrong?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who does have considerable expertise in these matters. I am glad that he understands the options which I had before me, and I am also glad that he accepts that the shape for which I have opted and the measures which I have proposed are the right ones to preserve the strategy of the Budget and to keep on course the present extremely healthy recovery, which must continue if it is to deliver benefits to men and women across the country.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): If the handful of Conservative Members to whom the Chancellor referred a moment ago as Euro-rebels vote for the package, will the Whip be restored to them?

Mr. Clarke: Matters of the restoration of the Whip are not for me, but they are usually governed by the practice of voting for a Conservative Government. The same practice has been followed by the Labour party when it has had similar difficulties from time to time. I am quite sure that we will continue to have such difficulties frequently in the future.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that many Conservative Members regret his having to appear before us today with those measures? Furthermore, will he instruct all those in business who transport goods, publicans, those who run off-licences and everyone else engaged in the legitimate sale of alcohol now to take all their comments to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) and ask him why we have had to make their business much harder?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Like me, he realises that this is a difficult package. He and I did not want to see the price of petrol, diesel, tobacco and alcohol go up in that way. I share his reaction. The next time Opposition Members attend gatherings allegedly to further the interests of those industries and the people who work in them, people should tackle them about how far their actions match the lobbying letters they write to me and the representations they make in the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Chancellor aware that there was another option? In the past 15 years of this Tory Government, the richest 10 per cent. have had £50 billion-worth of accumulated tax cuts. Instead of putting extra tax on fags, beer and petrol, the Chancellor could have chosen to take a couple of billion pounds back from the super-rich. Instead, he decided to hammer the working class. I shall give him this tip: when Labour gets into power shortly, I shall encourage those on our Front Bench to do exactly that.

Mr. Clarke: I well remember the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) delivering a shadow Budget on the Floor of the House many years ago. I sat throughout

[Mr. Clarke]

it—he took more than an hour but put nobody to sleep. Indeed, it was an extremely well put together shadow Budget, and very much better than anything that I have ever heard today's occupants of the Opposition Front Bench outline.

At least the hon. Gentleman is consistent. He knows what the Labour party is for, and has always advocated taxing the rich as he describes. We have discovered and experienced that, if we tax those rich, we drive them abroad and damage British industry. We have also found that the proportion of total taxation now paid by higher earners has increased as a result of getting rid of the high levels of penal taxation that satisfy the politics of the hon. Gentleman and for which he still yearns.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): May I remind my right hon. and learned Friend that one of the less well publicised aspects of his first Budget statement was the fact that the breakdown between pension increase and VAT was to be made clearer in the pension book? Despite Tuesday's vote, will he confirm that, in future, people will know from their pension book how much of the component of what they get is represented by VAT compensation?

Mr. Clarke: Because of the changes that are being made, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is considering that matter. It is clearly a matter for him and I shall ensure that my hon. Friend's representations are passed on to him this afternoon.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Chancellor's flippant remarks about old-age pensioners and fires come ill from somebody who will never have to go cold in the winter. Given the money that he is looking for, which he has admitted is only 10 per cent. of the standard error on the public sector borrowing requirement, is it not an issue only because of his extraordinary behaviour over the past few days? Has he not replaced one anti-Scottish tax of VAT on fuel with two anti-Scottish taxes on petrol and whisky? Why should the people of Scotland pay for the Chancellor's incompetence and the Prime Minister's petulance?

Mr. Clarke: I, personally, gain from the vote cast on Tuesday, as my heating bills will be reduced now that the higher rate of VAT will not be put on fuel. A pensioner in a small property with low bills loses as a result of Tuesday's vote, because the compensation would have exceeded the value added tax. There is no point in my arguing the case again. It was not accepted, and I accept the judgment of the House.

The hon. Gentleman must face up to the consequences of his actions. I regret the effect on rural motorists in Scotland, but it might have been less if the hon. Gentleman could do his arithmetic and work out the consequences of the votes he casts when he comes here.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I warmly welcome the increase in tax on tobacco, which I urged on Monday in my speech in the Budget debate, on the grounds that it would tend to reduce the number of deaths from lung cancer and other appalling diseases, and deter with more force the number of young people starting to smoke. Has my right hon. and learned Friend noticed the deafening silence from Opposition Members who claim to care about health? How does he expect them to vote on that?

Mr. Clarke: It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good. I know my hon. Friend's fierce commitment to the cause of reducing smoking, and increasing taxation on it to help that cause. He and those right hon. and hon. Members who agree with him will, I am sure, be pleased that their campaign has been reinforced by my being obliged to go back and take more money from tobacco in addition to the significant increase, in excess of inflation, that I had already imposed.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is there not a real problem that an increasingly uneven playing field is now developing between Britain and the rest of the European Union in taxation of tobacco and spirits? Is it not clear that what the Chancellor has done today, in spite of the problems, is to invite more job losses in the United Kingdom in both those industries? Is it not about time that British Chancellors went to Community economic summits and demanded harmonisation of the duties throughout the Community, so that at least there was a level playing field for production?

Mr. Clarke: If I went along and demanded harmonisation of taxation, quite a lot of hon. Members on both sides of the House might suddenly decide that they did not want that.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Clarke: The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), sitting behind the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), is nodding strongly about that.

I used the phrase "approximation of duty". I believe that the policy on taxation is a policy for the nation states, so I actually agree with the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, but obviously it is for those nation states to consider the consequences across their borders. I think that it is right for the member states of the European Union to seek to achieve greater approximation of duty, so that smuggling and artificial movement of trade is reduced, and that we will endeavour to do. There will be talks on that next year.

The difficulty is that Britain—like Ireland and Denmark—has always traditionally imposed high levels of tax on alcohol, compared with continental countries, which have a broader base for VAT. We have considerable zero rating of VAT, and we therefore do not obtain as much VAT as other countries do: and traditionally, for I think about 200 years, we have always raised far more revenue from alcohol and tobacco. We are entitled to make our choice; it is our national pattern of taxation and it always will be, but we do have to look to our trading interests, as do the other countries, and a closer approximation of duties is very much overdue.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on sticking to the objectives of a Budget that, overall, was a very good Budget indeed? Can he rest assured that I will meet my responsibilities to the Scotch Whisky Association, just as I expect every Opposition Member to do, especially the Scottish

Members? Can I say to my right hon. and learned Friend, having exposed the windfall tax as a windbag tax, that he can be assured of my support in the Lobby?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I congratulate him on the consistency and fairness of his position, and the way in which he puts it today. When disparaging the Labour party, I made disparaging remarks about one or two of those hon. Members who voted against my opinion on Tuesday. Last year, my hon. Friend came to visit me and told me what he thought about VAT on fuel. This year, he came and told me what he thought about VAT on fuel. He told me that he would not vote for it. His reasons were connected with VAT on fuel, and his constituents in Ayr. My disparaging remarks were made about one or two of his hon. Friends who told me one thing and then did another, and found themselves in alliance with the opportunists sitting on the other side of the House.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I am grateful to the Chancellor. Will he confirm that, as his demeanour today suggests, he is disappointed that he was unable to raise the cost of fuel for pensioners, the poor and the disabled?

Mr. Clarke: The compensation package that we produced for the poor, disabled and pensioners meant that that section of the population was the least affected by the tax changes that we were making. The House is full of men and women who personally benefit from the vote on Tuesday to a much greater extent than the average pensioner.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that most people in this country will regard the proposals as sensible, fair and just? Does he also accept that now, only two political parties in this country have a commitment to a carbon energy tax—the Labour party and the Liberal party? Can he confirm that there is indeed a crisis in this country—in the ranks of the Opposition, who cannot produce a properly costed Budget?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, who is right to point out the commitments to a carbon energy tax. The Liberals are certainly committed to that tax—the Labour party sometimes is and sometimes is not. As my hon. Friend says, it would have a dramatic effect on fuel bills in this country. It would have a crippling effect on the cost of business and industry, which would damage our competitive position at a time when we are trading so well and coming out of the recession.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Before the Chancellor leaves the House, will he apologise to the poor, the elderly and the invalids whose pockets the House prevented him from picking?

Mr. Clarke: I have explained repeatedly that the hon. Gentleman did not vote to the particular advantage of the poor, the elderly and invalids on Tuesday. He voted because his right hon. and hon. Friends could not think of any other point to make about this year's Budget and returned, in a misleading way, to previous debates.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, despite what has been said by the nationalists, my constituents will welcome his retention of the significant upgrading of cold weather payments and the home energy efficiency scheme, as well as the significant increase in the age allowance, which is well in excess of inflation? Most of all, they will be pleased that my right hon. and learned Friend has not been deflected from his overall policy of going for strong, sustainable growth—something that the Opposition parties cannot understand and are trying to destroy.

Mr. Clarke: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. This Government invented the system of cold weather payments and keep improving it—we have raised the payments to £8.50, which will benefit many Scottish people if we have a freezing spell this winter. In the course of the debate, I kept dramatically raising the amount of money available for the home energy efficiency scheme. That scheme improves the comfort of its beneficiaries—it dramatically reduces their fuel bills. It is an effective way of improving energy efficiency.

We have directed ourselves to the causes that my hon. Friend has identified, together with the main causes that must dominate this country at present—reducing unemployment, increasing prosperity and ensuring that we have a strong and thriving economy in this country.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Does the Chancellor accept that he and his hon. Friends have this afternoon been behaving like demented Corgis—voting to give away Korean cook books for Christmas? Does he also agree that, when it comes to cooking the books, his statement about the raiding of the contingency reserve to close 25 per cent. of the finance gap that has arisen is most unorthodox in terms of fiscal propriety? Does he not agree that that reserve is not meant to cover shortfalls in revenue? Will he explain how 25 per cent. of that gap remains unallocated and unexplained as of this afternoon?

Mr. Clarke: As I have said, that gap will be dealt with by cuts in public expenditure provision over and above those that we would otherwise have made in the relevant years—the second and third years of the survey. I mentioned in passing how we would account for that provision to underline our commitment to it. At this stage, it will be based on the lines of the provision that I have made for the future contingency reserve. It will come out of programmes and public spending control when we have carried out a proper public expenditure survey for years two and three of the present survey years.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. We shall move on now to the business statement.

Business of the House

4.28 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the business for next week:

MONDAY 12 DECEMBER—Second Reading of the Health Authorities Bill.

Motion on the First Special Report from the Committee of Privileges.

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER—Until 10 o'clock, motions relating to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement of 8 December.

WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER—Until 7 o'clock, motions on rating and valuation orders and regulations. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Debate on the common fisheries policy on a Government motion.

THURSDAY 15 DECEMBER—Estimates Day (1st allotted day).There will be a debate on administration and miscellaneous services in so far as they relate to the Department of Social Security's responsibilities for the Child Support Agency and the operation of the Child Support Act, followed by a debate on the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner and Health Service Commissioners, in so far as it relates to the powers, work and jurisdiction of the ombudsman.

At 10 o'clock the House will be asked to agree the civil and defence votes on account and the outstanding winter supplementary estimates. There will then be proceedings on the Consolidated Fund Bill.

FRIDAY 16 DECEMBER—Debate on the national lottery on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 19 DECEMBER—Motion for the Christmas Adjournment.

Motions on parliamentary procedures.

The House will also wish to know that the following European Standing Committees will meet at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents as follows:

Tuesday 13 December: European Standing Committee A, European Community Document No. 4195/94 relating to food hygiene for milk and milk products.

European Standing Committee B, European Community Document No. 9101/94 relating to generalised schemes of preferences.

Wednesday 14 December: European Standing Committee A, Unnumbered memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 28 November 1994 relating to reform of the agri-monetary system.

European Standing Committee B, European Community Document No. 8077/94 relating to action against drugs; and EC document No. 8929/94 relating to prevention of drug dependence.

[Tuesday 13 December:

European Standing Committee A—Relevant European Community document: 4195/94 relating to food hygiene for milk and milk products. Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports HC 48-vii (1993-94) and HC 70-i (1994-95).

European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community document: 9101/94 relating to Tariff Preference for Developing Countries. Relevant European Legislation Committee Report HC 70-i (1994-95).

Wednesday 14 December:

European Standing Committee A—European Community Document; unnumbered, Agri-Monetary Reform. Relevant European Legislation Committee Report HC 70-i (1994-95).

European Standing Committee B—European Community Documents: 8077/94 and 8929/94 Action to Combat Drugs. Relevant European Document HC 48-xxvi (1993-94).

Floor of the House—Motions on rating and valuation orders and regulations. The documents are as follows:

The Non-domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) Regulations; The British Gas Plc (Rateable Values) Order; The Electricity Supply Industry (Rateable Values) Order; The Docks and Harbours (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order; The Water Undertakers (Rateable Values) Order; The Railways (Rateable Values) Order; and The British Waterways Board and Telecommunications Industry (Rateable Values) Revocation Order.]

And now, the bit they all want—or perhaps I should say, the bit the House wants. The House will wish to know that, subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the House should rise for the Christmas Adjournment on Wednesday 21 December until Tuesday 10 January.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I thank the Leader of the House for that statement, and I welcome the fact that we shall at last have a chance to debate the Jopling proposals. I hope that we shall be able to make good progress, with the Leader of the House giving us as much notice as possible of future business on all occasions, even if that business is provisional.

I assure the right hon. Gentleman that, although we all welcome knowing the dates of the recess, it is his party, not ours, which is anxious for it to start as soon as possible.

With regard to the Committee of Selection, which met yesterday, the Leader of the House will be aware that the Committee was unsure as to how it should act now that we have a minority Government. Hence the Committee recommended that the whole issue of appointments to Standing Committees be referred to the Floor of the House. I wonder when the right hon. Gentleman intends to ensure that there is a debate on that matter on the Floor of the House, because we are obviously anxious to have it resolved; we believe that we have a strong case for parity on those Committees, given that the Government have lost their majority.

The Leader of the House will be aware that in July 1993 the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food published a consultative document proposing the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board, and that the responses to that document were overwhelmingly hostile. As the former Agriculture Minister promised a response by Easter this year, and as it has still not been forthcoming, when may we expect the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to remove that threat to agricultural workers and their families? It should have been removed by Easter; will it be removed by Christmas?

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that I am not at the moment able to give the hon. Lady a precise date and time for resolving the uncertainty to which she has just referred, but I shall bring the fact that she has just raised it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The hon. Lady asked about the Committee of Selection. We are all aware of what emerged from the Committee yesterday, and she will understand that the timing of any debate is a matter for discussion through the usual channels. I do not think that I can hold out expectation of it being before Christmas, but I am sure that discussions can resolve a satisfactory time. The hon. Lady's first question was rather routine, and I shall take it principally as welcoming the procedure motions arising from our negotiations on the Jopling report. Of course, I continue to take notice of the desire of the hon. Lady and others for further notification about business.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be a broad welcome in the House for the fact that at last the recommendations of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House will be brought to fruition? Will he be kind enough to lay before us the changes in Standing Orders, whatever they are, as soon as possible, so that we may have a good chance to read them? Does he intend the new arrangements to operate when we return from the Christmas recess?

Mr. Newton: Essentially, the answer to the latter part of my right hon. Friend's question is yes. In answer to his earlier question, I can tell him that I shall do everything that I can to make sure that the detailed resolutions are laid at the earliest practicable moment, so that there will be a proper opportunity to consider them. In view of the contacts that I have maintained with my right hon. Friend over what is now more than months, it goes almost without saying that I greatly value his appreciation of the fact that we are now able to make a move on this front.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Does the Leader of the House accept that if the Jopling proposals were extant and we had their benefit, he would today have been able to give us the last two days' business before Christmas rather than keeping us all on tenterhooks? There is a clear feeling in all parts of the House that the more notice we get on important debates, the better. If there are substantial and fundamental changes to the rules of engagement in Bosnia, will the Government undertake to make not just a statement on such important and serious matters, but provision for a short debate if that is necessary? While I am on this matter, what about Hong Kong?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps for the moment I may confine my remarks to Bosnia. The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made a statement yesterday. That responded to representations that I had received from various quarters about the desirability of such a statement. I think that I can claim some credibility because of my repeated assurances to the House about making arrangements for appropriate statements or debates as and when the need for them is clear.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my right hon. Friend realise that this is the ninth time that I have risen to press him on Jopling? I am delighted to congratulate him on being able to give a favourable response this time. Can he confirm that the motions will be amendable? As this matter of procedure is fairly wide, will he try to limit the amendments so that they relate only to the Jopling report and not to other aspects of procedure because, of course, to do so would be to go much wider?

Mr. Newton: Although those are ultimately matters for the Chair, I expect the motions to be amendable. However, I shall not presume on the judgment of the Chair about the scope and scale of amendments. As Chairman of the Procedure Committee, my right hon. Friend will understand that. I appreciate his warm welcome for what I said, and say to him in return that it feels like many more than nine times.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Department of Transport to send a Minister to the Dispatch Box to explain what has happened today to our rolling stock industry? That industry is virtually bankrupt and is now faced with the award of a major contract for London Underground trains to a firm that will give most of the work to France and Spain and very little work, which will be of an assembly type, to the west midlands. That is not only a disgrace but typical of what happens. No one can imagine the French Government awarding such a major contract for their transport system to any foreign supplier.

Mr. Newton: I am, of course, aware—and had I not been, I would have been made aware by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who has pressed so hard for new rolling stock for the Northern line—of the fact that a decision has been announced today. I have not had an opportunity to study the detail of that decision but, inevitably—and quite properly within the rules—London Underground will have had to have regard to the value for money of the various tenders that came in. I hope that the hon. Lady will understand that, while I understand entirely why she raised the issue and why the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and others may wish to raise it, I cannot add to that.

I acknowledge that all hon. Members representing Derbyshire and the surrounding area have quite rightly worked very hard for the award of the contract, which they wished to go to Derby, including my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight).

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an urgent debate on the appalling mismanagement of the Labour and Liberal Democrat-controlled Essex council, which is denying care in the community to frail and elderly people in that county? Does he recognise that the debate is urgent, given the shocking discovery that at the same time as the council is denying care to my constituents, it is sitting on more than £24 million, and that figure is growing with every profit? Surely the House should have an opportunity to debate the callous behaviour of councillors in Essex.

Mr. Newton: Again, as a Member of Parliament for Essex, as my hon. Friend knows, I well understand why

[Mr. Newton]

he raises that point. In noting his remarks, I would make the point that, for all local authorities, the support funding for social services, including community care responsibilities, has gone up by 15 per cent. this year on last and, over four years, from just over £3.5 billion to nearly £6.5 billion.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On Thursday's business, would the Leader of the House consider asking the Prime Minister whether he would answer the detailed Question 5 on Lockerbie at the end of questions, so that he can give the proper answer that he would wish, in view of the sensitivities of the relatives and to be fair to the noble Lord Parkinson, who, in good faith gave undertakings to the relatives that there would be a public inquiry, and to be fair to the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), who, as Secretary of State for Transport, made a statement to journalists at the Garrick club for which he was later dismissed—possibly unfairly because of its complexity? Will the Leader of the House ask the Prime Minister whether he would consider answering that at the end of questions, for the sake of coherence?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring that request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I ask my right hon. Friend for a debate on health next week, so that hon. Members can examine properly the argument advanced on both sides of the House that increasing taxation on cigarettes improves health in Britain when that is not proven, bearing in mind the fact that cigarettes imported from Germany and France replace British cigarettes that would otherwise be smoked, not to mention smuggling, which my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor mentioned this afternoon? The fact that 204 jobs at Gallaher Tobacco in my constituency have been lost this week to cigarette makers from overseas should properly be discussed in the House.

Mr. Newton: I understand why my hon. Friend raises that point. Perhaps he will have the good fortune to catch the Chair's eye next Tuesday if he wishes to pursue it. I should acknowledge, however, that it is clear that price has played a part in reducing cigarette consumption and that the reduction in cigarette consumption has had beneficial health effects.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Will the Leader of the House ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for a debate or statement on the thousands of women who are living on reduced incomes because they are denied invalidity benefit while the Government challenge a European Court decision that they should be entitled to it? It is outrageous and we are now told that it will be another 18 months at least before the matter is resolved. Millions of pounds are being denied to women living in reduced circumstances. If the Leader of the House has a word with the Secretary of State for Social Security, will he tell him that it really is not good enough consistently to refuse to estimate how much money is being withheld from those women? It is not good enough that the Secretary of State refuses to answer parliamentary questions on the matter.

Mr. Newton: I have to say to the hon. Gentleman, as I expect he anticipates, that I shall bring that question to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): In view of what my right hon. Friend has just said to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), is he aware of the concern of hon. Members representing Derbyshire about today's announcement from the Department of Transport? Would it be possible to have a statement next week? Will the Secretary of State, perhaps at that stage, draw to the House's attention early-day motion 71 in which a number of Labour Members demanded that the contract went to GEC?

[*That this House welcomes the bid from GEC Alsthom for a 20-year service provision package, including new rolling stock, for London Underground's Northern Line and the job security which the award of this tender would bring to its factories in Birmingham and the North West; calls upon London Underground to make its tender decision strictly on the quality of the product and value for money; and commends the bid to London Underground on these criteria.*]

Mr. Newton: I certainly take note of my hon. Friend's last point. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will answer questions on Monday 19 December. Lastly, I acknowledge the efforts that my hon. Friend has made as a Member representing Derbyshire, in the interests of his constituents and those nearby.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Would it be possible to have a debate in the very near future—next week, if possible—on the duties and responsibilities of Members of Parliament, bearing in mind how the standing of the House has improved considerably since the vote on Tuesday, because people have realised that there are Members of Parliament who vote according to what they believe to be in the national interest and according to their conscience, and who are not willing to be stamped on and bullied by Whips? If the Leader of the House has seen some of the letters that appeared in the national press yesterday and today, he will know full well that I am absolutely correct in saying that the authority of the House has gone up and that that is far more important than any proposed change over Jopling.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman may possibly care to reflect on those remarks when he starts to get the complaints that we heard so vociferously from the Opposition in relation to what my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor said this afternoon.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Notwithstanding the welcome collapse of the iron curtain, will the Leader of the House admit that it is a matter of grave concern if ever it is discovered that a British subject has been in the pay of a foreign security service? Will he consider, therefore, having an urgent debate on national security and perhaps the remit of the Nolan committee, given that Mr. Richard Gott, who still writes for *The Guardian*, has been accused this week by *The Spectator* of having been in the pay of the KGB for a number of years, despite which treason, he and his paper have continued to attack the supposed corruption of the British establishment?

Mr. Newton: While I have seen the front cover of *The Spectator*, I have not had the opportunity to read the story to which my hon. Friend refers. In view of what he said, he will understand that my proper course this afternoon is simply to take note of what he says.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Will the Leader of the House allocate some time to discuss the escalation of violent crime and the use of firearms in Scotland? One of the reasons why I ask this question is that the Secretary of State for Scotland gave a very misleading reply yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke), by telling him that such incidents represented only two incidents per 1,000 crimes, when in the past decade there were about 17,000 crimes—5,000 in the past three years—with 4,000 people injured and 60 people killed. It is a serious problem for the people of Scotland. Nearly all those incidents happen in deprived areas in Scotland. Will the Leader of the House raise the matter with the Secretary of State for Scotland?

Mr. Newton: I am not in a position to engage in a statistical dispute of the type that the hon. Gentleman describes without notice. I will, of course, bring his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend, but I know no one more determined to seek to tackle the problems of crime in Scotland, on which he has a Bill in this very Session of Parliament, than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): May we have a debate next week on British exports, during which we can congratulate British industry on its exceptional performance of late? Perhaps we could also consider the effect of the Government's announcement on reducing the rates of export credit guarantees, which has put Britain's exporters in a far better position than their competitors.

Mr. Newton: Much as I would like to arrange such a debate because I acknowledge what my hon. Friend said, I cannot readily envisage finding the time before the Christmas recess. I might be more encouraged even to seek to do so if I thought that there was the slightest chance that those well-deserved tributes to British industry would be paid by the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I believe that the order relating to the local government reorganisation of Cleveland was tabled today and will appear on the Order Paper tomorrow. Does the Lord President of the Council recall his statement of 16 June that it would clearly be inappropriate to proceed while the judicial review was taking place? I invite him to repeat that assurance to the House today.

Mr. Newton: Clearly, we would not have laid the order as the hon. Gentleman described had we felt that it was any longer inappropriate to do so. He will know that there has been an extensive amount of legal action on the matter. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment would say that there must come a stage when it is appropriate to proceed.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): May we have an urgent debate on the constitution, as the Opposition are making some extraordinary proposals these days? The Labour party is attacking the monarchy and suggests that if it were ever elected, it would spend the first year of government getting through legislation to introduce unequal representation. Those of us representing English constituencies would not be able to discuss matters relating to health, education, welfare and so forth in England and Wales, yet Members representing Scotland and Wales would be able discuss those matters here, in the same Parliament, as they relate to English residents. Unequal representation is a sinister idea and it is contrary to democracy wherever it is practised. May we have a debate to investigate that matter? Perhaps the hon. Member who represents West Lothian—the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—who has just left the Chamber, might like to take part.

Mr. Newton: That would certainly be the case and, indeed, that question—previously called the West Lothian question—has never even remotely been answered, to the embarrassment of many Opposition Members. In future, we shall have to describe it as the Linlithgow question, but it remains the same.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The Commons was absent for 13 weeks in the summer and for two weeks when Parliament prorogued. We shall be away for another three weeks over Christmas and the new year. Furthermore, this afternoon's business has collapsed and we have five and a half hours to discuss a bridge in Wales. Important though that might be, we could have discussed other matters later. Why then has a junior Transport Minister offered me a private Member's Bill to introduce, instead of a measure of my choice, because there is not enough time for it to be debated in Parliament? Should not we alter our arrangements so that we can get through our business correctly and properly?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that any hon. Friend who approached the hon. Gentleman was merely trying to be helpful. On the first part of his question, we have had such exchanges many times before and, judging by representations made to me about sitting hours and all the rest, the hon. Gentleman's views are simply unrepresentative—for example, he had only to listen to the welcome given this afternoon to the proposed debate on what are known as the Jopling proposals.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Further to the matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles), may I press my right hon. Friend for a debate on the monumental mismanagement by Liberal and Labour-controlled Essex county council, which has lost £8.5 million from its community and child care budgets, with reserves rising from £25 million today to a predicted £28 million at the end of the financial year? Surely the council should be using those reserves to protect the vulnerable elderly people and children in my constituency and in Brentwood and Ongar.

Mr. Newton: I would certainly tell my hon. Friends the Members for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) and for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. Pickles) that the matter that they pointed out raises some very real questions. While I cannot promise a debate before the Christmas recess, I shall certainly bear it in mind.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The Leader of the House will remember that my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) mentioned the United

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

States-United Kingdom nuclear agreement last week, which the Government extended for another 10 years. Does not he think that it is deplorable and damaging to democracy for such an agreement to be extended without the House having the opportunity to debate it and without hon. Members who oppose that nuclear strategy having the opportunity to express their opposition?

Mr. Newton: No, I do not, for reasons that I sought to explain in the letter that I sent to the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) following the exchange last week. I shall arrange for a copy of that letter to be sent to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): May I follow that question? I understood when I raised the matter in the House last week that the Government were extending the treaty under the Ponsonby rule whereby, for the matter to be debated by the whole House, an hon. Member is required to object in this Chamber. I asked the Leader of the House to arrange such a debate and I have not yet received a reply. Is he saying that the Ponsonby rule is being ignored and that the House is being denied the opportunity of having the debate that the rule should require?

Mr. Newton: I am certainly not saying that. I need hardly say that I signed a reply to the hon. Gentleman earlier today and I must apologise if it has not yet reached him. I shall ensure that it does as soon as possible.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): In line with the other representations that the right hon. Gentleman has heard this afternoon, may I ask for a statement by the Secretary of State for Transport about the contract that has been awarded to GEC, which will result in 600 immediate job losses in Derby and up to 3,000 losses eventually, if no other contracts are awarded in lieu of that loss? Will the Leader of the House convey to the Secretary of State that it is not good enough saying that France has got those jobs because of the minimum wage and the social chapter? The loss is a direct result of the Government's decision to allocate that contract to GEC, which will export jobs to France. It is not good enough and the decision should be reversed.

Mr. Newton: I have already made several comments on that matter in response to entirely understandable points from hon. Members on both sides of the House. I cannot add to them, but I shall add the hon. Gentleman's representations to those that I shall communicate to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): May we have an early opportunity to debate the figures issued through a planted written question on the single regeneration budget the other day? The Leader of the House may know that the single regeneration budget represented a massive cut in its constituent parts—the different budgets that went into it originally. He may also know that the figures released in the Budget were a cut on those announced earlier this year. At least, if we had such a debate, we would have the opportunity to discuss the astonishing press release put out by the Secretary of State for the Environment, which claimed £800 million of new money for regeneration.

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I should declare an interest, in that one of the successful schemes was the regeneration scheme in Braintree, East. I was very pleased about that. On the main thrust of the hon. Gentleman's question, his remarks may simply reflect a misunderstanding, given that one of the most notable features of the single regeneration budget is the amount of money brought in, alongside what is strictly SRB money, from other parts of the public sector and not least from the private sector. What the economists would call the gearing is immensely high and the investment is much greater than the outlay in the SRB itself.

Mr. Greg Pope (Hyndburn): Is the Leader of the House aware of early-day motion 211 on today's Order Paper, which was tabled in my name?

[That this House notes with concern the proposed loss of over 200 jobs at GEC Engineering (Accrington) as a result of the continuing recession in the aircraft industry; recognises that these redundancies are a disaster for the workforce and will cause real damage to the skills base of the East Lancashire economy; further notes that GEC is a cash rich company which recorded pre-tax profits in the last financial year of £866 million, and which can afford to bid for VSEL but apparently cannot afford to stand by its loyal workforce in Accrington; believes that GEC Engineering (Accrington) should be given further time to prove its economic viability; and therefore calls on the GEC board to defer these proposed redundancies pending talks with the trade unions, local authorities, honourable Members and other interested bodies.]

The job losses are not merely a tragedy for my constituents, but a disgrace from a company such as GEC, which made profits of nearly £900 million last year. Given that the job losses are in a crucial defence-related industry, will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the matter before the House rises for the Christmas recess?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps I had better not be unkind enough to observe some tension between the demand to prevent job losses at one part of GEC and the attacks on the award of a contract to another part of GEC. But I shall certainly take note of the hon. Gentleman's understandable concern.

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): Does the Leader of the House agree that the prevarication and delay that have beset the channel tunnel rail link ever since the scheme's inception mean that the House really should get down to considering that matter as soon as possible? Can the right hon. Gentleman say how soon that might be?

Mr. Newton: I hope that it will be quite soon. I do not anticipate a debate before the Christmas recess, but I shall be very much looking to arrange one shortly afterwards.

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): May I press the Leader of the House to have an early debate on insider share dealing? Does he appreciate that many people believe, as I do, that his noble Friend Lord Archer is guilty as sin of insider share dealing and made £80,000 in the space of a few weeks in January last year? Is he further aware that the Chancellor told me last week that the Government were keeping the law on insider dealing under review? He will have seen from today's *Financial Times* that the stock exchange is bringing forward new rules on insider trading. In view of those developments, surely there is a case for an early debate on the matter.

Mr. Newton: I do not know about you, Madam Speaker, but I am getting fed up with Opposition Members using the Floor of the House to make remarks about individuals which they would not dare to make outside because it would land them in court, and I shall certainly not provide time for a debate that would enable more of the same thing to occur.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): May we have a statement tomorrow on Gibraltar? Will the Leader of the House reflect that Parliament—the Government and other parties as well—has failed to address itself to the interests of British subjects, citizens of the European Union, who are being messed around, to say the least, by the Spanish authorities? It is unacceptable for the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister to pretend that they are macho in diplomatic affairs and not to address themselves to the interests of the people of Gibraltar. The House is failing them. It is time that we had a statement tomorrow on behalf of their interests, to show that Her Majesty's Government are being robust in their approaches to the Spanish Government. Secondly, we should have a debate in the House about the natural, legitimate aspirations of the people of Gibraltar for constitutional development. We are failing them.

Mr. Newton: I do not think that I can promise a statement, but the hon. Gentleman will no doubt be aware that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will be here to answer questions next Wednesday.

Consolidated Fund

Madam Speaker: I have an announcement to make about arrangements for the debate on the motion for the Adjournment that will follow the passing of the Consolidated Fund Bill on Thursday 15 December.

Hon. Members should submit their subjects to my office not later than 10 pm on Tuesday 13 December. A list showing the subjects and times will be published the following day. Usually, the time allotted will not exceed one and a half hours, but I propose to exercise a discretion to allow one or two debates to continue for rather longer, to a maximum of three hours. Where identical or similar subjects have been entered by different Members whose names are drawn in the ballot, only the first name will be shown on the list.

As some debates may not last the full time allotted to them, it is the responsibility of Members to keep in touch with developments if they are not to miss their turn.

Points of Order

5.2 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I remained for business questions this afternoon in order to listen to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson), which he also raised last week. I understand that he has now received a letter from the Leader of the House suggesting that the Ponsonby rule might not apply in this particular case.

As you, Madam Speaker, are responsible for the rights of Back Benchers, do you agree that deciding whether the Ponsonby rule applies should not merely be a matter for the Government, but one in which you should be involved?

Will you take the opportunity to read the correspondence, which I am sure that the individuals concerned will make available to you, and perhaps make a statement on Monday about whether the Ponsonby rule applies in this case? Will you also confirm whether, if we are not entitled to a debate in Government time, the subject would be suitable for the Consolidated Fund debate later next week?

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I was ready to answer the point of order in great detail, but go ahead.

Mr. Cohen: I echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) says. I have had a quick glance at the letter received by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) and it seems to say that the Ponsonby rule does not apply because extra money will not be spent. That is highly dubious in this case. If Britain is to move from Polaris to Trident missiles, extra money will definitely be spent. The agreement covers a 10-year period, so extra money is likely to be spent during that period.

If that is the reason that the Government are giving why the Ponsonby rule should not apply, I put it to you, Madam Speaker, that that is not appropriate and, as has been said, you should consider that most carefully. The matter should be brought to the Floor of the House so that we can have an opportunity to debate it and opposition can be expressed to that nuclear weapons policy.

Madam Speaker: With regard to whether the subject would be suitable for debate on the Consolidated Fund, I can tell the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that it would be a most appropriate matter to raise then.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to "Erskine May", page 215, which says:

> "When a treaty requires ratification, the Government does not usually proceed with ratification until a period of twenty-one days has elapsed from the date on which the text of such a treaty was laid before Parliament by Her Majesty's command. This practice is subject to modification, if necessary, when urgent or other important considerations arise."

[Madam Speaker]

For the interest of the House, I might say that the practice known as the Ponsonby rule has its origin in a departmental minute dated 1 February 1924 and signed by Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, then Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. I shall look at the points raised by hon. Members.

Mr. Bennett: Further to my point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South registered a protest last Thursday, so there should be a debate? I should be grateful if you considered the matter further.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

SAFETY AT SEA

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 6655/94, relating to training for maritime occupations (the 'training of seafarers Directive'), 11496/93 and 7919/94, relating to a European vessel reporting system in Community waters, and 5841/94, relating to ship safety and control of pollution (the 'port state control Directive'); endorses the Government's agreement to the formal adoption of the training of seafarers Directive and to a common position on the port state control Directive; and welcomes the Government's commendation to other Member States of Lord Donaldson's report Safer Ships, Cleaner Seas (Cm 2560) as a valuable contribution to discussions on the proposed European vessel reporting system.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9400/92 and the unnumbered Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Home Office on 29th November, relating to the protection of personal data; recognises that the Council of Europe Convention on data protection provides an adequate framework for data protection within the Union; believes that the Commission proposal would impose significant unnecessary bureaucratic burdens and very heavy additional and unacceptable costs for data users in the United Kingdom; remains of the view that the Directive breaches the principle of subsidiarity as provided by Article 3b of the Treaty of Rome (as inserted by the Treaty on European Union); and supports the Government's view that the case for a Community Directive on the lines proposed has not been made out.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Cleddau Bridge

5.6 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Before my Adjournment debate, I wish to present a petition signed by approximately 10,000 electors of Pembrokeshire, which declares that they are suffering an unfair burden as a result of the level of tolls on the Cleddau bridge and that the new Pembrokeshire unitary authority will be saddled with an unacceptable level of debt when the bridge is transferred to it in April 1996.

The petition concludes:

"The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons resolves that the Secretary of State's 1979 pledge be met in full and that the Welsh Office must ensure the financial burden of the bridge does not fall on the people of Pembrokeshire."

To lie upon the Table.

Cleddau Bridge

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

5.7 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): As a result of the arrangements in this place, we now have an opportunity which I had not expected a couple of days ago to debate in full the complex issue and the long history of the Cleddau bridge. Basically, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you will be aware from the petition that I have just presented, the people of Pembrokeshire are extremely concerned about the financing of the Cleddau bridge, the burden that has already fallen on the people of Pembrokeshire and its industry since its opening in 1975, and the future burden that will have to be borne by council tax payers as well as motorists and haulage contractors during the period of the new Pembrokeshire unitary authority unless significant changes are made by the Government.

This is not the first time that the issue has been debated in the House. On 19 March 1990, my Conservative predecessor, Nicholas Bennett, raised the subject with the Minister's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts), although, sadly, without success. Since that Adjournment debate, a number of factors relating to the Cleddau bridge have changed and make the argument that the Welsh Office should take over its running and financing even more compelling.

It would be useful if I went over the bridge's rather sad history. It was first proposed to build a bridge across the River Cleddau in 1943, during the war, and again in 1945 when it was envisaged that the crossing should be downstream of Pembroke Dock. In 1959, there was a further proposal for a barrage across the river. None of those ideas was implemented, but the plans for a bridge were revived in 1964 and the Pembrokeshire County Council Act 1965 granted the council permission to build a bridge to replace a ferry which had been operating between Hobbs Point on the Pembroke Dock bank and Neyland on the northern bank of the River Cleddau or, as it is also known, the Milford Haven waterway.

The House should be aware of the enormous limitation placed on Pembrokeshire's economy in the absence of a reasonable crossing between the north and south banks of the Milford Haven waterway. Before a bridge was built, if the ferry was not running due to bad weather or because it was too late at night or too early in the morning for shift workers to be about, an individual wishing to travel from Pembroke Dock to Milford Haven, which is further downstream than Neyland, would have to travel in excess of 30 miles. Clearly, it was of a matter of great importance to the Pembrokeshire economy that the natural barrier should be bridged.

Tenders were invited in 1968. The original estimate for building the then brand new box-girder design bridge was £3,640,000. On 2 June 1970, the then partially completed bridge collapsed, tragically killing four workmen and damaging a number of properties in Pembroke Ferry, the hamlet below the bridge. Following that collapse and the collapse of bridges of similar design in Melbourne, Australia and in Munich, Germany, the Merrison committee examined the technical requirements to improve the structure before work continued.

The council accepted the Merrison committee's recommendations which involved significant strengthening of the structure that was still standing and, of course, of the new completed bridge. As a result of the adoption of those recommendations, the final capital cost when the bridge opened in 1975 was not just over £3 million but £11.83 million.

The bridge has always been a political football in Pembrokeshire and it is worth while noting how it was treated throughout the 1970s. During the election campaign in October 1974—six months before the bridge was officially opened—the then Member of Parliament for Pembroke, now Lord Crickhowell, speaking with the full authority of a Conservative spokesman on Welsh affairs, said that the Conservative Government, were they elected, would take over the cost of constructing a bridge and would abolish proposed tolls. He said:

> "When the Pembrokeshire County Council planned the construction of the bridge they knew that it would make a great difference to the local economy but they could have had no idea of its crucial significance; they could have had no idea either that they might be faced with a disaster and a threefold increase in cost. It is quite clear that the burden of over £9 million is now too great for the ratepayers to shoulder and that any government will have to take over a substantial part of that burden . . . A conservative government would take urgent action to prepare for developments in the Celtic Sea and if oil were found they would see that resources were directed in those areas affected by the discoveries . . . It is wrong that local ratepayers should have to pay for something that is of key national significance, for the benefits of offshore oil will flow to the whole nation. We have said that Wales will benefit from offshore oil; I have now shown that we are determined to make that pledge a reality."

It is worth noting that, on 2 November 1994, Marathon Oil announced the first strike of gas in the Celtic sea, 25 miles from the shores of Pembrokeshire.

Let me take the House back to 1974.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I would not normally intervene during an Adjournment debate, but we are not suffering the usual time constraint. For the sake of accuracy, will my hon. Friend say whether the Lord Crickhowell to whom he referred is Nicholas Edwards, the Tory party candidate in Pembroke in 1979?

Mr. Ainger: He is one and the same. I am glad that my hon. Friend has enabled me to clarify that point.

In 1974, an inspector called Mr. J. R. Rawes reported on the proposed maximum tolls order on the Cleddau bridge. Paragraph 137 of his report stated that two thirds of the £11.83 million capital cost attributable to the Merrison committee's recommendation on the extra work needed to strengthen the bridge should be paid by the Exchequer. It continued:

> "This financial assistance from central funds should be an outright grant, inclusive of interest and inflation".

Two thirds amounts to approximately £7 million. Inspector Rawes also said that if the county council subsequently won any damages from the designers or builders of the bridge no part of that settlement

> "should be claimable by, or payable to, the National Exchequer, as the transaction derives entirely from the provisions of the 1965 Act for which Dyfed County Council are alone accountable."

The bridge opened on 20 March 1975, burdened from the outset by its tragic history and debts of some £11.83 million. Tolls were set at 15p for motor bikes, 30p for cars and 60p for heavy vehicles. Following a claim by the county council in the financial year 1978-79, it received some £3 million in insurance compensation from the designers and builders of the bridge.

[Mr. Ainger]

The political history of the bridge did not end there. It again became a political football during the 1979 general election when the then Nicholas Edwards was still representing Pembroke. At his adoption meeting prior to the election he said that the pledge that he had given in the 1974 election to abolish tolls was no longer valid. He continued:

> "A pledge made at the time of an election does not stand if the party is defeated"—

that is also true in this case or, from the experience that we have had during the past two years, when the party wins—

> "but in any case the situation today is totally different from that in 1974."

Nicholas Edwards referred to the inspector's recommendation that the Government should pay for the Merrison elements, and said:

> "I now want to make it perfectly clear that a Conservative government would accept that recommendation and a commitment to that effect is contained in our Welsh election manifesto."

I do not need to remind my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on the Front Bench, nor the Minister, that, following the 1979 general election, the then hon. Member for Pembroke became the Secretary of State for Wales, and on 21 December 1979, the Welsh Office gave Dyfed county council not a grant but a £4 million interest-free loan, repayable over 40 years at some £100,000 a year. That neither satisfied the commitment to pay in full the cost of the Merrison recommendations, which were £7 million; nor was it an outright grant—it was a loan. In that year, because of the burdening debt accruing on the interest, tolls were raised—to 35p for cars and 70p for heavy vehicles. In 1985, tolls were raised again—to 50p for cars and £1 for heavy vehicles.

As I said in my opening remarks, this is not the first time the issue has been debated, and I shall refer to my predecessor's Adjournment debate of 19 March 1990. The right hon. Member for Conwy, who was then Minister of State, said that the figure of £4 million had been arrived at because of the £3 million legal settlement won by the council, which had been discounted against the deemed £7 million cost of the Merrison element.

That totally contradicted the inspector's recommendation that compensation should not be claimable by the Exchequer, and also the assurance given by the then hon. Member for Pembroke and subsequent Secretary of State for Wales, Nicholas Edwards. The right hon. Member for Conwy said in 1990 that only a loan, not a grant, could be paid, because the Pembrokeshire County Council Act 1965 prevented toll income being used to pay for grant-aided roads. In other words, if a grant was given, one could not charge tolls. If one insisted on doing so, one could not give a grant. That was true in 1979 when the loan of £4 million was made, but it certainly was not true when he said that in March 1990. I am not saying that the hon. Member for Conwy was trying to mislead the House, but he was incorrect, and I shall go on to that later.

In that Adjournment debate, the then Minister of State went on to say:

> "Further Government assistance is not an option."—[*Official Report*, 19 March 1990; Vol. 169, c. 988.]

But by then the Dyfed Act 1987 was in force. That had repealed totally the Pembrokeshire County Council Act 1965. In a letter to me dated 8 February 1994, the then Minister of State repeated that the Pembrokeshire County Council Act 1965 prevented a grant being given and made no mention of the fact that it had been repealed. I then wrote back to him pointing out that the Act had been repealed, and in a further letter to me on 11 April this year he said:

> "I accept that the Dyfed Act 1987 has now repealed the Pembrokeshire County Council Act and this Act contains no similar provision restricting the use of the toll income."

That was as true in 1990, at the time of the first Adjournment debate on the subject, as it is now in 1994.

There is therefore no legal impediment to prevent the Welsh Office from giving grant aid instead of a loan to cover the spiralling debts on the bridge. In the letter of 11 April, the Minister went on to say:

> "However, the question remains as to whether the Department can justify the provision of any further assistance towards the Bridge."

Perhaps the real question still remains whether the Welsh Office is willing to honour the election pledge given in 1979 now that there are no longer any legal impediments. I think that it is a question of political will.

On 26 May this year, the Minister—

Mr. Ron Davies *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Before the hon. Gentleman rises, it is, of course, a convention of the House that this is a Back-Bench debate. With the permission of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger), who has the Adjournment debate, other hon. Members may take part, but by tradition not from the Front Bench. If the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) wishes to intervene or contribute, he really should change the position where he is sitting.

Mr. Ainger: I have no objection to any hon. Member from any position in the House making a contribution to the debate. We are not pressured by time. It is an important issue—certainly for my constituents—and it touches on a number of very interesting national points as well.

On 26 May this year, the Minister of State wrote to me after I had written to request financial assistance and trunking, following a delegation that I had led with council officials from South Pembrokeshire district council, Preseli-Pembrokeshire district council and also representatives of Dyfed county council. Even though up to 9,000 vehicles a day cross that bridge, the Minister of State said that the traffic on the bridge remained mainly local.

Despite efforts to contain the growing deficit, in October 1993, tolls were again raised from 50p to 75p for cars and from £1 to £1.50 for heavy goods vehicles. The tragic history to date means that when the new Pembrokeshire unitary authority comes into being on 1 April 1996, it will inherit an estimated debt of up to £40 million. I shall give a breakdown of that, because certain issues are worth examining in detail. Some £5 million of the projected debt is the remaining capital loan debt. Part of it is owed to the local authority loans pool. Some £2.65 million is the remaining interest-free loan being repaid to the Welsh Office. Another £4.8 million is the cumulative operating deficit on the bridge account, which is separate from other county council finances. More than £11 million of interest is owed to council tax payers to meet deficiencies in years when there is a deficit in the bridge account—when toll income does not cover costs, including interest charges. Between £15 million and £20 million is also required for strengthening costs due to be incurred between 1996 and 1999 to meet European regulations that will allow heavy lorries of up to 44 tonnes on to British roads. The county engineer cannot give an accurate estimate until full engineering surveys are carried out, but his estimate is that the figure will probably work out at between £15 million and £20 million.

Dyfed's current population is about 350,000, of whom some 124,600 are band D-equivalent council tax payers. When the bridge is transferred to the new Pembrokeshire county council in April 1996 there will be only a third of the current number of council tax payers, and the burden will obviously fall far more heavily on that smaller population.

The Welsh Office has told me that the county council is really at fault for not raising tolls more often in the past to cover deficits. In his letter of 26 May, the Minister of State wrote that

> "if implemented with regular proposals to increase tolls to cover the increased costs, the forecast deficits should be containable."

In the same letter, he questioned the interest liability on the operating deficit—that £11 million. He said that the council "may apply interest" at 10 per cent., but had chosen not to do so thus far and could not do so retrospectively.

In fact, interest has been calculated. Sections 24 and 25 of the Dyfed Act 1987 clearly intend local taxpayers to be compensated for covering deficits. Section 25 states:

> "Any deficiency in the revenue of the bridge in any financial year shall be made good in the first instance out of the reserve fund (if any) formed in connection with the bridge and if there be no such reserve fund or such reserve fund be insufficient for the purpose then out of the other moneys of the county council and in such case any such other moneys shall be repayable out of any future revenue of the bridge."

Council tax payers are to be reimbursed, and interest can be paid only out of future revenue. The £11 million plus interest may be only a paper debt, but the uncertainty should be lifted from the new Pembrokeshire county council. In 1992-93, the Department of Transport provided for expenditure of some £43.5 million for exactly the same kind of debt in connection with the Humber bridge; I shall say more about that later.

The effect of raising tolls still further could be devastating. On 22 February 1994, Huw Morse, Dyfed's county treasurer, wrote to the Minister of State giving deficit forecasts based on the cost of strengthening the bridge—a cost of between £15 million and £20 million. Those are the most up-to-date estimates; as I have said, a full engineering report would be necessary to provide a final and accurate estimate.

Mr. Morse's projections show that if the strengthening cost is at the lower end of the scale—around £15 million—and traffic grows in line with national Department of Transport forecasts, toll increases of 6.65 per cent. every year would be needed to reduce the deficit to zero by the year 2022. The deficit would peak at around £52.1 million in the year 2002, when tolls would have to be £1.34 for cars and £2.68 for heavy vehicles.

If the worst happened and the engineering cost was nearer £20 million, and if there was no traffic growth, tolls would have to rise by some 9.57 per cent. to remove the deficit by 2022. It would peak at about £62.2 million in the year 2002, when tolls would have to be £1.50 for cars and £3 for lorries.

In his letter, Mr. Morse told the Minister of State:

> "As the County council is operating within a capped regime funding these costs can only be done at the expense of other services. One can imagine the critical nature of such a picture which, when added to the cash limit approach adopted for local government expenditure, will mean wholesale reductions in many of the services provided by the council.
>
> The impact on a major county like Dyfed is devastating enough but the effect on a smaller unitary authority, possibly less than a third of its size, would be catastrophic."

At current levels, tolls are projected to take £1.8 million out of the economy in this financial year. It is worth noting that, because of the chronic unemployment from which my constituency suffers and because of the numerous defence closures announced just before the 1992 general election, the then Secretary of State for Wales set up the west Wales task force, giving it a budget of some £12.5 million over five years. That constituted £2.25 million of additional help for the west Wales economy. The contradiction is that, because the Welsh Office refused to take any action to assist in reducing the debt or the toll level, £1.8 million is now being taken out of our local economy.

The petition that I presented earlier, signed by approximately 10,000 people, states that the burden of the Cleddau bridge should not fall on the people of Pembrokeshire. I do not want them to bear that burden, whether as motorists, commercial operators of heavy goods vehicles or council tax payers. Our economy has suffered more than its fair share in the past few years, as a result of defence closures and unemployment that has remained persistently high. In Milford Haven and Pembroke Dock, the two main towns nearest to each side of the bridge, unemployment rates were 17.8 per cent. and 12.8 per cent. respectively in October this year, on narrow base rates.

Extracting yet higher tolls to try to contain the deficit constitutes a tax on jobs. That option, and cutting services to meet the debt burden, are both unacceptable. Many people have to cross the bridge to obtain essential services: the Minister of State will know that the Withybush general hospital is based in Haverfordwest, and the 30,000 or so people who live south of the Cleddau must cross the bridge to go to the hospital for admission or to visit relatives. People living south of the river who work in Haverfordwest or Milford Haven, in the Elf or Gulf refineries, must also cross the bridge. The same is true of people living in the north of the county who work in the Texaco refinery, or at the power station on the southern side of the Milford Haven waterway.

Industry has developed on both sides of the Haven. People living on the opposite side from their workplace will have to find an additional £7.50 a week, at current levels. The Minister may know that, sadly, west Wales has one of the lowest pay levels in the United Kingdom. This additional burden is totally unfair.

The Government really should accept their responsibility for both the economic well-being of the area and the whole trunk road system. The Welsh Office has been asked several times to designate the bridge part of the trunk road network, most recently in December last year. Trunking would clearly be the best solution to avoid the potential disaster that faces the new Pembrokeshire county council, along with recognition by central Government of their responsibilities. Clearly, the bridge is, in effect, part of the national road network. It is bracketed to the south by the A477, which is trunked and

[Mr. Ainger]

only 1 km away from the southern side of the bridge. To the north of the bridge, the A476 is only some 6 km away. The 8 km stretch containing the bridge is the only section of major road linking south, west and north Wales which is not trunked.

The Welsh Office's refusal to help the people of Pembrokeshire sharply contrasts with the Department of Transport's attitude towards Humber bridge, which currently has debts of more than £430 million. In the financial year 1992-93, the Department of Transport provided £43.5 million to the Humber Bridge Board and it has promised legislation to avoid the board having to precept local authorities to solve the problem.

It is interesting to note that, per metre of length, the Humber bridge is cheaper than Cleddau bridge. One pence of toll on Humber bridge allows one to travel 13.9 m whereas 1p of toll on Cleddau bridge allows one to travel only 10.9 m. The Government's inconsistent approach to the national importance of estuarial crossings has been highlighted in a report by the Select Committee on Transport in 1985. It said that tolls were a selective monopoly charge and the policy that the costs of estuarial crossings should be borne by the local population was applied inconsistently. It pointed out that the following bridges were estuarial crossings, but were untolled: Avonmouth bridge, Ballachulish bridge, Moray and Cromarty firth bridges, Friarton bridge in Perth, Runcorn-Widnes bridge, the Clyde tunnel and M8 Kingston bridge, the Medway crossing and Dornoch firth bridge.

It is worth noting that, in Wales, the Conwy tunnel and the M4 over the Usk at Newport are untolled. The new extension of the M4 at Briton Ferry, again over an estuary, is untolled. I understand from my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) that the new Dee crossing will not be tolled, even though its estimated cost amounts to more than £50 million.

The Select Committee on Transport report went on to say that, if the Government recognised Humber bridge's problems, they could recognise the problems of other bridges as well. It also said that assuming responsibility for debts would not mean finding cash. Debts to the Public Works Loan Board, like those owed by Dyfed county council for Cleddau bridge, and to central Government need have no effect on the public sector borrowing requirement. The report said:

> "The transfer of responsibility for servicing all the debt to central government would only be a transfer within the public sector".

Therefore, it would have no impact on the PSBR.

The Government response to that report was to reiterate the arguments about special local advantages for estuarial crossings, but they were

> "willing to consider reasoned argument for special treatment in particular cases."

In the case of Pembrokeshire, the Welsh Office has said that the liabilities of the new authority would be reflected in its standard spending assessment. Before I entered this place, I was a county councillor in Dyfed. I regularly heard Welsh Office Ministers assure local government, when particular problems were raised with them and they accepted those problems, that the money would appear in the council's rate support grant. No one was able to find it. I have heard promises like that before and it becomes extremely hard to identify where and whether extra money has been forthcoming for particular problems.

If the Welsh Office is to provide extra money in the standard spending assessment or the revenue support grant, why does not it take over financial responsibility directly rather than use the new Pembrokeshire authority as a third party? Its approach implies that the Welsh Office accepts that there is a problem and money needs to be found, so why does not it go the whole way and take over full responsibility? If it will not provide extra money, it is meaningless to say that the burden of Cleddau bridge will be reflected in the new authority's settlement.

It is clear that the new Pembrokeshire authority, which has been welcomed by everyone in my constituency, will face a massive financial problem because of the bridge. The Minister has been warned by the treasurer of the outgoing county council of a potential catastrophe. The problem arises from an undertaking that was made, not even by the present council, but by the previous one. It was greatly worsened by circumstances that were not of that authority's own making. There has been a fatal collapse of the bridge and the problem has been exacerbated still further by the Government's failure to live up to a pledge to provide help. The problem is likely to be doubled again because of the circumstances—the need to strengthen the bridge to meet new legislative requirements, which no one could have foreseen when the bridge was first built. For all those reasons, it would be a clear abdication of responsibility for the Welsh Office to refuse to help.

This is now the second Adjournment debate on this subject. The first was raised by a Conservative Member and this one has been raised by a Labour Member. I urge the Minister to accept that Cleddau bridge can and should be treated in the same way as the Dee crossing, the Briton Ferry crossing and the Conwy tunnel. The Welsh Office should accept its responsibility.

5.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) has raised concerns about various matters relating to Cleddau bridge and to the effect on his constituents. I noticed that he did it in a way that sought to emulate the standards of his distinguished predecessor, Mr. Nicholas Bennett. In going through so much history, I feel that I, too, am following in the footsteps of predecessors—my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Crickhowell and my right hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts), who was Minister of State.

Before we go too much into recycling, the reaction might be, "What is new about going down this road or going across this bridge?" The bridge is owned and operated by Dyfed county council. Apart from certain reserve powers possessed by the Secretary of State of Transport with regard to the revision of tolls, the county council has sole responsibility for charging, collecting and reviewing tolls under the Dyfed Act 1987.

It was always intended that the bridge should be a self-financing project, with debt charges being recovered over a 50-year period. Those charges, together with operation and maintenance costs, are met by tolls levied on users of the bridge. That was clear to the then Pembrokeshire county council at the outset and has remained the case since.

The bridge opened to traffic in March 1975. Construction costs increased from the original estimate of £3 million to £12 million on completion. The increase was mainly due to a delay during construction following the collapse of the bridge superstructure and the need to comply subsequently with the recommendations of the Merrison committee on box-girder bridges.

The Government inspector who took the public inquiry into a tolls review in 1974, under the previous legislation contained in the Pembrokeshire County Council Act 1965, recommended that the additional costs to the county council of applying the Merrison committee's standards should be transferred from local ratepayers to the Exchequer. The inspector estimated those costs to be £7 million or more.

Dyfed county council, in an out-of-court settlement with the consulting engineers who designed the bridge, obtained compensation of £3 million. That left a sum of £4 million attributable to the Merrison requirements. The Government took the view that, because of the exceptional circumstances, it was appropriate to give assistance to the county council on a one-off basis. A £4 million interest-free loan that was repayable over 40 years was, therefore, made to the council. That represented a full response to the commitment made in 1979 by the then Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Crickhowell.

In 1979, the only way in which the Government could provide financial assistance to the county council was through an interest-free loan. Grant aid was not possible under the Pembrokeshire County Council Act 1965, under whose powers the bridge was constructed. If a grant had been paid, toll receipts could not have been used towards any construction, maintenance or improvement costs. As I understand it, Parliament's intention in 1965, under the then Labour Government, was to prevent tolls from being used to meet bridge costs that were also grant aided.

Mr. Ainger: I accept what the Minister has said about the legal impediment—I, too, referred to it in my speech—but the argument concerns whether the loan should have been for £4 million or £7 million. Inspector Rawes argued that the loan should not take into account any compensation that the county council was to receive as a result of a legal challenge against the consulting engineer. Does the Minister accept that the £4 million loan did not fully meet the recommendation made by Inspector Rawes?

Mr. Jones: No. As I understand it, the recommendation was that none of the compensation should go to the Exchequer. It did not; it went to Dyfed county council. To comply, the Government gave a grant for what the county council had not obtained by compensation to ensure that that bill did not fall on Dyfed county council.

As the hon. Gentleman said in his speech, and as was confirmed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Conwy, the Dyfed Act 1987 has repealed the old Pembrokeshire County Council Act 1965. I accept that the 1987 Act contains no similar provision restricting the use of toll income. I do not believe, however, that the financial projections prepared by Dyfed county council justify the need for further central Government assistance towards the bridge. Traffic figures and income projections show that, if the highway authority behaves responsibly in reviewing and setting tolls, future revenue will be sufficient to meet future costs. The projections indicate that the forecast deficits on the bridge should be containable without grant assistance, subject to regular increases in tolls to cover increased costs, such as the proposed strengthening programme.

In March this year, the balance on the interest-free loan stood at £2.6 million, repayable over the next 26 years. The actual total debt was £5.1 million and is steadily declining year by year. The large accumulated deficits, which are often quoted, are misleading. I know that the hon. Gentleman seeks to guard the most extreme case when he arrives at his £40 million projection and the size of future tolls.

The county council is empowered to charge interest at 10 per cent. per annum on deficiencies in the revenue on the bridge, but it has chosen not to do so. It is precluded from introducing retrospective charging of such interest. In fact, the bridge generated satisfactory surplus from 1986 to 1992. The 1992-93 deficit of £257,000 was primarily due to higher than usual maintenance charges. The bridge managed to break even in 1993-94.

In response to the Select Committee's 1986 report on tolled crossings, the Government said that they were unable to accept the recommendation that they should write off or discharge the debts of tolled crossings. The Government felt there was no reason that the Exchequer should assume responsibilities for obligations freely incurred by the promoting authorities in accordance with their enabling legislation. It was felt that most crossings were either viable or could become so under prudent financial management. That does not, of course, include the exceptional case of the Humber bridge, which would represent a debt of £220 per person per year as local tax had it not been treated in a different way. The arrangement for that bridge is the legacy that we had to take on from a Labour Government, who were desperate to win a by-election.

The 1991 annual inspection of the Cleddau bridge showed that major items of work were necessary in the following 10 years. In addition, with European legislation introducing a 40 tonne weight limit for vehicles from January 1999, it will be necessary to carry out an assessment of the structure to determine its capacity to carry such loads. An initial assessment by the county council shows that the maintenance and strengthening work will cost between £5 million and £20 million.

Resources for assessing and strengthening bridges are provided via the local government revenue settlement, but strengthening work is not the only option. The costs and benefits of that work need to be assessed. It may be—I can say no more than that—more sensible for Dyfed county council to consider whether, subject to complying with the necessary statutory requirements, weight restrictions might be applied to the bridge.

Under arrangements agreed with local authorities, transport grant can be available for major road improvements. Priority for transport grant is given to road improvements costing more than £5 million and which meet value-for-money criteria. I would not rule out the consideration of a transport grant bid to strengthen the Cleddau bridge. In the absence of an assessment showing that strengthening would be justified, it seems unlikely that such a bid would be supported within the parameters of the scheme. I will, of course, consider evidence which the authority may wish to provide.

[Mr. Jones]

The hon. Gentleman is right when he says that, following local government reorganisation, responsibility for the bridge will pass to the new Pembrokeshire unitary authority. He is right, too, when he says that the debt associated with the bridge will also transfer to the new authority. He ignores, however, two important points: first, the new authority will inherit the asset and receive the benefit of toll income; and, secondly, the allowance within the new authority's standard spending assessment for debt charges will reflect its total debt portfolio. The creation of the new authority represents a reversion to the original authority that introduced the legislation to build the bridge. I know that the new authority is warmly welcomed in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, as our popular reforms are usually greeted throughout Wales.

The failure of Dyfed county council to use its powers under its veto to consider and, if necessary, revise regularly the level of tolls has contributed to the bridge's present financial position. Tolls did not increase for eight years between 1985 and 1993.

The hon. Gentleman has repeated the calls that have been made previously for the A477 between Pembroke Dock and Johnston on the A4076 to be made into a trunk road. The trunk road network is a national system of routes for through traffic. While, at peak times, up to 9,000 vehicles per day might use the Cleddau bridge, in the main it deals with local rather than through traffic. According to the latest statistics for 1992-93, the average is even lower than 9,000, because a total of 2,582,108 vehicles crossed the bridge, which I equate with an average of slightly under 7,400 a day. The hon. Gentleman also referred to the third Dee crossing, which is used by 24,000 vehicles a day. The new link with the M4, Fabian way, is also a relevant consideration because it carries 30,000 vehicles a day.

The bridge was provided by the local authority to meet the local need, and no evidence has been provided to suggest that it meets a broader national need. As the hon. Gentleman accepted, the area already has good access to the trunk road network at Pembroke Dock and at Johnston on the A4076. Those links provide good access to the dual carriageway at St. Clears via the A477 and A40 and thereafter to the M4. Those links are trunk roads.

The Government's commitment to improving road communications in Wales is clearly demonstrated by a high level of expenditure. Since 1979, more than £2 billion has been spent on the construction and improvement of 25 miles of the M4 and more than 160 miles of trunk road. Nine major improvement schemes providing another 30 miles of motorway and trunk road are under construction.

The rate of spend per head of population in Wales is greater than in England and Scotland. This high level of investment will continue with expenditure of about £200 million planned to be spent on trunk roads in the current financial year. Plans for 1995-96 will be announced shortly.

Earlier this year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales undertook a review of our trunk road priorities in Wales. These were subsequently detailed in our document "Roads in Wales: 1994 Review". Our main strategic objectives for Wales are extending the A55 dualling in the north across Anglesey and, in the south, completion and further improvement of the M4 and dualling the A465.

Completion of the M4 will be realised in four days' time when the two remaining sections of the "M4 missing link" between Baglan and Lonlas are finished. We will then have a continuous motorway of some 220 miles from Pont Abraham in Dyfed right through to London. Moving eastwards along the M4, work is progressing on the Brynglas tunnels-Malpas relief road scheme and on the approach roads to the second Severn crossing. Future M4 proposals include widening the Castleton to Coryton and Magor to Newport—Coldra—sections of the M4 and we are assessing responses in the recently completed second public consultation on the route for the proposed M4 relief motorway around Newport.

Those improvements to the M4 underline our commitment to improving road links to west Wales. "Roads in Wales" confirms that improving the A40 to Fishguard and the A477 to Pembroke are high priorities. On the A40, work on the Whitland bypass is due to start next month and preparation work on the Fishguard western bypass is well advanced. Public consultation will take place this month on the planned Robeston-Wathen bypass. A preferred route for the A477 Sageston-Redberth bypass has recently been announced. Also on the A477, the improvement at Red Roses junction is being advanced and we are considering the scope for further improvements on the section between Llanddowror and Red Roses. Those improvements are designed to enable traffic to flow freely. Further improvements will be brought forward where those are justified.

I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we remain committed to supporting the economy of west Wales, particularly through the west Wales task force. I am glad that he acknowledges our action in setting up the task force and providing the sums of money required. I am certain that the hon. Gentleman welcomes the fact that unemployment has been falling in Wales, as it has been throughout the country.

I have looked at the unemployment figures for travel-to-work areas, and I note that in Haverfordwest unemployment has fallen from 11.7 per cent. in October of last year, to 9.9 per cent. in October this year. Similarly, in south Pembrokeshire, unemployment is down from 14.4 per cent. to 10.7 per cent. In Dyfed, unemployment is down from 9.5 per cent. to 8.2 per cent. That spread of figures compares appropriately with the fall in unemployment for Wales from 10 per cent. to 8.8 per cent.

Mr. Ainger: There is a peculiar reason for that fall in Pembrokeshire between October 1993 and October 1994, which was the fact that the Texaco refinery blew up in July 1994. Literally hundreds of new jobs were created in a short period to make good the refinery. Overall, we were still no better off in October 1994 than we were in October 1993. The fall in unemployment is merely because of the work carried out on the refinery.

Mr. Jones: Part of what the hon. Gentleman says must be true. I know the significance of the Texaco incident, as I visited the refinery a few days after that dreadful explosion. But what he says is not fully borne out, either by the figures which I quoted for the whole of Dyfed—which would not be affected by Texaco alone—or by the Welsh figures which I also quoted. The hon. Gentleman is seeing the fruits and the benefits of the Government's successful economic policies coming home. They are achieving a better framework which business and industry are taking advantage of in creating new jobs in Wales. The hon. Gentleman should know that Wales is leading the UK, as the UK, in turn, is leading Europe.

For the current financial year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a £4.9 million package of financial allocations under the 1994-95 round of the strategic development scheme in support of a range of projects which will benefit the west Wales task force area. Nearly 800 bids were submitted under the 1995-96 round and an announcement can be expected shortly.

I cannot respond to the hon. Gentleman as he would wish. The picture which he paints of, on the one hand, responsible action by Dyfed county council and a major problem looming for the new unitary authority and, on the other, an uncaring and miserly Welsh Office does not reflect the facts. The county council is already in receipt of a £4 million interest-free loan. That was an exceptional measure and was taken in specific recognition of the unique circumstances of the bridge following its collapse during construction. The new unitary authority will inherit an asset and its standard spending assessment will take account of servicing its loan debt. I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that I am not persuaded that there is a case for further assistance.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes past Six o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 9 December 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Brentwood Transfusion Centre

9.35 am

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): I wish to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Brentwood and Ongar and on behalf of other electors within Essex concerning the potential closure of the blood transfusion centre at Brentwood. The petition has attracted more than 100,000 signatures and it reads:

> To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled
>
> The Humble Petition of the blood donors, patients, blood transfusion staff, hospital staff and the general public, who are served by and serve the formally named North East Thames Regional Blood Transfusion Centre
>
> Sheweth that their wonderful establishment is sited within the boundary of my constituency of Brentwood and Ongar. The Brentwood Blood Transfusion Centre collects, processes, tests and supplies blood for transfusion to the wider area of North East London, Essex and surrounding counties. The Centre is the most effective means by which blood donors can continue to help hospital patients by simply giving the gift of life.
>
> Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House ask the Secretary of State for Health to reverse the recommended closure of the Blood Transfusion Centre at Brentwood.
>
> And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Education (Standards)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

9.36 am

The Minister of State, Department of Education (Mr. Eric Forth): I hope that hon. Members consider the debate as a welcome opportunity for us to discuss the important matter of standards in education in a more leisurely and determined way, as we can on Fridays.

I hope that hon. Members would also agree that there appears to be increasing political agreement on the achievement of those standards. I say "appears to be", because today will give us the opportunity to explore how much common ground exists between us and to discover where the odd political difference may still arise. Whatever those differences, as we approach the festive season, I welcome, in the spirit of generosity, the apparent recent conversion of at least some Opposition Members to our long-held view that standards and quality in education are and always must be of prime importance.

Standards and quality are the backdrop to the debate. Their achievement means that every child is provided with the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential and to enjoy access to knowledge, so that their skills are developed to equip them for life beyond education.

I submit to the House that the achievement of the objectives of standards and quality in education depends upon the successful implementation of a number of mechanisms, designed exactly to deliver those objectives that we have developed over the past 15 years. Those mechanisms are the national curriculum; regular and objective assessment and testing; publication of school performance data; regular inspection by independent inspectors; maximum choice and involvement for parents in the schooling of their children; procedures to deal with failing schools; effective provision for pupils with special educational needs; maximum access to post-16 provision; and effective development of pre-five education provision. That list is not necessarily exhaustive, but it might provide a good framework for the debate that we shall have in the House today.

My submission, it will not surprise anyone to hear, is that the Government are playing their full part in developing all the approaches that I have outlined to provide the appropriate framework and mechanisms for delivering quality and standards in education for all our young people.

I shall begin, because this is the most appropriate place in my speech, by saying a few words about the national curriculum. It is an oddity that, until the late 1980s, we had no national curriculum in Britain. Looking back now, that seems rather bizarre to many people. The truth is that, until that time, pupils up and down the country had no guarantee of access to a comprehensive range of subjects and knowledge in schools.

Since the late 1980s, we have progressively put in place a national curriculum which sets out to provide exactly that guarantee; to deliver to our young people in schools a proper range of subject matter in order that they will be better fitted to deal with life beyond education. That surely is of the utmost importance. It must be right, must it not, that every child in the land has that same access to

[Mr. Eric Forth]

knowledge and subject material across a wide range of subjects? That is what the national curriculum sets out to do.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): It is a straitjacket.

Mr. Forth: We acknowledge that it should not be a straitjacket in any sense, and that it should have an element of flexibility. That is why we have identified core subjects, which are of the utmost and overwhelming importance: English, maths and science, and the other subjects, which remain of the greatest importance. An element of flexibility within the curriculum enables teachers and heads in schools to alter the emphasis of education as they see fit in their individual school circumstances and to suit their needs.

There is now broad agreement, in education and beyond, that the complementary approach of core subjects and flexibility gives us an approach to the curriculum which is appropriate for the 1990s and beyond. Beyond that, the work done recently by Sir Ron Dearing and his authority to look again at the curriculum in the light of recent criticisms has produced a document which I am confident has widespread support throughout education and gives us a firm basis on which we can now proceed. Sir Ron is indisposed at the moment. I send him my best wishes for a speedy recovery, and, I hope, those of all hon. Members present.

That firm basis is important, because we need the co-operation, support and participation of everyone in education so that we can make the best use of the curriculum material and use it to the advantage of our young people. By "everyone" I mean, obviously, teachers, head teachers and governors of schools; but I also certainly mean parents. We must constantly remind parents, if they need any reminding, that their participation in the education process is vital. We must look to them to provide that.

Closely related to the curriculum is regular objective assessment and testing of pupils. I should have thought that that was beyond doubt and beyond debate, but we have had some difficulty in bringing everyone in education along with us in our stated objective of ensuring that there is a mechanisms and a procedure to provide for the objective testing and assessment of pupils at key stages in their development.

There are several reasons for that. I should have thought that everyone would want to ensure that we know what the progress of each pupil has been as a pupil moves through education, so that parents can know, pupils themselves can know and teachers can know, and so that we can emphasise those matters which require greater attention and provide comparative information for parents, teachers and the public at large about what is happening throughout education.

So, with our key stage tests at seven, 11, 14 and 16, together with the established GCSEs and A-levels and the developing general national vocational qualifications in our schools, we now have an arrangement whereby we can be confident that we can properly assess the progress of pupils as they go through education and report on it appropriately. There has been some difficulty in some quarters in accepting that, but I believe that we have now reached a stage where it is more and more widely acknowledged that testing is the correct approach. It is welcomed very much, certainly by parents, and increasingly by teachers. There is now broad agreement that our approach is the best and most appropriate.

I say "broad", because some remain to be convinced. For example, some members of the National Union of Teachers apparently still remain to be convinced. The NUT recently conducted a survey of its members. Only some one in four took the trouble to respond. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the bulk of that one in four expressed themselves still dissatisfied with the testing and assessment arrangements that we have in place.

However, against that, one has to point out that the other five teachers' unions—and, by implication, three out of four even of NUT members—are sufficiently satisfied with the testing and assessment arrangements that they are prepared to give them a fair wind and support them. I hope that that is the case, because it cannot be to the benefit of the pupils in our schools to have constant disruption and unpredictability from one term and from one year to the next.

Mr. Skinner: When the school testing was first initiated, and it became a matter for public discussion, people on different sides took different views. As a matter of interest, I still oppose the idea, because I do not believe that testing per se is the only measure of intelligence. When the newspapers decided to see what Tory Members of Parliament knew about tests, they asked them certain questions. Every Tory Member failed to pass the test.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on a key element, as he so often does on these occasions. He has spotted the fact that most Tory Members of Parliament—even some of my younger colleagues—have not had the benefit of the national curriculum, or, indeed, teaching relevant to the application of the tests. We shall shortly see a new, thrusting generation of young Tory Members who will have received the benefit of the curriculum. I am confident that, at that point, they will be able to shine in the tests. The hon. Gentleman will answer for his colleagues as to how well they would do, but that is another matter.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Is not the important thing not to make claims for testing beyond what it is meant to achieve? Attacks made on testing are often on the basis—for example, as the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) recently said from a sedentary position—that they are not a test of intelligence. No, tests are not. They are a short, summative assessment for testing a level of achievement at a particular moment in time. They do not exclude continuing diagnosis of pupils' ability and learning, which is a continuing part of teaching at any time.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I could not have put it better myself. In fairness to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I think that he said, standing as well as sitting—not an unusual occurrence—that the tests were to do with intelligence. They are nothing of the kind. The tests and assessments are designed to measure the progress that pupils make in education, and therefore provide the opportunity to see where they need more support, where the teaching can be concentrated.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): Before we progress, it might be helpful to the House and others who might be listening if the Minister could clarify what he said. He agreed with his hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) that the tests were summative. From that very Dispatch Box on several occasions, he has said that they are not summative but formative, diagnostic tests aimed at helping teachers and others improve the performance of pupils. Could we be clear? Are they summative or formative tests?

Mr. Forth: At best, they seek to perform an element of all of those, together with teacher assessment. It is important that we acknowledge the importance and the role of teacher assessment alongside formal testing, in order to cover the ground that the hon. Gentleman identified. I want also—

Ms Margaret Hodge (Barking): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Forth: I certainly will, but first, because this may help the hon. Lady, I want to remind all hon. Members present—it will not be the last time that I do so during my brief remarks this morning, for reasons that the House will understand—of some of the words of the Leader of the Opposition, who is becoming quite an authority on education. He said in the *Sunday Mirror* of 2 October 1994:

"we certainly won't be throwing out proper testing of children, because that's a necessary part of education".

So we have it on the highest authority now that what we are doing is okay by the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Hodge: Given the hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm for the national curriculum and his confidence in testing, and given that he believes that they will improve the quality of Conservative Members who are returned to the House, does he propose to extend the national curriculum and testing to the private sector, where most Conservative Members spend their early years?

Mr. Forth: I do not know whether that is true or not. As it happens, it did not apply to me or indeed to my daughters, but that is a matter for all of us to decide.

The answer to the hon. Lady's question is no. It is well understood that the Government welcome a healthy independent education sector. We understand the concept of choice. If people care, having paid their taxes, to spend their after-tax income on educating their children privately, they must have that choice. They will have that choice in the knowledge that the independent sector is not covered by the arrangements that the statutory or maintained sector is. I think that that is well understood. If the hon. Lady cannot understand it, I suspect that not much that I can say will persuade her.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): In considering the intervention that my hon. Friend has just taken from the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge), will he understand her difficulties in the matter, as the former leader of Islington borough council? The Leader of the Opposition discovered that he did not wish to send his children to schools in that borough even though he lived there, and he chose to send them to a school outside the borough.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I think that what he says is true. We might mention that subject again later in a different context, but I welcome any interventions that seek to elucidate those matters. It is probably for the hon. Lady to answer for the quality of education in Islington, because I think that there are some questions to be asked. When eminent public figures take choices that suggest that their local education provision is unacceptable, I hope that many people will ask a lot of questions about what is happening, in Islington and elsewhere.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): The hon. Gentleman still has not answered the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) asked about the extension of those rules to private schools. The Minister knows as well as I do that there are parents, especially in Surrey, who are sending their children to private schools who are being absolutely rooked by those schools. Therefore, it would be helpful if the Minister would say, "We shall extend those minimal provisions, which we think are the best for all children, to those specific schools." Will he give that assurance now?

Mr. Forth: No. I do not share the hon. Gentleman's rather patronising attitude to parents in Surrey or anywhere else. I assume that parents in Surrey and elsewhere are perfectly capable of making an adult, rational choice about the school they wish their children to attend and the money they are prepared to spend on that education. I do not accept that there is any difficulty in increasing quality, taxpayer-funded, in the maintained sector—in the sector provided, with some pride, by the Government, the Department for Education and the Secretary of State.

I think that it is appropriate that we have a curriculum and an independent inspectorate, and assessment and testing. However, I think that it is equally appropriate that the independent sector, in which parents pay from their own hard-earned money to educate their children in the way they choose, should remain free and able to operate in the way that the parents endorse, because it is a matter of choice.

Mr. Enright: I am most grateful to the Minister for giving way a second time, but I wish for a little more elucidation. In that case, why will he not allow parents in the public sector of education to choose the curriculum with the school individually, thus giving all parents choice instead of only a few parents?

Mr. Forth: I hope that the hon. Gentleman may catch your eye in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I wait to hear that apparently it is now Labour party policy that the national curriculum is to be on an a la carte basis, whereby parents, by some unspecified arrangement—by majority vote or whatever—can pick some or all elements from some or other curriculum in each school throughout the country.

It is an interesting idea. I do not find it immediately attractive, but I await the development of the hon. Gentleman's thinking, because I know that he has a great influence on Labour party education policy. Perhaps we are about to witness further changes in Labour party education policy this morning, of the type that has rather surprised us recently. I may return to that subject in a few minutes.

Mr. Jenkin: Is it not evident from the two interventions of the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) that he is coming from a standpoint that has nothing to do with education? He obviously thinks that the Government should be responsible for all schools,

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whether or not they are in the public sector, and he also thinks that parents should have no choice—that all schools should somehow be the same and regimented. Is that not the same old Labour party, wanting to create Stalinist uniformity throughout our national institutions, instead of the choice and diversity that will lead to the innovation and creativity that we need in our education system?

Mr. Forth: I hope that my hon. Friend is not making the mistake of dismissing lightly what the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) says, because the hon. Gentleman is somewhat of a Labour party guru on education, as indeed he should be—he has a very distinguished record in education. We should all listen carefully to what the hon. Gentleman says, because it might give a clue as to the thinking on education matters in influential circles in the Labour party. We shall all listen carefully when, as I hope, he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, later in the debate, because we might hear a great deal to interest us.

Whether or not what the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) says during the debate would meet with the approval of his leader, for example, remains to be seen, but that is something that, if I have time, we might discuss later. In fact, we might mention it now, because I notice that the next heading on my piece of paper here is "Publication of Schools' Performance Data". That is a subject about which neither we nor the public and parents have any doubt. We might hear in a moment what Opposition Members' position is, but let me make our position quite clear.

We believe that it is appropriate—indeed, essential—that the public and parents know as much as possible about what is happening in our schools. That is our starting point, and we are very sure of that. We have recently seen the third round of the comparative performance tables that we are publishing about schools performance, and they have been lapped up with great enthusiasm again by the media and by parents.

Survey after survey demonstrates that parents want to know what is happening in our schools, as parents and as taxpayers, so our position on that is absolutely clear. Whether it is shared by Opposition Members remains to be seen.

I thought that recently the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) underwent something of a conversion, and that perhaps there was a growing all-party consensus on the subject. I thought that it was remarkable that, after bitter opposition to the availability of information, perhaps the Opposition were beginning to be persuaded of its value.

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton) *rose—*

Mr. Forth: I shall give way in a moment, but I want to give the hon. Gentleman some information that he may then want to develop.

As recently as March 1994, the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said, on the BBC "On the Record" programme:

> "We will stop publishing league tables".

That is what she said, and at the time she was the Labour party's education spokesman.

Or let us consider what the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) has said. He is a figure of considerable influence in the Labour party. He said in *The Observer* on 4 December that we must not turn the publication of results into league tables. Obviously, he had not listened to the Leader of the Opposition, who said on "Panorama" on 3 October this year:

> "I'm fully in favour of information coming on league tables"—

that was the term he used—

> "but there should be more information provided."

The final piece of confusing evidence comes from an item in *The Scotsman*, no less, of 22 November this year—it is quite recent. In it, the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), a senior and influential figure in the Labour party, commented on what the Opposition education spokesman, the hon. Member for Brightside had said.

In response to the fact that the hon. Member for Brightside appeared to support performance tables, the hon. Member for Linlithgow said that he must be out of his mind. That suggests that there is some confusion among Opposition Members about the publication of information on schools and performance tables. I think that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) is about to put us out of our misery and give us the Opposition policy.

Mr. Kilfoyle: I should like to ensure that the record is put straight. There is confusion about simplistic raw data, and the Labour party has been consistent. In the *Official Report* of 19 November 1991, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), then shadow Secretary of State for Education, said:

> "Our position during the past month is the same one that we have taken for three years. Again and again, we have argued the need for Ministers and local authorities to concentrate on the value added by schools. If one simply relies on the raw data, and not school effectiveness data, it may show the strength of the pupils at the school, not the strength of the school."—[*Official Report*, 19 November 1991; Vol. 199, c. 153.]

That has been our consistent position, and I hope that the Minister will take that on board.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that clarification, because the heading on my next page of notes happens to be "Value Added". It is a welcome development that Opposition Members are now talking about value added. Let us think about what that is. It is not entirely clear what everyone means by the term. As with many other topics, there is confusion about the meaning of the term.

There is broad agreement that we would like to be able to assess the extent to which schools improve the performance of their pupils through their educative input and teaching efforts—there must be common ground there. The other inescapable fact is that, when seeking to measure value added in education, there must be regular testing and assessment of pupils at different stages of their education in order to provide the benchmarks. I see that the Labour party's Front-Bench team are nodding—at long last we have agreement that regular testing in schools is an essential part of education. We are making progress.

The fact that the hon. Member for Walton has endorsed the concept of value added takes us further. It suggests—I hope that he will expand on the subject when he speaks shortly—that we might be looking at some sort of testing assessment for five-year-olds on their entry to school. If not, it would be difficult to see how we could measure value added in primary schools.

The hon. Member for Walton might say that he is thinking about some sort of assessment of pupils before the age of five, which might be an interesting thought. I can predict with confidence that he will be telling us that testing and assessment at regular stages throughout education is an essential part of measuring value added. Beyond that, none of us can go with confidence.

If the hon. Gentleman has read, as I am sure he has, the recent School Curriculum and Assessment Authority report on value added, he will know that it is a scholarly study of the difficulties and complexities, and the need for reliable data over a period of years before one can, with confidence, measure and publish value added information. I think and hope that that is common ground between us.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has asked SCAA to look further into the subject, which will be taken forward. We shall consult on the basis of next year's publication of results and decide which information can sensibly and reliably be published. I think that we have broad agreement on the subject, and I welcome what the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Kilfoyle: What sort of timetable does the Minister foresee for the introduction of value added data?

Mr. Forth: Of necessity, it will probably have to be a longish timetable, because the development of reliable figures on value added depends on the availability of reliable testing and assessment figures over a period. For reasons that the hon. Gentleman will well understand, we do not yet have them. I hope that we shall start to have them next year, when key stage 2 comes on stream. I hope that, from that year on, it will be possible to look at and publish value added figures. It is not something that we can expect to happen quickly.

The possibility of a year-on-year index, a rolling three-year index, has been considered and favoured in some quarters. We shall be consulting on that in the context of next year's performance figures generally, so it may be possible to introduce such a policy. I remain to be convinced of that option, but on the face of it, it is available as an option. I urge some caution. My answer to the hon. Gentleman's fair question is that I believe that it will be some time yet before we can contemplate the publication of comprehensive and reliable value added data. That is an objective that we all share and to which we are all working.

I said that we all share that objective, but I have in my hand a copy of *The Teacher*, a publication of the National Union of Teachers—its usual spokesmen do not appear to be present this morning; perhaps they thought that I would quote from this document. I shall quote from it, and the hon. Member for Walton may wish to comment. It states:

> "The union is opposed to league tables whether they are Labour league tables or Conservative league tables. They are part of a market concept of education . . . Mr. Blunkett claims that his league tables will be better than Mrs. Shephard's because they will be so-called 'value added' league tables."

This is the publication of the NUT, with which certain Opposition Members have a close affinity. It continues:

> "The case for the value added approach has yet to be proved. There are enormous problems of defining all the factors affecting schools which would have to be taken into account . . . If Mr. Blunkett is really serious about having the value added test, he will need to do more testing than the Tories. You can't measure the 'value added' at seven without knowing the base from which you started. Therefore you would have to test children when they start school at four."

That is a lengthy quote from the NUT, but it informs the debate. I think that Opposition Members may want to take the opportunity this morning to comment at some length on what the NUT said about what the Labour party's education spokesman said on value added. But that is a matter for Opposition Members—I do not regard it as my duty to go into the private grief of the relationship between the Labour party and the NUT.

Mr. Don Foster: I should remind the Minister that, as well as being an adviser to the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, I am also an adviser to the NUT, with which, as the Minister well knows, I have had violent disagreements on a number of occasions. Like the Minister, I should be interested to hear the comments from the Labour party's Front-Bench team.

For the sake of the record, will the Minister make it clear that the Government's Front-Bench team and his Department are genuinely interested in adding value added information to league tables and to information provided to parents and others? He will remember that, about a year ago, his right hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), the former Secretary of State for Education, accused me of wanting to obfuscate the facts by talking about value added.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman—I sometimes lose count of the number of education hats he wears. He has helped us with what he has said.

The position is perfectly clear. It may be that, at the time of which he speaks, we were having a debate about sociological factors and massaging figures. I am glad to say that I think that that debate has been left behind—it was nonsense then, and it is nonsense now. I have no difficulty in confirming that the Secretary of State has said that she wants to take the matter forward.

When we can identify ways of properly measuring value added on the basis of reliable data, we shall want to provide that information. We have no difficulty with that. The SCAA report suggests caution, and patience would be sensible.

Mr. Kilfoyle: I want to set the record straight on the relationship between Labour Front-Bench spokesmen and the National Union of Teachers. The NUT is not affiliated to the Labour party, and pays nothing into Labour party funds. Would the Minister say the same, for instance, about the Tory placemen on the Funding Agency for Schools who contribute to the Conservative party through their various companies? Is the Minister beholden to them?

Mr. Forth: If the hon. Gentleman discusses these points with members of the FAS—it is a very open body—he may find that they do not believe that the Government are in their pockets, or vice versa. Quite rightly, a vigorous debate goes on between the Government and the funding agency, about the future shape of the grant-maintained sector of funding and various other matters. I have no difficulty with that at all.

Mr. Jenkin: What worries me about added value tables for schools is the fact that schools in more difficult areas

[Mr. Jenkin]

may be given an excuse for poor performance. We should remember that one of the prime aims of education is to achieve good results across the board and to give good opportunities to all children, wherever they live and wherever their schools are.

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend is right; he illustrates some of the difficulties. If a school is performing extraordinarily well, on some methods of measuring added value it can be difficult for it to demonstrate an improvement—if it already achieves a 100 per cent. pass rate, for example. By the same token, a school starting from a low base line can readily show a rapid rate of progress simply because it started from such a poor position. That just goes to show some of the problems in this area.

Mr. Enright: I have considerable sympathy with what the Minister is saying. Winchester, which is highly selective and weeds out the thickies at an early stage, should perform extraordinarily well; whereas Eton, which will take any old thickie, should be judged by another standard altogether. The value added in each case should be put together and compared.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman appears to be revealing another Labour party secret—the fact that it has a thickness index. I shall leave him to make the running on that one. As ever, he offers an interesting insight into Labour party thinking on these matters.

Ms Hodge: It appeared to me during the most recent exchange that the Minister does not quite understand what value added is about. It is the value added to the educational attainment of each child. Merely looking at the outcome of a school does not show how that school has added to what a child can achieve. The intervention by the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), and the Minister's reply to it, both showed a misunderstanding of the value added concept.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Lady, too, shows the difficulties which I have already readily accepted. I have said over and over again that we all want to find a valid method of measuring the value added by education to pupils' attainments: that is common ground. The difficulty arises with finding that method, finding the relevant data and determining how to measure and report them. I think that there is more common ground here than the hon. Lady is prepared to acknowledge, and that heartens me. If nothing else emerges from this morning's debate, that alone will have been a considerable achievement.

I shall pass over one or two elements of the list that I gave at the beginning, for which I apologise, but I know that colleagues want to make their speeches. I do feel, however, that I should say something about parental involvement. That will lead me quickly on to discussing grant maintained schools.

There is, I hope, a growing consensus—we wait to hear what Opposition Members have to say—on the idea that parental involvement is crucial to education. We have provided a number of ways of enhancing it: reporting on children's progress at least once a year; summary reports on schools by independent inspectors; performance tables; comprehensive school prospectuses; annual reports by schools' governors; annual general meetings; parent governors serving on school boards. All these are designed to increase parents' participation in schools and to give them a greater sense of ownership in what schools do. There is little disagreement about that.

Parental involvement can take many different forms—direct involvement as governors, attending AGMs, and so on. Another important recent element of parental involvement has been parents' ability to participate in ballots on whether a school should become grant maintained. We have developed that policy over a number of years, and it has been extremely successful. More than 1,000 schools have chosen to become grant-maintained—in spite of some vicious opposition from local education authorities. Still, these schools have decided to go for GM status, and we have enabled them to do that.

There appears to be some confusion about what Opposition Members really think about grant maintained schools. In the course of the "On the Record" BBC programme on 6 March 1994, the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), then the Labour party's education spokesman, stated:

> "you can't keep Grant-Maintained schools".

Perhaps we may characterise that—if this is not too ungallant of me—as the authentic voice of old Labour, bitterly opposed, as ever, to parental choice. But a Mr. Neil Fletcher said on the same programme:

> "It would be very wrong for an incoming Labour government to . . . return those schools, against their will, to the LEA. The Labour Party cannot afford to be against popular schools".

I found that an informative insight into Labour party thinking.

These newspaper articles can be a mine of information. In *The Observer* of 4 December 1994, the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said:

> "It would be intolerable were the Labour party to encourage the middle classes to elbow their way into the most popular schools".

I cannot imagine who the right hon. Gentleman had in mind, but there is clearly some confusion on the part of the Opposition as to what is going on.

Are grant-maintained schools a matter of parental choice, given that the schools opt for that status and then parents elect to send their children to them? Do Opposition Members approve of personal choice, or parental choice? I hope that this debate will provide an opportunity for Opposition Members to tell us in some detail—possibly with some passion—what they think about GM schools, parental choice and the freedom of parents to exercise that choice. I suspect that the hon. Member for Walton is itching to get up and tell us right now.

Mr. Kilfoyle: We are in favour of choice, but that choice has to be informed. Would the Minister care to tell us why, when parents at the West Monmouth school had clearly balloted against GM status, the Government then insisted that they hold another ballot?

Mr. Forth: Indeed we did. When local education authorities and/or the Labour party have provided parents with appallingly distorted information and subjected them to intolerable pressure, there is certainly a mechanism for ordering a re-run of a ballot, and it has been used from time to time.

As for ill-informed choice, I wonder what sort of information parents would have if they were considering local schools that were provided by a Labour LEA, and decided that all the schools were obviously unacceptable and their choice was to send the child to another school some distance away? Presumably such parents would have had sufficient information, and I would not be surprised if they had used our performance tables on schools in the locality before deciding to send the child some distance.

It is right for us to provide information for parents and to give them freedom of choice, and we applaud the right of parents to make that choice. I hope that the Opposition will tell us that they also support those freedoms, the provision of such information and the right of parents to decide where to send their children.

I apologise for speaking for such a long time. I wanted to cover some other areas, but I will not do so.

Mr. Don Foster: Before the Minister leaves the issue of grant-maintained schools, will he give the current prediction of his Department for the number of pupils in grant-maintained schools by December 1995? I hope that the Minister will not say, as he has on other occasions, that his Department does not make predictions about such matters, because it has regularly done so in various memoranda and in evidence to Select Committees. That evidence demonstrates that, so far, the Department's predictions have been out by 40 per cent.

Mr. Forth: No, I cannot make such predictions, because the hon. Gentleman has kindly alluded to the fact that I have said many times that the number of pupils in grant-maintained schools at any one time is determined by parental ballots. We have no control over that process, which happens naturally. Therefore, the number of pupils and the number of schools are determined by ballots.

Mr. Foster: The Minister cannot get away with it as lightly as that. His Department makes predictions which, of course, have often been dramatically wrong. There were predictions in the press release relating to the Budget. I ask the Minister again to place on record his Department's prediction about the number of pupils in grant-maintained schools over the next two or three years.

Mr. Forth: What is contained in the press release is presumably what the Department wants to say about the matter. I shall not repeat what is in the press release, because that is not my function in this debate. As the hon. Gentleman has kindly conceded, for a long time I have taken a much more relaxed attitude to these matters. It would be quite wrong of me to vary my position now just because the hon. Gentleman has read a press release.

I shall now turn to the issue of failing schools. In a debate about standards and quality in education, we must consider that important matter. In a sense, I suppose that we have arrived at this rather late, but it is right that we have finally reached it. For too long, too many schools have failed their pupils and have been allowed to continue year after year and generation after generation to provide unacceptable education.

Generations of young people have left our schools hopelessly equipped to meet the demands of the modern age. That is quite intolerable, and that is why we took the power in the Education Act 1993 to allow Ofsted, the independent inspectorate, to identify schools that were failing their pupils and to invoke a mechanism requiring the schools and the LEA, where appropriate, or the governors in the case of a grant-maintained school, to produce plans to bring the school up to acceptable standards.

The fallback mechanism was that an education association could be created to manage the school and ultimately to decide whether the school was satisfactory or had to be closed. We have already started that process, and a number of schools have been identified by Ofsted. I am happy to report that, so far, the response by the overwhelming majority has been positive. They have been remarkable in examining what they were doing and considering plans for improvement. The early signs are that the bulk of those schools, often with the support of their local education authorities, will improve their performance to an acceptable extent.

That sends out an important message to education and to everyone involved in it, which is that failing schools, which let their pupils down year after year and generation after generation, are unacceptable. As I say, there is now a mechanism to deal with them, and it has widespread support throughout education. The willingness of schools, governors and LEAs to respond to that mechanism has demonstrated that it will bring in a new era of hope for pupils who for too long have all too often been badly let down.

The issue of special educational needs is very close to my heart. I have had the privilege of dealing with it since I came to the Department two and a half years ago, and I can claim, I hope with humility, that, over the past two years, we have taken important action in this area and have carried with us most of the people involved.

Few areas of education are as important as dealing effectively with pupils who have special needs. A great breakthrough was made in 1981 with the seminal report, but by about 1992 we had identified weaknesses, inconsistencies, gaps and problems. Worst of all, many pupils were required to wait an intolerable length of time to have their education dealt with properly by schools and LEAs.

The combination of the Education Act 1993, the code of practice that underpins it and the special educational needs tribunal goes a long way towards dealing with those difficulties. My confident hope is that we shall be able to deliver quality provision of education to pupils with special needs in all schools.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): In some Labour-controlled authorities, such as Ealing, the law is being seriously broken. Grant-maintained schools are getting proportionally much less support on special educational needs than authority schools. Children are not being statemented when they should be, and those who are statemented are not getting the support that is set out for them in the statements. The law is being blatantly flouted by Ealing Labour council. What do the Government intend to do about such serious breaches of the law?

Mr. Forth: If my hon. Friend will provide me with evidence, I will have it looked into urgently. What he says is happening is unacceptable, and we shall want to act promptly and effectively to deal with the difficulties.

Of course, the new regime has been in force for only about three months. The full implementation of the code of practice in particular and the tribunal, which will hear its first cases next month, will take some time. The combination of what we are doing about special needs, school policies, the code of practice and so on will go a

[Mr. Forth]

long way to deal with the problems that my hon. Friend may have in mind. I ask him again to let me have evidence of what he has alleged, because I want it to be looked at.

I hope that what I have said will convince hon. Members and those outside that the Government are serious about standards and quality in education. We want to make sure that every child is guaranteed, as far as it is possible to give that guarantee, access to a proper breadth and quality of education. We are determined that all pupils, regardless of location, background or abilities will be fitted as best possible for the ever-increasing demands of the world beyond education. That is the Government's responsibility, and we are determined fully to discharge it.

10.29 am

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): To a certain extent, there is increasing agreement on education between the Government and the Opposition, but only because the Government have made so many U-turns—in particular the appointment of a new Secretary of State for Education.

I welcome the opportunity to debate standards in the education system. Perhaps I should say "our" education system, as we are talking about the state system—the system that I and five of my children went through, and a system about which I feel passionately. I do not know whether one can feel the same passion for a system that one does not use very often, but I declare a vested interest for myself, the Labour party and certainly for the good burghers of Walton, because we do not have the option of buying into the private sector, and nor do we want to; we pay our taxes and expect the Government to provide a decent, high standard of education for all our children.

I want to talk about the real standards in schools, not the spurious measures that the Conservative party often try to pass off as a way of proving educational advances. It was telling that there was not a single word in the Gracious Speech about education. It shows how little Conservatives care about it. For me, education is the principal route for individual advancement and for national progress. Yet, for the past 15 years under this Government, the education system and the opportunities for those who depend on state provision for the education of their children—the vast majority of the British people—have shrivelled. The Minister gave us a whole list of sectors. I understand that, because of the pressures of time, he had to omit some of them, but it is interesting to note some that he omitted.

One subject about which he may have had a Pauline conversion was nursery provision. If we are serious about improving the standards in education, we need to start at the very beginning with nursery provision. As we all know, 50 per cent. of education development takes place in the first five years of a child's life. The research from the National Commission for Education, the Royal Society of Arts and the National Foundation for Educational and Research in England and Wales provides conclusive evidence of the value of such education. I know that the Minister is well aware of that.

More importantly for me, in the context of recent debates, is the recent American research, which evidences the long-term social benefits of nursery education. These days, even our benighted Prime Minister seems to see the advantages of nursery education. That is until he saw the costs, because, by all accounts, to fulfil the pledges that he and the Secretary of State for Education made would cost about £300 million, but there was no extra money in the recent Budget. It could be argued that the Secretary of State has signally failed to persuade the Chancellor that support for nursery education is worth financing, but, of course, he has problems of his own right now.

I was also taken by the comments of Sheila Lawlor, a well-known advocate of Conservative policies, who last night again made a fool of herself, this time on the regulation of outdoor education centres, and was yesterday in *The Guardian*. It seems that she challenges the consensus view that nursery education has proven social and educational benefits. I wonder whether, as in the past, she speaks for the new thinking in the Conservative party. Perhaps the Minister will confirm that, once again, she is out of step with its thinking.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The hon. Gentleman raises two points to which I shall refer, the first of which is spending. Can he really be unaware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has secured an extra £427 million for education spending this year? Secondly, Sheila Lawlor produces papers, which may or may not interest Conservative Members, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that she certainly does not speak for the parliamentary party.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Let me nail the myth about the extra money for education and what did and did not come out of the Budget, including the £400 million that was taken away from the local education authorities. As to the business about Sheila Lawlor, she always seems to be at the forefront, and very often what she says today, the Conservative party and the Government take up tomorrow. I wonder whether it will be another U-turn—one of many that the new Secretary of State has made already.

Mr. Forth: While I confirm, which I happily do, that it is the Government's policy to develop and work towards a policy of education provision for all four-year-olds, I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman—I detect that he might be leaving the subject—will confirm precisely the Labour party's commitment to pre-five provision.

Mr. Kilfoyle: It is a matter of record that the Labour party goes along with precisely what was pointed out in our White Paper, "Opening Doors on a Learning Society"—that appropriate nursery education provision will be made available to all three and four-year-olds whose parents want it. It would obviously have to be costed and paid for. *[Interruption.]* I shall touch on that later, if and when the Government decide to implement their own pledges and look at the cost of the assisted places scheme. Money within the current budget is not necessarily unavailable for such a purpose.

Labour's key objective will be to ensure that all three and four-year-olds have quality nursery education. That will happen in due course, but nevertheless it is a commitment. It will be one of the very first things that the next Labour Government—which is not too far off—will put into practice.

I shall deal now with cuts in education spending. It is a fact that £100 million was cut from the budget for the Department for Education and Ofsted. Ofsted faces a cut of £13 million in planned expenditure, despite concerns about the need for more inspections. I understand that inspections have now been handed over to Her Majesty's inspectorate because of Ofsted's failure to meet the targets. Instead of a budget of £111 million, it must make do with only £98 million. I note that, in some of the London boroughs, fewer than half of the planned inspections were made.

For a Government who espouse standards as their byword for their education policy, I do not understand how, without making the appropriate inspections of schools, they can even begin to assess the standards. It is quite disgraceful that Ofsted has been unable to meet its targets. It failed only because of Tory ideology. It is not working. Regular inspection of primary schools in particular is crucial if we are to raise standards and improve literacy and numeracy.

I return to the cuts in the local education authority budget—£400 million. For most authorities, that means a cut in real terms of 2 per cent. I think that the Minister has his brief from the civil servants, and he may like to answer. He is obviously anticipating that we shall find many more faults in his claims. Nevertheless, those cuts will affect every pupil in every school across the country—that is, unless one is in the private schools system—and many grant-maintained schools. I hasten to mention to Conservative Members that I shall not avoid the question of grant-maintained schools. I shall come back to it as the climax to my contribution. We now have a large and very damaging cut in what will be available to schools next year.

On standards, another issue is that of class size. I have read about, and, certainly in recent months, heard of, many examples around the world of large class sizes not seeming to affect the standards in those schools. I have to say that, when I was teaching, if I had a class—which I did at secondary level—of more than 40, it was a damn sight harder to impart knowledge in my limited way to those pupils than it would have been if I had had a class of perhaps 20.

One of the great advantages that the private schools seem to have is a low pupil-teacher ratio compared to schools in the public sector. People do vote with their feet on these issues, but class size is an issue that the Government have failed to address, but which they should address because of the pressures that it puts not only on teachers but, most importantly, on the individual pupils in the classroom. The problem affects not only schools, but the higher education sector.

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): The hon. Gentleman referred to class sizes and the pupil-teacher ratio. Does he accept that since 1979, the ratio has improved from 19:1 to 18:1?

Mr. Kilfoyle: No, quite the reverse has happened. The figures that I have show that the pupil-teacher ratio in January 1993 was 17.8:1 and in January 1994 it was 18.1:1. That is an increase, not a decrease.

Class sizes are important to the quality of education. A recent publication by Professor Neville Bennett of Exeter university, called "Class size in Primary Schools: Perceptions of Headteachers, Chairs of Governors and Parents" reflects the views of people at the sharp end of education. It is believed to be the first time that the independent views of those directly concerned at school level have been sought. That in itself is something of a scandal.

Not surprisingly, the report states that the great majority of teachers, parents and chairs of governing bodies say that class sizes are too large and that class size is a very, if not the most, important educational issue. The research is significant because those conducting it sought the opinions of the four key partners directly involved in children's education. Too often, hon. Members want to be prescriptive about what is happening at the sharp end of education.

Mr. Forth: People's opinions are important, but they are not always definitive. What evidence does the hon. Gentleman have that there is any causal connection between class size and educational achievement or outcome?

Mr. Kilfoyle: Most of my evidence is anecdotal. I have spoken to both teachers and parents. By and large, it is accepted by the consumers of education, especially parents, that smaller classes are more effective. Indeed, that is often reflected in results. Schools with low pupil-teacher ratios have better results, especially in examinations. In the Minister's terms, they are more successful academically.

Mr. Forth: It is also accepted by most people that a return to capital punishment would deter criminals. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that on the same basis?

Mr. Kilfoyle: No, I do not. The Minister makes a specious argument.

Professor Bennett's research shows that almost one in three teachers now teach classes with 31 or more children. The position is worse for children aged seven to 11—years three to six—where almost 40 per cent. of teachers have those large classes. The Department's own figures tell the story, although they omit the worse cases. They show that the pupil-teacher ratio in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools is 18.1:1. It has actually risen over the past 12 months. Head teachers and chairs of governing bodies are frustrated by external constraints in their attempts to prevent class sizes increasing—for example, by the operation of the formulae for local management of schools and the appeals system covering places in schools.

Mr. Jenkin: What should the pupil-teacher ratio be?

Mr. Kilfoyle: I have no idea, to be quite frank, but I do know that the figure should be decreased. I say that from my experience both as a teacher and as a parent. I am sure that research can determine the appropriate figures. Problems arise when the Government feed figures, rather than quality, into schools. The Government want numbers, not quality.

Other factors affect standards in our schools. It is all very well to talk about academic outturns, to use the jargon, but what about the actual buildings in which pupils are being taught and where they are supposed to learn? Six years ago, the Audit Commission estimated the cost of clearing the backlog of repairs and maintenance to schools at £2 billion. Recent research by local authority associations shows the cost could now be double that.

Is the Minister aware of the scale of the problem, which affects every authority? In a recent report, one London head teacher asked:

> "What use is a parents charter when you are allowing pupils to work in such dreadful conditions?"

[Mr. Kilfoyle]

It is only a matter of time before there is a serious accident in one of those schools. Every hon. Member must have visited schools that pose real dangers to both children and staff because of the poor state of the fabric of the buildings.

The state of school buildings is nothing less than a crisis, but the Government are allowing local education authorities only 23 per cent. for that in their capital borrowing bids for the coming year. The answer seems simple to me. Why cannot local authorities borrow more to finance the appropriate buildings? Why not allow LEAs more discretion to use receipts from the sale of land and property? I am sure that the Minister will respond to that point later.

It is time that there was an end to the "Dad's Army" of recruits who patch and mend the fabric of schools buildings, many of which are more than 100 years old. Some of the buildings are demountables, erected on a temporary basis more than 30 years ago—yet children are still being taught in them. At one school in Birmingham temporary buildings erected 60 years ago are still being used. It is a national disgrace.

Mr. Enright: My hon. Friend is making an excellent point. Is he aware that the problem is compounded in mining areas because of the amount of subsidence, for which it is now impossible to get reparation from British Coal?

Mr. Kilfoyle: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Obviously, different circumstances affect schools in different parts of the country. The picture is one of unremitting gloom.

The Minister commented on curriculum changes. We have long supported the need for a national curriculum and we welcomed its introduction. However, we part company with the Government on the prescriptive national syllabus that they have been enforcing. We believe that, through the national curriculum, all children must be equipped with the core skills which are essential to their later learning and which provide a broad and balanced education for each child.

However, we cannot avoid the fact that since the former Secretary of State for Education, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), introduced the national curriculum in 1988, it has cost the taxpayer almost £750 million. That money has been wasted on tinkering with the contents. It has been spent not on improving facilities and standards in the classroom but on funding the bureaucracy which the Government have created to administer the changes, and which they are constantly having to adjust. The last round of changes cost £6 million for the publication and distribution of a new curriculum. Some £2 million was spent on consultants fees—which seem to arise in almost every Government operation. The interim and final Dearing reports cost £755,000, while the work by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority on slimming down the curriculum cost £582,000.

All that tinkering has an effect on staff and pupils in schools. Time that should have been spent on boosting achievement has been wasted on adapting to the whims of whichever Secretary of State was in office. We are talking not about one, not about two, but about five different Secretaries of State. It is a national scandal.

I want to raise a point about which I feel very, very strongly. It occurred to me only this morning. The emphasis on English that was in the new curriculum is being undermined by the amount of section 11 money being diverted into the single regeneration budget. The very people who most need help—those with English as a second language—are being penalised because section 11 money is being taken away. I hope that the Minister will make representations to his Government to redress that balance.

Neither the Government nor my party can measure any improvement in standards because the Government, according to their own record, got it wrong from the start. I am glad that the Secretary of State has said that there will be a period of stability, during which time the Government will boost standards and develop achievement levels free from bureaucratic worries. If the Secretary of State repudiates more unnecessary and unwanted radical change, we will welcome that.

One of the more contentious issues to which Conservative Members will want to direct their attention is league tables and examination results. We will not be lectured by them on the publication of data, because we differ most over their quantity and quality. We shall ensure that every parent will have the right, under a comprehensive freedom of information Act, to obtain details of the performance of local schools and LEAs. We shall publish information on a range of issues, including uniform, homework, discipline, internal pastoral arrangements, sports and library facilities, and pupil achievement.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): One questions the quality of the hon. Gentleman's proposal for a system of league tables that will explain the value added. Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the suggestion by another Labour Front-Bench spokesman that, to make league tables more socially relevant, they ought to be grouped according to post code? Given that the Peabody estate and Belgrave square are both in SW1, is not that proposal a load of nonsense?

Mr. Kilfoyle: I am not a postman, but I understand that each post code encompasses 1,800 properties. I may point out that SW1 is not a post code but that SW1A 0AA is a post code. I accept the hon. Gentleman's constructive criticism that a post code can be only a rough guide to the economic status of people living in a particular area. The truth is that there are not many highly mixed areas.

Our complaint with the Government's crude league tables is that they reveal only part of the picture. We would develop and publish performance tables showing how much added value a school has achieved. We shall highlight schools that show real improvement year on year. We are not against high standards or improvement, but we are against mediocrity. The children who suffer most from mediocrity are those attending schools in areas such as that which I represent, whose only life chances will come from the education that a Labour Government will make available to them.

Mr. Don Foster: I agree with the need to provide a wide range of information, but I understood the hon.

Gentleman to say that Labour would publish league tables based on crude test or examination results. In the past, Labour said that it would not do that.

Mr. Kilfoyle: I said that we would publish information in each of several different areas. That has been party policy and will continue to be so.

We shall do more than the Government, through help to schools that fall behind, to prevent them from becoming sink schools. Labour will act to lever up standards rather than perpetuate the fiction that the market will cater for the needs of children whose schools may be perceived in Government terms to be failing. An unemployed parent living in Liverpool cannot suddenly uproot and move to Leatherhead to ensure for his or her children the education that Conservative Members might think appropriate. We shall intervene to help schools.

I am sure that Conservative Members will raise the issue of grant-maintained schools. The head teacher of one well-known GMS—the Oratory school in west London—made a strong statement on intervention. Many people in education recognise the importance of intervention, but sadly they do not include the Government.

Mr. Jenkin: The Oratory school will be familiar to the Leader of the Opposition. As to league tables, I understood the hon. Gentleman to imply that a future Labour Government would not publish test and examination results in their current form. Will we return to the days when such information was suppressed?

Mr. Kilfoyle: Quite the contrary. The hon. Gentleman could not have been listening. I said that, under our proposed freedom of information Act, we shall make much more information available. Our criticism is that the data currently provided are one-dimensional and do not give the information to which parents are entitled.

As to school standards, it is often a case of do as I say, not as I do. One disturbing feature is the power and influence held by education quangos. Research by the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) showed that 55 per cent. of the money spent on schools and colleges is channelled through unaccountable quangos, which means that taxpayers can no longer use their votes in local elections directly to influence school spending. A powerful new quango, the Funding Agency for Schools, has been established.

The Minister referred to the National Union of Teachers, and I presume that he holds the same views about other trade unions—which I would defend as having the right to represent their members. Our priority is to represent the interests of school children.

The FAS controls the funds and monitors the performance of schools that opt for grant-maintained status. Its chairman, Sir Christopher Benson, is chairman of the Sun Alliance group, which has given £280,000 to the Tory party in the past six years; a director of the MEPC property group, which gave £25,000 to the Conservative party in the 1992 general election; and chairman of the Costain group, which also donates to Tory funds. Other members of that supposedly impartial body are Stanley Kalms, chairman of Dixons, which gave £25,000 to the Conservatives at the last election; Edward Lister, Conservative leader of Wandsworth council; and Sir Robert Balchin, chairman of south-east Conservatives.

I shall not delve into the relationship between the GMS insurance company run by Sir Robert and Sun Alliance, because I am sure that Conservative Members are well acquainted with it. The Minister spoke about teaching unions, which perform the proper role of defending the working conditions of their members, and abused Labour for supposed links with such organisations. The public have a right to know the Government's relationship with so-called independent agencies.

The House would not expect me to say other than that the Government have gone wrong principally by being motivated by ideological experiments. The variety of U-turns that the Secretary of State has already made suggest that the right hon. Lady, unlike some of her predecessors, acknowledges that error, and that pre-eminent in her thinking, as with that of any right-minded person, is improving educational standards.

Hungry children do not make ideal pupils. When the Minister considers improving standards in schools, is he aware that one in nine children go to school without breakfast? Is he aware that one in six children go home at night and do not have a hot meal? Between 1979 and 1991-92, the amount of money spent on the provision of school meals has been cut by 58 per cent. That is a national disgrace. Not only has there been an expenditure cut, but many authorities provide only the most minimal school dinner service.

It is equally disgraceful that there have been no agreed national nutritional standards since 1990. I received free school dinners all of my school life. In fact, I enjoyed them so much that during the holidays I would go to the local dinner centre where, although it was a discretionary service, hot meals were laid on for many children. We cannot expect much at school from tired and hungry children.

I also worry about the effect on educational standards of the huge increase in the number of experienced teachers who are leaving the profession on health grounds. In 1984-85, 2,449 teachers resigned on health grounds and last year the figure was 5,535. I am sure that the Minister appreciates that teaching is become increasingly stressful. Those who suffer most are the teachers we can ill afford to lose—those with the most chalk-face experience.

I do not think that it is a coincidence that the huge increase in teacher resignations occurred at the same time as the many precipitate changes forced through by successive Secretaries of State. A snapshot survey was taken recently among Catholic head teachers in the Birmingham archdiocese. Overwhelmingly, stress is the biggest problem they face. When the matter was pursued further—I see the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) nodding in agreement—it was discovered that the stress resulted from—

Mr. Pawsey: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should make it clear that I was actually nodding in agreement with the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) who is sitting behind the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Enright: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There will be no bogus points of order this morning.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Most head teachers ascribed their increased stress to the many unwanted changes that had been forced through in their schools, particularly since the Education Reform Act 1988 came into effect.

[Mr. Kilfoyle]

The Government have been complacent about many educational factors. They have certainly been complacent about the explosion in the number of student expulsions and suspensions in schools. Recent Ofsted figures show that the number has doubled in the past two years. The Minister should speak to his colleagues about it, because I certainly speak to mine. I try to visit many schools, and head teachers and governors say that they face increasing numbers of student expulsions and suspensions. Last week, I met a group of head teachers from Nottinghamshire who said that the biggest problem on the horizon for them was the increase in the number of pupils that they were having to expel and suspend because of behavioural difficulties.

Another important issue is post-16 education.

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): Not mentioned by the Minister.

Mr. Kilfoyle: As my hon. Friend says, the Minister did not mention it in his contribution—perhaps he ran out of time. Some 750,000 young people are outside education, training and work. That is a better measure of the Government's failure than the fallacious rhetoric of Ministers. We can add to that the scandal of student poverty: a whole generation of young people are being conditioned by Government policy to accept debt as a way of life.

The loan scheme is in chaos. It provides more for the quangocrats who run it than it provides for students. It is a conscious step along the road of denying working-class children access to higher education. They are squeezed at the start of the educational chain—at the nursery level—and they are now being squeezed towards the end of it.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Will he reassure the House that the Labour party will not introduce loans for student fees when we come to office?

Mr. Kilfoyle: I am sure that that is the case, but the question of future funding for higher and further education is a matter for our national policy commission. We shall not fall into the trap of providing ammunition for a thoroughly discredited Government to abuse during an election campaign.

Mr. Hendry: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way on that point. He will be aware that the Labour party's Commission on Social Justice advised that there should be a charge for fees for people entering higher education. Is he specifically rejecting that recommendation or is he leaving his options open?

Mr. Kilfoyle: That is a recommendation. We have well-established machinery for considering what party policy, and eventually what our manifesto, will be.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) said, the discretionary grants system has become a lottery with very few prizes. The accident of where one lives determines what, if any, discretionary awards one will receive. The Department's own figures show, for example, that 10 London local authorities make no discretionary awards to 16 to 18-year-old students and 10 local authorities make no discretionary awards to students aged 19 and above.

Is it any wonder that young people are so alienated from our political system? It does not seem to be doing them any favours. Perhaps the Government hope that fragmentation of higher and further education will hide the problem, but I assure them that it is not hidden from us. We have to bear in mind the long-term effects of that alienation on not only the 750,000 people who form the education and training underclass, but the 2.5 million first-time voters who chose not to exercise their franchise at the last election. That statistic should be worrying for any political party.

I know that Conservative Members are tired of listening to me drone on about matters in which they have no interest because they can make little or no political capital from them, so I shall now move to the vexed question of grant-maintained status.

I take a very personal view about it, because I have been involved in two opt-out campaigns. I hark back to the Minister's earlier comments about the kind of information that local authorities release. In the first campaign, I had a dickens of a job obtaining even a list of parents—that was problem No. 1. Problem No. 2 was that, because of the head teacher's predisposition towards GM status, children were taking home propaganda to which we had virtually no access.

Ultimately, the school decided to go for grant-maintained status. The parents were sold on it principally because the Government offered the bribe that the school would jump the queue for single-site status.

The second example is instructive. It involves a school that, by the Government's own standards, is successful in terms of raw data scores. It was a simple matter to persuade parents that they had a winning school. Why should the school have changed its status, despite the best efforts of the governors and one or two people in the school, who wanted to go for grant-maintained status?

Mr. Pawsey: Has the hon. Gentleman read the piece in *The Times Educational Supplement* on 7 October 1994? The TES is not known to be a particular Government supporter, but it made it clear that the overwhelming majority of head teachers applied for grant-maintained status, not because of extra funding or, to use the hon. Gentleman's word, bribes, but because of the greater independence that grant-maintained schools enjoy. That is what draws them in. That is the principal benefit.

Mr. Enright: That is not true.

Mr. Pawsey: Of course it is true.

Mr. Kilfoyle: If that were the case, why were the Government so keen to offer such schools extra funding? If it was not about extra finance for capital investment, why make the offer in the first place?

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman invites me to speak again. I rest my case on what I have just said. Schools choose to become grant-maintained because they like the independence. It is not the money but the independence. Parents like the fact that schools can cut the apron strings that secure them to local education authorities. That is why parents vote for GM status.

Mr. Kilfoyle: That obviously explains why West Monmouth school and schools like the one in Kirklees, despite the best efforts of the Government, have chosen not to opt out. Despite pressure on schools to consider ballots every year, only just over 4 per cent. of them have taken that path. That shows how amazingly popular it is.

I should like to nail a few myths about the Labour party's view on grant-maintained schools. First, it is said that we encourage people not to send their children to GM schools. That has never been, and will never be, the Labour party's policy. We believe in parental choice. The idiocy of the suggestion that we would go down a different line is evidenced by the fact that people could live in a region or in a local authority area where there is no alternative to a GM school. What is a parent living in that region supposed to do?

The Labour party's view has been that we object to the way in which grant-maintained schools have been given preferential funding, to the way in which they are no longer under any form of local accountability, and to the way in which have been placed under the direct control of the Secretary of State for Education.

Mr. Booth: If the Labour party is seriously telling the House that it is in favour of choice, why does it want to get rid of assisted places, city technology colleges and a range of other choices that the Conservative party has introduced? Why did the Labour party abolish grammar schools in the first place?

Mr. Kilfoyle: It did so because it believed in choice for all of the people, not just for a select few—it is as simple as that.

Mr. Duncan: The hon. Gentleman must make clear his party's policy on grant-maintained status, because the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) said:

> "We are against inequity wherever it exists, and that is why we oppose grant-maintained status."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 430.]

His opposition had nothing to do with the amount of money that was offered to schools to choose grant-maintained status. It was about GM status in principle.

Mr. Kilfoyle: The hon. Gentleman is living proof that the new emphasis on English in the national curriculum is important. "Inequity" referred to inequity of funding. We have two objections to grant-maintained schools, one of which is that such status implies that schools will receive preferential funding. Hon. Members will be happy to know that the next Labour Government will be with us shortly. We have to look only at the polls showing that the Labour party has a 40 per cent. lead to realise that, which gives us some succour this morning. The next Labour Government guarantee to do two things in relation to GM schools. There will be no preferential funding of any sort. Secondly, GM schools will be brought into a framework of local democratic accountability.

We shall not go into the matter in the confrontational manner that the Government have shown in recent years. We shall speak to GM schools. We are happy to do so. We are happy to reach a consensus on how to bring them back into an equitable system. Not only that, but we are happy to speak to voluntary-aided schools.

Indeed, I would go further. We are happy to speak to the 300-plus private schools that are considering their future existence, not simply, I hasten to add, because of our views on those schools' charitable status or because of our view on assisted places, but because they realise that, even under the Government's market philosophy, the country is over-supplied with private schools. That is perhaps why, in my part of the world, two schools, the Upton convent school and, I think, St. Anselm's college, are considering opting back into the state system.

Mr. Duncan: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it would be highly inequitable if a school were to retain its GM status and yet were to enjoy no extra money for the duties that it has taken on which the local authority used to perform on its behalf? If those schools assume some of the responsibilities of the local education authority, should they not be compensated for it, and would it not be inequitable if they were not?

Mr. Kilfoyle: I do not know whether to blame myself or the hon. Gentleman for the confusion between us, because I think that the matter is rather simple. We are talking about all schools being treated in a fair, honest and open-handed way and schools catering to the needs of individual schools and, more importantly, to pupils while catering to the wider community. One of the problems with GM schools is that they increasingly complicate the sort of strategic provision that needs to be made.

I should like to emphasise that we shall have discussions with all schools, whether local authority, grant-maintained or private, so that we achieve what the vast majority of people involved in education want—an equitable, accountable and efficient education system.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Kilfoyle: I am just coming to my closing remarks, and I have taken many interventions.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has endorsed education as the passion of his future Labour Government, and rightly so. It is the route to not just economic success but personal fulfilment for the children who go through those schools and, later, on to higher education and beyond—that applies not just to some of our children but to all of them. They are our future. We have no right to do anything to jeopardise their life chances. That has been the Government's sorry record, but we are determined to give hope back to our young people and to give them faith and a stake in our society.

11.17 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I am most grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me. May I explain to the House, with apologies, that I have to leave shortly after speaking for I have engagements in my constituency, particularly with children and others. I hope that the House will forgive me for that.

The rise in standards speaks for itself when one considers the results of testing at all ages, particularly the ages laid down under the national curriculum. GCSE results speak for themselves, with standards rising at a rapid rate in the number of children gaining A to C grades, to the extent that people are even wondering whether the marking is too lenient. I doubt it. I think that standards are rising. The same is true of A-levels. In 1979 at a school not very far from here, 35 children went on to universities; this year, the figure was 142. That is the level of the Government's achievement, and it shows that standards are rising.

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

I went to a village school. When people call for independent schools to have the sort of assessment that is applied to grant-maintained schools, it is necessary to look at their good results. After all, the proof of the pudding is, in the end, in its eating. Their results speak for themselves.

The Labour party has long argued for neighbourhood comprehensive schools and, as far as I know, that is still its policy. The Labour party wants a monopoly, uniform system of comprehensive schools to which local children automatically go. What choice is there in that? If a Labour Government were to apply that policy, the Leader of the Opposition would not be allowed to send his child eight miles across London to a school in another area.

Mr. Kilfoyle: I am intrigued by what the hon. Gentleman said, which I believe is a reference to the excellent results of grant-maintained schools. What evidence is there that their results are excellent when compared with those of other schools?

Mr. Greenway: The results of grant-maintained schools are there for all to see, but I was talking about independent schools. I thought that I had made that clear, but, if not, I do so now.

If there were a uniform system of secondary education and parents could choose only their neighbourhood comprehensive school—if that is no longer Labour party policy I should be grateful to hear a repudiation—what parental choice would there be? Under that policy, the Leader of the Opposition would lose the choice that we have all defended.

Northolt high school is my constituency is grant-maintained. It saves £70,000 a year on cleaning alone now that the local authority—Ealing Labour council as it was and, unfortunately, as it now is again—no longer has responsibility for it. As an independent state school, it now runs its own cleaning services and saves £70,000 a year, which it would presumably lose were the Labour party to have its way. That money is now spent on books, pencils, rubbers and teachers.

Eighty-eight per cent. of secondary and 80 per cent. of primary grant-maintained schools have reported increased numbers of pupils. All primary schools and 77 per cent. of secondary schools in the GM sector are employing more teachers and 65 per cent. have introduced new subjects. More than half of them are spending more on books and 60 per cent. of GM schools achieved scores above the average of five GCSE grades A to C. I hope that that answers the question posed by the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle). If he did not hear it, I hope that he will read the record.

As I said, the Labour party's policy was and is based on neighbourhood comprehensive schools. I lived in east London for some time at the Oxford university settlement in Bethnal Green. In that area, Labour's policy meant the elimination of the excellent Parmeter grammar school, which was a two-form entry school attended by 60 children a year. The Labour Government argued that the school had to be eliminated because its very existence and the fact that bright children could go there was wrecking the neighbourhood comprehensives. Labour has always believed that all children, especially the bright ones, must be made to go to state schools because that in itself will raise the schools' standards. However, they do not apply that rule to themselves.

The education officer for Islington is a former assistant master of mine and a fine fellow. The hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) will know plenty about him. His job will be made more difficult by the fact that the Leader of the Opposition has not chosen an Islington school for his son but wants to send him across London. What does that do to my former colleague's attempts to do a good job in Islington and to Labour's argument that bright children must attend local schools in order to raise standards? When it comes down to it, the Labour party runs away, which is deplorable and hypocritical.

I shall refer to grant-maintained schools again if I have time, but I wish to take up a point made by the hon. Member for Walton. He rightly said that the permanent exclusion of children from school is a matter of great importance. We now have a much more acceptable and honest system in that local authorities are required to provide alternative education for those children. Therefore, I hope that the situation will settle down after the present explosion of permanent exclusions.

I do not like children being excluded from school because, as all hon. Members who were formerly in the teaching profession will know, the children who are excluded tend to be the very ones who most need to be in school. The Government have now introduced a legal requirement that they must have schooling. I welcome that and will wait to see how the system works.

We must re-examine school discipline. No satisfactory alternative has been found to corporal punishment, which was a quick and good way to deal with some cases of indiscipline. It is not a panacea, and I am not suggesting that it solves everything, but if a boy had a stroke of the cane he would not need to be excluded or suspended. I must stress that I am not talking about brutality, of which no one would approve. However, an alternative may exist in the new requirement placed on local authorities.

Mr. Kilfoyle: What does the hon. Gentleman make of the suggestion that there is a relationship between the increasing number of exclusions and the desire to remove from a school low achievers who might damage that school's eventual league table position? Does he accept that a school could be tempted to think in that way?

Mr. Greenway: No, I do not accept that. With the exception of one, all secondary schools in my constituency have grant-maintained status. They are doing extremely well, but they take their fair share of pupils from all ability ranges, including children with social and other problems. Whatever system was devised, they would do well.

I believe that school journeys to activity centres and outward bound courses are very important. They are a crucial part of a child's education. Some children benefit enormously—and all could do so—from such courses on which they compete against themselves, each other or the environment. I am thinking of activities such as canoeing, mountaineering and horse riding.

When I was the deputy headmaster at Sir William Collins school in King's Cross—with which the hon. Member for Barking might be familiar as we drew children from Islington—I devised a horse riding and stable management course paid for by the ratepayers of

London through the London county council, as it then was, and the Inner London education authority. It was a great success.

However, horse riding is one of the most dangerous sports, so the ILEA and the LCC and its excellent inspectorate devised a system whereby no child could be taught at a horse riding centre that was not approved by the British Horse Society. That guaranteed that the teaching was always undertaken by a qualified instructor; that the horses were safe and sensible—so far as one can ever be sure of that—and that the teaching conditions were acceptable.

Teachers who accompany children on such courses must have some understanding of what the children will be required to do. I was allowed to make suggestions to the LCC and ILEA, and we devised courses to ensure that every teacher who accompanied children on curriculum riding and stable management courses knew what the proper standards should be and what was safe and unsafe. Teachers were part of the means of achieving those proper standards for children. All the children were required, for example, to wear a hard hat. If they did not do so or did not want to do so, they were not allowed to ride. Many of the girls did not like to wear a riding hat because they thought it was a bit unglamorous, but it is now law that children under 14 must wear a hard hat when riding.

It is important to ensure that the teacher accompanying children on adventure trips, as well as those teachers who provide the training at the centres, are properly qualified, because that helps to reassure parents that tragedies such as the canoeing tragedy which was resolved before the courts yesterday do not recur.

In my 23 years of teaching, I took 40 groups of children on various adventure courses—they must be seen as courses, not holidays and trips. I took them skiing to 15 different countries, as well as on courses to learn how to ride, climb and sail. In every case, I made it my business—I was not required to do so by the LCC—to ensure that the children were taught by people qualified in the relevant discipline. As their teacher, I always took part in the activity as well. All too often, teachers do not participate, so the children do not dedicate their attention to the activity, which leads to trouble.

Ms Hodge: I am interested to note how the hon. Gentleman has described ILEA's excellent record of providing extra-curricular activities in inner London for children who often could not afford or did not have the opportunity to take part in such activities. Does he agree that it is regrettable that, because of the pressures on time in the school day and in the school year caused by the national curriculum and the greater pressures on finances, most children from inner London no longer enjoy the opportunities that were available to them when the hon. Member was a teacher under ILEA?

Mr. Greenway: I do not accept that. All children in inner London have access to such activities through one means or another. I need not go into the whys and wherefores, but people raise money to help individual children—I am one who does just that. Such groups have always existed, because trips were not just offered through the benevolence of the LCC, in the name of the ratepayers, and ILEA. I remind the hon. Member for Barking that although ILEA was a good education authority in its day, by the time it was disbanded it was reviled for its low standards and the under-achievement of its children, which it facilitated and tolerated.

If teachers who take children on a ski trip understand about skiing and snow craft, they will know why it is not possible to ski in certain places because of avalanches. It is not always possible for a course teacher, who may not speak the same language as the children, to explain that properly. People who teach children soccer may be professional instructors from football clubs or school teachers who are required to have the Football Association's refereeing certificate. We also expect those who teach cricket to have the Middlesex county cricket club's coaching certificate and for those teachers who coach pupils in other sports to have the relevant certificate. It is therefore right that teachers who accompany children on adventure trips should have a relevant qualification in the activity taught at those adventure centres.

Mr. Mackinlay: The hon. Gentleman is a decent person, and I agree with much of what he has said. I believe, however, that many school trips are too ambitious, because children are sent across the continent. The hon. Gentleman has spoken about ski trips, but most children will not keep up that exercise when they are older, and it costs a lot to hire equipment. We should have more school trips across the channel so that children can experience another country, another language and another culture without having to go too far across the continent. Why can we not have more trips around the United Kingdom? Many kids do not see outside the south-east of England and do not enjoy the rich cultural differences of the United Kingdom, which is a great pity.

Mr. Greenway: School journeys of an educational nature, not trips, are important whether they are made inside or outside the United Kingdom.

I took 34 children from King's Cross to the Tartar mountains of Poland to ski. A lot of those boys were poor and they took on jobs, such as delivering newspapers, to pay for the trip. We made that trip into a great school project—in fact, some children made it an individual or family project. In every way, such journeys are enormously helpful to a school. I also took children to Czechoslovakia and to France.

There are many aspects to an adventure centre journey. It is not just a question of learning how to do an activity, but how children build up to that journey and what they get out of it, including language enrichment and the experience of being with people of a different culture. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) tempts me to go down a rich road, but I shall resist the temptation.

11.37 am

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): First, I apologise and say that I am genuinely disappointed because I probably will be unable to stay long enough for the concluding speeches. I have a surgery in Hemsworth in the early afternoon and I must get back for it.

I should like to take a somewhat picaresque look at the debate on education. In view of many of the remarks that have been made, we should recall how universal education came about. It was not because of a wise and percipient House of Commons—indeed, least of all that—but because local people urged upon their communities the value of education.

[Mr. Derek Enright]

Education grew from the grass roots. It sprang up from there: it was a natural creation. A lot of people, including many Irish immigrants, worked extremely hard to ensure that there was literacy in the working classes. The old elementary schools were founded and did a fine job. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have one of the oldest elementary buildings still standing in your constituency. Whenever we talk about education, it is important that we relate it to local people as well as to our national aims.

I should like to examine two important aspects of education that have not been considered this morning. The first is the teaching force.

As the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) declared an interest, I suppose that I had better do the same. My interest is that I am an adviser to all my constituents in Hemsworth on education and to no teaching union. Teaching unions have a proper job to perform—I do not knock them in any way—but they are not the key to the success of the teaching force. We really must do something about dynamising that resource.

Our document proposes a general teaching council. That is not a new idea, or something that has been instantly thought up. It has been around for a long time. The importance of a general teaching council is that it could unite teachers who are currently fragmented into their various unions, as the hon. Member for Bath illustrated in declaring his interest. It could look at what teachers do and say to them, "You must have pride in yourselves. This is how you can improve yourselves. This is the assistance that we can give."

A general teaching council would not be about sacking teachers but about giving teachers enhanced standards. There are good teachers, mediocre teachers and poor teachers. A general teaching council could bring up best practice to ensure that, within the teaching force, we could have pride in the profession. I make no political point when I say that it is objectively true that, for one reason or another, teachers have become extremely depressed about their standing. A general teaching council could give that pride back. It could provide practical courses. It could ensure the sort of the training that is not occurring now. It could be a body well qualified to recommend training.

A general teaching council is important in enhancing the standard of teaching of all our children. Equally important is a British association for the advancement of education. That is another proposal we make. I accept that it would be a quango, but it would certainly not be a political quango. We would consider putting in charge a person such as Claus Moser and peopleof that ilk, including representatives of parents and teachers to ensure that teaching and the general aims of the Government's policies in teaching were put into a world perspective as well as a national perspective.

There is a general problem in educational research. Some of our colleges of higher education have become so squeezed that less and less educational research is being done except in very specialised areas. No one is able to sit back and take a long, cool and calm look at practices in other countries and whether they would apply here. I am bound to say that some of the experiments properly carried out in schools rely on American experience and research, but that research has not been confirmed here. That can be dangerous. The research can apply and the experiment can work well, but what is desirable for New York is not necessarily desirable for Hemsworth.

Indeed, I would go further. This is a tripartite point. Far too often, we have had a look at London and what was wrong with the Greater London council and the Inner London education authority, and then decided to apply that to the entire country. That is wrong. I hope that, in their first attempt to put right policy on nursery schools, the Government do not fall into the trap of seeing what works in London and letting it go forth. That would be a disaster.

The curriculum has been much on everyone's mind. I must confess that I am not a great devotee of the national curriculum and particularly not of the way in which it has been expanded. In his interventions, the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) showed precisely what could be wrong with the national curriculum and testing. What he talked about was a sort of quiz show: we put together a body of knowledge, and when the various buttons are pressed people bring out the appropriate response.

That is not education. It is stuffing information into people. It is not drawing out of people their capabilities, but putting in bits of information. It is not teaching them. I do not say that the national curriculum is completely bound up along that path, but it is in grave danger of going that way.

The link between the curriculum and testing has to be carefully examined to make sure that we do not get in the way of real education in the process. I have no objections whatever to testing. It is perfectly valid to test. Most teachers did their own tests before testing was introduced, because it was a quick and easy way of finding out whether our pupils understood what had been said.

One of the difficulties with grant-maintained schools is that they have diminished the ability of education authorities to provide certain specialist services. The balance between the education authority and individual schools must be maintained. That includes the provision to every school of services for children with special needs and, perhaps above all, what we used to call truancy officers and now call educational welfare officers.

Educational welfare officers are crucial in solving the problem of truancy. It is a genuine problem, particularly in inner cities or deprived areas. It is much more likely that people will truant in those areas than elsewhere. We need a good supply of educational welfare officers.

Two things militate against that. One is that LEAs are sometimes too small to afford the experienced team which is necessary. The second is that that is compounded when central money is taken away from LEAs and given to grant-maintained schools. LEAs have to perform a service without having the money to do so, so the service declines. We have certainly seen that happen in the past five years. I hope that the Minister will take the problem seriously and examine it to see what can be done. Of course, what can be done is simply to provide extra resources.

The same problem occurs with LEA educational advisers. LEA educational advice services have been run down. Clearly, an authority which is strapped for cash will get rid of such people first, because they are not in schools. That has consequences for the curriculum and for the quality of education in the local schools. An outstanding example of that is in religious education.

Religious education in state schools is in a considerable crisis because we do not have enough full-time RE teachers. We do not have enough people who may teach physics, French or English but who are willing to do a couple of periods of RE. That is not necessarily because they are opposed to religious education, but because they are not confident about how to teach it. They are certainly not confident about teaching it to the quality which is essential if religious education in schools is to be worth while.

Previously, that function was fulfilled by local authority advisers in religious education. They were able to run very good courses on a curriculum that had been agreed locally among a multitude of Churches. That worked very well, but if one is cutting one's local authority advisers, they are the people who will go before one's adviser in physics, one's adviser in English or one's adviser in mathematics. I do not blame local authorities, of whatever hue, for doing it that way round, but it is a problem of which we should be aware, and about which it is crucial that we do something.

On the principle of grant-maintained schools, I hope that I have put grant-maintained into a specific context, so that it is not simply about grant-maintained. The policy of the Labour party, as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) said, is absolutely clear: when we come into Government, grant-maintained schools will return to local democratic accountability. There is absolutely no need for grant-maintained schools to worry about that. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) had something to say about that.

I quote from a letter from a head teacher whose school, incidentally, is one of the top schools, whose results, even on the raw statistics, in a working class area, are as good as any:

> "I read with interest a front page article in the Times Educational Supplement last week which refers to Grant Maintained Schools."

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) is

> "quoted as saying 'I want to know the underlying reasons for schools becoming Grant Maintained, apart from those which are purely ideological'. I offer the following comments which may be of some help . . .
>
> I recently attended a conference for Catholic Grant Maintained Schools. Though we are not a Grant Maintained school and are more than happy to be within the LEA maintained sector it is important that we are made aware of the alternatives which are open to us. It was in this sense that I attended the meeting in Warrington. I listened to several of my colleagues extolling the virtues of Grant Maintained status but was struck with the very small difference between their independence and our own. Most of those Catholic schools which are Grant Maintained took the step before having any deep experience of LMS and have therefore not had the freedom as LMS Voluntary Aided schools that we have enjoyed . . . None of them had done anything which we either had not done or could not have done had we chosen to do so.
>
> The only exception being that generous government grants direct to the school had made it possible for them to replace and renew accommodation and facilities. It made me quite envious. My envy was short lived since it is clear that government resources at the disposal of these schools in such generous amounts has denied them to more deserving schools: hardly the generous sharing or concern for the weak required of Christians. It was comforting too to appreciate the extra bureaucratic procedures which are involved and the demands made in terms of accounting procedures in order that the government department or FAS can be satisfied."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Robin Squire): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, not least because I also spoke at that conference, and he reminds me of an entertaining time.

Although none of us would deny the author of that letter the absolute right to hold the opinion that he or she expresses, it must also be said that GM heads move themselves among a gathering of other heads who remain in LEA schools and are well aware of, as the author of that letter would put it, the perceived advantages of being an LEA school. In spite of that, as the hon. Gentleman knows from the most recent *Times Educational Supplement* survey, a massive 90 per cent. or more have no intention or wish to go back under the LEA, in spite of knowing those perceived apparent advantages.

Mr. Enright: Of course that is true, but as soon as funding becomes fair instead of weighted, it will be a very different question.

Let me say this about the selfishness of some grant-maintained schools. We know, because we have the statistics—the Government kindly provided them to us—that the biggest increase in expulsions from schools happened in Essex from grant-maintained schools: a massive 70 per cent. increase. That happened because grant-maintained schools do not want to tackle difficult cases, and the difficult cases are therefore being left to be considered by the other schools. That is a serious dilemma.

We have a serious problem to confront of disruptive and difficult schoolchildren. That has to be considered in a regional context rather than a national context, because that is the best way of tackling it. We must prevent what is currently happening—people being kicked out of grant-maintained schools and their pieces picked up by schools that have chosen to remain in local authority control.

I am conscious that many other hon. Members are waiting to speak, so I will not mention many of the subjects that I had wished to. However, I make one plea to the Minister—an eternal plea of mine. That is a plea for the teaching of modern languages in primary schools, which could have the most tremendous effect.

It is not impossible to put together a strategy with local authority advisers, or something of that ilk, to help to teach specific primary school teachers how to introduce language. We could in that way get it going sooner rather than later. It is an important lesson that we can learn from the continent, and I hope that the Minister will consider it carefully.

11.58 am

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I ask the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) to excuse me if I do not follow him entirely in his line of argument, although, as always, it is interesting to hear that argument developed, especially about education.

I start by congratulating the Government most sincerely on the steps that have been taken, not only in recent years, but in the past dozen or so years, to improve standards in education. I ask my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools to pass on personally

[Mr. Tim Rathbone]

to my hon. Friend the Minister of State my congratulations on his review of what has been done, which was comprehensive and persuasive, in spite of some of the shrapnel that came across the Floor of the House during that review.

I wish to link with those congratulations, congratulations to the schools in my constituency, none of which are grant-maintained—the secondary schools in Lewes, Ringmer, Newhaven and Seaford, and small and large primary schools throughout the constituency, which consistently provide considerable high-quality education for their children, often in old-fashioned buildings. I have never attached great importance to old-fashioned buildings—I was educated in a very old-fashioned building, albeit in the private sector—but the teachers give absolutely first-rate education, and that is already showing in some of the commentary about them and the ranking of them that is now being made available.

I should like to end my congratulations by applauding the Government on their promise to provide those involved in teaching and education with some stability now. The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) referred to the stresses that the teaching fraternity and sorority have had to suffer in recent years in adapting to change. There is no doubt that it has been stressful, particularly for older teachers, who have naturally become more set in their ways. It will be welcome news to them to hear that there is now to be a period of consolidation and catching of breath, and a digestion of the steps that have been taken.

I should like to make three specific points. The first relates to the teaching of mathematics. Not only is mathematics a good discipline per se, but it is essential for the pursuit of physical sciences and engineering in all its parts. Mathematics is a crucial part of the education of students, whatever they are going to do in the rest of their lives. It is particularly important if they are to pursue studies in engineering and become the engineers of the future. I do not think that I have to remind the House of the crucial part that engineering plays in the prosperity of our industry and, through that, the prosperity of manufacturing and of our country.

A few years ago, Sussex university, which is situated in and near my constituency, had to devote the best part of a term of a new intake to bringing the students up to the required standard for their courses, particularly those studying engineering, mathematics and physical sciences. The position is improving, but it needs to get better still.

I congratulate the Government on lowering the barriers between what has historically been referred to as education, and what has recently been referred to as training. Education, re-education, training and retraining are part and parcel of the lifelong effort of preparing oneself for the changing years to come. In that context, schooling, further education, university, the importance of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications and schemes such as company training schemes—a magnificent one has been developed at Brighton university, which now runs the largest company training centre in the country—cannot be underestimated .

The second point that I wish to raise—nursery schooling—was mentioned by the hon. Member for Walton. I welcome the Government's reconversion to nursery schooling. I call it "reconversion", because many hon. Members will remember that a Conservative Education Minister who went on to become Prime Minister was committed to the theory and importance of nursery schooling. Sadly, the aim was not achieved during her period of premiership, but, under the guidance and dedication of the present Prime Minister, who has committed himself to it, the policy has now reappeared as an important thrust within the educational system.

Both nurseries and schooling are important. We are not talking about simply care, play or teaching, but a subtle combination of all three. Nursery schooling is therefore different from primary school learning and teaching. Good nursery schooling is different from pre-entry school classes. I stress that point, because it would be a mistake for the Government, when planning nursery schooling on a broader basis than currently exists, to think that it is akin to, or can be made up by, the extension of pre-school entry teaching.

It is particularly important to note its difference in terms of pupil-teacher requirements—a subject touched on in another context. It is generally accepted that there has to be a higher teacher-pupil ratio in nursery schooling than in primary and secondary schooling. We must take that into account when planning.

Nursery schooling is different from playgroups, although play is an important part of nursery schooling and developing a child's character. There have been worrying reports recently that the Government might choose the Playgroups Association, which does a marvellous job in organising, supervising and professionally running play groups, as the basis for an extension of nursery schooling. That association and its members do not have the awareness or capacity to teach. The essential element of nursery schooling that distinguishes it from playgroups, creches, nurseries and care of any sort for children of pre-school age is the teaching element.

I think it was the hon. Member for Walton who said that nursery schooling was not just important per se in extending educational years downwards. Only nursery schooling will enable children to obtain the maximum benefit from whatever schooling they go on to attend—primary, secondary and further education.

A magnificent piece of research from America—which traced people from nursery school age up to, I think, 30—shows that those that have attended nursery schooling have done better in life. Their families have been more secure, and they have become better members of their communities. No element of education is more important than nursery schooling. I hope that the Government will quickly take steps to provide the facility for all four-year-olds and, as soon as possible, extend it to three-year-olds as well.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of a recent interview that the Secretary of State gave on the David Frost programme, when two significant factors emerged? First, the Secretary of State refused to give a timetable for the introduction of nursery education for the children of all those who want it. Secondly, she could not even define exactly what was meant by nursery education.

Mr. Rathbone: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was probably being wise in taking those two positions. First, the provision should start when we are able to do so. No one in the House or anywhere in the country would want to pick up a policy proposition—to start making nursery schooling available for all those who want it for their children between the ages of four and five—until the necessary facilities are available. It would be infantile to adopt any other attitude.

As to the definition of nursery schooling, the Government are still on a learning curve in terms of nursery schooling, because they have taken a long time to accept the need for it. I doubt that there is a complete awareness of what nursery schooling is, even though I have offered the Government assistance over the years, and wrote a pamphlet on the subject five or six years ago. I hope that I have made a little contribution to the decisions that have been taken so far.

I believe that an entirely sensible reaction was given by an extremely sensible Secretary of State to a probing question designed merely to hook a politician and to persuade her to make a commitment that she could then be shown not to have lived up to.

My third point has to do with health education. I have corresponded with the Minister—in his previous capacity as well as his present one—for many years about the need for better health education to tackle the increasing problem of drug and substance misuse. I have had my differences with the Government, especially over the withdrawal of funding for what used to be drugs education co-ordinators and subsequently became health education co-ordinators. I could not understand how that decision was ever arrived at—but let bygones be bygones.

Under the new drug strategy, there is a re-emphasis of the need for the Government to come to grips with demand reduction. Demand for drugs and other substances can be reduced only by better health education in schools. So I tip my hat to the Minister and the Secretary of State for their consultative paper, put out by the Department for Education, on future health education. I wish them well in their efforts.

I also value the encouragement and help being given to schools to persuade them to adopt a policy on this subject. It is crucial that schools have a policy; it is only against such a policy that teachers can make their best health education contribution, and parents can know how schools intend to react to circumstances as they arise.

In this context, I should like to recommend a good guide for governors of schools produced by the London Drugs Forum only a few weeks ago. If the Minister has not seen it, I suggest that it is worth studying. Perhaps the Government should help to ensure its wider distribution around the country.

Two things worry me still. First, too many political speeches claim that drugs education is included in the curriculum. Technically that may be so—it is a small part of the science curriculum—but that does not constitute health education. As part of the curriculum, the subject is taught in the same way as facts about amoebae, frogs, birds or bees. We are deceiving ourselves and attempting to deceive others if we attempt to argue otherwise. Information about drug misuse and attitudes towards it is not included in the biological curriculum. Both are important in health education. Every teacher in every school must be in a position to make some sort of contribution.

We all know that each pupil in a school enjoys a special relationship with a particular teacher. If that relationship does not permit the teacher to understand a drugs problem and react positively to it, teachers will clearly not be equipped to make their best contribution.

My second worry concerns the amount of funding for the new Government scheme for the teaching of teachers. It is likely—although not certain—that education authorities will experience a shortfall in the funds needed to mount, and successfully to execute, a teaching of teachers scheme so that there will be a teacher in each school who is proficient in teaching better health to its pupils.

Just as nursery education is the best foundation for the rest of education and of life, so a better appreciation of the value of good health is the foundation for a healthier life, and the only way we shall ever get to grips with the problems of drug misuse. Young people must be persuaded never to get involved with drugs in the first place.

12.14 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): This has been an interesting and wide-ranging debate, if at times somewhat confusing. I have rarely listened to a Conservative Member speak with whom I have found myself in absolute agreement, but such was the case as I listened to the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone). I suspect that he will not agree with everything that I intend to say, however.

I agreed with the hon. Member for Lewes about the importance of a period of stability and reflection in our education service. He was also absolutely right about the importance of mathematics in the curriculum. As a former physics teacher, I entirely share his thoughts on that. I also welcomed his comments on nursery education, and the crucial distinction that he drew between it and, on the one hand, early entry into reception class, and on the other, playgroups. He noted that nursery education is the key to providing people with the right start.

I also share the hon. Gentleman's anxiety that the Government may try to meet the Prime Minister's commitment by way of providing major financial support for the Playgroups Association instead of providing nursery education. Like the hon. Gentleman, however, I welcome the Conservative party's reconversion to the idea of nursery education. I know, too, that the hon. Gentleman's views on health education and drugs will be widely shared in this House.

I said that this had been a slightly confused debate, but there have also been several points of agreement—although I was not always entirely sure whether the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) agreed with the rest of us. Nevertheless, I certainly agreed with what the Minister of State said about the purpose of the whole educational endeavour.

He talked of enabling every individual to develop his or her potential. That was the key, he said, to what education was about. The Liberal Democrat policy document states:

> "Our objective is to enable each individual to achieve his or her full potential by creating a first class education for all, in which quality is the key. We aim to provide not just excellence for a select few, but excellence for all."

No doubt the Minister of State and the Under-Secretary of State would entirely agree with that. So when we discuss how to raise standards in education, we are debating the means, not the ends. That is where the major differences between the political parties arise.

It is therefore important that each political party be clear, internally and with a wider audience, about what means it favours. I agree with the Minister and with

[Mr. Don Foster]

Conservative Members who have said that there is a great deal of confusion in Labour party policy on a number of issues—

Mr. Hendry: The hon. Gentleman expresses much of what we think when he talks about this confusion. He did, however, tell the *Times Educational Supplement* that it was

"difficult to disagree with a word she"—

referring to the former Labour education spokesman—

"says".

When the interviewer told the hon. Gentleman that it was difficult to see daylight between their two parties' policies, the hon. Gentleman agreed: "Yes—embarrassing, isn't it?" How has he come to realise that Labour's policies are confusing—or is he trying to tell us that the policies of his party are equally confusing?

Mr. Foster: The hon. Gentleman's intervention allows me to put on the record, a year after I put it on record, the last time that a Conservative Member mentioned that quote, how it came about.

The hon. Gentleman takes it out of context. I was agreeing with the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), who had spoken about the importance of nursery education. The hon. Member for Lewes would have had difficulty disagreeing with a single word of what the hon. Member for Dewsbury said at that conference, at which I was present and where I made the comments that the hon. Gentleman has quoted.

I disagree a great deal with the hon. Member for Dewsbury, and recently I have disagreed with some of her colleagues who now speak for Labour on education. There seems to be much disagreement between members of the Labour party on the issue. There is nothing wrong with a political party saying that it is important to rethink policies. That is right, and I admit that my party is having a rethink on a number of issues. I said at my party's conference that we would need to have a major reconsideration of our higher education policies, and especially its funding.

It is proper to admit that one is considering changes. However, it is not helpful for some to make clear to all and sundry that major changes are going on, while others try to pretend that they are not. Labour has been challenged on a number of issues, and those challenges need to be answered. I hope that, in winding up for the Opposition, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) will give clear answers.

For example, the issue of grant-maintained schools has not been properly addressed. I think we are all aware that Labour's shadow spokesman on education, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), recently sent a letter of reassurance to all Labour Members, which stated:

"I thought it would be helpful for you to know that there has been no change of policy in relation to the events of the last few days."

That was specifically in relation to grant-maintained schools.

I am reliably informed that, a couple of days after the hon. Gentleman sent that letter, Mr. Simon Crine, the general secretary of the Fabian Society, said that a debate about future education policy is now raging behind the scenes among the leadership. He is quoted as saying:

"People were wondering what to do about opted-out schools. Some people seem to think the future lies with them. Tony seems to have made the decision for us."

There is certainly confusion within the Labour party.

One question typifies the uncertainty that many of us feel, and I hope that the hon. Member for Yardley will answer it, either in an intervention or when she is summing up. It is the puzzle that senior educationists within the Labour party have about grant-maintained schools.

Perhaps it was best summed up a couple of weeks ago, at a meeting of Labour's consultative forum, which was attended by various education experts. I am reliably informed that Mr. Maxwell Bird, who is Labour's vice-chairman of the ACC education committee, said:

"Unless there is a clear-cut Labour party policy returning opt-out schools to the LEAs, there could be a rush to opt out before the schools are handed over to the unitary authorities."

Mr. Enright: In view of our policy on devolution and regional government, will the hon. Gentleman allow that, in view of the current problems facing the Government over the reorganisation of local government, it is extremely difficult to forecast what form of government there will be when we take over? Therefore, it is difficult to say categorically that we would put this into one structure and that into another. I hope that the hon. Gentleman accepts that the ultimate aim is to put it in a regional context.

Mr. Foster: The hon. Member adds yet another dimension. The problem is that Labour's spokesman on education, the hon. Member for Brightside, stated categorically in a letter to all Labour Members that there is no change in policy. But we know from meetings with Labour education spokesmen in LEAs that there is talk merely of coming into a local democratically accountable framework. However, it is not specified whether they will be local education authorities.

The hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) who is assisting the leader of the Labour party, recently gave out briefings stating that Labour was not in the business of obliging grant-maintained schools to return to local authority control. That information is on the record. There is considerable confusion. The hon. Member for Hemsworth now says that the policy may be to go into regional government, and that adds a fourth or fifth dimension of uncertainty.

Ms Estelle Morris *rose—*

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Lady may add to the size of the hole.

Ms Morris: The hon. Gentleman should know about holes.

I am happy to put the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) out of his misery. I am touched by the great amount of interest shown by hon. Members in Labour's education policy. Hon. Members anticipate, as we do, that there will soon be a Labour Government. Their interest is touching.

The hon. Member for Bath quoted Labour's spokesperson on education as saying that the policy on grant-maintained schools had not changed, and that Labour's policy is to bring them back into a democratic framework. The hon. Gentleman must accept that that is our policy. There will always be an exchange of views about how that will be done, but the letter that my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) circulated earlier this week contains Labour's policy. The purpose of the shadow Secretary of State for Education is to give Labour's policy.

There is no way that we will go back to the position of five, 10 or 15 years ago. Things have changed, and local authorities have changed. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) said, they will continue to change after local authority reorganisation. Our debate is about the nature of the framework, and the relationship between schools and their communities. The bottom line is that they will be accountable to local communities.

Mr. Foster: The hon. Lady's intervention may save time in her winding-up speech. I am grateful for that clarification, but it does not help many people who do not know what it means when they are told that there will be a democratic framework.

Does it mean that grant-maintained schools will be brought back into LEA control? I tell Conservative Members who have been heckling me that my party's policy is quite clear. We will remove grant-maintained status, and those schools will be brought back under LEA control; the activities of LEAs will be streamlined so that they become light-touch strategic planning bodies.

Mr. Pawsey: There must be roughly about 650,000 children currently being educated in grant-maintained schools, which means that there are more than 1 million parents. Is the hon. Gentleman seriously telling the House that the free and democratic elections that led to the schools becoming grant-maintained schools will go down the drain? Is he really saying that the Liberal Democrats—I ignore the Labour party for a moment—agree with that? I find that truly staggering, and very much hope that those 1 million parents will listen with care to what the hon. Gentleman will say, because it will undoubtedly influence a substantial number of them when they come to cast their votes at any general election.

Mr. Foster: I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving me the opportunity to put the matter on the record. Before I do so, it is slightly bizarre of the hon. Gentleman to talk about the democratic decisions of those parents, because the Conservative party will never agree to have genuine democracy on the issue and give parents the right not only to vote out of LEA control but, equally, to vote back in if they so wish.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether Liberal Democrat policy is to bring grant-maintained schools back within LEA control. I have already said that, but I am happy to say again to the hon. Gentleman that that is the case. Those parents who want to see their schools have greater individual freedom will find that all schools under our plan will have it—not just grant-maintained schools—because of the restructuring and rearrangements of LEAs, which are clearly described in our policy documents and at which on a number of occasions I have offered the hon. Gentleman to look to see where he disagrees with me.

Mr. Robin Squire: I wish to respond to the point about grant-maintained schools wishing to opt back in to LEAs, which the hon. Gentleman trots out from time to time. At the risk of repetition, I would say that he cannot produce an example of one school from the 1,007 that are already operating to show that a governing body has said that it would like to come back in. Then there is the stability. Most hon. Members would see some advantage in ensuring that schools were not switching in and out. The key issue remains, that not one school has given a sign of wanting to come back in, and frankly, one wonders why they would want to.

Mr. Foster: The Minister will be aware that there have been one or two comments on television programmes, although I accept that people have argued that there were misquotes and so on. It is hardly surprising, under the current level of bribes and additional funds that grant-maintained schools—*[Laughter.]* Conservative Members laugh, but it is quite frightening to hear that they do not believe that grant-maintained schools continue to get additional financial benefits.

If the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) will bear with me for two seconds while I find what the Secretary of State said about that in relation specifically to this year's Budget—I will come to it in a second—he will see that the Secretary of State made it clear in her own press release that, in terms of capital funding, grant-maintained schools would continue to be treated favourably, and they are continuing to do better as a result. The hon. Gentleman will remind us of the article in *The Times Educational Supplement*, but he fails to recognise that a new structure of LEAs is emerging.

Mr. Enright: I would like to give the hon. Member the newspaper quote from the Secretary of State for Education. It reads:

> "In perhaps the clearest public admission yet that the Government is stacking the cards in favour of GM schools, Mrs. Shephard told a meeting of the GM headteachers' association last week that 'despite very tight constraints on spending generally . . . we have preserved favourable treatment for the GM sector in the allocation of capital provision'."

I hope that that is helpful to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Foster: I am grateful to the hon. Member.

Mr. Pawsey *rose—*

Mr. Foster: I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I have given way to him several times. The House will want me to make a little progress.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foster: I shall give way to the hon. Member for Colchester, North, as I have not given way to him yet, but then I must make progress.

Mr. Jenkin: The hon. Gentleman was keen to extract a forecast from the Minister of how many schools will be going grant-maintained in the years ahead. Will the hon. Gentleman give the House a forecast of how many

[Mr. Jenkin]

schools he thinks will vote to return to local authority control from grant-maintained status? I think that we should know.

Mr. Foster: No, I certainly will not, unless I am allowed to do that in the context of the educational framework that I would like to see in place in this country. If the hon. Gentleman is asking me to do so in the current context, I am not surprised that the Minister was able to say that relatively few want to come back, although one hears increasingly of a number of governors, head teachers, deputies and staff who are concerned about the increasing bureaucracy they have to face.

I have raised a number of issues where I think that there is uncertainty about the Labour party's policy. There continues to be uncertainty about where it stands on league tables, independent schools and so on. Other hon. Members may have the opportunity to raise those issues.

We welcome the fact that there have been some changes in the Government's stance. It is welcome that they now recognise that their grant-maintained policy is beginning to falter and fail— *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) chides me. The statistics provided in evidence to the Select Committee are interesting, because they show that there has been 40 per cent. inaccuracy in the Government's prediction of the number of pupils who would be in grant-maintained schools. Has the hon. Gentleman seen the recent statistics for the number of schools that are even considering opting out, let alone choosing to do so through a ballot? He should compare the statistics with those for previous years.

The biggest proof of failure comes in this year's Budget, and in the rate support settlement. Compared with last year, there is to be a 57 per cent. reduction in the budget for grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Jenkin: The policy of grant-maintained schools would be a success even if there were only one such school in the whole country. That school would be enjoying freedom, having got the local education authority out of its hair, and would be providing a better education. In my constituency, all secondary schools have gone for grant-maintained status, so I do not think that the Liberal Democrats or the Labour party will make much progress in my area at the next general election.

Mr. Foster: In view of the poll results today, the hon. Gentleman is making strange predictions about the future of his party. However, I shall not spend more time trying to make him believe that the grant-maintained policy is failing. The evidence is clear, and few schools are now interested in moving in that direction.

The Government's shift on league tables is welcome. As I said in an intervention earlier, only a year ago I raised with the former Secretary of State the importance of incorporating value added information in the tables, and he accused me of wanting to obfuscate the facts. Therefore, it is pleasing that there is now a growing consensus in the House on the importance of presenting a wide range of information about individual schools to parents, pupils and other people within the local community.

I hope that, over time, the Government will pay more attention than they have done to date to the comments of the National Commission on Education about the 10 qualities that define a successful school. Hon. Members would find it helpful to study those comments if they have not already done so.

Another Government shift welcomed by both sides of the House relates to their previous absolute opposition to a general teaching council, whose importance was so eloquently described by the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright). There is growing evidence that the new Secretary of State is more willing to listen to the arguments in favour of such a council. Perhaps, in due course, she will support its establishment. I hope that the Minister will tell us the Government's latest position on that matter.

I now come to points on which I suspect the hon. Member for Lewes and others will begin to disagree with me. I do not believe that we can provide quality education and raise standards unless teachers and other highly trained and motivated people in the education service are given the tools with which to do the job—for example, books, equipment and other resources—and are provided with adequate and appropriate facilities and premises in which to work. The Government have failed in all those respects, by neglecting to invest. They are priming a time bomb, and seem sadly unaware of growing difficulties.

The hon. Member for Walton referred to problems in higher education. The massive expansion in numbers in that sector is not properly funded. There has been a massive reduction in expenditure per student, but over the past eight years the costs incurred by universities have increased 8 per cent. in real terms. The service faces growing financial pressures and increasing demoralisation.

It must concern hon. Members in all parts of the House that there is an increasing backlog of repairs and maintenance, and a need for additional buildings to cater for growing pupil numbers. The hon. Member for Walton made a graphic reference to worries about the quality of some buildings. Quality education cannot be provided when many schools have leaking roofs, rising damp and dry rot. There is an estimated repair and maintenance backlog of £4.3 billion.

Some pupils miss lessons because they are sent home from unsafe classrooms. Coventry's chief education officer, Mr. Farmer, recently stated:

> "I know of a primary school held up by the window frames. I would play truant from some of the schools we force our children to attend."

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities also recently stated:

> "The situation is getting worse by the month. Almost every local education authority has at least one unsafe school."

We cannot provide quality education without tackling the appalling repair and maintenance backlog. The modest Budget increases in the capital programme will go no way to meeting those problems.

As to the debate on class sizes, the Minister of State challenged the existence of any real evidence to prove the detrimental effect of class sizes on quality. The hon. Member for Walton replied honestly, that he was not aware of any major research—nor am I. However, in referring to the report produced by four teacher unions and the Campaign for the Advancement of State Education, the hon. Member for Walton did not quote a remark by one parent that sums up the matter perfectly:

> "Any halfwit should realise that increasing class size is detrimental to a child's education."

I entirely agree. When teachers, head teachers, governors, parents and experts all acknowledge the importance of class size in relation to educational quality, it is worrying that Ministers do not share concern about the sizes of classes in which many pupils are taught. For the first time, this year more than 20 per cent. of primary school children are being taught in classes of 31 pupils or more.

How can one develop and improve standards if our teachers are increasingly under such stress? Data submitted to the school teachers' pay review body contained worrying statistics about the rising number of workers within the profession who are retiring prematurely on the grounds of ill health.

The National Association of Headteachers refers to that increase in its submission, and says:

> "We remain concerned at the continuing high level of teachers, heads and deputies leaving the profession before the normal retirement age of 60. If this trend continues, given the age profile of the profession and the uncertainties of graduate recruitment referred to earlier, then the education service cannot realistically maintain improving standards as reflected in this year's GCSE and A level results".

The problem is a time bomb, which is not being addressed.

Reference was also made to concern about the growing number of pupils being excluded from schools. The Minister of State spoke on the radio today in response to a recent survey which shows a significant rise in the number of pupils who are permanently excluded from our schools. I was concerned to hear him say that he was not convinced by the figures. The very worrying figures in the survey have been collected from a large number of local education authorities.

Statistics from local education authorities which were not referred to in the survey show a similar trend. Figures from Essex county council and local education authority—which were not included in the survey released today—show that the number of permanent exclusions has doubled, from 110 in 1992-93 to 221 in 1993-94. How can quality education be provided to pupils when they are excluded from school? I hope that the Minister will be slightly more positive about the Government's reaction to the survey than the Minister of State was.

I know that the Minister was unable to attend in the Chamber for the beginning of the debate, but I am sure that he is aware that his hon. Friend referred to special educational needs. I have paid tribute in the House to the Under-Secretary of State for the work that he has done in respect of special educational needs.

However, it is worrying that, while we have a code of practice in this area— it is very welcome—if resources are not provided to ensure its implementation, the code is not worth the paper it is written on. Currently, many schools fear that they will not be able to implement the code, simply because they do not have the resources either to make special allowance payments to teachers who have the job of co-ordinating the code's implementation, or to find time to allow co-ordinators to undertake in-service training. That is a particular problem in primary schools, where non-contact time is short.

If we are to have high-quality education in our schools, assessment is clearly very important. Much has been said about testing, assessment and league tables. Hon. Members should be concerned, if they are not already, about the recent Budget's impact upon Ofsted. After all, Ofsted is the body charged with monitoring standards in our schools.

The Budget cuts Ofsted funding substantially, yet it is currently not able to perform its set tasks. I hope that the Minister will respond to that concern in winding up. Once every four years, all primary and secondary schools are meant to have an inspection, but Ofsted is way behind in its inspections this year, because of the system set up by the Government. In the autumn term of 1994, 1,250 primary schools were told that they would be inspected. In practice, only 950 of those schools were visited by an inspection team and 150 of those were not inspected until the following spring term.

In the spring term of 1994, 1,267 schools were told that they had been called for inspection and yet I was told by Ofsted yesterday that it expects only just over 850 of those schools to be inspected. It is clear from that evidence that Ofsted is falling a long way behind in meeting its targets yet its budget for next year has been cut by more than 10 per cent.

Ofsted is not able to meet its already great work but it appears from the comments of the Secretary of State for Education that she intends to impose a further burden on Ofsted in relation to nursery provision and to increased support to pre-school playgroup associations. I understand her to be saying that, where money is given, for example, to the Pre-School Playgroups Association, Ofsted will be charged to carry out inspections to ensure value for money and its proper use. I should be grateful if the Minister would confirm whether that is the case.

I am increasingly concerned about the relationship between Ofsted and the Department for Education's school effectiveness division. The Minister may not have time to deal with that matter in his winding-up speech but he may wish to reflect on my concern, which other hon. Members may share, about the growing overlap and confusion between Ofsted and the school effectiveness division.

My speech has ranged widely but I hope that my major concern has come over clearly. Although many good things are going on in our education service as a result of the dedication and hard work of the people working in it, growing strains exist in the education service, which will mean that we shall not be able to continue to develop the education service and standards and to improve quality. If we are going to achieve that, there must be increased investment in our education service.

The worrying thing is that, although we have a modest increase in this year's Budget, in subsequent years, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer has told us, that will decline. We know that even in this year's Budget contains a significant cut that limits what local education authorities are able to do. That will not help standards or improve quality. I hope that the Minister will fight more vigorously for increased resources in our education service.

12.52 pm

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to speak about standards in education, which is of increasing

[Mr. Charles Hendry]

concern to my constituents. I agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), with whom I share the privilege of being president of the British Youth Council. We both, therefore, take a considerable interest in the issue.

I share the hon. Gentleman's view about the confusion that is now evident in the main Opposition party's thinking on education. In the debate, the hon. Member the Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) asked his party spokesman, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle), to clarify that a Labour Government would not charge fees for people going into higher education. The official record will, I believe, show that the hon. Member for Walton said that he was sure that that was the case—that those people would not be charged. I then pressed him on the position of the Commission for Social Justice, and he replied that it had made recommendations that the Labour party was still considering.

There is clear confusion between what the hon. Member for Walton initially suggested was the case and what he subsequently clarified as being the case—that there is no direct policy on this matter.

Mr. Kilfoyle: May I clarify the position and exactly what I said? I think that the record should show that I said that we had machinery to consider such matters, and recommendations would go into that machinery.

Mr. Hendry: The hon. Gentleman referred to the 2.5 million young people who were entitled to vote at the previous general election but chose not to do so. He will be doing all he can to entice them to vote Labour. Many will be aspiring to go into further education and they need to know for certain whether a Labour Government would charge them for their fees. It is not sufficient for the Labour party to say that it is "considering" the matter. The commission set up by the Labour party to make recommendations on such matters said that they should be charged and we need the Labour party to state clearly whether it agrees with the commission.

We also need greater clarity on Labour's general education policy. It is not acceptable to tell grant-maintained schools that they will be consulted after the election because, if there were to be a majority Labour Government, which I do not believe will be the case, the Government would be in a position to disregard the schools' views completely and do whatever they wished. The 1 million parents who chose grant-maintained schools need a clearer statement about what the Labour party would do.

The Labour party should also state its position in the interests of fairness. When the hon. Member for Walton was a Whip, his tremendous reputation for fairness was greatly respected by my colleagues. However, I am sure that, out of fairness, he will admit that, when the Labour party was last in opposition in the mid-1970s, it made fine promises about what it would do for education but when it took office it cut the education budget over the next five years by £1.6 million and reduced it as a proportion of gross domestic product by 1 per cent. In the interests of fairness, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make it clear that the Labour Government did not always live up to their promises.

I wish to concentrate on issues relating directly to my constituents. Over the past few years, there have been significant improvements in examination results. They would not have been possible without testing or had it not been the Government's policy to publish test results. I accept that there are problems in comparing the results of individual schools, because a wide range of factors can help to determine those results.

However, it is worth noting that, in the schools in my constituency, the average number of pupils gaining five grade A to C GCSEs has increased from 49.4 per cent. to 52.8 per cent. in the past year. Results in High Peak are therefore better than the county average. We must ensure that improvements in results are not made at the expense of standards in general. We seek an assurance from the Minister that there will be no pressure to reduce the standard of GCSEs to obtain better results.

We must re-examine the way in which results are portrayed in small schools because, even where the Government allow for significant rounding, an individual student's results can be identified in small schools. That worries teachers, and especially the children and their parents.

There is a school funding crisis in Derbyshire at the moment. In the summer, I spent a significant amount of time consulting the heads of schools and the chairmen of governing bodies trying to establish the source of that crisis. One argument is that it is caused by lack of Government funding, but, in recent years, that funding has risen although the county council has reduced the amount that is spent on education.

One of our concerns in Derbyshire involves the amount of the aggregated schools budget that is spent on schools—we spend 85.01 per cent. and the legal requirement is 85 per cent. Sadly, Derbyshire is one of the six, out of the total of 97, local education authorities that retain centrally the maximum possible amount. That directly affects the sum that can be spent in schools.

I understand the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Walton about school meals. Until recently, £18 million was taken out of the schools budget of Derbyshire to fund school meals, regardless of need. Prosperous parents found that their children at secondary schools—perhaps the grandchildren of the Duke of Devonshire, had they attended those local schools—could have a school meal for 55p. That was an absurd waste of money, because the budget should have been targeted on those in need. The majority of parents, however, were willing to contribute significantly more to the budget.

Under the standard spending assessment the Government allow money to be allocated for sparsity. My constituency covers 400 square miles. The majority of the population live in the two main towns of Buxton and Glossop, but that means that a significant number of small schools are spread around an extremely large rural area. A specific 2 per cent. element of the SSA is designed to relate to sparsity, but, unfortunately, when the county council and the education authority come to dish out the money, they overlook that factor. The small rural schools have not benefited as the Government's policy intended that they should. The upshot is that my constituents are being denied funds that the Government specifically said should go to smaller rural schools.

If the county council had allocated that SSA element, it would amount to £50 per pupil in a secondary school and £37 per pupil in a primary school. It is clear that some of the financial problems now faced by local schools would be overcome if the county council allocated the funds intended for them. Hope Valley college, for example, would receive an extra £20,000, and small primary schools with 100 pupils would receive about £4,000 a year. That money would make a real difference.

The problem is how the county council chooses to allocate its funds. It puts enormous emphasis on deprivation. All of us readily accept that, in areas of serious deprivation, extra funding should be given to help to cater for those needs. Because of that factor, Leicestershire, for example, gives £115 for every secondary pupil and Staffordshire gives £264. Derbyshire, however, which cannot readily claim to suffer greater deprivation than those counties, does not just offer the same amounts or a little more than the combined sums, but double the combined amount. It offers £784 per secondary pupil; similarly large amounts are offered to primary schools. Thirteen secondary schools in the county get nothing, even though deprivation exists within their catchment areas—five of those schools are in High Peak. Another four schools, however, get more than £125,000 a year as a result of that deprivation factor. Schools in my area are losing badly because of the way in which the county council dishes out the money.

According to Government advice, small schools with fewer than 10 staff should be funded by the education authority to cover the actual cost of the teaching staff. The county council resolutely refuses to do that and still wants to work predominantly on an average cost basis. Popular rural schools have the reputation of keeping their teachers for many years, which means that the teachers rise up the income table. Because of the way in which those schools are funded by the county council, however, their own costs for their teachers are not remunerated. The Government's guidance is being ignored by the county council.

I do not wish to get involved in a discussion on the general principle governing grant-maintained status, which has already been covered adequately by hon. Members today. I hope that we are beginning to see that issue being taken out of politics. The fact that the Leader of the Opposition and his wife have exercised their parental right to educate their son in a grant-maintained school will, I hope, mean that we can have more structured, sensible debates about grant-maintained schools than has been possible in the past.

I have tended not to get involved in the issues surrounding grant-maintained status in my constituency because I felt that it was a matter for the parents to decide. However, in view of the points that I have raised, that can no longer be the case. The shortfall in the education budget of the schools in my constituency is serious because of the way in which the county council allocates money. Schools have no choice but to consider grant-maintained status. The governors and head teachers would not be doing their jobs properly if they did not consider the issue.

It is not a question of a bribe, as the hon. Member for Bath suggested. Schools are not receiving the budgets that they need because of the way in which the county council divides up the total budget. The budget includes money which is rightfully theirs. The only way in which they can gain it is by obtaining grant-maintained status. As that means taking on extra responsibilities currently handled by the education authority, it is right that schools should be compensated for that.

A typical secondary school in High Peak would be about £158,000 a year better off if it achieved grant-maintained status. The smallest secondary school, Buxton St. Thomas More's, would be about £70,000 a year better off. Glossopdale, the largest secondary school in my constituency, would be about £340,000 a year better off. Those are the amounts held back by the county council which schools should receive but do not. Schools could radically improve the standard of education for the children and overcome all their teaching and funding problems by taking that approach.

On average, primary schools would gain £31,000. Very small primary schools—the smallest has fewer than a dozen children—would gain about £7,000 a year. The largest would gain about £90,000 a year. Those are significant sums. If, as a result of the way in which the education authority chooses to allocate its funds, the screw is turned unbearably tight on schools, we shall have to look more widely at the other policies which are available.

No issue causes greater concern to parents in my constituency than the education of their children. They believe that the Government are right to put more emphasis on pushing up basic standards in basic subjects. Overwhelmingly, they back the Government and say that we should test and publish the results. We must also examine the issue of funding. In many cases, the money put in by the Government has increased, but my schools are suffering because they have been deprived of funds which are rightfully theirs by the education authority. It will be up to the heads and governors to decide how they will deal with that issue.

1.7 pm

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): It is a personal pleasure to speak in a debate opened for the Opposition by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle), who is just one shining example of the excellence of the education system in Liverpool. Liverpool seems over the years to have produced far more than its fair share of musicians, poets, scientists and great politicians. I do not suggest that my hon. Friend is a poet.

For at least two decades, discussion in Britain about standards in education has been dominated by the analysis of outcomes, chiefly in terms of the needs of the economy. While I do not minimise the importance of that, over-concentration on it has pushed aside the desire to improve standards for the student as an individual with a growing personality—a future parent, and a future citizen with a role to play in our culture as well as in our economy.

Education is much more complex and important than examination results and what we can gather from them. Education is the business of giving young people the equipment to make their lives more satisfying, and giving them the capacity to make choices and understand that other people have choices that they wish to make, to reach compromises, to contribute positively to all the functions of social living and, as the Minister said at the beginning of the debate, to explore every avenue of knowledge. The standards that we should seek are those that are achieved in all those aspects of education, including, but not relying exclusively on, examination results.

[Mr. Colin Pickthall]

The Government's presumption is that standards—even the cripplingly limited ones that they target—are improved by choice. Parents will choose the best school and the best courses for their children. If the choice turns out to be wrong, that is the parents' fault and education authorities at all levels will not be to blame. That choice-making, naturally, will force all schools to come up to scratch and, if they do not, the free market will see to it that the failures will disappear.

"Choice" is attractive as a slogan, but the Government remain unconcerned about the areas in which one person's choice removes another's. I hope to illustrate that in a moment.

It is in the nature of any market that some people, through strength, ability, luck, inherited means or whatever will succeed while others fail. The comprehensive system ensured that the choices that were made by individuals minimised damage to other people's choices. The result, as was mentioned—inadvertently, I think—by the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) earlier, was a huge increase in the numbers of students in the country achieving exam successes at O-level, GCSE and A-level and ultimately qualifying for higher education.

Eleven-plus selection was enormously unpopular; so much so that the Government have not sought to restore it as such. The totality of the Government's changes to the mechanisms of education, however, amount to a newer and more tricky and insidious selective system, whose results are beginning to be apparent. In their claims to be improving standards, the Government are essentially talking about improving educational standards for part of the school population. It is essentially, in its effect, an elitist programme, and its mechanism is divisive and competitive.

League tables are at the very root of what is going wrong with our education system. I note with care what my hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), has been saying about Labour's attitude towards league tables. Specifically, in his article in *The Times*, with which I agree, he said:

> "League tables should not be employed as the public hand of the 'market system' in education. They should be used to lift and support schools rather than to embarrass or denigrate them."

Quite so. However, I have to say to my hon. Friend that that is easier said than done.

League tables, as they are now, are designed to compare raw output in terms of exam results. We need to be aware of the consequences of that for the practice of education in specific cases.

Last week, I visited a fine primary school in Skelmersdale, in my constituency, where the percentage of pupils with statemented and non-statemented special needs is 65 per cent. The three secondary schools in the town have about 50 per cent. of pupils with special needs, but within four miles of Skelmersdale there are six comprehensive schools—high schools and grammar schools, which are all supposed to be comprehensive—which do not have nearly as high a percentage of pupils with special needs. Some of them have a largely favoured intake from well-to-do districts. That example in my constituency is typical of the position in many places.

Before league tables existed, there was already a significant movement of pupils out of Skelmersdale to what were perceived to be more favoured schools. Parents perceived that there was a cachet to be had in schools outside the town, which might offer a better life chance to their children—and who can blame any parent for taking that choice for his or her children?

The inevitable result was that the children from the most ambitious and striving families had already been creamed off from secondary schools in Skelmersdale, to the advantage of schools outside the town. Increasing freedom of preference accelerated that process.

The local education authority could, and did, help to even out that process by investment in Skelmersdale schools. I have no time to describe the details, but the help was considerable and intelligently done.

It came as no surprise that the first league table showed the Skelmersdale schools in a poorer light than the non-Skelmersdale schools, and the immediate result was a drastic drop in the intake of the Skelmersdale schools, ratcheting down those schools' academic possibilities.

Since that time, the schools have struggled to improve their position, not without some success. But the pattern has already been set and it is difficult to claw back. The pattern in sibling links already exists and is determined by the drop away.

There is no disagreement among all the schools in and outside Skelmersdale about the quality of management, the dedication of staff and their sheer hard graft. There is no disagreement about the terrible damage that will be done to the town if schools are driven out of business, which is more than possible. But competition for numbers produces active poaching, which goes on all the time.

Parents are ever alert to any rumour. There was one appalling example where teachers at one school told parents of pupils in a primary school in the district not to send their children to the other secondary school down the road because it had a drugs problem. It did not, but the rumour was enough and the school suffered severe damage.

Skelmersdale is a town that has been brutally bashed about by two recessions. It has many of the problems of an inner city area, but few of the advantages. It can boast about the quality of its schools and college, but it faces a relentless struggle to keep its brightest and best-motivated children in the town.

The process becomes more difficult with the production of raw league tables. I hope that the Labour party is not accepting the principle of raw league tables standing alone until new value-added league tables are established. The SCAA says that that is unlikely to happen before the beginning of the next century—much damage will have been done before then.

Schools should primarily be competing with themselves to improve their standards year on year. Improvements should primarily be measured by contrasting attainment on entry to a school with attainment on exit. In Lancashire a great deal of work has been done in conjunction with Professor Peter Mortimer and the university of London's institute of education to try to create a viable analysis of what is value added. The aim has been to try to assess the factors that lie outside a school's control and clearly have an impact on students' attainment or standards in the school.

The work has shown that pupils' attainment at 11 has a huge impact later on GCSE results—I do not suppose that that fact will surprise anyone. That information will, in turn, throw the spotlight on attainment in primary schools. Before league tables are, in turn, thrown at primary schools, the socio-economic factors that influence events in both primary and secondary schools should be clearly marked up.

I had intended to give details of how the research works, but the information is generally available and I do not have time to give it in detail. To summarise—of the 79 secondary schools in Lancashire that were considered in terms of the value added tables from 11 to 16, 33 per cent. of schools showed that they were better than their raw league table ranking. Some 49 per cent. showed in the value added tables that they were worse than their raw ranking. One could say that the figures might be wrong here and there, but they show an enormous shift in results between the two systems.

That work in Lancashire, as with projects elsewhere, must be heading in the right direction and must provide a fairer assessment of schools than the present league tables. SCAA spokespersons have said that they will not consider socio-economic factors. That fact has been reinforced by one or two Conservative Members in today's debate.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Brightside and to the Government that, even when an agreed system is running, we shall still be faced with a vast problem of perception. The calculations are complex. I can foresee that parents will say that it is wonderful that the schools in Skelmersdale have made great achievements in terms of value added. They will note that it is good for the town and for everyone living there, but will add that the schools do not achieve the same exam results as schools in Ormskirk and Up Holland. They will therefore send their children to other schools even though they appreciate what a nearby school is achieving. Even with value-added league tables, there will be continuing serious social problems for schools in less-favoured districts such as Skelmersdale which face great difficulties.

I hope that it can never be claimed that I have said that I believe that the amount of resources is the sole determinant of standards in schools. I do not believe it to be even the most important determinant. It is, however, one crucial factor. At a time when standards are predicated on success in league tables, it is unfair and even immoral that there should be significant regional variations in funding per pupil. I shall run through the figures quickly, comparing Lancashire with three southern authorities of the same size: Essex, Hampshire and Kent. The serious resource deficit is the consequence of the area cost adjustment. The Minister has heard me complain about that adjustment on numerous occasions, but the gap is growing.

In the five-to-10 age range in 1993-94, £1,822 was spent on each pupil in Lancashire. Each Essex pupil received £60 more than that, each Hampshire pupil £44 more, and each Kent pupil £63 more. That is a large difference. For 1994-95, however, the gap increases. Each Lancashire pupil will have £1,867 spent on him or her, in Essex they will get £105 more, in Hampshire £62 more and in Kent £94 more. The disparity in the secondary sector is even greater. The Essex advantage over Lancashire, which used to be £85 per pupil, is now £145. In Hampshire, it used to be £63, but is now £85; and in Kent, an advantage of £90 has grown to one of £130. These disadvantages affect the constituents of the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) as much as mine—indeed, as much as those of any hon. Member with a seat outside the south-east. So we should all be worried.

Finally, there is a conflict between Government rhetoric about choice, standards, quality, expansion of higher education and nursery education, and the structures and the funding mechanisms that the Government have put in place. The Government's philosophy, as expressed in this place, has its roots in air. Pupils, students, parents and teachers live and work under the systems and regulations that the Government have put in place but which in many ways are strangling what the Government profess to want.

Ministers' vigorous defence of the private sector's right to opt out of virtually all the regulations and testing procedures that the Government have imposed on the rest of us show what the Government really think of the monster that they are creating. The priority for any Labour Government must be to maximise choice in education but also to ensure that one citizen's choice, under the mechanisms and structures that we have, does not remove another's choice.

1.22 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I should make it clear at the outset that I am an adviser to the Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

I was interested to hear what the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) had to say. Without league tables, we would return to the old system, which basically consisted of school-gate gossip. Parents had no information on which to base a reasoned decision. Therefore, I support league tables and am delighted that Ministers introduced them. I am also pleased that they now have the support of Opposition Members. Clearly, the light is at last beginning to shine.

The debate is about education and quality. I believe that the Government have done a great deal to improve the quality and standards of state education, in which the overwhelming majority of the nation's children are educated. If education had been left to the Opposition, the reforms would never have been introduced.

It seems to me that the Labour party's education policy, in as much as it has one, can be summed up as "more of the same". It is locked into a 1960s time warp, believing that only one type of school holds all the answers to all the needs of all the nation's children. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am delighted to note that my hon. Friends agree with me on that.

There is a place for comprehensive schools just as there is a place for denominational schools, grammar schools, grant-maintained schools and city technology colleges, and for the assisted places scheme. We offer the maximum choice and diversity because we want to give parents the maximum freedom and choice. We are successful in doing that, and it is unfortunate that opposition parties cannot grasp it. Choice and diversity allow parents to choose the school that they think is best for their child.

The Government have introduced a series of reforms, starting with the Education Reform Bill in 1987. That major legislation, which became an Act in 1988, has been likened to the Education Act 1944 and that is not an unreasonable comparison. Since 1988, the Government have introduced local management of schools,

[Mr. James Pawsey]

grant-maintained schools, the national curriculum and testing, a new system of schools inspection, league tables and the GCSE and GNVQ. By contrast, Labour's education policy has been distinguished only by its absence. The Opposition were the dog that did not bark, despite the fact that the great education debate was initiated by a former Labour Prime Minister.

With the support of their colleagues in the trade unions, Opposition Members have criticised and opposed the Government's innovations and ideas, but they have little thought for the consumer, whether parent or pupil. Even today they reject efforts to raise school standards and deny initiatives that are designed to give parents greater powers and responsibilities.

Interestingly, Madam Deputy Speaker—I know that you follow these matters closely—Opposition Members produced a White Paper entitled "Opening Doors to a Learning Society". The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) and I are the only people who now possess a copy, and it might be useful to show the document to the House.

Those of us who have been involved in education believe that the Labour party has been far more interested in bolting doors than opening them. The Opposition's mind remains closed to anything other than the increasingly discredited dogma of the 1960s. Labour's doorman for this exercise was the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), but the doors jammed, and they never opened and the White Paper became so much waste paper. It was claimed that this consultation document was the result of

> "an exceptional type of consultation, not seen since the 1944 Education Act."

Some four months later Labour's doors remain as closed as Labour's mind on both the consultation and the paper. The document has been consigned to the oblivion that it deserves.

Labour is motivated less by a desire to improve education than by a raw appetite for power. The Opposition seem to believe that, by adopting some of the Government's education policies, they may secure some form of electoral advantage. I have news for them. Why should the electorate vote for Labour when, in the Conservatives, they have the real thing? We believe in league tables and grant-maintained schools and in all the measures that have been so painfully introduced by the Government in recent years. By contrast, the Opposition oppose competition and believe that only LEA education is good education.

It is said that there is much rejoicing in heaven when one sinner repenteth. I am not implying that the right hon. Member for Sedgfield (Mr. Blair), the Leader of the Opposition, is in any way a sinner, but at long last he has come round to the idea that parents actually like choice, and that the good, bad or indifferent comprehensive school does not provide all the answers. He has come round to the idea that grant-maintained schools should not be damned simply because they are outside the LEA establishment.

I welcome the conversion, which no doubt occurred on the stony way to his son's secondary school. Let me make it clear—I say this with absolute sincerity and I want no misunderstanding about that. I do not criticise the right hon. Gentleman and I do not condemn him, for he is doing what I do. I endeavour to secure the best for my children, and he is doing the same. The best in his case, and with his Labour-controlled LEA area, is a grant-maintained school outside it.

If there is condemnation in this, it is of the quality of schools and the quality of education provided by a local Labour education authority. There seems to be a growing gulf between the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle). I acknowledge the fact that the latter, like me, has a large family. Between us, we have 11 children. We were both educated in the state sector, as were our children, but I suspect that that is where the similarity ends.

The hon. Member for Walton is quoted in *The Times Educational Supplement* as being

> "an unequivocal opponent of grant maintained schools."

Indeed, he quotes among his battle honours—we heard from him about it earlier—the Bluecoat school, where he was "on the winning side"—that is, the side that defeated an application for grant-maintained status.

I believe that it would be helpful if the right hon. Member for Sedgfield invited his hon. Friend into the Leader of the Opposition's room and, over a comradely glass of Glenlivet, and in his smiling, cheerful way, suggested that he change his ideas. After all, one cannot have, even in the Labour party, the leader doing one thing and one of his henchman saying and doing something completely different.

It would be in the interests of the nation's children if the Labour party persuaded its comrades in the more militant LEAs to call the dogs off and to stop their unreasonable opposition to grant-maintained status. I am convinced that one of the reasons why even more grant-maintained schools have not so far emerged is the campaigns waged against them—for example, by the hon. Member for Walton and other Labour Members, and also the Liberal Democrats. It seems that they and some LEAs were more interested in protecting their own interests and empires.

I believe that Opposition Members are abolitionists. They oppose grant-maintained status, grammar schools, city technology colleges and the assisted places scheme. They are opposed to anything other than the neighbourhood comprehensive. I must tell them that they make a grievous error.

Mr. Kilfoyle: The Labour party is against the divisiveness of consecutive Conservative policies that set out a small group, to the disadvantage of the majority. On grant-maintained schools, the hon. Gentleman is fully aware that our objection has been about the form of management, the preferential funding and the lack of local democratic accountability. It was never suggested by anybody that parents should not send their children to grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Pawsey: If that was a brief intervention, thank heavens the hon. Gentleman did not want to make a long one. When he says "divisiveness", I say "choice". I say with all the sincerity that I can command that I believe in choice. I want to give parents choice. "Choice" and "diversity" are key words, and I am sorry that I cannot carry Labour Members with me on what I believe to be a key principle of our developing education policies.

Mr. Don Foster: I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument. Does he believe, in the choice and diversity on which he is so keen, that it would be only fair to have a level playing field? Does he agree that it is unfair that grant-maintained schools have a financial advantage over LEA schools?

Mr. Pawsey: If the hon. Gentleman can contain himself for a little longer, I shall deal later with the reason why people elect for grant-maintained status—and it is not the money.

The Gracious Speech did not propose any new education legislation. Therefore, we shall have the opportunity to digest and absorb the reforms of previous years. The teaching profession has rightly complained about the pace of change. We are now moving from the stormy waters of reform into the relative calm of consolidation. There is now a breathing space in which we can further consider the actions that we have taken and undertake the fine tuning that will undoubtedly prove necessary. I look forward to hearing what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say about that when he responds to the debate.

Another of the Government's achievements is the greater part now being played by parents in the running of their children's schools. There is a powerful argument that parents know best what is right for their own children. Parents do not leave their brains at the school gate when they go into the school to meet their children's teachers. Parents have a contribution to make and, in my view, it is a substantial one. Parents—I include the right hon. Member for Sedgefield—recognise that children respond to different challenges and different school environments. The Government have ensured that all parents now receive a written report on their child's progress at least once a year. Schools are also now required to publish test and examination results.

I am an unashamed proponent of grant-maintained schools. I believe that the system delivers choice and diversity. It also acts as a spur to those schools that remain under LEA control. Therefore, GM schools have an impact out of all proportion to their number. So far, about 1,100 schools have voted for GM status. That involves about 650,000 pupils. It means that well over 1 million parents have elected to send their children to GM schools.

Overwhelmingly, those GM schools come from the secondary sector. It is now time for GM status to be relaunched and focused principally at primary level. The House will recall that more than 17 per cent. of the nation's secondary schools are now grant-maintained. I want a similar proportion of primary schools to opt for GM status. Primary schools are naturally much smaller than their secondary brethren and they may not, on their own, be able to afford the specialist advice that exists in secondary schools. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should make it easier for primary schools to establish links with the secondary sector so that they can share some of the costs of providing the necessary expertise. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister could refer to that point in his reply.

Some of us who were the poor bloody infantry in the education battles fought in Standing Committees will recall my argument that the principal attraction of GM status is not the additional funding—although clearly it is a benefit—but the greater measure of independence that such schools enjoy. GM status enables head teachers and their governing bodies to cut the apron strings that formerly secured those schools to the LEA and its ideas.

When I sought to intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), he saw me holding a survey published in *The Times Educational Supplement* and he would not let me in. I do not blame him. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question was given by *The Times Educational Supplement*. Its independent survey made it absolutely clear that the real reason for choosing grant-maintained status is not money but the independence that it allows.

Mr. Don Foster *rose—*

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way, but I am already receiving curious signs from my Whip. Unless I move on, there will be grumbling.

The Government's record on advanced education is splendid. To paraphrase one of my hon. Friends, when the other lot were in, only one in eight of the target group went into advanced education. Today's figure is one in three, making well over 1 million students. My right hon. and hon. Friends and the Government have not received the credit that they deserve for that remarkable achievement.

The only causes for disquiet are the way that discretionary grants operate and the fact that some LEAs do not make them. I should like to elaborate but I cannot do so, but I would be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would refer to that point when he winds up.

Everything that has been achieved has been achieved at great cost.

Ms Estelle Morris *indicated assent.*

Mr. Pawsey: I am glad that the hon. Lady agrees. Spending per pupil has risen almost 50 per cent. in real terms since 1979, when her lot left office. Spending on books and equipment has increased by 30 per cent., and teachers' average pay has risen 57 per cent. in real terms.

Ms Morris *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Pawsey: That figure of 57 per cent. is correct. Those improvements are a measure of the Government's achievements. Only with a Conservative Government will parents and pupils get a good deal and be able to ensure that the quality of education continues to improve.

1.41 pm

Ms Margaret Hodge (Barking): Much of today's debate has centred on the alleged contribution that grant-maintained schools have made to improving standards. In reality, only four children in 100 attend a GMS. Our concerns are quality, excellence and standards for all school children. If one adds to that number the seven children in 100 who attend private schools, one finds that nearly nine children out of 10 attend ordinary state comprehensive schools. The Government must answer the question of whether their educational reforms provide the framework in which every child can develop to his or her best.

After 15 years of turmoil and change, are all children better equipped to fulfil the roles that society wants and needs, if this nation is to succeed in the intensely competitive global market economy? A small number of higher education establishments may be maintaining better standards, but the Government have failed the

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majority of young people. The charge against you is that, far from raising standards, you have failed most young people.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Lady appears to be addressing me personally.

Ms Hodge: My apologies, Madam Deputy Speaker. I must learn the conventions of the House. I hope that you will excuse me.

The charge that I lay against the Government is not the product of political dogma and prejudice but founded on the factual outcome of Government reforms. The Government chose to concentrate the nation's limited resources and energies on the few and to forget the many.

Let us examine the facts. If we compare ourselves with our international peers, we will see that we are not attaining high standards and outcomes for most children. Only 27 per cent. of 16-year-olds in England get grades A to C in the core subjects of maths, the national language and science. In Japan, 50 per cent. of children achieve that level; in Germany the figure is 62 per cent.; and in France it is 66 per cent. It is indictment on 15 years' of Conservative Government that today one in five 21-year-olds has difficulty with basic maths and one in six 21-year-olds has difficulty reading and writing.

What matters to Britain is not what is happening in a few schools, but how the education system is meeting the needs of the overwhelming majority of our children. One of the ways in which high standards can be achieved is through the investment of resources in our education system. Education has been starved of resources year on year under this Government.

That is not to pretend that resources are the only answer to the problems that we face in our schools; but without the proper allocation of sufficient resources we will never achieve high educational standards. We can build effective schools only if we ensure that proper educational standards are a basic entitlement for all of our children.

That goal is not necessarily achieved through higher taxation; it is, most importantly, a question of political choice. If the £780 million that was invested in consultants for the British Rail privatisation process had been spent on improving nursery education for our under-fives, the Government could be proud of their achievements in improving educational standards and quality.

Most of the children of Opposition Members attend state secondary schools—those are the schools to which we have a commitment. Most of the children of Conservative Members do not attend those schools. Conservative Members are quite happy to invest as much as £5,200, on average, in every pupil attending a private school. However, when it comes to state comprehensive education, we are, on average, investing less than half of that amount—£2,400—in every child.

That is the real unfairness and the real scandal in British politics today: it is not whether a Labour Member of Parliament chooses between one state school or another, but that most Conservative Members of Parliament choose to spend an average of £5,200 on their children in the private sector. They believe that it is all right for the rest of us to survive in a system where less than half of that amount is spent on each child.

Of course school outcomes are different. If private schools achieve better results, Conservative Members must ask themselves whether that is at least partly related to the resources invested in each child. One has only to compare the pupil-teacher ratio in the private sector with that of the state comprehensive sector to see that that level of investment provides a much more generous pupil-teacher ratio and therefore promotes higher standards.

Britain has a history of one of the longest periods of compulsory education in the world. Despite that, we devote a considerably smaller share of our national income to education than most of our European partners and the United States of America. According to the most recent comparable figures, we spend 4.7 per cent. of gross national product on education. France spends 5.4 per cent. of GNP on education, America spends 5.7 per cent. and Sweden spends as much as 7.2 per cent.

What has been the impact of those funding levels? What have our state schools been forced to do in the past 15 years? Under the current system, they have been forced to get rid of experienced teachers because they are too expensive. All hon. Members have examples of that happening in their constituencies. Under current constraints, state schools have been forced to make cuts in books and equipment.

A recent report by the National Association of Head Teachers states that schools, to cope with the financial constraints of this coming year, could install water metering and water controls to save money; have a central heating control switch in the head teacher's office to save money; sell rights to ice cream vendors to earn money; and replace broken windows with plastic windows to save money.

The capital spending situation is a scandal. The extent of our investment in capital expenditure on schools means that, at current levels, it will take 60 years simply to deal with depreciation in those assets, without taking account of new assets that might be brought in. We have a poorer pupil-teacher ratio than in the past, and it is worsening. That is having an impact on quality standards in our education system.

I want to spend my last few minutes considering our commitment to nursery education. In 1972, the previous Prime Minister gave a promise that every three and four-year-old would be entitled to a place in a state nursery school. One generation later, successive Governments have failed to deliver that promise. At the Conservative party conference, the Prime Minister made a commitment that four-year-olds should have access to pre-school education in schools. However, since that commitment was given, all that has happened is that the Government have cut the budget for pre-school and early-years training through grants for education support and training funding.

I fear that there will be either a spread of poor quality early-years service or a growth in the number of four-year-olds in reception classes, where 30 children are looked after by one teacher and one helper. They are nothing more than a form of cheap child care.

Comprehensive, high-quality early-years services are vital to creating equality of opportunity for children and equality of opportunity between men and women, both in education and in the work place. They are vital to build the skilled work force we need if we are to be competitive and successful in the global economy.

What have we got? Where is the commitment to doing something about the early years? Where is the new money that was promised? We were not told about it in the Budget. Where is the new capital that is required? It did not appear in the Budget. Why is there such a loathing of local authorities, as expressed by Sheila Lawlor in an article yesterday, which will prevent the Government, who one assumes is advised by her, from giving local authorities the necessary resources to improve early-years education?

Improving the quality of early-years education, will cost us money. The Danes and the French spend 1 per cent. of their gross domestic product on education of children in their early years. The French spend 10 per cent. and the Norwegians 11 per cent. of their education budget on the early years. We spend a mere 4 per cent. Let us compare ourselves with our international competitors. In France, a third of two-year-olds are in nursery schools and in Belgium, Denmark and Italy, more than 80 per cent. of children aged over three are in nursery schools or kindergarten. However, in Britain, only 14 per cent. of our three and four-year-olds have full-time places in nursery classes. The geographical distribution of provision is just as bad.

The concern for quality and excellence is central to my party's values. The educational entitlement that we offer our children is the key to creating a fair and equal society but, in a truly fair society, everyone would have an equal chance of a good education. In Britain, under this Government, only the privileged few have that chance while the rest of us have seen our schools starved of resources, our teachers hounded and promises of improvement in provision for the early years broken.

Too many of our children have been failed yet our children are our future. The Government's failure to invest in that future makes them unfit to govern. The British people are longing for the day when they can tell the Government to go and we can start to build an education for our children which will create a strong Britain for the future.

1.55 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I shall be extremely brief. I shall not read out pages of prepared text, but intend to reply directly to the international comparisons made by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge). The hon. Lady complained about nursery education, although Conservative education authorities such as Wandsworth have been pioneers in this respect. She also mentioned outcomes, but it was the Conservative Government who shifted the debate from inputs to outcomes. That significant shift has transformed the education debate. However, I shall concentrate mainly on the hon. Lady's international comparisons.

We have taken great care to introduce league tables, testing and the national curriculum, because we want to improve the outcomes of education system. The hon. Lady cited some figures, and I believe that I know their provenance. I think that they come from a document entitled "Educational Achievement in Britain, France, Germany and Japan: A Comparative Analysis" by Andy Green, published by the Institute of Education of the University of London, but the hon. Lady will correct me if I am wrong.

The document does indeed show that the outcomes of the education systems in France and Germany in particular, but also in Japan, seem to be superior to ours. In particular, the proportion of 16-year-olds obtaining the GCSE standard in a range of subjects is significantly lower in the United Kingdom than in France and Germany. The reasons cited by the document are important, and it is incumbent on the hon. Lady to explain the full facts.

The document states:

"as nations, they"—

Germany, France and Japan—

"place great emphasis on educational achievement, engendering high educational aspirations amongst individual learners. They . . . have a learning culture . . . and . . . the labour market, and society in general, regards those who do well in education."

The document is therefore taking account of a range of factors, such as starting salaries for graduates in industry, to encourage people to aspire to higher educational achievement.

The key paragraph that the hon. Lady should perhaps have cited, rather than reading her prepared notes, states:

"Prescribed curricula have governed the content of different types of school and for different ages. They have established norms and expectations for all children and have given clarity and purpose to the educational process. Curriculum development and pedagogical research has tended to have a more national focus than in the UK . . . Norms are established for all children, in whichever stream, and they are reinforced through regular assessment and reporting. In France and Germany, the practice of grade repeating serves to underline the expectation that certain standards are expected at each level."

The countries mentioned have a diversity of educational provision and wide parental choice. That is what the Labour party has yet to learn, and it is an issue that will make the Government's education policy a winner at the next election.

1.58 pm

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): In accordance with the traditions of the House, I first declare my role as an adviser to the National Union of Teachers.

We have had a number of interesting speeches on what all hon. Members have recognised as one of the most important topics facing the nation. I particularly enjoyed the contribution of the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), who made an excellent speech on sensitive issues. It is only when we have a cross-party approach to those issues that we will be able to begin to tackle them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) gave us his usual sensible and expert analysis of education and, as is normal in his case, offered us the philosophical underpinning that we sometimes lack. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) illustrated only too well how changes made to education in the past 15 years have affected the children and people within his constituency.

I should like to refer for a moment to the remarks by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). I spent a number of hours in Committee and in the Chamber debating education with him. I have heard him express his commitment to choice before. How many children in his constituency can choose to go to Rugby school? How many of them can choose to go to Lawrence Sheriff school or the High School for Girls? All those schools are selective or fee paying. Even in the hon. Gentleman's

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constituency, which offers comprehensive education, what choice do parents have, other than the Kenilworth comprehensive, which is the only comprehensive school in that part of his constituency?

The hon. Gentleman's attempt to persuade hon. Members that schools do not opt out for financial incentives came ill from him, especially when we had just heard a 10-minute speech from his hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry), who said that he was about to advise the schools in his constituency to opt out in order to gain those very financial incentives. Perhaps I can understand the thinking of the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, because I know that the first school that chose to opt out in his constituency may have done so not to gain financial incentives, but in order to avoid closure.

It would be surprising if standards in education had not risen in the past 15 years. There is no doubt that many children now do and know more than those educated even a decade ago. One need only walk into a science class at any secondary school to see young people studying topics that used to be part of an undergraduate syllabus at university. Pupils are more likely now to be learning two languages, to have successfully completed a period of work experience and committed themselves to a period of community service than those of a previous generation.

It is probably no exaggeration to say—I speak on my behalf, at least—that many children in primary schools are more computer literate than many hon. Members. It is clear from talking to young people that many of them are more confident, more articulate and more ambitious than those in previous generations. Their work in creative and expressive art is, in some cases, outstanding. Young people get all too bad a press nowadays, but I want to acknowledge the real achievements of many young people, and, in doing so, the achievements of their teachers and their parents.

The real question is not whether standards have risen—they have—but whether they have risen enough, and whether they have risen across the board. More than a year ago, the National Commission on Education reported on the relative under-achievement of our 16 to 18-year-olds. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) said, those young people lag behind their counterparts in Japan, Germany and France in terms of vocational and academic qualifications. The graduate comparison, however, is more favourable to the United Kingdom.

Those comparisons reveal the real issue in the debate about standards. Our education system has always been plagued by the gap between those who achieve and those who do not. The main challenge that should have faced the Government in the past 15 years was how to bridge that gap and raise the education standards of all our children. The evidence shows that the Government have failed to meet that challenge; in fact, I am not sure that they even had it as a target.

The Tory legacy in education is one of two classes—the haves and the have nots; the selected and the rejected; the failures and the successes. As with the health service, the Government's policy has turned schools into competing financial units. If one school gets more, another is denied; if schools achieve, they are rewarded; if they are struggling, they are left to struggle.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Morris: I gave up some time to allow the hon. Member to make his speech, so I am not in a position to give way to him now.

How else can we explain why grant-maintained schools have received two and a half times as much money for capital expenditure as other schools? Why is it that four times as much is spent on a child in a city technology college as on a child in a maintained school? What rhyme or reason is there in the public purse providing money for children to be educated in the private sector? Is it any wonder that a Government who have deliberately built into the system inequality of funding should have seen an increase in inequality of achievement?

Inequality of funding is not wrong because any Opposition Member envies those who manage to secure the resources. It is wrong because such favouritism cannot meet the needs of our children or of the nation. It must be at the least morally questionable to invest in some children at the expense of the rest. Perhaps even more importantly, it shows that the Government fail to realise that the future of our nation depends not on the skills of a few but on the contribution of us all.

I detect a feeling of complacency in many of the words that have been spoken from the Conservative Benches today. If Conservative Members think that what we have in our schools and education system is good enough, they are not ambitious enough for our country or our children. How can they be complacent when, after 15 years of Tory government, 150,000 children are still taught in classes of more than 40, and a further 1.5 million are taught in classes of more than 30?

How can they be complacent when one in 10 children still leave school with no qualifications and the number of school exclusions continues to rise? Why are not the Government doing something about the fact that 25 per cent. of local authorities are now so short of cash that they do not give any discretionary grants to students between 16 and 18 for further education courses? Labour wants better than that. I believe that parents and teachers share in our high aspirations for the education system.

The Minister of State acknowledged that a sizeable group of our children are under-achieving. Those are children both in inner-city and outer-ring areas, in schools the catchment area of which is middle and working class, and in schools at both the top and the bottom of the league tables. Under-achievement is not in one school or one type of school. It pervades too many of our schools in the system.

However, the Minister must reflect why, after 15 years of the Conservatives running the education system, the problem has grown and not reduced. For the Labour party, education is about raising standards, not for the few but for a whole generation. Everyone has a part to play: teachers, parents and Government. There is no doubt that the conflict that the Government have created between those partners in education has done nothing to help matters.

There are three ways in which the Government can help to raise standards. The first is through the provision of nursery education. As my hon. Friend the Member for

Barking and others have said, there is now incontrovertible evidence that the life chances of individuals can be crucially enhanced by good-quality nursery education. Why, when the evidence is so strong and has been so strong for so long, are we still languishing at the bottom of the international league table of nursery provision?

The Tories have dithered for 15 years about whether they are in favour of nursery education or not. While they have dithered, millions of children have missed the only chance they have ever had of getting the best start to their school life.

From what I read, nursery education is now back on the Government's agenda. However, words are not enough. After 15 years of Tory rule, whether people's children get a chance to go to nursery still depends on where they live and what they earn. Simply, for every month and every year of Government indecision on nursery provision, thousands of children are denied the chance to succeed.

Secondly, we need to examine what we ask our teachers to do and how we support them in doing it. Every parent knows that one of the important factors which determines whether a child does well at school is the relationship between the teacher and the pupil and what goes on in the classroom.

It sometimes appears that the Government have deliberately gone out of their way to make classroom teaching more difficult. All the changes of recent years have inevitably affected the way in which teachers do their job—and not simply the changes that have been forced through in legislation and Government experimentation. Changes in technology and teaching methods have made teaching substantially different from the job it was 30 years ago.

Nevertheless, throughout all the upheaval of the past 15 years, the Government have never once re-evaluated the tasks we ask of our teachers. It is about time that we considered what teachers do, and what pupils and parents can expect of them. It is about time that we considered that in its own right.

Most teachers now spend only half their working week working with children. No other profession receives as little support as teachers. When teachers are not teaching, they are clerks and typists, form fillers and resource makers. They have to learn to be technicians, bookkeepers and administrators. The effect on teacher morale is damaging enough, but the real losers are the children. People do not go into teaching to be paper chasers and form fillers, and parents want teachers to spend more time with their children.

Let the teachers teach. Let them spend more of their working week with children and less doing administrative and support work. If teachers had the clerical and administrative support that is given to accountants or solicitors, or even Members of Parliament, it would bring about a substantial improvement in the quality of teaching and the standards of achievement. The winners would be the pupils.

Thirdly, we need to build an environment and a culture for learning. How can a child learn when he is being taught by a string of supply teachers because the school does not have the money to carry supernumerary teachers to cover for staff absence? How can one learn when one's class is being disrupted by other children because one's school does not have the resources to provide the support that destructive children need? How can children learn if they are the ones who do not have a book and whose classroom is waiting for repair? That might not be a familiar environment to the children of Conservative Members of Parliament, but it is only too familiar an environment to many children throughout the country.

However, it is not simply what happens in the school that creates an environment for learning, but what happens outside, and what children bring to the classroom with them. What type of learning environment is it for children who come from homes where there is no space for homework, for quiet or for study? What about those children who come from families that find parenting difficult? What about the 4.1 million children who live in poverty, or the growing number of children who suffer from poverty-related illness? The current Government have made it hard for so many of our children to succeed.

Like many who have spoken in the debate, I spent my working life before being elected to this place as a teacher. In my case, it was at an inner-city comprehensive school. Like many other teachers, I know that the greatest professional satisfaction is to watch children succeed and progress. However, I also know that the greatest professional frustration is to watch talent and opportunity being wasted.

I have to believe Conservative Members when they say that they want to raise standards. I have to say to them, however, that, in 15 years of their rule, they have hindered the process rather than helped it. The Government will never raise standards as long as they fund differentially, as long as they make schools compete for the necessities, and as long as they make as many errors as they have done in the national curriculum and testing.

Education has given many of us in the House and outside all the opportunities that we have had in our lifetime. It is the responsibility of all Governments to give the same opportunities to everyone else. This Government have singularly failed to do that. The next Labour Government will deliver.

2.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Robin Squire): This has been a wide-ranging, entertaining and—I suppose predictably—at times controversial debate on education. Like the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris), I have conceded some time, because I was anxious that hon. Members who had stayed in the Chamber throughout the morning should have the opportunity to speak. I hope that, in turn, hon. Members on both sides of the House will understand if that limits my ability to give way, because I want to concentrate on the debate rather than raise fresh issues.

In a spirit of friendship I shall start on a note that I am sure will unite the House. I congratulate the hon. Members for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) and for Yardley on their maiden speeches from the Opposition Front Bench. I thought that they both performed well—by account, in the first case, and from the evidence of my own eyes and ears in the second. The hon. Member for Walton and I meet relatively regularly due to my role as sponsor Minister for Merseyside, but I can reassure him—he may need it—that any agreement that we regularly find

[Mr. Robin Squire]

on matters involving Merseyside has not yet been evident over most of the education issues that have been discussed today.

The hon. Member for Walton highlighted performance tables. Speaking from the Government Benches, it is only fair for me to welcome the new support from the Labour party for the principle of performance tables with value added. I recognise that that has still to be worked through some parts of the Labour party.

The hon. Gentleman also asked, quite properly, about the progress on Ofsted inspections. I readily confirm that in this term we have had some difficulties in securing the flow of inspections that we have sought in primary schools. Her Majesty's chief inspector has taken a number of steps to deal with the matter, including using Her Majesty's inspectors and Ofsted to lead some inspections of primary and special schools. The House will realise that it is too early to judge whether that has been successful. We are in the first three months of the first year of the cycle of primary school inspection. It remains the Government's clear intention to ensure that every school is inspected within the four-year cycle, as originally set out.

The hon. Gentleman—and I suspect almost all hon. Members—predictably referred to grant-maintained schools. I shall not contribute an enormous amount to the subject. I think that my hon. Friends have more than coped in their efforts to expose what can best be described as a certain embarrassment on the subject among Labour Members at present.

Self-governing status for schools is not an end in itself; it is a means by which schools improve themselves and improve the standard of education offered. I recently read that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) was quoted as saying that he wanted to investigate what it was that made GM schools special. If, unlike so many of his colleagues, he is prepared to visit GM schools, not regard them with utter hostility, hoping that they will go away, he will discover from heads, staff and parents that, at heart, what they like is is the ability to run the whole of the school, the immediacy of decision making, better value for money and greater freedom. If he remains unconvinced he can always bring the matter to the shadow Cabinet, which might yet be formed of a majority of GM parents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) has apologised to the House for his inability to be present for the conclusion of the debate, as has the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright). As ever, my hon. Friend speaks with great authority on matters educational. He rightly spoke of the welcome rise in standards as measured by GCSE results. That fact was welcomed on both sides of the Chamber. It is clear evidence that the anti-studying ethos that was a problem in so many of our schools, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, has been significantly reduced.

The hon. Member for Hemsworth mentioned the Government's attitude to a general teaching council, as did the hon. Member for Bath. I can confirm that nothing has changed in Government policy since the conference of the Professional Association of Teachers and the correspondence with Professor Tomlinson in the summer. A professional body, established voluntarily by teachers and committed to high standards in teaching, would be a positive and welcome step and would not need statutory powers to be effective. As Professor Tomlinson knows, we are willing to discuss such proposals when he or others are ready.

The hon. Member for Hemsworth also mentioned the problem of the numbers of religious education teachers. There have been some shortages, but the numbers are increasing. As the numbers going into teacher training and coming out of it are increasing, the problem is obviously declining.

I also sympathised with what the hon. Gentleman had to say about modern language teaching in primary schools. Although such teaching is not a statutory requirement, a growing number of primary schools are offering modern languages; and I hope, in the space created by the curriculum reforms, that further primary schools may take up the option. It is of some advantage both to the children and to our country.

My long-time hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) gave, as ever, a thoughtful speech. I could have spent my whole speech dealing with his points, but time will allow me to mention only two or three of them. He joined in what must be a universal welcome for the stability that now seems to be with us. A period of stability for the curriculum is, we recognise, important for our schools. The Government's commitment to five years without change remains firm. We shall most certainly stick to it.

My hon. Friend also highlighted the importance of mathematics. I am sure that he, like me, welcomes the creation of the first 50 technology colleges, with their concentration on science, technology and mathematics. The numbers will grow, not least because we have enhanced the opportunities for all schools, including LEA county schools, to seek that status. Although they have been in operation as technology colleges for only a short time, they are already starting to influence their pupils, and they are certainly popular with parents.

My hon. Friend's third point—if I did not mention it, he would tick me off afterwards—was to reiterate his long-held commitment to nursery schooling, which he has championed for many years. I am delighted to note that he now sees broad agreement between his views and those of the Government.

I gather that the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) intervened to mention some DFE press release that he had seen, quoting projections of numbers of GM schools. I can confirm here and now that there is no such press release, although there have to be working assumptions for all projected budgets.

Mr. Don Foster: I was referring not to a specific set of figures in a press release but to an ability to work backwards from the budget figures to extrapolate from them what the assumptions must have been—that is why I asked the Minister about the assumptions.

Mr. Squire: If the hon. Gentleman will look at the tables, he can make that sort of calculation more quickly than I can standing here. Here, as in so many other areas, each year we have to make some projections, but they are not necessarily predictions of what will happen.

The hon. Member for Bath also drew attention to what can best be described as the utter confusion in the Labour party on the matter of GM schools. But just when I was about to agree with him, he used phrases such as "GM failure". These are schools which, by any standard, are usually more popular with parents and are obtaining better results than LEA comprehensives. Ofsted has said that they often exhibit higher teacher morale and lower truancy rates. Some failure! Would that all our schools performed as well as most GM schools do.

The hon. Gentleman also commented on Ofsted. I hope that he will take into account what I said earlier when responding to a point made by the hon. Member for Hemsworth. The independent inspectorate stands quite apart from the DFE policy units. The inspectorate not only highlights good and bad schools—the latter being the ones that require attention—but also informs future policy making. They are independent of the Government and we must look at our own policies from time to time, especially in terms of how we can improve schools in general.

I enjoyed the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry), who highlighted the excellent improvement in examination results in his constituency. I congratulate the schools involved and assure him that there is no question of debasing the standards and quality of our examinations, GCSE or any other. There is now a system to ensure that that cannot happen.

My hon. Friend the Member for High Peak spent some time correctly pointing out that, while there is an element in the standard spending assessment for measuring sparsity, it is not necessarily to be found within an individual LEA's locally managed school scheme. I have exchanged a considerable amount of correspondence with hon. Members on that subject. My hon. Friend made it clear in his speech that responsibility for the LMS scheme lies absolutely with the local authority. If as he suggested it is currently discriminating against some small but excellent schools, I trust that the opportunity that he has taken to highlight that will be widely read in his constituency and elsewhere in Derbyshire.

I shall dare to praise my hon. Friend for a third time by saying that he spoke wisely about depoliticising the issue of grant-maintained schools. It is quite common for some GM school governors to say to me, "We are not Conservatives." Of course, that is a temporary unpopularity. However, they wish that their parties, whether they are Liberal Democrat or Labour, were more in tune and appreciated the success and importance of grant-maintained status. They share my hon. Friend's view that those schools are here to stay in their present form.

I have enjoyed considerable discussion in Committee and in the House in recent years with the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall), who spoke of his concern about performance tables. I absolutely respect his right to hold the views that he expressed, but he must accept that, at least in some schools, there is clear evidence that heads and senior members of staff have combined to ensure that the appearance of the tables and the relatively poor position of some schools have served to galvanise them to improve their schools. That has been shown by the performance either this year or in a previous year.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West spoke about the balance of funding through the standard spending assessment. In view of the time that is available, he would not expect me to go into the highways and byways of that, but I am sure he accepts that there can be no question of standard spending per pupil across the country. Whether one considers sparsity, much higher salaries in the south-east or the proportion of pupils who have free school meals or have English as a second language, there must be a means of measuring schools in areas with different factors or sometimes problems. It is right that such schools should get extra funding.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) was, as ever, present for a debate on matters educational. He emphasised the issue of choice and I was delighted to hear him refer to the Labour white paper of just four months ago and to read out the marvellous passage from it that this was

"consultation not seen since the 1944 Education Act."

My hon. Friend will agree that, in a year or two, we will be lucky if we see the white paper again in any shape or form.

I agree with my hon. Friend on the importance of primary grant-maintained schools expanding. The number is going up and I suspect—this is not a prediction—that within a year or so there will be more GM primary schools than GM secondary schools.

My near neighbour the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) alleged failure at a time when there are improved numbers in higher education and higher grades at GCSE and other examinations and a wider range of courses on offer. She was rightly and wisely corrected in a brilliant short speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin). The hon. Lady was wrong about nursery education and she was certainly wrong on her general charge that standards were not rising. They are continuing to rise.

Let me draw up a brief checklist of where we stand on standards in education. We welcome the fact that there is some agreement on the national curriculum, possibly on testing and certainly on publication of performance tables, but if we are talking of quality, what about assisted places, whereby some of the brightest from some of the poorest households are currently educated in some of our best schools? What about selective schools, where some 170 schools, including some of the best in the country on educational merits and examination success, are threatened by the Labour party? What about city technology colleges, which have an all-ability intake and are out-performing the average in virtually every LEA in which they are situated? Finally, of course, what about grant-maintained schools, where the Labour party can go neither forward nor backwards, but can only watch as the popularity of such schools increases?

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That at the sitting on Monday 12th December, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Greg Knight relating to the Committee of Privileges not later than one and a half hours after their commencement, and the said Motion may be entered upon and proceeded with, though opposed, at any hour.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

WAYS AND MEANS

Ordered,

That at the sitting on Tuesday 13th December, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Ways and Means Motions in the name of Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer not later than Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That the Speaker shall—

(1) at the sitting on Wednesday 14th December, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business)—

(i) not later than Seven o'clock put the Questions on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Gummer relating to the draft Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) Regulations 1994 and the draft Water Undertakers, Railways, British Waterways Board and Telecommunications Industry, Electricity Supply Industry, Docks and Harbours, and British Gas plc (Rateable Values) Orders 1994; and

(ii) not later than Ten o'clock put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to the Common Fisheries Policy; and

(2) at the sitting on Monday 19th December put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Tony Newton relating to Sittings of the House (Private Members' Business), Consolidation, &c., Bills and Law Commission Bills, Money Resolutions and Ways and Means Resolutions, Statutory Instruments, &c., and European Community Documents, and Short Speeches not later than Ten o'clock; and those Questions shall include the Questions on any amendments to those Motions which she may have selected and which may then be moved.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 15th December, any Consolidated Fund Bill ordered to be brought in and read the first time shall be proceeded with as if the second reading thereof stood as first order of the day, and Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills) shall apply.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Friday 16th December, the Speaker shall not adjourn the House until she has notified the Royal Assent to Acts agreed upon by both Houses.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

ACCOMMODATION AND WORKS

Ordered,

That Sir Donald Thompson be discharged from the Accommodation and Works Committee and Mr. Sydney Chapman be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Robert Dunn be discharged from the Select Committee on Members' Interests and Mr. James Clappison be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

CONSOLIDATION, &C., BILLS (JOINT COMMITTEE)

Ordered,

That Estelle Morris be discharged from the Select Committee appointed to join with a Committee of the Lords as the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills and Mr. Eddie Loyden be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Royal Yacht

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise the subject of the future of the royal yacht. Back in 1980, I had a similar debate about the Queen's flight: two different topics, but with a similar starting point—time has overtaken equipment in the royal service.

On 23 June, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence made an announcement about the future of Britannia in a written answer. It was short on answers, but posed some interesting and worthwhile questions. A further statement was promised, but has not yet been made. It is good of my hon. Friend the Minister to be present this afternoon, and the House hopes that he will use this opportunity to take the issue forward as it is a matter of considerable public interest.

The House will be familiar with the basic facts. Britannia was launched in 1953 on the Clyde and has travelled more than 1 million miles, serving as a secure royal residence in the age of international terrorism, providing a wonderful setting for official entertainment—she can host a reception for some 200 people and seat more than 50 around the dining table—and promoting this country's commercial interests abroad. Her last major refit was in 1987. A future refit, at an estimated £17 million, would be necessary in 1996-97, but we are told that this would prolong her life for only five years more. I understand that she would need new engines and, indeed, much new machinery. Even then, she would be difficult to maintain and very expensive to run. It has therefore been decided to decommission her in 1997.

There are those who think that Britannia should have the refit and not be decommissioned. They would like to see her given new engines, and the accommodation altered to allow more exhibition space. I must tell the House that I am not one of that number, as I believe that that would be allowing the heart to rule the head.

Britannia was originally designed to have an alternative function as a hospital ship. That concept was always put forward when her expense was criticised. Personally, I regret that she was never used in that role, and it is no longer practicable to do so. At the time of the conflict in the south Atlantic it turned out that she used the wrong type of fuel. The holiday liner Uganda was therefore used instead. However, the Britannia did rescue some British subjects trapped in the Yemen in 1986.

This is the moment to pay tribute to the Britannia's present and past crews. I am proud to have a cousin on board serving as a comparatively senior officer. Britannia has been a centre of excellence in a service renowned throughout the world for its skills and high standards. I lunched on board in 1991 when the British Council of Shipping took over the ship for a seminar. It was a memorable day in the pool of London—all was sparkle and style. From the admiral to the ratings, we were talking to carefully selected and dedicated individuals with many professional qualifications. There is tremendous enthusiasm in the Royal Navy to serve on such a ship.

Will the Minister tell us today about plans for the reduction and final removal of her present splendid ship's company, now down to some 220 sailors? May we also be told what are the present guidelines governing the use of Britannia and the level of fees charged by the Ministry of Defence? I am told that Sir Robin Butler—the Cabinet Secretary, no less—chairs a commission to consider applications for her use. The ship certainly should not be made available free of charge for private or corporate functions at a time when, as we all know, the defence budget is under such strain.

Britannia has done Britain proud on countless visits abroad. My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) has kindly given me permission to quote from a letter that he received from a former United States ambassador to the United Kingdom, Henry Cato. In 1976, that distinguished diplomat was the US chief of protocol, charged with preparing for the Queen's state visit to America. His letter said:

> "I was literally besieged with people wanting invitations to the various functions that were to be held on board. Corporate moguls would devise outlandish reasons as to why they should be invited; society matrons would throw themselves at me. In short, that ship was a superb tool for British industry and the British nation and to let her go and not replace her would be a great pity, sending a bad message to the world."

Prudent Ministers could take heed of such comments.

What should happen to that splendid ship after 1997? The Government believe that she should serve a useful purpose while never again going to sea. The bids are pouring in. I had a letter from the hon. Member for Hartlepool (Mr. Mandelson) and as I have fine memories of his part of England I am happy to read out the key sentence:

> "I would like it to have a nice dignified retirement in Hartlepool where a maritime heritage centre and the new Imperial War museum are to be located."

My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight has been most active in this area. His constituency is very concerned about not having a royal yacht for Cowes week. He tells me that children have been raiding their piggy banks to buy the royal yacht for the Isle of Wight. The local council wants to use Britannia as a hotel, reception centre and museum—making her available, of course, for the royal family during Cowes week.

Nearer to my neck of the woods, Greenwich council wants the Britannia to be moored permanently on the Thames for use as a museum or conference centre. However, Greenwich already has the fine old Cutty Sark, which is well worth a visit. There are plans to get visitors to London to go to see outer London and not just stay in inner London. Let Britannia therefore be moored permanently by Erith in the London borough of Bexley. She would be a wonderful attraction and would create much local interest and employment. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister would note my suggestion and share his ideas with us.

The Government have now had five months to consider the question of whether to replace Britannia. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said:

> "The Queen has made it known that in the light of changes in the pattern of royal visits since the yacht was built, she does not consider a royal yacht to be necessary in future solely for the purposes of royal travel."

Perhaps some weight should be given to the world "solely". In a week when the royal family has been the subject of considerable political debate inside and outside the House—including a colourful and over-the-top contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), a former diplomat—the Queen's views are a reminder that the monarchy well understands the need carefully to scale down its size and scope and to evolve, to face better new national and international conditions and challenges.

My noble Friend Lord Ashbourne wrote to me, after raising the subject in another place, to suggest that a new royal yacht should be designed and built, re-equipped for export promotion and royal duties. She could be funded by the Department of Trade and Industry, which could rent an admiral and crew from the Ministry of Defence. I agree with my noble Friend that the cost of a new yacht should not be borne by the defence budget, because her purpose would not be defensive and she would not have any defence capability.

I see no problem in Royal Navy personnel manning such a ship. The Merchant Navy would also be happy to take on such a responsibility, but we have a working formula and should keep to it. I imagine that a smaller crew would be required. At a time when Royal Navy destroyers, frigates and submarines have sadly been axed left, right and centre, such a vessel could provide valuable sea training and experience afloat.

My hon. Friend the Minister would be wise to announce today that he has decided that in future there will not be an admiral on the royal yacht. In the light of changing circumstances and roles, and bearing in mind that the yacht's crew is only 220 strong, I cannot believe that such an appointment is still justified. If an admiral is required on rare occasions for particular state visits, one could be despatched from elsewhere. In reality, the Queen is likely to use to the royal yacht only 20 days next year.

If some hon. Members still query the need for a royal yacht, primarily tasked for export promotion—as a country, we must export or face economic collapse—I draw attention to remarks by Britannia's present admiral, Rear Admiral Rob Windward, who was reported by a Portsmouth newspaper, *The News*, on 9 November as saying:

> "She more than pays for herself many times over."

He told a Portsmouth audience that the royal yacht helped to secure hundreds of millions of pounds' worth of business for Britain, compared with annual running costs of £10 million to £12 million.

The admiral is well placed to know the true position. During Britannia's recent visit to St. Petersburg, for instance, she was the venue for an event at which British bankers were put in touch with their Russian counterparts and a number of significant new business links will follow, to the great benefit of both countries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Sir Keith Speed), chairman of the parliamentary maritime group, told me last night that he is fully behind placing an order for a new royal yacht for export promotion. I envisage private capital playing a major part. Sir Donald Gosling, chairman of National Car Parks—a young wartime signaller on HMS Leander—proposed in the summer that a consortium of British business men should contribute £5 million each to funding a new vessel. He has already pledged £5 million of his own considerable fortune. Management staff at Devonport dockyard, Plymouth's privatised royal naval facility, confirmed that they have held exploratory talks with Sir Donald, so that is not just a pipe dream.

Since its privatisation in 1987, Devonport has successfully attracted more than £40 million of yacht work, including the last big refit of Britannia. You,

[Mr. Cyril D. Townsend]

Madam Deputy Speaker, will know better than I that it faces a severe shortage of orders for surface ship work after the blows of "Options for Change", and has recently announced 850 redundancies.

The project could have huge importance for the Plymouth area and its skilled work force. They have had a rough time and the Government owe them a measure of support. *The Times* reported Mr. Williams of Devonport Management Ltd. as saying:

> "Ideally, we would like to see a vessel that is a floating advertisement for the very best in British design, technology and engineering skills, as well as having the powerful draw of the Royal cachet. You will not achieve that by converting any old ferry."

To summarise my case, I am asking the Government to announce without further delay that there will be a new royal yacht which will be primarily a selling machine for British exports, including our valuable defence exports.The new Britannia will become a symbol of our centuries-old maritime tradition, too often badly neglected by the Government, and of our own national pride. Visitors to her will see the latest and best of British design and fashion, British engineering and end-of-century advanced technology.

The present Britannia initiated the idea of so-called "sea days" when she is left to British exporters while in foreign ports. Buckingham palace introduced the scheme partly to counter mounting criticism of the cost of the yacht. The scheme has proved to be a gigantic success and some big contracts have been signed on board the yacht, including a £1.5 billion agreement with India. The scheme has enormous potential, not least in the far east with the new south-east Asia tigers. It will allow us to take our products to them with a style and panache that they cannot yet emulate, for at its heart are the centuries-old traditions of the Royal Navy.

I ask today whether Whitehall has the agility and wisdom to sponsor such a proposal, involving as it does at least two Departments and their much-fought-over budgets. I trust that the comparatively new Minister, who has already demonstrated his interest in service traditions and who has personal links with the royal household, will give us an optimistic and far-sighted answer.

2.47 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) on securing this debate on a subject which has been a matter for a great deal of rumour and speculation. As he rightly says, it is certainly close to the hearts of many hon. Members as well as of people in the country at large.

As my hon. Friend knows, and as he rehearsed so clearly in his powerful speech, it is now more than 41 years since the sovereign launched Britannia at John Brown and Co Ltd., Clydebank. In the decades since then, the royal yacht has travelled the world, covering over 1 million miles and visiting more than 600 ports in some 135 different countries. She has been a powerful and graceful symbol of the dignity of the sovereign and the royal family, and therefore a potent image for Great Britain.

Throughout that period, Britannia made a visible and significant contribution to the country and to our image abroad, in her roles as a royal residence and as an unmatched setting for official entertainment, and in the vigorous support of vital British commercial interests overseas that those roles allowed.

We should not forget that the yacht's genesis was in a different world. It was a world where passenger air travel was in its earliest stages of development, in those broader and I think better days when the British empire and Commonwealth stretched across the globe. In those days, test match teams toured the world not by jumbo jet, but by a stately and majestic liner, and the pace of life was a great deal slower. In those circumstances, it was clearly the special and different requirements of royal travel which dictated a royal yacht and brought into being the magnificent and beautiful vessel we know today.

The world has, sadly, become a smaller place, under the assault of the jet aircraft. An increasingly demanding and hectic royal schedule inevitably dictates that more and more be packed into less and less time, with a consequent increase in emphasis on flying to overseas engagements.

Britannia's age has, gradually, turned her into an almost unique vessel in the Royal Navy. Following the retirement of the last Leander class frigate, HMS Andromeda, at the end of November, she is, with HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid, the last of that glorious and long line of steam-turbine powered ships in the Royal Navy. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced in July of this year an invitation to tender for replacement of those latter two ships, both 10 years younger than Britannia. When they leave the service of the Crown around the turn of the century, Britannia will be truly unique.

Given her age, and the amount of inevitably outdated equipment that she contains, Britannia is an expensive ship to run, costing about £10 million a year. We believe that, merely to keep Britannia safe and seaworthy for a further five years, a refit would be required in 1997 costing about £17 million.

With the change in the pattern of royal travel, Her Majesty did not believe such expenditure could be justified. That accorded with the view reached by Her Majesty's Ministers after the most careful, thorough and detailed consideration. Consequently, albeit reluctantly, a decision was taken to decommission the yacht in 1997. By continuing to run her until 1997, we shall gain maximum value for money from the £7.1 million that was spent during the docking and repair work undertaken in 1992.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath in paying tribute to the magnificent work of the officers and men of the permanent royal yacht service. Without their dedication and pride in such an admirable centre of excellence, the yacht could never have achieved so much in more than 40 years of golden and distinguished service.

Although never called upon to carry out her originally designed secondary role as a hospital ship, Britannia showed in 1986 that she could adapt readily to tasks other than her primary ones. The yacht, on her way to undertake a royal tour to New Zealand, was instructed to stand off Aden following the outbreak of fighting in South Yemen. She subsequently mounted a series of evacuations in and around Aden, taking off, as my hon. Friend for Bexleyheath rightly said, more than 1,000 people of many different nationalities.

However, Britannia will be, rightly and with great affection, best remembered for her ceremonial role—the beatings of retreat, the Commonwealth conferences, the state visits and, less glamorously but every bit as importantly, her splendid and unique contribution to the trade promotion of Britain's interests. Those aspects of her life are leading us to study the best way forward when finally, in 1997, she lowers the white ensign for the last time.

One of the questions that is, of course, on everybody's minds—my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath asked this himself—is, what will become of Britannia when she is decommissioned? Until 1997, the yacht will continue a programme similar to that of previous years in support of the royal family's official commitments at home and abroad and of our commercial interests overseas.

On Britannia's future, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence said in his statement of 23 June that, once she has been decommissioned, we would seek to find a way to enable her to continue to serve a useful purpose, even though we would not envisage her going to sea. As I have already said, we believe that work costing about £17 million would be necessary in 1997 if she were to remain seaworthy for a further five years. Costs of that order, therefore, make a future sea-going role unlikely. We are, however, looking at a variety of proposals that we have received. My hon. Friend is right to say that there are very many such proposals.

Reaching a decision will not be a simple task. We shall need to assess the amount of work that might be necessary if she were to be preserved afloat in relation to that required if she were to be displayed in a dry dock. Any alterations that might be necessary to allow access to the public, while balancing the requirements of their comfort and safety, and, above all, the preservation of the fabric of the vessel, also need to be assessed.

These problems arise for the simplest of future uses, that of straightforward display, and before issues such as a possible location have been assessed. There have already been a number of bids in that respect, including the sensible and formidable one made by my hon. Friend for her to be moored at Erith, which we shall of course consider. Many of the arguments have been powerfully deployed and all need to be carefully assessed.

I am sure that my hon. Friend would not wish us to rush into a decision; nor shall we do so. The announcement of the royal yacht's paying off, three year's before it will take place, gives us time to consider our options with care and a great deal of thought. That is what we intend to do.

While this consideration is under way, it would, of course, be improper of me to speculate on its outcome or the relative merits of any of the proposals, but I can assure the House, and my hon. Friend in particular, that a statement will be made in due course, once a decision has been reached. I am afraid that I cannot tell him when that might be. Of course, as well as all the issues being considered by the Cabinet, my hon. Friend will know that we shall be seeking Her Majesty's views on what should happen to Britannia after 1997.

As for a replacement for Britannia, I have made it clear that we greatly value not only her contribution over the decades, but that of her officers and men to Britain's image and commercial interests overseas in particular. I have also made clear the changed pattern of royal travel.

However, the considerable success of Britannia, to which my hon. Friend rightly drew attention, in her trade promotion and representational roles—the latter seen to such glorious effect this year in her graceful and dignified participation in the D-day celebrations and the state visit to Russia—means that we are giving the most serious consideration to how these tasks might best be met in the future.

One option is, clearly, a replacement yacht, although we are considering alternatives. Many interesting ideas have been floated by members of the public, business organisations and, indeed, right hon. and hon. Members on possible ways to fund, run, and man a yacht and on a variety of potential secondary roles. I know that my hon. Friend has followed press speculation on the question of a replacement. All the ideas are very interesting, and before coming to a decision we shall give detailed consideration to all sensible proposals. However, to do so requires time and, contrary to press reports, I assure my hon. Friend that no decision has yet been reached.

As my hon. Friend rightly said, another important role played by the royal yacht has been to bring business to this country. That is something that we do not underestimate. Sea days involving Britannia have been a brilliant addition to our armoury for raising the profile of British industry and business abroad, and many important contracts have been signed on board. It is precisely because the Government realise the importance of trade promotion that we are considering how best to carry out that task in the future, once Britannia is no longer in service.

As well as considering the future of the yacht, I am also mindful of the need to give careful consideration to the future of the permanent royal yacht service. These men—some 111 ratings and Royal Marines who, once accepted, usually serve on board for the remainder of their careers—provide the support that the royal yacht needs to carry out its specialised functions. We are urgently considering their future.

The rest of the yacht's complement, made up of some 112 officers and men of the Royal Navy, most of whom serve a single tour of duty, would be expected to follow their planned career pattern at the end of their current tour or certainly by the time that the yacht pays off in 1997. I can confirm that the flag officer of the royal yacht is to be replaced on his retirement by a commodore. One of the reasons for announcing, three years in advance, the decision to pay off Britannia in 1997 was specifically that it allowed us to address properly the personnel issues.

I should like to express gratitude to my hon. Friend for the opportunity provided by the debate to put on record the Government's appreciation of the work which the royal yacht and her crew have performed in the past 40 years in the service of the Crown. Work to find her a dignified and fitting role once she has left service continues, and as I have already made clear, we will consider all sensible options. It is important that that work is not rushed, nor that hasty decisions are reached. I ask the House's indulgence in allowing our important deliberations to take their course. My hon. Friend can rest assured that, once decisions have been reached, a formal statement will be made.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 12 December 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

1. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will ensure that millennium fund projects are evenly distributed around the country.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): Under section 26 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 the Millennium Commission has been issued with directions as to matters which should be taken into account when distributing lottery proceeds. These include the need to ensure that major projects are supported in each country of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Knight: My right hon. Friend will know of the considerable interest in the millennium fund. Is he also aware that in the midlands, and no doubt elsewhere in the country, there is concern that projects in London and the south-east will get preference? Can he assure me that that will not be the case? Can he also assure me that support will be given to projects which celebrate both the heritage and the future of some of our traditional industries—such as iron, steel, lace and engineering—upon which many parts of the country such as Erewash continue to depend?

Mr. Dorrell: I can certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance that she seeks. No preference will be given to projects based in London and the south-east; the Millennium Commission has made it clear that it will proceed without trying to distribute funds according to a quota and will judge each application on its merits, from wherever in the kingdom it comes.

The type of project that my hon. Friend outlined would be particularly appropriate in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, and if local supporters put the idea to the Commission I am sure that it would be considered favourably. Her proposal has an attractive theme as it looks back over the past 200 years of achievement in those industries and forward to the prospects for those industries in the next millennium.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister give particular consideration to Wakefield sculpture park which, with its Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth collections, is a leader not only in the United Kingdom but in the world?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the Yorkshire sculpture park, which is a major centre of excellence. I am not aware whether it has made a bid to the Millennium Commission. If it has, the bid will of course be carefully considered.

Mr. Robert Banks: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it will be important for elements of the celebration of the millennium to have a theme? Does he consider that the best theme for this country would be a celebration of music? To that end, will my right hon. Friend give thought to setting up a music palace in London, which could act as a central point and which could be replicated in all our major cities? We could then leave a mark which would establish the music industry as one of our great industries.

Mr. Dorrell: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the Millennium Commission must back projects with themes which communicate a clear message about the things that we value when celebrating the millennium. As to whether music should be such a theme, my hon. Friend may wish to put that to the Commission. I suspect that he would need to be able to demonstrate the extra elements that the Millennium Commission could add to such a project in addition to the backing that would come from the Arts Council, which would perhaps be a more natural lottery distributor body to deal with that part of the performing arts spectrum.

2. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met the organisers of the national lottery to discuss the provision of outlets for the purchase of tickets; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): The provision of outlets for the purchase of lottery tickets is an operational matter and as such is entirely the responsibility of the operator, Camelot plc, and the regulator, the Director-General of the National Lottery. The director-general meets Camelot regularly to discuss operational matters.

Mr. O'Brien: May I put it to the Minister that in many areas the organisation put in place by Camelot is not working, particularly in my constituency which covers the community council area of Normanton and Altofts with a population of about 25,000, and the neighbouring rural area of Sharlston with a population of about 27,000? There is not one outlet in that area where people may purchase a lottery ticket, so any of my constituents in the area wishing to purchase a lottery ticket must travel by bus to Wakefield or Castleford. As the arrangements made by Camelot are not working, will the Minister use his persuasive powers to ensure that my constituents and those in other areas will have an opportunity to purchase lottery tickets?

Mr. Sproat: I am sorry to hear that all is not completely well in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and I will ensure that his remarks are brought to the attention of Camelot. He may be aware, however, that by the end of this year a postal subscription service will be on offer, which should solve some of the problems. Although he has drawn attention to one or two things that have gone wrong, it is perhaps right to point out that 11,250 outlets are working extremely successfully.

Mr. Jessel: I thank you for calling me, Madam Speaker, although I am not sure whether you will like what I am going to say. Will my hon. Friend see whether lottery tickets can be put on sale somewhere in the Palace of Westminster?

Mr. Sproat: As is often the case, my hon. Friend has suggested an interesting idea. I will certainly ensure that it is brought to the attention of the appropriate House authority.

3. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the anonymity provisions of the national lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: The anonymity provisions in the licence issued to Camelot to run the national lottery state that the identity of any person who has won a prize shall not be disclosed without the prior written consent of that person. The director general has informed me that he is not aware of any cases in which Camelot has not complied with that condition.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend hope to win £18 million in the national lottery some day? If so, what would he do with the money, and is he satisfied that the current anonymity provisions in the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 would ensure that no one knew about his win?

Mr. Sproat: As I have said, there appears to be no doubt that Camelot has adhered to the provisions to keep winners anonymous. It may be, however, that others have not done the same. If, for instance, it was felt that complaints about what has happened in the press were proper, they could be made to the Press Complaints Commission.

4. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much money has been raised to date via the national lottery.

Mr. Dorrell: In the four weeks since it began, the national lottery has raised more than £53 million for good causes.

Mr. Evans: I am delighted with that response. I had rather hoped that this would have been the appropriate time for me to declare an interest, but unfortunately I am not the person who has won £17.8 million—and good luck to whoever it happens to be. As well as people winning prizes from the lottery, are not vast sums of money now set to be distributed to good causes and is it not appropriate that some of the rural areas of the United Kingdom should attract some of that money? On Friday I was talking to heads and governors of schools who would like to get funds for a swimming pool, which they would not ordinarily be able to build. Does my right hon. Friend agree that they may be able to look to the Sports Council for national lottery money to enable them to provide that facility?

Mr. Dorrell: I am sorry that my hon. Friend is not able to declare the interest that he wanted to declare. He has, of course, drawn attention to the principal benefit of the national lottery to the great majority, because it is raising sums of money for good causes which could not reasonably have been expected from any other source. My hon. Friend has also drawn attention to the opportunity that the lottery represents for a community in his constituency to realise a long-cherished ambition. The picture that he has drawn will be repeated many times in constituencies up and down the country.

Mr. Chris Smith: In four weeks, has not the Chancellor of the Exchequer already made £25 million for the Exchequer through his 12 per cent. tax take on the national lottery? Does that not make it even more inexcusable that, as a result of the Budget statement last week, the Arts Council and the Sports Council have less money in real terms than they had two years ago, especially when arts, sport and heritage are at the very heart of the appeal of the national lottery?

Mr. Dorrell: I am at a loss to understand the hon. Gentleman's argument. He seems to be saying that, as the lottery represents an unprecedentedly large addition to the resources available to the arts and sports world, there must be an equally large addition from taxpayers' funds. The Government have made it clear that the lottery money is additional to the Government's funding to the major beneficiaries. We have delivered on that commitment in the public expenditure settlement that I announced the week before last and, in addition, the lottery is unleashing an unprecedentedly large sum towards those beneficiary groups.

Listed Buildings

5. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many representations he has received about the criteria on which buildings are listed.

Mr. Dorrell: Very few; the listing criteria were fully restated in the recent planning policy guidance note No. 15, which was the subject of wide public consultation last year.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Is he aware of the number of farmers who have listed barns that they are not allowed to convert for housing or light industrial use, and who are confronted with the dilemma of maintaining a building that is extremely expensive to maintain to the standards of English Heritage and other organisations and being forced to foot the bill? Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the criteria in the light of the dilemma faced by farmers, many of whom are in my constituency?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right to point out the importance of ensuring that in the enforcement of the listing regulations— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Has the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) anything to raise? If he has, I will deal with it in a point of order after questions. The question was in perfect order.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is right to emphasise the importance of ensuring that the listing system is applied in such a way as to ensure that, while we respect the ancient buildings that are listed, the enforcement mechanism is sufficiently flexible to allow those buildings to be put to modern, effective use. That principle is made clear in the policy guidance to which I referred.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the right hon. Gentleman make it clear that the hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) cannot go around cladding her Tudor house and hoping to get away with it? Will he also bear in mind that, in terms of listing, a number of modern buildings in London need to be listed and protected? Will he make it clear that any change in the listing of that wonderful art deco building, the Hoover building on the Great West road, will be resisted?

Mr. Dorrell: We shall continue to operate the listing system in such a way as to ensure that proper respect and attention is paid to buildings of architectural importance. We shall also ensure, however, that once a building is listed it is not preserved in aspic but that the listing system is applied sufficiently flexibly to allow the building to be put to economic use in the modern world.

Mr. Steen: Listing commercial buildings without regard to economic consequences is a form of sequestration by the state without compensation. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the value of Castrol house in Marylebone road has plummeted since it was listed by the Department of National Heritage? The building is out of date and has reached the end of its life, but modern facilities cannot be put in, it cannot be let, it cannot be sold and it cannot be pulled down.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right that the listing of a building has economic consequences. It is important, therefore, to ensure that the system which lies behind the initial decision to list is sufficiently flexible to allow the heritage and economic questions to be held in the balance, and a proper and balanced judgment reached. That does not always mean preserving the building exactly as it is, but it certainly does mean respecting ancient buildings which are determined, according to the listing criteria, as being of national importance.

Battersea Power Station

6. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which parties are involved in discussions on the future of Battersea power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: The London borough of Wandsworth and English Heritage are taking part in discussions on the future of Battersea power station with the owners, and with other parties.

Mr. Cox: I note that reply, but is the Minister aware of the feeling in the London borough of Wandsworth that the destruction of the internal fabric of Battersea power station is an utter scandal, because that power station has been a major feature of the national heritage of this country? In view of the development, which was fully supported by the Conservative Government and the London borough of Wandsworth, by a developer whose ultimate aim was extremely dubious, close attention will be paid to the Minister's reply today as to the involvement that Wandsworth council will now have. Local people have no confidence in anything in which Wandsworth council is involved relating to the Battersea power station project.

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Member is right to be concerned about what is happening to that listed building. Two of the classic pieces within the power station—the directors' staircase and the control room—are in perfect condition. The building was last examined on the afternoon of Tuesday 6 December and will be examined again before Christmas. Its condition is fine at present, but we shall be keeping a close eye on it because we share the hon. Gentleman's concerns.

National Lottery

7. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his latest estimate of the percentage of national lottery funds that will be devoted to charities.

Mr. Sproat: In common with the other four beneficiary areas, 20 per cent. of the national lottery proceeds for good causes will be devoted to charities.

Mr. Flynn: Nought out of 10 for that answer—the question involved only charities, not good causes. Is not the donor fatigue suffered by charities such as Children in Need and others a result of misleading adverts by the national lottery suggesting that large amounts of money would go to charity? Would it not be better for charity givers to buy lottery tickets from the St. David's Foundation in Gwent, where 100p in every £1 goes to charity and not merely a few pence, as with the national lottery, from which no money will go to charity until 1996 anyway? Is it not true that the charity money from the national lottery will be very little, very late?

Mr. Sproat: No, I do not agree with that. So far, £53.4 million has come in for good causes, of which the charities will receive their 20 per cent. If people want to give money to charity as well, they can continue to do so. I think that most people in this country will very much welcome an extra source of funding for charities.

Mr. Hendry: Will my hon. Friend give consideration to what should be done when the jackpot is not won and is rolled over for a second week? Does he agree that it might be better to give half the sum to good causes and charities and perhaps a quarter to smaller prizes, leaving a quarter or a third to be rolled over to the next week's jackpot? Would that not make it more attractive to punters and result in more money going to good causes?

Mr. Sproat: I do not think so. The House of Commons made a decision on the matter last year. I take my hon. Friend's point, but if there is a very big prize, many more people buy tickets, which increases the turnover and means that good causes receive more money in the end.

Arts (North-west)

8. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last met the chair of the North West regional arts board to discuss the level of financial support for the arts in the north-west.

Mr. Dorrell: I have had no such meeting. Decisions on the allocation of grant in aid to the regional arts boards are a matter for the Arts Council.

Mr. Miller: Does the Minister agree with me about the importance of theatre and the arts in the regions? If he does, what is he doing about the serious problems facing theatres such as the Liverpool playhouse, which is suffering a large deficit? Does he not think that he should take direct action in the interests of protecting arts in the regions?

Mr. Dorrell: I very much agree with the point made by the hon. Gentleman about the importance of the arts in the regions. That is why I was pleased to go to Manchester last week to celebrate the success of the city of drama year in Manchester—some fine and important drama was being celebrated there. The hon. Gentleman asked specifically about Liverpool and I share his enthusiasm for ensuring that the city of Liverpool has a vigorous artistic, theatrical, musical and cultural life. That is delivered partly by state funding, which is why we have increased the money available to the Arts Council, and partly by ensuring that there is extra business support and extra support from people who visit the city as tourists and contribute to the city's artistic life through the box office. As Secretary of State for National Heritage, I intend to pursue all those avenues, not just one.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the places where arts in the north-west are particularly strong is Blackpool, particularly at the Grand theatre, one of Frank Matcham's masterpieces? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is important for his Department to continue with strong support for the arts in the north-west, exemplified by the support that he and his predecessor have given to theatres such as the Grand theatre, Blackpool? I hope that he will confirm today that he is able to continue to do so.

Mr. Dorrell: I can confirm that the Arts Council has continued in the current year to give very large sums of its budget to North-West regional arts. Indeed, it is the largest recipient of Arts Council grant outside London. That reflects the importance that the Arts Council attaches to stimulating and catalysing an active artistic life in the north-west of England. I stress to my hon. Friend the point that I made to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller): this is a matter not just of public subsidy, but of using all the weapons at our disposal to ensure that the artistic life of the nation thrives and expands.

Mr. Maclennan: We recognise that the Secretary of State regards his business and his job as serious and important. Could he also tell us whether he enjoys the arts?

Mr. Dorrell: I enjoy the arts in all their many and various forms; but my job is to allow others to enjoy them, rather than regarding them as a private passion.

Mr. Fisher: Will the Secretary of State now deal with the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) put to him about the size of the deficits of the major regional theatre companies? I am sure the right hon. Gentleman understands that those deficits cannot be met by his recipe of increased box office receipts or by sponsorship. Those might help with running costs and yearly costs, but the deficits are enormous. Our major regional theatres have cumulative deficits of more than £7 million. That is a testimony to the Government's lack of a policy and lack of concern. The right hon. Gentleman cannot get away from his responsibility for dealing with those deficits.

Mr. Dorrell: I am at a loss to understand how I am supposed to deal with the issue of deficits separately from that of running costs funding and the expansion of the arts economy to which I have referred. The way to solve a deficit is by ensuring that activity grows, generating revenue from the taxpayer, through the Arts Council, from the box office, and from the business community. That is our strategy; that is how we deal with deficits.

National Lottery

9. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to keep under review the national lottery policy of only giving awards for capital projects.

Mr. Sproat: I shall be keeping all the section 26 directions under review.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply. Is he aware that small organisations—charities and good causes—do not necessarily need money for capital projects? They need support for sustainable activities. Crossroads, in my constituency, and voluntary "sitters" organisations, need administrative help to sustain their work of serving the community.

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes a good point. At this moment discussions are taking place between the Home Office and the National Lottery Charities Board to decide on the exact split between capital and revenue. My hon. Friend is entirely right to say that the charity sector will get, and deserves to get, much more revenue funding than capital funding. I shall see that her interesting comments are passed on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Maxton: Although most of us would accept that the provision of sports facilities is essential and should come from the national lottery, would it not be useful if some of that money were allocated to specialised training and support for our elite young sportsmen, who find it very difficult not just to secure the use of facilities but to get time off work and proper coaching?

Mr. Sproat: That is a good point. The Sports Aid Foundation already gives some money to elite athletes, though not a great deal, I agree. We are looking at ways in which capital projects could have a revenue tail, so that there could be revenue funding for the sort of thing that the hon. Gentleman has in mind. I have also asked that the new United Kingdom Sports Council, when it gets going next year, should look into this sort of issue as a matter of priority. I certainly take it very seriously.

Cross-media Ownership

10. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about the Government's review of cross-media ownership.

Mr. Dorrell: I have received 64 written representations from a wide range of individuals and organisations. These have been supplemented by a number of meetings at ministerial and official levels.

Mr. Lidington: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the making of programmes for broadcasting is now a very competitive international industry, and that there is therefore a strong case for relaxing the present rules on cross-media ownership to enable British companies to compete effectively in that international market?

Mr. Dorrell: That view has been argued by some in the context of the review, and we are currently examining that argument along with many others. Whatever happens in future to the cross-media ownership regulation, the programme-making industry in Britain will continue to grow substantially. It provides a major opportunity for Britain in business terms, because of the employment that it creates and the wealth that it generates. It is also important in terms of the wider exposure that it gives to our way of life and ideas. The programme-making industry is one of the success stories of recent years, and whatever emerges from the cross-media ownership review should be determined, at least in part, by a commitment to ensure that that continues.

Mr. Grocott: Before the Secretary of State makes any further decisions on media ownership, would it not be a simple matter of prudent common sense to have a thorough review of the disastrous decision on media ownership that was made by his predecessor almost 12 months ago today when he relaxed the rules on the ownership of television companies? The consequences of that have been a massive 51 per cent. increase in profits by Carlton since it took over Central, bosses making a great deal of money, studios closing, many people losing their jobs and many others moving to short-term working. In view of that, does it not make simple common sense to ensure that, before changes for the future are made, one looks to the mistakes that one has made in the past?

Mr. Dorrell: It is an interesting reflection on the hon. Gentleman's presentation of his case that he spoke about the impact of the change on the company, the shareholders, the directors, the employees and the company's cost base, but did not volunteer a word about the impact on the viewer. It is the viewer who should be the driver of our policy on cross-media ownership.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that some British companies are suffering disadvantages compared with companies in Europe? Does he not think it better that, if there is to be an expansion of cross-media ownership and the communications industry, it should be by British companies, and specifically not by Italian and German companies?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the opportunities for British companies to expand and fill the fast-growing international market for programme making. In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), I spoke about our success in that endeavour to date and about my commitment to ensuring that whatever emerges from the cross-media ownership review should be consistent with our continued future success in that sector.

Mr. Allen: Does the Secretary of State accept that we understand why he wishes to delay the cross-media ownership review further? Given the media coverage that his Government are getting at the moment, he does not want to upset anyone in the media. Will he look at two areas in the review? First, rather than imposing an inflexible solution, will he consider talking to those in the industry to see whether there is a possibility of securing agreement throughout the different branches of the media? Secondly, will he consider the viewers, readers and listeners who are the consumers of these various products and understand that they want clear plurality and diversity—a choice of different mediums? Will he ensure that whatever emerges from the review he will sustain that choice?

Mr. Dorrell: Yes and yes.

12. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on his consideration of the problems of cross-media ownership and predatory pricing.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government are actively considering the way ahead on media ownership, and will make an announcement in due course. Alleged predatory pricing is a matter for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Mr. Dalyell: What possible purpose do the right hon. Gentleman and the President of the Board of Trade imagine that Mr. Murdoch has in mind other than putting in jeopardy *The Guardian* or *The Independent* or even *The Daily Telegraph* by pricing his copies of *The Times* at 20p?

Mr. Dorrell: With all respect to the hon. Gentleman, I am not sure that Mr. Murdoch's motives are my concern. My concern is the enforcement of the law and the application of principles of public policy. The suggestion that Mr. Murdoch has been engaged in predatory pricing of *The Times* was examined by the Director General of Fair Trading within the terms of the law and he concluded that there was no evidence to support that. That seems to me, within the law as it stands, to dispose of the issue.

National Lottery

13. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy that money from the national lottery will not affect the provision of public funds to sport and the arts.

Mr. Sproat: It is not intended that the money provided by the lottery should substitute for that provided by the Government in other ways.

Mr. Cunningham: Does not the Minister understand that companies such as the Coventry Theatre in Education and the Coventry Belgrade theatre could be in jeopardy because of the series of cuts imposed by the Government in recent years? Will he speak to the West Midlands Arts Council and ensure that the future of those two companies is secured?

Mr. Sproat: I shall certainly draw the hon. Gentleman's comments to the attention of the board he mentioned.

Sir Donald Thompson: Will my hon. Friend also remember the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, a body about which none of us has anything but good to say? It has great experience and expertise and has a number of projects in the pipeline. Will he ensure that neither the public purse nor the national lottery do anything but add to the work that the foundation has done so well and should continue to do with a bigger budget?

Mr. Sproat: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend. The Foundation for Sport and the Arts and Mr. Grattan Endicott and his board have done a wonderful job, giving some £40 million to sport and £20 million to the arts. Long may that continue.

Sports (Young People)

14. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about sports provision for young people.

Mr. Sproat: The Sports Council provides financial and other assistance to enable governing bodies of sport, local sports clubs and schools to enhance their sporting provisions for young people. One of the objectives of my current proposals for restructuring the council is to strengthen the links between governing bodies and schools so that young people have wider opportunities to develop their sporting skills.

Mr. Hain: Does the Minister accept that those are mere words because the figures show that the number of physical education teachers has been cut by more than 40 per cent? There are also reduced facilities because of opting out and cuts in local government provision. Why do not the Government invest in a major national programme to boost youth sport? If we did that, as the Australians do with their cricket academies, we might start winning some test matches and other sporting events that appear to be beyond our grasp at the moment.

Mr. Sproat: I have been following with great interest the hon. Gentleman's series of questions on PE teachers to the Welsh Office and the Department for Education, which he has tabled over the past few weeks. He certainly has a serious problem in his sights. He knows the answers—such as, more teachers used to take sports but now PE teachers tend to do that; that there are fewer pupils, and so on. However, I hope that the future of PE training will be looked at in the joint paper being prepared by my Department and the Department for Education.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman's point about Australia and I am going there some time in January to look at exactly what the Australians are doing and to see what lessons we can learn.

National Lottery

16. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to meet the revenue consequences of capital projects funded through the income from the national lottery.

Mr. Dorrell: It will be for applicants for lottery funds to demonstrate that they will be able to secure on-going revenue funding for their capital projects. It is important that projects can show that they are financially viable and that they command wide support. However, in exceptional circumstances, distributing bodies do have the power to give revenue grants to lottery funded capital projects. This will ensure that good projects do not founder for lack of funding.

Mr. Gunnell: The Minister's answer is not quite satisfactory. Many projects will be started as a result of the funds available through the national lottery. When they get going, some will meet consequences that were not foreseen and were not in their business plans. The need for revenue funding will be much greater than the right hon. Gentleman suggested. Should not some lottery money be put into a trust to generate revenue funding? Many organisations working in the national heritage area are already short of revenue.

Mr. Dorrell: We have said that, in exceptional cases, the model which the hon. Gentleman anticipates—a fund-generating revenue to look after the capital asset—can be envisaged. It would not be right for us to create a fund at large to cover the generality of risk in the projects that are being backed because the responsibility for covering that risk and making viable business plans, with an element of flexibility to cover the unknown, rests on the people who sponsor the projects. I would not wish to do anything that would create among them the impression that events that were unforeseeable when the project started would be covered by an emergency fund of the kind anticipated by the hon. Gentleman. That would not be a sensible way forward. The responsibility for managing flexibility within the future life of a project must rest unambiguously on the project's sponsor.

18. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if it is Government policy to use proceeds from the national lottery to support opera in its London centres as well as in the regions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Decisions on the allocation of lottery funds will be entirely for distributing bodies to make, within the framework of the directions issued to them under the National Lottery etc. Act 1993. The Arts Council will make the funding decisions in response to the applications it receives. It has recently issued guidelines for applicants which give details of its funding strategy.

Mr. Jenkin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that our opera centres in London provide extremely good value for money compared with national centres in other major countries? Would it not therefore be worth while to tip the Arts Council the wink and encourage it to push some money in that direction?

Mr. Dorrell: I do not engage in tipping winks. I engage in giving policy guidelines, which I have done.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

National Science Week

27. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about preparations for National Science Week.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert G. Hughes): Preparations are well advanced for the second science week, starting on 17 March 1995. It will be bigger and more comprehensive than this year's.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that, as part of National Science Week, it will be necessary to emphasise the quality of science teaching? Does he agree that science teaching has improved since the introduction of the national curriculum, especially in grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Hughes: Indeed, science teaching is improving. The fact that the national curriculum requires pupils to learn about science for so many years is a big improvement. Improvements in facilities are also important, but so is the excitement of science. Therefore, schools' participation in science week—I urge all schools to do so—is an important part of the public's understanding of the science curriculum.

Mr. Battle: While I welcome the Government's National Science Week initiatives, we cannot let the Minister get away with trying to con us into believing that that is all that is needed. Can he confirm that, although the Office of Science and Technology budget was not cut last week, the budgets of every other Department—the Department for Education and the Departments of Trade and Industry, Health, Transport and the Environment—all had their research and development spending reduced in the recent Budget. Is it not a classic case of a teaspoon of aid for National Science Week while, with the other hand, the Treasury is firmly grasping the windpipe of every other Department's science spending? It was not a Budget for science, was it?

Mr. Hughes: It was a Budget for science. The Labour party apparently finds it impossible to welcome good news. Labour Members do not understand good news when it gets up and hits them. The science budget is at a record level and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy protected and increased it, which has been warmly welcomed in the science community.

Mr. Dykes: I wish my hon. Friend well because at the end of March he will be the Minister in charge of that programme for schools throughout the country. Can he confirm that we shall have a major programme throughout the borough of Harrow and that, although it is early days, schools are already responding well to that initiative?

Mr. Hughes: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I know from the work which my hon. Friend and I have been doing that there will be a large programme in Harrow. Indeed, our work has been mirrored by other hon. Members of all parties who have responded warmly to the letter that I sent all hon. Members. They have been contacting their schools and companies in their constituencies, so that everyone concerned in the subject will make a large input to National Science Week.

28. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration was given to animal experimentation in his sponsorship of the recent National Science Week.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: We welcome contributions to the week from any bona fide organisation that seeks to promote greater public understanding and appreciation of science, engineering and technology. No area of research, including medical research, is excluded.

Mr. Cohen: Surely the Minister does not pretend to be neutral on the issue of animal experiments. Millions of animals are destroyed unnecessarily each year in the so-called interests of science. Why do not the Government take the opportunity provided by the week to listen to the public's views on unreliable, unethical and inhumane treatment of animals in experiments, and to promote the genuinely scientific alternatives to those awful experiments?

Mr. Hughes: I know that the hon. Gentleman is seriously concerned about the issue and pursues it with equal seriousness. I am sure that he accepts that my voting record in the House indicates that I also take a serious view of it. The Government share public concern that animals should not suffer unnecessarily. We are committed to finding alternatives and the Home Office funds research to that end. The British Association's declaration on the use of animals in medical research is an important contribution, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman welcomes the fact that thousands of eminent doctors and scientists, including 31 Nobel prize winners, signed that declaration.

Duchy Benevolent Fund

29. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will transfer responsibility for the disbursement of moneys from the Duchy benevolent fund to Lancashire county council.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. David Hunt): No.

Mr. Prentice: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the way that the fund's decisions are made is opaque? Last year, three of my constituents received just over £700, yet figures for each of the past five years show that one school alone—the Royal grammar school in Lancaster—receives money from the fund year after year. Should not responsibility for disbursing those funds be transferred to a democratically accountable body, rather than be vested in the few people who advise the Chancellor of the Duchy?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to announce that over the past 10 years, the Duchy has donated more than £1 million to charitable causes. I am not one of the trustees, so I cannot comment on their deliberations and decisions—but all three Duchy Lords Lieutenant are trustees and they comment on requests for support from their respective areas. That seems quite satisfactory.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I assure my right hon. Friend that transferring to Lancaster county council responsibility for allocating any money would be frowned upon by my constituents. Is he aware that the county council has never been fair in funding Lancaster schools, including the Royal Lancaster, and could not be trusted to be fair with Duchy money? How much money has Pendle received from the fund?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for supplying the correct background to the question by the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice). This year grants totalling £2,600 have been made by the fund to charities and individuals in his constituency, from a total of £168,000.

Science and Technology

30. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures his Department is taking to encourage partnerships between different sectors of the economy in the areas of science and technology.

Mr. David Hunt: Many.

Mr. Brandreth: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the work of Campus, the campaign for Salford university—one of the leading universities in the north-west? It involves 150 different businesses from large multinationals to small local firms, who have formed a partnership with the university to develop research and research funding. Is not that a perfect example of the way forward, and should it not serve as a model for other universities and businesses in the north-west?

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The answers to his questions are yes, yes and yes.

I am impressed by the work that Salford university has done in partnership with industry, particularly the work done by Campus. Into my hands has fallen a brochure produced by the campaign to promote the university of Salford: it fell into my hands because my chief scientific adviser visited the university last October and was most impressed by all that my hon. Friend has described.

Mr. Miller: The Minister will know that I approve of the idea of increasing the number of partnerships in the science communities, especially on university campuses, but how will he avoid the potential conflict between the interests of science and those of the private sector in subjects such as genetic research?

Mr. Hunt: It is important for us to seek a positive partnership between industry and science. That is why my predecessor set up the technology foresight panels, which enable leaders of private industry to sit down with some of the country's leading scientists to discuss genetics and many other subjects right across the spectrum, and to try to look five, 10, 15 and 20 years into the future. The results achieved by the panels will emerge next spring, and will be reflected in the "Forward Look" that my Department will publish next year.

Mr. Streeter: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the partnership between the university of Plymouth and various private sector companies which are setting up the science park at Derriford, making Plymouth a centre of scientific excellence? Is not that exactly the kind of initiative that the Government should support? I shall send my right hon. Friend a brochure in tonight's post.

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I look forward to reading the brochure, and to hearing more about Plymouth's efforts. They reflect the record amount of money that is being spent through the science budget, which will be more than 30 per cent. higher in real terms next year than it was 15 years ago.

The most important way ahead, however, must lie in a more positive partnership between science and industry. That is reflected in many of the efforts mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House in letters to me.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Is not the Minister aware that it is extremely foolish to be complacent about the issue, especially when Britain's industrial base has shrunk so badly over the past 15 years? Surely the most urgent need for better partnerships between different sectors of the economy, and in science and technology, is in the development of information super-highways. Will the Minister acknowledge that unless the Government change direction in that vital regard, Britain will be left behind again?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Lady should recognise that the United States has followed our example in developing the super-highway in many important and material respects. As for her general point, I am very proud of the fact that the United Kingdom is in the premier research league. Again, the science budget shows our commitment to staying in that league.

Cultures and Microbes

31. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consideration he has given to the report of the working group under the chairmanship of Professor Roger Whittenbury, commissioned by the Office of Science and Technology, into the safeguarding for the nation of the collection of the 42,500 cultures and microbes used by the country's science research bodies and institutes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: We are grateful to Professor Whittenbury for his report, and we are considering it carefully.

Mr. Mackinlay: Does the Minister accept that that will not reassure scientists who greatly value the preservation of those cultures and microbes, which are the product of 100 years of research? It really is in the interests of the British research and scientific community for the Government to take an initiative to ensure that the microbes are preserved for the nation, and for British scientific research.

Mr. Hughes: That is the whole point of the report. The history is as follows: the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee report on systematic biology research expressed a number of concerns, and in our response, to meet those concerns, we set up an independent study. We now have its report, and are considering its recommendations carefully. We consider building on United Kingdom strengths in systematic biology a very important part of overall Government plans.

Let me set the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest. Three years ago, we commissioned similar studies examining the conservation of plants in culture collections. That has worked well, and I believe that the current project will also work well.

Civil Servants

32. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what new proposals he has to improve the job security of civil servants.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Our public service reforms, which the Select Committee recently endorsed, mean that the civil service continues to offer rewarding careers and job security which compares well with other sectors.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Minister aware that I and my constituents who work at the Patent Office were told that a decision would be made and published by Christmas—Christmas 1993? Was not that prediction as reliable as that made by the Home Secretary today that the Conservatives would win the Dudley, West by-election? Is he aware that the staff of Companies House in Cardiff, at the Accounts Services Agency in my constituency, at the Passport Office, the Central Statistical Office and the Patent Office in my constituency have the sword of Damocles in the form of possible job losses hanging over their heads for another Christmas? Will he guarantee that, if the Government privatise the agencies, the jobs involved will be secure in Wales and not moved to other parts of the United Kingdom, Europe or the far east?

Mr. Hughes: Just to fill in the background for the hon. Gentleman, the next steps agencies represent a significant improvement in the organisation of government. Although I understand that prior options reviews are unsettling for staff, and prolonged reviews are even more difficult, the Government are still considering the review of the Patent Office to which he referred. An announcement will be made as soon as the review is complete. As for the Accounts Services Agency, a decision has been made to contract out its work. It may be valuable to the hon. Gentleman's constituents who work there to know that it is expected that the staff and assets of the agency will transfer with the work.

Mr. Hawkins: My hon. Friend will be aware that the civil service is an extremely significant employer in Blackpool and on the Fylde coast, as many parts of the civil service are based there. Does he agree that job security for those civil servants will be best assured by a high quality of service to customers as exemplified by that offered by the Information Technology Services Agency, the new headquarters of which is on the outskirts of my constituency and which employs many of my constituents? Does he further agree that civil service job security will not be improved by the type of scare stories manufactured by civil service unions of which we hear far too many?

Mr. Hughes: My hon. Friend is right. It is because of the high quality of work done by many of the agencies that so many bids have been won in house. The fact remains that people employed in agencies are there to deliver a public service; that is their primary function and it is the delivery of a high quality public service that we should all have in the forefront of our minds.

Post Office

33. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to reconsider a citizens charter for the Post Office.

Mr. David Hunt: The Post Office publication, "Putting the Customer First" sets out the Post Office's commitment to charter standards.

Mr. Hain: Will the Chancellor join me in congratulating the post office workers who took a day of action today to defend the public who do not want their local high street post offices closed or dumped in the back of supermarkets? Is he aware that a MORI poll published this morning shows that 79 per cent. of the public support the strike, which is an unusually high percentage for a public service strike? Does not that show that the people of this country have no confidence in Government policies?

Mr. Hunt: No, it does not. Ninety-five per cent. of all post offices are already successfully run as private sector businesses. They offer their customers a substantial and excellent range of services. I feel strongly that today's action has no justification and I am sad that it should have taken place against the background of the most recent figures, which show that, in the past 12 months, the United Kingdom had the lowest number of strikes on record and the lowest number of working days lost on record. I am sad that today Post Office workers are seeking to add another strike to the incredibly low total. That low figure demonstrates the commitment of the vast majority of people who continue to put the customer first.

Mr. Waterson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses in my constituency are very happy with the Government's commitment to securing their future? They need no advice about running their businesses from Labour Members who are sponsored by the postal workers.

Mr. Hunt: Yes, I agree. It is evident that the service in post offices has improved tremendously. More than 95 per cent. of post office customers are now served within five minutes. In the past 10 years tariffs have risen less than the rate of inflation. Thanks to the commitment of all those who work in post offices, the quality of customer service has improved beyond recognition.

European Council

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement on the European Council at Essen which I attended with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Council's conclusions have been placed in the Library of the House.

The European Council achieved five key British objectives: strong support for the peace initiative in Northern Ireland, including additional funding of £240 million; commitment to an intensified fight against fraud and mismanagement; solid progress on subsidiarity, and it was agreed that next year the Council will complete its review of the existing Community statute book; priority for labour market flexibility and deregulation to make Europe competitive and create jobs; and a strategy to prepare for accession to the Union of the six central and eastern European associate members.

At the request of the presidency, I briefed the European Council on the peace process in Northern Ireland. There was unanimous agreement for a Commission proposal to provide an extra £240 million over three years to help urban and rural regeneration in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic. I am grateful for the strong support President Delors has given to Northern Ireland in recent weeks.

I raised the subject of fraud, waste and mismanagement of the budget following the Court of Auditors report. I said that the European Union would not enjoy popular support unless it took vigorous action against these abuses. I made a number of proposals which were agreed by the Council. These were: the Council must ensure that reports from the Court of Auditors are rigorously scrutinised and followed up; each member state must report to ECOFIN, the Economic and Finance Council, on what it is doing to combat fraud in its own country; and agreement should be reached rapidly in Brussels on measures now under discussion—these include a British proposal put forward by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary which would oblige member states to co-operate and act effectively to fight criminal fraud against the Community budget—and the new powers given in the Maastricht treaty, as a result of British initiatives, to the Court of Auditors, the European Council, the European Parliament and the Commission should be used to the full.

I made it clear that taxpayers' money must not be misused. The fight against fraud, waste and mismanagement will remain high on our agenda. That view was strongly endorsed by the Commission and a number of member states, and it echoes points that we have been making for some time in the European Council.

The European Council confirmed again that subsidiarity—the principle of minimum Community interference—must be a guiding principle of the European Union's future work, as agreed at the Edinburgh summit. I am encouraged that so far in 1994 there have been only 42 Commission proposals for significant legislation compared with 185 in 1990. But the new Commission must keep up the fight against unnecessary interference.

Discussion of the economy focused on the need to create jobs. Yet again the policies that we have been following in this country were widely accepted to be right across the European Union. We agreed that Europe must be more competitive. We agreed on the need for more flexible working arrangements for the reduction of labour costs and for better education and training. There was nothing in our discussion to suggest that socialism had triumphed over market liberalism. The reverse is plainly the case—[Hon. Members: "Test it."] I will test it with the conclusions, which show that clearly.

The European Council added three new priority transport projects to the list of trans-European networks agreed at Corfu. Four out of the 14 are United Kingdom projects: the channel tunnel rail link, the west coast main line, the rail route from Cork to Larne and the Holyhead to Felixstowe road link.

The Essen Council effectively rejected the long-debated proposal for a European Union-wide carbon energy tax. It supported instead the approach which Britain has advocated all along—a flexible framework allowing the member states that wish to introduce a carbon energy tax to do so. We will not wish to do so.

Enlargement of the European Union has long been a British objective. At the Edinburgh and Copenhagen Councils, the decision in principle to open membership to the six countries of central and eastern Europe was taken. At Essen, leaders of the 15 European Union states, including Austria, Finland and Sweden, met their central and eastern European counterparts. Agreement at the Council on a strategy to draw the six associate members closer to the Union was another important step to help prepare for their eventual accession.

On Bosnia, there was strong support for the protection force commanders and for the work being done by the brave men and women whom they lead. They are saving lives and bringing better living conditions to many parts of Bosnia than would otherwise be possible.

We agreed that the United Nations protection forces must be allowed by the Bosnian Serbs to get on with their job without obstruction and that they should stay, provided that the risks were acceptable. It was our unanimous view that the enforced withdrawal of UNPROFOR could have disastrous consequences—above all for the people of Bosnia. But we agreed that we needed to plan for all eventualities and to keep in close touch with other troop contributors and interested Governments.

The European Council gave strong backing to the Contact group's efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement. The immediate need is for a durable ceasefire as a prerequisite to a successful negotiation.

Over dinner, the Heads of State and Government had an informal discussion about the future development of the European Union, taking account of the need for further enlargement. This was the first such wide-ranging discussion I can recall, and it was very welcome.

I emphasised the Community's achievement in helping to bring 50 years of peace and prosperity to western Europe. In squabbles over other matters, that priceless achievement is often overlooked. I also commented on the fact that 40 years ago, the founders of the Community had a broad vision of their objectives many years ahead, and that those objectives had already been exceeded.

Within a few years, we shall have around 20 members and, some time later, perhaps as many as 27 members of the European Union. The Union is changing beyond recognition. I said that it was time to rethink the Union's future constructively and I set out the need for realism in the period ahead. That is essential if the European Union is to regain popular support.

I do not underestimate the difficult tasks the Union faces, but I was greatly encouraged by the general acceptance of the need for flexibility and for substantial changes so that the European Union can successfully meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I thank the Prime Minister for his statement. I welcome the £240 million economic aid package for Northern Ireland, which was announced last week and agreed at the summit. It is another significant step on the road to peace and a recognition across the entirety of Europe of the historic opportunity to bury old hatreds.

On Bosnia, while no one can fully understand or understate the magnitude and complexity of the problems, no one can be proud of the European Union's record in dealing with the break-up in the former Yugoslavia. The inability of the west to agree or enforce clear aims and objectives for its role in Bosnia has contributed to a situation today where our troops are vulnerable, civilians are murdered, undemocratic and violent forces are in command and war crimes are, as yet, unpunished. It is particularly important that the European Union now acts in a concerted way. Will the Prime Minister insist that the economic blockade and political isolation of Serbia will not end until the Bosnian Serbs withdraw from the territory allocated to the Muslim community?

The security of our troops, whose bravery we greatly commend—I entirely agree with what the Prime Minister said about that—must come first and foremost. With that said, will he continue to impress on all our allies the disastrous consequences of a withdrawal of United Nations troops without a viable peace plan in place, not merely for Bosnia, but for the authority of the UN generally?

On the economy, may I thank the Prime Minister first for his effusive praise of Mr. Delors at the summit—something that is welcome at least on the Opposition side of the House? In particular, may I congratulate him on his welcome for the Delors paper on job creation? We agree unreservedly with the new emphasis that it places on tackling long-term unemployment and other measures, including intensive education and training; an active re-employment service; flexibility in the organisation of work, to balance family and employment responsibilities; tax rebates and other measures to counter long-term unemployment; equal rights for part-time employees; and special measures to attack youth unemployment.

I am extremely surprised, however, that the Prime Minister should represent that paper as a success for his views, as it bears out many of the points that we have been making for some time. While the document rightly stresses reducing unnecessary costs and a flexible and adaptable work force, is not the principal difference between the Conservative Government and our European partners, whether Labour or Conservative, that they see such a modern work force resulting from investment in people and technology and view it as entirely compatible with decent standards and fair treatment at the work place?

If he continues to claim that the rest of Europe is moving his way, why is his Secretary of State for Employment still having to go to the Council of Ministers to veto social legislation? Why does he alone out of all Heads of Government, whether Conservative or Labour, veto the social chapter of fair treatment and work for people in Britain?

As the Prime Minister made such a play of that, may I raise one aspect of economic and monetary union? The presidency conclusions, which I assume he fully endorsed, say this about such a union:

> "The new instruments of the"

Maastricht

> "Treaty for strengthening the convergence of our economies are being consistently used in order energetically to advance the European unification process in the economic and monetary fields".

What is the role of the Government in relation to that statement? What steps are they taking, energetic or otherwise? I am sure that that will be of interest to the Opposition parties not merely on this side of the House, but on the other side, too.

On subsidiarity, may I again welcome the communiqué's endorsement of that as the key to democratic legitimacy? Would not the Prime Minister's support for that principle abroad be more credible if he acted in accordance with it at home in the United Kingdom, instead of centralising power?

On enlargement, there is no doubt that the actual, and potential, enlargement of the Union is changing the context in which its future develops. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we fully support the concept of enlargement. Is not the single biggest handicap to widening the European Union and including the eastern European countries, however, the existence of the tariff barriers that keep their goods out and, above all, of the common agricultural policy? Does not the process of enlargement make wholesale and fundamental change to the common agricultural policy not merely desirable but essential to its future progress? Will he confirm that the CAP still adds around £20 a week, or £1,000 a year, to the average family's food bill?

Indeed, does not that bear on the issue of fraud? Is not the CAP the main focus for such fraud? While we can all agree with the right hon. Gentleman's general sentiments and the measures he suggested on fraud, would those not carry greater weight if the Government had not recently and for the second year in succession voted for cuts in the Union's anti-fraud budget?

Although the summit was, of course, not without its successes, does the Prime Minister accept that it was low key and uncontroversial in part at least because it identified problems rather than resolved them? The big questions confronting Europe's future remain. Does he agree that, for those of us who genuinely believe in Europe and Britain's place at the heart of it, a precondition for further European co-operation is that it is decided through a debate involving the people of Europe, not merely their political elite? The debate about Europe's future should be open and the Government and other Governments within Europe should be candid about their views. They should seek to explain and justify further progress, rather than simply demand it. In short, is it not the case that the next stages of the development of Europe will come through persuasion, or not at all?

The Prime Minister: I can agree with a great deal of what the right hon. Gentleman had to say—not least because much of it was what I have been saying for most

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of the past two years. I am glad to see the attention to detail which the right hon. Gentleman gives to so many of my speeches.

Let me pick up on the many points which the right hon. Gentleman raised, starting with his welcome for the £240 million over three years for Northern Ireland, which is a welcome gesture. This is additional money for Northern Ireland which is likely to be extended beyond three years provided that progress is made in the peace process during that period, as I passionately hope it will. It is a remarkable contribution which was unanimously agreed without difficulty at the European Union summit. I am delighted at the Union's support for the process in Northern Ireland, which has been evident for some time.

On Bosnia, the right hon. Gentleman was right to say that there has been an inability to enforce peace. When the whole imbroglio started, I sought advice immediately as to what would be necessary to enforce peace. The military advice which I received right at the outset—long before troops of any sort went in—was that to go in and enforce peace, we would need several hundred thousand troops who would perhaps have to be there for a very long period. Even if peace was enforced, there would be no certainty that peace without a political settlement would continue once the troops had left.

There was a possibility of huge troop commitments in the most alien territory imaginable, with the troops having to stay there even after peace had been enforced unless a political settlement had been reached. It is not possible to enforce peace, and no sensible political or military strategist ever thought that that would be possible. As far as the blockade is concerned, there will certainly be no further sanctions relief, and I can give the right hon. Gentleman that assurance.

As for the right hon. Gentleman's remarks on the economy, he would have seen—if he had been present at the debate—the extent to which the debate has changed during the past two or three years. Many of the fashionable shibboleths of two or three years ago have been utterly and completely ditched. The European Union knows that, increasingly in many parts of the Union, it is becoming less competitive compared with the rest of the world. That is less true of this country than others, but it is true across the European Union as a whole. That is becoming increasingly apparent to political leaders, not only with regard to their own economies but to their own unemployment figures as well.

That is why the Union is turning towards more liberal approaches in terms of economic management and generally greater competitiveness. The whole thrust of what was said—the right hon. Gentleman picks out little bits here and there—was an endorsement of what we have been arguing for in the European Union for many years with increasing success.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): They will not be voting for you in Dudley.

The Prime Minister: Not a lot of people out there say that—certainly not with regard to the policies which the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues advocate.

On economic and monetary union and the convergence criteria, the right hon. Gentleman may not know that the convergence criteria were originally put in the Maastricht treaty at the insistence of the British Government—not least because they are sensible economic criteria in any event, quite apart from convergence. Convergence is necessary before economic and monetary union could be a practical economic step, apart from its political or other desirability. As of today, there are probably only three nations—of which this is one—which are likely, in the foreseeable future, to meet the economic criteria set out in the Maastricht treaty. Luxembourg already does, and we are one of two others which are likely to. Those criteria are correct in their own right, not just as a means of moving towards economic and monetary union.

I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's conversion to subsidiarity. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I see the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), who is squatting in the aisle, scoffing again at subsidiarity. That is consistent behaviour, because when I first raised the issue of subsidiarity, scoffing was precisely the reaction of the Opposition. They said that we would never get it; that it would never happen; and that it was not desirable. We have got it; it is desirable; it is central to what the Community is doing and every other nation has signed up to it. The Leader of the Opposition has signed up to it, but, alas, there seems to be a split between leader and led on the question of subsidiarity.

I share the right hon. Gentleman's view about the desirability of enlargement, not just for economic reasons, but for security and other reasons. He will know that we were the first to advocate enlargement at the Edinburgh summit. That is true of enlargement to include the EFTA countries and enlargement to include central and east Europeans. He will also know that I have repeatedly made clear my belief that the common agricultural policy was under sentence of death, provided that we enlarged to the east, so he did not have to press me on that today. I welcome him on to my ground, yet again, on that issue.

On the question of anti-fraud measures across the union, the right hon. Gentleman claimed that the budget to combat fraud had been cut. If he looks carefully at that budget, however, he will see that certain capital items that were put there last year have been paid. The revenue to deal with fraud continues at a satisfactory level and it has been agreed across the Community for that purpose.

I have a great deal of sympathy for the right hon. Gentleman's final point about the elite and Governments being out of touch with the views of the electorates across Europe. I pressed that precise view on my fellow Heads of Government in the discussion that we had on Friday evening in Essen. That remoteness has been shown by the difficulties experienced with referendums across Europe and in a raft of other ways. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that further development of the European Union will have to carry with it the support of people across the Union.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): And their Parliaments.

The Prime Minister: Of course, self-evidently with the support of their Parliaments.

Mr. Allen: Not here, though.

Madam Speaker: Order. This is wasting time.

The Prime Minister: It is not practical for some enthusiasts across Europe to believe that, because they happen to think it right, everyone else is necessarily going to follow them. There are increasing signs that that is not the case. It should not be the case and I share the right hon. Gentleman's view about that.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Will my right hon. Friend accept advice from the Comptroller and Auditor General on the question of fraud in the European Union? Will he especially consider the proposition that no money should be given from Community funds until any funds from a proven case of fraud have been fully restored and restitution has taken place? Does my right hon. Friend also accept that if there are to be as many as 22 nations, or one day 27, in the European Union, a profound change must take place and that any notion of political union must become ever more distant? Is not it important that national Parliaments, which are the closest to the grass roots of democracy, should remain the natural form of democratic expression so far as we can see?

The Prime Minister: I agree entirely with my right hon. Friend. On fraud, I shall certainly look at the proposal that my right hon. and learned Friend has made. It is, of course, a first cousin to the proposal agreed at Essen that all the member states will have to report back to the ECOFIN Council on the measures that they are taking in their countries to deal with the problems of fraud. Those measures should cover fraud prevention in the first place and dealing with fraud that arises.

I see political development in the form of co-operation on an intergovernmental basis, not development in the sense of there being a political union, with political decisions centrally taken.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I welcome the Prime Minister's statement and, in particular, the progress made in Essen in respect of Northern Ireland and widening the Community. However, does he accept that those people who favour widening European Union also understand, as it seems that he does not, the need to strengthen Europe's institutions and make them more democratic and flexible if that is to be coped with effectively? In that case, does he realise how welcome it is that the Government should be taking, albeit tentative, steps towards defence integration, especially with the French? Do not the failures in Bosnia, and more recently the worrying situation in Chechnya, make that even more urgent? Will he assure the House that he puts that at the front of the Government's agenda for the 1996 intergovernmental conference?

Finally, the Prime Minister has said, rightly, that Britain's policy on Europe should depend on a widespread debate that involves the people of Britain and the people of Europe. It should not depend on the untidy outcome of an unseemly spat led by rebels in his divided party. It will be greatly welcomed that he is now changing his mind on the issue of a referendum. He has said that there might be circumstances in which a referendum would be appropriate. Will he now tell us what those circumstances would be?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his support on Northern Ireland and enlargement. He is also right about the European Union itself becoming more democratic, although many people may mean different things when they say it. I certainly think that there needs to be more accountability by the Commission to the European Council. That is the primary democratic focus of the European Union.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): The European Parliament.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) would do me the courtesy of listening to what I have to say, he might not have had to shout. He could have saved himself some breath.

The European Council is made up of members from the individual democratic domestic Parliaments. The European Parliament is not the primary focus for democracy throughout the European Union. As Labour Members were shouting at me a moment ago, not least from below the Gangway, it is here that the primary democratic institution lies, and not the European Parliament. I am interested to see an apparent divergence between the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends on that matter.

On defence, I think that there is scope for more defence co-operation across Europe. I think that there is a great deal to commend that. It is an aspect that we have been examining for some time, and that we shall continue to examine for some time. I think that it is right on its merits, right for the defence of Europe and right for other reasons. I suspect that that will be an issue in the intergovernmental conference in 1996, although much of it has been developing for some time. We have not generally recognised the fact that we probably have more joint defence co-operation with France than we have had with any other nation in Europe, and perhaps any other nation anywhere, for very many years.

I made it clear that I did not rule out a referendum. One will have to wait and see precisely what the circumstances are. I think that it is wise to wait and see precisely what the circumstances are. The right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) does not know what will happen in the future, and his past projections of what might have happened today have proved that he does not know what will happen in future. So I have indicated that the circumstances might be appropriate to have a referendum, and if they are, we will.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. Those initial exchanges have now taken something like half an hour. I am now insisting that Members restrict the length of their questions to the Prime Minister. I am sure that, for his part, the Prime Minister will respond briskly, so that I can call as many Members as possible.

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the part that he played in keeping the Council meeting in a low key. May I ask one question? In the discussions that took place at the dinner meeting, and which touched on the complexities and challenges of enlargement, how many Heads of State expressed the opinion that the single currency would impede rather than facilitate enlargement?

The Prime Minister: Most Heads of Government pitched their remarks to what was likely to happen in the next 20 or 30 years, rather than looking at each individual item, so no one directly either supported the necessity for

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a single currency or specifically objected to a single currency. The debate ranged a good deal wider and a good deal further than that.

However, I think that my right hon. Friend knows the Government's position on a single currency. We sought in the Maastricht treaty to retain a freedom for the House to decide at a later date whether it was in the interests of this country to join. I am sure that that is the right position for the House to maintain.

It is clear that one of the reasons why a single currency has tended to fall away from the standard European debate that we have known so much over the past couple of years is that there is now no doubt in anyone's mind that the original timetable for a single currency is not remotely likely to be met—it will be a good deal later. Although some people are still flirting with the possibility of a single currency among some countries by the turn of the century, others have their doubts about the desirability of that.

What is clear now is that, whereas before the Maastricht treaty many people had in mind the concept of a single currency right across membership of the European Union, that is plainly fatuous if the Union is to be extended to 27 members. It will be almost totally unlikely if it has 20 members and extremely unlikely for 15 members. Most people are concentrating on a small core who may or may not decide to proceed. That carries a good deal more with it than simply an economic judgment. If a small core went ahead without the others, it would materially change relationships within the European Union.

I apologise to you, Madam Speaker, for that lengthy reply and shall try to obey your injunctions in future.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): We can all welcome the steps towards extending the European Union towards central and eastern Europe, but it is a rather different matter when we turn to the institutional changes or conditions that are referred to as a prerequisite for extending the Union. Is not a phrase such as "institutional conditions" just a code for the further tightening and centralising of the decision-making process inside the European Union?

The Prime Minister: Coming from where he does on the issue, I understand why the right hon. Gentleman thinks that. But I would say to him that, no, that is not the case. I shall give but one illustration of the sort of thing that we have in mind. Every time nations have joined the European Community in the past, one or two extra Commissioners have been added, which is patently absurd and cannot continue. There are too many Commissioners now and we should cut the number. I fervently hope that that will happen in 1996. Clearly, we shall have to have a smaller number. One of the institutional changes to be discussed is a change of that sort, which I think that the right hon. Gentleman would welcome. I think that he would welcome many others, too.

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): Is it not absurd for those who argue that the authority of the House is being undermined by Brussels to argue for a referendum—an alien concept that is incompatible with a representative parliamentary democracy? In that context, would it not be particularly absurd to have a referendum on a single currency when most people do not know the difference between a single currency and a common currency? In addition, as my right hon. Friend has said, because of enlargement, that is not likely to be an issue for many years.

The Prime Minister: It is certainly not likely to be an issue for many years. As my right hon. Friend will know, I advocated the principle of a common, as opposed to a single, currency some time ago, and I still believe that that would have been the best way forward. It would benefit business and industry—the prime beneficiaries in terms of the economic advantages of a single currency—without the disruption, both politically and historically, to the domestic currency that has become so familiar and beloved of people across the European Union. I remain of the view that, if it is possible to persuade others, a parallel currency is the right way ahead—I am sure that that is right.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Was anything said about sanctions against Libya by either the Germans or the Italians, who do not observe them, in view of the fact that 5,000 British nationals work there and British industry is greatly disadvantaged?

The Prime Minister: That was certainly not discussed by the Heads of Government and, to the best of my knowledge, it was not discussed by the Foreign Ministers in their meetings.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend say no now to a single currency, given the fact that, under section 2 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act passed last year, if there were a Labour Government with a massive majority, they would put into effect a single currency through the mechanism already provided? Therefore, when my right hon. Friend considers whether there should be a referendum, will he ensure that the referendum takes place before the next intergovernmental conference so that we can ensure that we preserve the very rights that my right hon. Friend mentioned in his opening remarks?

The Prime Minister: The IGC will have nothing to do with the single currency—it is not likely to be on the agenda at all.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): Come off it.

The Prime Minister: It is not likely to be on the agenda—the shadow Foreign Secretary can be reassured about that.

As for ensuring that a future Labour Government would not take us into a single currency, my hon. Friend's complete support to ensure that there is no future Labour Government would perhaps be the most agreeable way to ensure that that does not happen.

I think it right for us to determine what the circumstances are, in the longer term, when the question of a single currency will arise. That must be in our national economic interest. It is why I think we reached the right conclusion at Maastricht: not to sign up now to something in the unknown future, in unknown economic circumstances, and to keep open the option if it is in the economic interests of this country at the time.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): If the Prime Minister is serious in what he says about power residing in national Parliaments, will he advocate giving the European Committees the power not only to amend suggestions from Ministers but to vote on them on the Floor of the House as a matter of routine?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Lady, or any Government, did that, they would make any discussions or negotiations in the European Union almost an impossibility, the more so given the size of its membership, as it widens, which we all want. Whatever the underlying democratic desirability of what she suggests, it would be impractical. It would effectively be a way to kill any activity and almost any progress in Europe.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the forthright way in which he fights to defend British interests in the European Union—and on the way in which he survives repeated political assassination attempts by certain quarters of the British media?

If there were a clear prospect of a transfer of sovereignty away from this country to the European Union, would my right hon. Friend ensure a referendum before such a transfer took place?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's kind words and for his concern for my physical and political welfare. I am very touched indeed, and I look forward to his thoughts spreading.

Constitutional change is not a matter to be taken lightly or trivially. I have said in the past that I do not traditionally favour referendums in a parliamentary democracy, but I recognise that there may be occasions—Northern Ireland was a recent one—when a referendum would be appropriate.

A referendum has been suggested for two matters: one is the outcome of the IGC; the other is the single currency. We do not yet know the agenda for the IGC, and a single currency is still a long way off, and possibly getting further away. On matters of such exceptional importance, as I have said, a referendum cannot be excluded.

Mr. Enright: Is not the Prime Minister aware of how incensed Christian Democrats, as well as socialists, on the continent are at his continued attempts to frustrate directives that seek to treat workers as human beings? Does he not realise that the attempt last week by the Secretary of State for Employment to block the directive on building firms that exploit cheap labour has infuriated the general populace on the continent?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is talking absolute codswallop. This country has the best health and safety record in Europe, and he should know that. If there is frustration across Europe, it is likely to be found in the countries where unemployment is still rising because they are not following the policies that we are in Britain, where it is falling.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the successes of the Essen summit underline again the benefits of British membership of the EU? Does he share my hope that the British media, just for once, will report those successes fully and honestly, so that our people can understand that Britain's future does indeed lie at the heart of Europe?

The Prime Minister: I travel hopefully on the substantive part of my hon. Friend's question. I wish our membership of the European Union to be a success for this country. Thus far, over the past 20 years or so, economically it has been an immeasurable success. I think that there is no doubt about that, and the European Community, now the European Union, has undoubtedly been a dramatic success for living standards and for security and peace across western Europe. Those are much bigger issues than many of the matters which engage us in trivial and sometimes not so trivial arguments with our European partners. I want our membership to be a success. I intend that to continue, and I have no intention of acting in a way that would damage that.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): How many more summits does the Prime Minister expect to attend? Did he tell them, including the other Prime Ministers who are also teetering on the brink in the Common Market, that if he had not got rid of those eight Members by removing the Whip, there would have been 34 votes against him and he might not even have made that journey?

The Prime Minister: Dear, oh dear, oh dear. I think that the hon. Gentleman is aging. I assure him that that was not discussed in the European Union discussions at Essen. To my knowledge the hon. Gentleman has been making remarks like that since before the last general election. Much to his great dismay, no doubt, he has been wrong all the time.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on defending the legitimate as opposed to the hysterical interests of the United Kingdom in the European Union? If ours is the most competitive economy, why is it that of the big four we are the only one with a trade deficit? As the pound has been repeatedly devalued since the war, what fantasy are we defending?

The Prime Minister: If my hon. Friend looks at the growth pattern and in particular the export growth pattern, he will find that we are doing far better than any other nation in the European Union at the moment. As we came out of the recession the fashionable view was that our balance of payments gap would be very wide. It was often advanced by the shadow Chancellor in his moments of gloom—indeed, he has nothing but moments of gloom—that, as we emerged from recession, the balance of payments gap would widen and widen. It has, of course, narrowed and narrowed, and the reason for that is our competitiveness.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Is it not an exercise in self-delusion for the Prime Minister to conclude from this inconsequential summit that our partners are moving on to his ground? Surely the reality is that France and Germany and others are moving ahead behind the scenes with economic and monetary union proposals, and that at some stage he will have to choose between pandering to those behind him, whose paternity he has doubted in the past, and the interests of the country.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman wants to look at self-delusion he should look in the mirror. As for the summit being inconsequential, I refer to the £240 million for Northern Ireland, the fraud commitment, developments on subsidiarity, deregulation and competitiveness, the strategy on enlargement, and the historical impact of having another six nations attending the European Union summit. If those are inconsequential, heaven help us from what the hon. Gentleman thinks would be consequential.

On monetary union, I suggest that the hon. Gentleman compares some of the more recent speeches by European leaders with those of two years ago. He might, for example, look at Mr. Balladur's recent speech and at what President Mitterrand had to say at our joint press conference in Chartres. If he had done that, he would be better informed and would not have asked that question.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the continued uncertainty in the fishing industry, would the Prime Minister care to clarify the statement by Mr. Gonzales in Madrid this morning that he was overjoyed at what he saw as a crucial breakthrough over fishing? Is it true that he forced this issue on to the agenda, that a crucial breakthrough was achieved, and that he got what he came for? Does the Prime Minister accept that, when such statements are made by foreign Prime Ministers, and particularly in the context of our fishing industry, it is helpful to have the issue clarified and a statement made so that the whole House knows what is going on, or whether a statement is a load of rubbish?

The Prime Minister: I have not seen that remark by Prime Minister Gonzales, but it is not entirely unknown for Prime Ministers abroad to make statements for domestic reasons—*[Interruption.]* That does not, of course, apply to British Prime Ministers. It applies occasionally to Prime Ministers elsewhere who do not find themselves subject to the same rigorous questioning in their Parliaments as we do in ours. Indeed, I must say that some of my fellow Heads of Government could scarcely find their way to their Parliaments with a guide dog.

On the point about fishing, it has been agreed that the new rules must lead to no increase in effort, including for the Spanish fleet. There was no great breakthrough, no great change, and the issue will be debated in the House later this week.

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): That last insult to every Prime Minister in Europe really takes the biscuit. More seriously, if, as we know, the Prime Minister cannot speak for his party but claims that at least he speaks for his Cabinet, why is there not a single Europhobe Cabinet Minister sitting on the Front Bench with him today?

The Prime Minister: Dear, oh dear. I am not really sure why the hon. Gentleman bothered to ask that question and it certainly does not merit a reply.

Sir Wyn Roberts (Conwy): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the undoubted successes that he achieved at Essen, which were grudgingly welcomed by the Leader of the Opposition, will be warmly welcomed in many parts of the country? He should be congratulated on his part in achieving them.

On the economic front, is it not a fact that last week Mr. Delors described the policies pursued by my right hon. Friend and his predecessors as ultra-liberal economic policies which he was happy to thwart with socialism? Have not Conservative policies been well and truly vindicated as the only possible policies to be pursued in Europe to reduce unemployment and create jobs?

The Prime Minister: Not only do I believe that to be overwhelmingly the case, but I believe that that is the view of most of the people who attended the Essen summit.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): As the Prime Minister is in candid mood today, will he tell us how he would pitch his enthusiasm for a strengthening of the EU's common foreign and security policy, in view of recent comments by the Foreign Secretary? What institutional changes within the EU would be required to allow such a strengthening?

The Prime Minister: A common foreign and security policy in the European Union is a relative novelty, following the Maastricht treaty. It is still in its infancy. We think that it can easily be further developed, but on the basis of co-operation, not qualified majority voting. Therefore, it would continue on an intergovernmental basis, but based on co-operation.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I welcome the announcement on the trans-European projects, especially the funding for the channel tunnel rail link. Not least, it will fund some of the environmental improvements already agreed. May we have an assurance that European environmental funds will not be excluded from further environmental improvements in Kent?

The Prime Minister: I think that I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. Of course, I cannot guarantee that more funds will necessarily become available. I do not know whether they will or what priorities will emerge, but they will certainly not be artificially excluded.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): Has the Prime Minister read the report in *The Times* today, which states that the summit decided that job security and welfare benefits should be reduced to cut the queue of 17 million unemployed? If the report is true, why did he not mention it? Can he explain how cutting job security and welfare benefits will increase employment?

The Prime Minister: I do not know precisely what *The Times* is referring to—

Mr. Smith: Here it is.

The Prime Minister: I am not quite that long-sighted. I did not read that report, but I suspect that it is an extrapolation of the argument that unless we are competitive we will lose jobs. That has been happening across the whole EU, where 18 million to 20 million people are unemployed. If the number continues to rise, it will be an extremely serious long-term problem for the EU. The number has been rising almost consistently since the 1950s as we have become progressively less competitive. I suspect that the article which the hon. Gentleman has in mind indicates the need to retain competitiveness across Europe to ensure that more people are put back into work.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what might be described as a dull and businesslike meeting at Essen?

Will he confirm that quiet confidence at such meetings will achieve what this country needs: enlargement, competitiveness and subsidiarity?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about that.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): It was a difficult one, was it not?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's wise words on that subject, and he is right to stress them. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) might have put it differently, but I prefer my hon. Friend's formulation.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): In his reply to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), the Prime Minister suggested that the institutional conditions before enlargement were largely mathematical—matters such as seats. Has not the presidency, in the form of Chancellor Kohl and his friends, advocated increasing the powers of the European Parliament? Does the Prime Minister agree, therefore, that even if his Government do not believe in increasing those institutions' powers, other members of the reflections group at the 1996 conference probably will?

The Prime Minister: Yes, some of them will certainly want more powers, as the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) said earlier, although I was not entirely sure whether he was in favour of or against them.

Mr. Enright: In favour.

The Prime Minister: He is in favour of them on this occasion—good. So some people will argue for that in 1996. The illustration that I gave the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) was just one example of the sort of matter that will be discussed in 1996. One could give others. I have no doubt that some will argue for changing the powers of the European Parliament. There will be a range of proposals, but whether they will be agreed is a separate matter.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to refute completely the allegations and suggestions made by the Labour and Liberal Democratic parties that a backstage deal that will do down our fishing industry was stitched up at the summit? Will he assure the House that, at the Fisheries Council meeting next week, which is particularly vital to south-west England, we shall retain our position and robustly defend our fishermen's interests?

The Prime Minister: No backstage deal has been done. We have succeeded in setting aside the complex solution put forward by the Commission in September, which was not in the interests of British fishing. Instead, the Council agreed in its conclusions that a non-bureaucratic solution would need to be found. We shall continue to consult the fishing industry. Our objectives remain to ensure the following: that British fishing interests are protected; that only necessary measures are agreed; that fishing effort should not increase; and that the ability to take quotas is uninhibited.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Before it develops into a story throughout Europe, would the Prime Minister care to rethink the gratuitously insulting words that he offered his colleague Prime Ministers on their inability to know where their Parliaments are, not to mention his insult to guide dogs? Other Prime Ministers may have their Parliaments under greater control than he has his own. Why does he object to the European Parliament having greater democratic powers? Why should it not be the democratic institution for Europe? After all, its members are elected as well, and national Parliaments seem incapable of getting democracy into the European Union.

The Prime Minister: I hope that the hon. Gentleman's words will gain wide currency. If he implies that he wants a significant movement of authority from this House to the European Parliament—

Mr. Tony Banks *indicated assent.*

The Prime Minister: I note that the hon. Gentleman is nodding. He therefore wants a significant movement of powers from this House to Europe.

Mr. Skinner: No.

The Prime Minister: There seems to be slight dissent from other Labour Members.

Mr. Skinner: We may disagree, but at least we all have the Labour Whip. *[Interruption.]*

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the difference is not so slight. There is a fundamental split between not just Opposition Members but left-wing Opposition Members, with Opposition Front-Bench Members no doubt sitting uneasily in the middle. Thank heavens that that sort of thing only happens there.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): I agree with the tone of much that my right hon. Friend said, particularly in respect of the European Commission, Parliament and Council. However, I believe that my right hon. Friend said that a single currency is unlikely to come about in the near future. Is not that difficult to square with the treaty, which states that a single currency must come about by 1 January 1999? Was my right hon. Friend implying that the treaty must be amended, so that the timetable will not be fixed?

The Prime Minister: Originally, in 1972, there was agreement on a single currency by 1980. That patently did not happen because neither the economic circumstances nor the political will were right. It is certainly the case that the economic circumstances will not be right for 1997. It is extremely improbable that the right economic circumstances will be widespread in the Union in 1999—and they, too, are written into the Maastricht treaty as a necessary precondition for a single currency. That certainly applies to a European Union of 12, 15 or whatever number of states. It is conceivable, though no one yet knows, that a smaller group of member states might be ready by 1999. Even if that were the case, they would need to consider carefully the implications for the whole European Union

[The Prime Minister]

if they adopted a single currency when the others—whether or not they wanted to go ahead—were not economically in a position to do the same.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The Prime Minister reported that the summit agreed to abandon the proposal for a carbon tax. Did the summit reaffirm commitment to the Rio targets? If so, how will the British Government meet their commitment?

The Prime Minister: A European Union conference on environmental matters will be held in Berlin in the near future. The summit touched on environmental matters only in general because it agreed that those matters and the Union's position at the Berlin conference should be discussed at the Environment Council next week.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Does not it demonstrate the United Kingdom's great influence on European affairs? Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be disastrous for all parts of the United Kingdom if that single, strong voice were put at risk—as it surely would be under Labour's proposals for constitutional reform?

The Prime Minister: That is undoubtedly the case. I have forcefully expressed my views on that issue in the past. If the United Kingdom did not have a single, unified voice in the European Union, it would not have the same force of argument. That does not apply exclusively to the Union, because it would also be the case in the United Nations, G7 and every other international forum where Britain currently sits at the top table. A divided United Kingdom, perhaps leading to parts of it being separated, would not allow it to retain that position.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Did the Prime Minister raise at the summit the difficulties confronting the British aerospace industry? Did France and Germany raise with him the need for the British Government to purchase the future large aircraft? I hope that they did. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that my constituents, who manufacture the European Airbus, are terrified that the Government will buy Hercules and not place orders for the FLA?

The Prime Minister: No, the British aerospace industry was not discussed—although it is, of course, important. Much of the present Hercules fleet will need either substantial refurbishment or replacement. We must consider whether to go wholly or partly for refurbishment, buy new planes now, or buy some new planes now and develop the future large aircraft. Those matters are under active consideration and no conclusion has yet been reached.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be a warm welcome for the additional funds destined for Northern Ireland? Did not President Delors take a particular personal interest in the Northern Ireland peace process? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the funds will genuinely be additional and directed at areas of greatest economic and social need?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right. From the moment of the Downing street declaration, President Delors has been particularly helpful in regard to developments in Northern Ireland. I am very grateful to him for the personal effort that he has put in, and the personal part that he played in ensuring that this substantial package of extra assistance for Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic would be made available. It will be used for projects to promote reconciliation, encourage economic growth and expand job opportunities.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is it not disappointing that nothing was done at Essen to tackle the democratic deficit? Should not powers move to the European and national Parliaments, and away from secret bodies such as the Council of Ministers?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure that I would describe the Council of Ministers as a secret body. No one who attends its meetings would regard them as at all secret. Given that everyone holds press conferences immediately after the meetings, that conclusions are published, that some of the meetings are open nowadays and I will answer questions about them—as, no doubt, will others—I do not think that they are terribly secret. I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman is on the strongest ground.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. We shall now move on.

Points of Order

4.30 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Last Thursday I reminded the House that the implementation order relating to local government reorganisation in the county of Cleveland was still before the courts. At that time, the Lord President of the Council effectively withdrew the assurance that he had given in June this year that progress on the order would await resolution in the courts. I submit that that in itself was a hindrance to proper procedure.

On 10 March, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Environment assured the House that his Department would

> "place in the Library a summary of all representations received by the Secretary of State about the Commission's final recommendations"—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1994; Vol. 239, c. 577.]

when the Government laid the implementation order for Cleveland. He repeated that promise on 31 March. The order was laid last Thursday—nine months after that promise was made to the House, and 13 months after the Banham commission made its infamous recommendation. Despite repeated telephone calls from Library staff to the Department throughout Thursday, Friday and today, the summary of submissions has not yet been deposited in the Library.

Not only has the Secretary of State for the Environment treated the people of Cleveland with cynical non-concern by denying them a proper means of registering their preference; he has breached faith with the House by failing to keep his word, thus depriving hon. Members of information that could be crucial to the making of proper representations. May I ask you, Madam Speaker, to make the appropriate investigations of this disgraceful breach of faith?

Madam Speaker: From what the hon. Gentleman has said, the Department appears to have been very lethargic. Ministers will have heard that exchange, and I hope that they will report it to the appropriate Department without delay.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A couple of hours ago, I heard that the North West gas board had introduced a £21 call-out charge for gas leaks. I am extremely concerned that that may lead to dangerous circumstances in the north-west. Will you advise me, Madam Speaker, on how I might raise the issue in the House as a matter of urgency?

Madam Speaker: Advice on procedure is not given across the Floor of the House, but I am sure that the hon. Lady—who is wily in the ways of getting things done in the House—will find methods of doing so before the House rises: indeed, in the next day or two.

Orders of the Day

Health Authorities Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

Madam Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State, I must inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.32 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill represents the final steps in the programme of national health service reform that began with the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. When we embarked on those reforms, there was a clear consensus that the NHS needed to change. Despite the substantial extra funds that the Government had committed—increases unprecedented in its history—the service was still often inefficient, inflexible and unresponsive to the needs of patients.

Management was exercised through a cumbersome, command-and-control bureaucracy; staff were trapped in a system over which they had little or no control; the vested interests, whether they be the trade unions or the Sir Lancelot Spratts of this world, had too much power. The patient had little say, and even less choice.

The background to the Bill is four years in which—

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton) *rose—*

Mrs. Bottomley: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman wants to share reminiscences with me, as someone who was a member of the Standing Committee that debated the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 five years ago. However, I must make progress.

The background to the Bill is four years in which the balance of power in the NHS has changed. We have effected a fundamental and irreversible shift in favour of the patient. Before I outline the detailed provisions of the Bill, let me remind the House of some of that progress.

We said that we would devolve power and responsibility to the local level, so that decisions would be taken as close to the patients as possible. We have done that by establishing NHS trusts, by creating a new and distinct role for local health authorities, and by giving family doctors more power through fundholding.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), whose dodgy predictions we always enjoy on these occasions, foretold that the trust movement would be like a bicycle with a flat tyre. Well—some bicycle, some tyre. Not 30 per cent., not 50 per cent., not 70 per cent., but 96 per cent. of hospitals and community health services are now run locally as trusts.

I am delighted to be able to inform the House that I have approved a further 13 applications from hospitals and ambulance services wishing to become trusts from next April. That will mean that not 96 but 98 per cent. of services will be in trust hands.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the Secretary of State comment on the proposals for the Yorkshire and Northern regional

[Mr. O'Brien]

health executive, which covers an area equal to that of Scotland but which will have fewer than 140 people to administer it and ensure fair treatment in hospitals? Will she consider allowing the existing Yorkshire regional health authority boundaries to remain in place, which would mean a better service for the people of the region?

Mrs. Bottomley: That is evidence of the Opposition's hypocrisy when they claim that they wish to reduce bureaucratic layers of management. We can achieve savings by reducing the number of regional health authorities and, what is more, because of the nature of the responsibilities devolved to the districts, we do not need the large command-and-control regional health authorities. The Opposition are always hankering after regional government, tiers of government and layers of officials. That is their idea of paradise, but it is not the right way forward for the health service today.

I cannot finish with the subject of trusts without offering the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) one last opportunity to clarify her party's policy on NHS trusts. Would they stay or would they go under Labour? Will she say yes or will she say no? She recently had breakfast with David Frost, and she made a proper meal of it. I have the transcript of the programme here.

The right hon. Lady was asked whether she would keep the trusts, and she replied:

> "You can't simply tear the plan up and start again".

That seems perfectly clear, but, two pages further on in the transcript, she has changed her mind—

> "By the way"—

she added as an afterthought—

> "we're not talking about keeping the Trust hospitals".

She is after all thinking of tearing up the plan and starting again.

I know that, in her defence, the right hon. Lady will say that she is consulting. She told Mr. Frost that a Labour Government's first dramatic act in respect of trusts would be to do even more consulting. To be fair to her, she also said that she would "consult fast", but that is not good enough. Labour has a third health spokesman, but the party is still consulting.

I doubt that the right hon. Lady could tell us the day of the week without gathering views from the length and breadth of the Labour movement and issuing a discussion document. It has to be said that the right hon. Lady is the author of the biggest waiting time scandal in the national health service—the length of time that the public have been kept waiting for the Labour party's health policy.

I was referring to the progress made in implementing the Government's health reforms which form the backdrop to the Bill. As part of the reforms, we promised more consultants to reduce waiting times, to improve the quality of services and to cut long hours. In those three years, more than 1,000 new consultant posts were created. Thirteen thousand on-call rotas of 83 hours for junior doctors were eliminated, and in the past six months there has been a 46 per cent. reduction in the number of on-call rotas of more than 72 hours. That is real progress, which will lead to benefits for patients as well as staff.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy (Liverpool, Broadgreen): Is one of the 13 national health service trusts that the Secretary of State is announcing today the proposed new trust which is a merger between the Broadgreen hospital trust and the Royal Liverpool university hospital trust? The two NHS trusts are struggling financially, but the proposed merger offers no solution to their financial problems.

The people of Liverpool have waited a long time for a decision. They have been "consulted"—according to the Secretary of State's understanding of the word—and we are now waiting for her announcement. Will she clarify the situation?

Mrs. Bottomley: I confirm that that trust is one to which I have been able to give approval today. It will join the other trusts in providing excellent quality of care for patients. The hon. Member is particularly fortunate to live in a part of the country which, under the leadership of Sir Donald Wilson, has delivered waiting time achievements which are the envy of the country. Most of my hon. Friends think that the people of Mersey are extremely fortunate to have their health care controlled by the health service rather than by political appointments and local councils which have not had the same achievements or praise. But I do not intend to provoke Labour Members, as I have to make a great deal of progress, and I know that they want to make their own speeches.

We said that general practitioner practices would be allowed to manage their own budgets. Fundholding has proved to be one of the biggest reform success stories. Fundholders are expanding services and shaping the services that others provide in order to respond to patients' needs. They are cutting waiting times, improving the quality of services and showing others the way.

The House does not need to take only my word, or that of my hon. Friends, for it: hon. Members should consult the report released last week by the National Audit Office. It states:

> "There is evidence that the direct involvement of general practitioners in health care purchasing has led to improvements in the services provided for their patients and made fundholders more aware of the cost implications of their spending decisions."

By being good stewards of available resources, GPs have been able to make the resources go further and work harder for the benefit of all patients.

The report, like the independent evaluation of fundholding by Howard Glennerster before it, is further evidence that fundholding works. The report recommends that the benefits of GP involvement in purchasing should be extended to all patients. That is our policy, and it is why I recently announced a radical extension of fundholding.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Is there not a problem with the right hon. Lady's argument? The National Audit Office report also says that, at the time of the field work, none of the regions it visited was able to compare directly the funds allocated to fundholders and the resources available to districts to purchase equivalent services for the patients of non-fundholders. In other words, the NAO says that direct comparison is not possible.

Mrs. Bottomley: It is quite clear that the methodology behind setting budgets and the details of the reforms' implementation are improving all the time.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Compare like with like.

Mrs. Bottomley: It is comparing like with like. The report says that there is scope for improving the methodology behind the allocation of the budget. It also says that, as we move to capitation funding for GP fundholding, it will be more possible to make tight comparisons. There is overwhelming evidence of the benefits of GP fundholding in independent report after independent report. It is also evidenced by the number of people who are seeking to become GP fundholders, and recent Government announcements have made that even more possible.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Is it not extraordinary that the Opposition will not accept the National Audit Office's genuinely objective and independent assessment of the situation? It has completely vindicated the decision to establish fundholders, as well as making the more general point about pushing down decision making in the health service as far as possible.

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. Characteristically, the Labour party has a lowest common denominator approach to everything. Labour Members dislike excellence and innovation. They think that any change must be a change for the worse, and that is a tragedy. GP fundholding has been commended by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report, by Professor Glennerster's report, and now by the National Audit Office. Labour Members are deaf and blinkered; bad news is the only news they favour.

The Government have achieved the objectives which we set out in the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. Trusts are here to stay, and fundholders are leading the drive towards our goal of a primary care-led health service. The power to take decisions has been put in the hands of those closest to patients.

But in one vital respect, we want to go further than was envisaged in our original reforms. The principle purpose of the Bill is the abolition of regional health authorities. The RHAs played a necessary role in the old NHS. That fact has been recognised by many of my colleagues, not least by the late Lord Joseph, to whom I pay a very warm tribute. He was a most distinguished predecessor in this office and a major contributor to the well-being of this country.

In the first stages of the reforms, regional health authorities assisted the successful development of trusts, of fundholders and of district health authorities in their new purchasing role. I express my appreciation, and that of other Ministers, of the work of regional chairmen over the years. I am pleased to say that they will have a continuing and important role as regional members of the policy board.

The successful devolution of responsibility to local level inevitably meant that the role of RHAs would reduce. To put it slightly more bluntly: they were the last bastion of the old command and control system from which we have now escaped. By abolishing RHAs, the Government will sweep away an unnecessary tier of NHS management. The Bill is part of our concerted move to streamline management, to eliminate unnecessary duplication and bureaucracy, and to save money on administration which we can then spend on patients.

We estimate that the savings from the Bill will total £150 million every year in England, and at least £3 million a year in Wales— substantial savings, which will result in even better patient care. Those savings will result from the abolition of RHAs and from bringing together and halving the number of DHAS and family health services authorities. In Wales, 17 health authorities will be reduced to five. A further £50 million will be saved from reductions in the size of the Department of Health. We are determined to ensure that we set an example from the centre, and we expect streamlining to take place throughout the service.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): If the Secretary of State's Government are leading the fight against bureaucracy and are streamlining management, why has bureaucracy in Doncaster increased by 48 per cent since the changes were introduced? Spending on bureaucracy has increased from £4 million to £6 million—and that is only in Doncaster. Where is the Secretary of State's streamlining there?

Mrs. Bottomley: A less than worthy characteristic of the Labour party is its knee-jerk attacks on NHS managers at every possible opportunity. People who go into NHS management are committed to the national health service and to the improvement of service provision to patients.

The Government's achievements have included strengthening management in NHS trusts and health authorities; ensuring that there is better financial control, so that health authorities do not run out of money nine months into the year; and, above all, managing waiting lists so that progress can be made on waiting times. The hon. Member for Doncaster, North should realise that, because of the Government's reforms, his region has received a further £139 million this year for the benefit of patients. Those are the achievements that really matter.

In line with our manifesto commitments, substantial efficiency savings, amounting to £200 million, will be spent to improve the quality of services further. Thanks in part to this Bill, we will be able to make even further cuts in hospital waiting times.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): On the question of NHS administrators, does the Secretary of State agree or disagree with the views expressed on that subject by her hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales?

Mrs. Bottomley: I certainly agree with the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), who makes a very important contribution to the decision-making process. It is a great asset to have a colleague in the territorial Departments who takes a close and detailed interest in the matter, and I am delighted to see that he is in the Chamber today.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I am especially glad that my right hon. Friend has paid tribute to the work of employees in the regional health authorities. Will she, however, give full recognition to the talent, expertise and knowledge of the work force during the reorganisation? In particular, will she consider carefully before moving the headquarters from Harrogate, which has one of the best possible offices? If the headquarters was retained, the pool of expertise could continue its valuable work in the enlarged area.

Mrs. Bottomley: I know what a great champion of that cause my hon. Friend is. I have visited the headquarters to which he refers, and his local trust hospital. I have seen some excellent mental health project developments there. Detailed consideration is, of course, given before final

[Mrs. Bottomley]

decisions are made. The region under consideration is large, so it is important to have the headquarters somewhere that is accessible not only for the area my hon. Friend represents, but for those in the north and the east of the region.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mrs. Bottomley: I will not give way now, because many hon. Members may be fortunate enough to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In short, the changes will ensure that we have a local service which is locally accountable to health authorities and trusts providing the service, and not the great command-and-control, hierarchical, bureaucratic service of the past. It is because of that change that the service is so much more flexible and so much more responsive to local circumstances than it would be with a command-and-control system.

It is not a coincidence, of course, that Labour Members belong to the party that produced that great document, the national plan, in 1965. That is how Labour Members would like to run the health service. They would like one document in the centre—

Mr. Morgan: A Stalinist approach.

Mrs. Bottomley: Exactly—a Stalinist approach to these matters. The hon. Gentleman has helped me with the word. We believe in devolution and flexibility.

Mr. Morgan: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: No. The hon. Gentleman will be able to address the House on his Stalinist ideas at great length later. He will understand that I must now make progress—*[Interruption.]* I will not be tempted on the matter now.

The Opposition's amendment refers to cancer services. Thanks in part to the Bill, we shall be able to make further progress on that front as well. We shall build on the excellent cervical and breast screening programme that we established. I again place on record my commitment to take forward the principles set out in the report on cancer by the chief medical officer's expert advisory group. I want to see them sensibly implemented throughout the service. Facing changes, as we do in the Bill, will enable us to do precisely that.

This is the difference between the Government and the Opposition. Labour's policies are in turmoil, and its policies threaten turmoil for the national health service. We have introduced this sensible measure, which will improve the management of the NHS, improve its efficiency and improve services for patients. Let no one be in any doubt that, if the Opposition vote against the Bill tonight, they will be voting for bureaucracy and inefficiency, and voting to put patients last.

I turn now to the detailed provisions of the Bill. It is essentially a straightforward measure, with one major provision in clause 1, which will abolish regional health authorities. It will also remove the existing district and family health services authorities and replace them with a single body—the health authority.

It is a further measure of the success of the reforms that the merger of DHAs and FHSAs now seems an obvious and inevitable step. Many DHAs and FHSAs already work in an integrated way under a single chief executive. Those joint health commissions eagerly await formal merger and other authorities are not far behind. It has become clear that the whole NHS will be ready for this change by 1 April 1996. We have decided, therefore, to establish all the new health authorities on the same date. That will make it absolutely clear where we stand and where the future lies.

As all hon. Members are probably aware from their constituency mail, many people outside the health service cannot tell the difference between DHAs, FHSAs and RHAs. I am pleased to tell them that they will not have to bother in future. From 1 April 1996, there will be just one health authority at local level, and the system will be simple, clear and accessible. The new merged authorities with their wide span of responsibility will have real influence at local level.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): We suggested that.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman is prepared to offer advice to the Government on these matters. I know that he will vigorously support the legislation when it is in Committee. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health has noted the hon. Gentleman's enthusiastic support; he may be able to help to move some of the amendments.

The local authorities will have real influence and a vital role. They will be the single authority responsible for ensuring that the entire health needs of their populations are met. For the first time, their job will to be to ensure that the hospital, the community and the family doctor services are planned together in a coherent and co-ordinated way. I expect the new health authorities to work especially closely with the family doctors in their areas—fundholders and non-fundholders alike.

General practitioners, as my hon. Friends are well aware, have always had a crucial role as the gatekeepers of the national health service. Their position is a hallmark of our health service and is recognised, at home and abroad, as one of its great strengths. Our reforms have, rightly, enhanced the role of family doctors. We have given them new powers and new authority to shape services according to the needs of patients. The Bill will build on that.

The Bill will ensure that family doctors are even more at the heart of the new NHS. The new health authorities will be better placed to support GPs in the move towards more primary care-led health care, and they will ensure that family doctors, as the National Audit Office report again suggested, are fully involved in the crucial task of purchasing secondary care.

Schedule 1 makes the consequential changes required to reallocate functions. The new health authorities will bring together responsibility for both primary and secondary care—[HON. MEMBERS: "And dentists."] Indeed, as hon. Members say, dentists will also be included. As a result, the new authorities will be able to take on some of the roles previously carried out at regional level.

We shall be able, for example, to pass down to local level functions such as purchasing specialist services, public health, midwifery supervision and some aspects of education and training. Where tasks need a wider perspective than a single health authority, several will be able to work together, supported as necessary by regional offices. I know that this is a point of concern to many of my hon. Friends. The new system will retain the necessary overview to ensure that the health service continues to deliver its objectives efficiently, effectively and coherently.

We have today published a guide to the operation of the new system, which sets out some of the issues in more detail. It builds on good practice and experience so far. Among other things, it describes the role of the new regional offices. The proper implementation of key national policies, such as our objectives in "The Health of the Nation", the reduction of junior doctors' hours, teaching and research, and the development of regional and supra-regional specialty services, requires strategic direction. The NHS executive, operating through its regional offices, will discharge that role. It will support the development of local policies and, where necessary, ensure effective co-operation across service, education and research.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): The Secretary of State referred to the Yorkshire regional health authority office in Harrogate. Will she undertake to publish the full and detailed option appraisal on whether the new regional offices should be based in Harrogate, York or Durham, so that hon. Members within the new region can express opinions on the merits of each case and so that the public can be consulted? Or does she intend that the new decentralised health service should deny the public the opportunity to express views on the health service? Will decisions simply be taken behind closed doors in the NHS executive?

Mrs. Bottomley: I regret having given way to the hon. Gentleman. It is the case that decisions about the delivery of services are open to public consultation, and the papers are made available. For decisions about the organisation of NHS staff and people in the Department of Health, that is not the process followed. Our duty is to ensure that the taxpayer's money is used as effectively and efficiently as possible for patient services.

I regret giving way to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley). I thought that he might have something interesting to say about the role of the regional office and that vital aspect of delivering a local service but also managing to pursue a number of national priorities. We believe that we have got that balance right in this important Bill—through detailed consultations and consideration within the service.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) *rose—*

Mrs. Bottomley: I have lost patience. I was so disappointed with the comments of the hon. Member for York that I am not prepared to give way. I am afraid that my patience has withered away. I shall try to be more forgiving in due course, but now I have lost patience.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Do not give way.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am deeply in awe of my hon. Friend, and will follow her instructions.

What matters is to establish a more effective, streamlined management, so that the executive can better fulfil its role. That will ensure that we continue to deliver national policies by getting the best out of the local flexibilities that are at the heart of the new NHS.

The regional offices will not be RHAs by another name, however. They will be considerably smaller, and totally different in outlook. Two years ago, the regions employed around 3,900 staff. Today they employ 2,600. The new regional offices will employ no more than 1,100, which is less than a third of that original size.

Their work will focus on the key functions that have to be exercised at regional level. There will be no unnecessary duplication of functions between the regions and the centre, or between the regions and NHS trusts and health authorities. The executive will give proper strategic management to ensure accountability of health authorities, fundholders and trusts. The simplified structure means that information and advice can flow more freely between the NHS executive and local level. There will be a clear line of accountability from the NHS in the field through to Ministers.

The new system will further promote freedoms at a local level. It recognises the importance of innovation and will nurture it. We utterly reject the Labour party's model of a health service—rigid, monolithic and crawling along at the pace of the slowest. We believe in the rest learning from the best and in levelling up, not levelling down. That is the culture that the Bill will reinforce.

I do not need to take the House through the functions in schedule 1 in detail, as most of them are straightforward consequential amendments, but I must highlight two areas, not least because they are of direct relevance to the Labour party's amendments. They are the role of professionals and the future of education and research.

On the latter, we are committed to maintaining and improving the essential partnership between the universities and the NHS. I have already had productive discussions with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, and we will monitor progress carefully during and after the reorganisation.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I trust that my right hon. Friend is not referring only to universities, as there is a very good Project 2000 in St. Martin's college in my constituency, which is not a university, although it is as good as most, or better.

Mrs. Bottomley: Again, my hon. Friend has the right of it. She will know that that revolution in the training of nurses is one of the changes since the introduction of the reforms. The Project 2000 course is now available throughout the country. As my hon. Friend rightly says, we are leading in that area. The courses are especially good for training nurses to work in the community as well as in a hospital setting. I thank my hon. Friend for drawing that fact to the attention of the House.

As I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellet-Bowman) will agree, the training of doctors and dentists has certain special aspects—the long training, the rotations and the links with research. Because of the importance of maintaining those contacts, I asked the eight regional policy board members to take special responsibility there.

Some of the changes that the Bill introduces are to enable consortia of health authorities and trusts to work more closely together in informing the purchasing of education and training over time and, in due course, taking on some purchasing themselves. That will no doubt apply to the college to which my hon. Friend referred. That change will take place within a national framework, which will be carefully overseen by the NHS executive.

[Mrs. Bottomley]

Similarly, because medical research in this country is, frankly, outstanding—some of our centres receive commendations from around the world—it is important that we have the right balance between local and national input. Many of my hon. Friends will be aware of the important work undertaken by Professor Michael Peckham, the first ever director of research and development for the NHS.

I was recently able to underline the Government's commitment to teaching and research by announcing an additional £40 million support in the coming year. In passing, it is only possible to make such announcements for the health service because the Government are taking such good care of the economy that we have such sums to invest.

Following the publication of the detailed document "R&D in the New NHS" and of the important Culyer report, we have been holding discussions with the research and academic communities, with a view to introducing a new single stream of funding for NHS research. I am pleased that, so far, that has been welcomed. I shall be able to make more announcements shortly.

Finally, when we make regulations on the membership of the new health authorities, we will require them, where they have a medical or dental school in their area, to have a university member on the board. In doing so, we shall continue the present arrangements, which recognise how vital is the partnership between universities, medical schools and the NHS.

On health authority membership, when our changes created district health authorities, with their new and distinct role, we paid special attention to who should sit on their boards. Frankly, I regret the fact that so many of the non-executive members have had to face the vituperation of the Opposition, who constantly denigrate their contribution, regardless of the way in which appointments to health authorities were made by the Labour party when it was in power, and of the arbitrary way in which 32 health authority chairmen were dismissed at one stroke by a former Labour Secretary of State for Health because he did not like their political colour.

More important than the non-executive appointments, however, we brought in executives for the first time. It was absurd that, under the old system, the agenda was often dominated by overtly political interests, such as the prospective local Labour party candidates in Greenwich who sat on the board of the health authority, while those who had to do the work had to sit on the sidelines. In the new health authorities, we propose that the executive members will include a director of public health. The Labour party's amendment—characteristically missing the point—mentions regional public health directors.

Of course, the new local health authorities should be the focus of action in a decentralised system. The public health function should properly reside there, closer to the public whose health is the key issue. That is why, in an important advance on the old system, we will establish for the first time as a statutory requirement an executive director of public health at the local level.

Health authorities will continue to be unified boards, bringing together executive and non-executive members working towards a common purpose. It is important that they comprise the best people locally to give them the balance of skills that they need. People should be selected for the personal qualities they bring to the boards, and not to represent sectional interests. As the House will know, we are opening up our appointments procedures so that both health authorities and trusts have access to an even wider range of skills and experience.

I have asked the right hon. Member for Derby, South before to take her embargo off the trusts and to encourage people to serve on them, instead of putting them in the appalling position in which, if they serve on trusts, they are apparently supposed to be working for her to bring them to an end.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I must have told the right hon. Lady at least three times that there is no such embargo. Will she cease making such a silly point?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am to some extent reassured by the right hon. Lady's comments, but members of her party have been worried about taking on such appointments, when approached to do so by Ministers, because of their fears of offending the party they support. If that happens again, I shall refer the details to the right hon. Lady.

The Bill will build on the practice that we have already established with district health authorities, so that the new boards have the best people to help them to discharge their vital role.

We expect that a growing number of both health authority and trust members will have backgrounds in nursing, medicine or any other relevant profession, and we are already seeing examples of that.

The hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and I served on the Standing Committee on the National Health Service and Community Care Act a long time ago—*[Interruption.]* We were all young then. The hon. Gentleman, and my hon. Friends who served on the Committee, will be aware that the president of the Royal College of Physicians at that time was Dame Margaret Turner-Warwick. I am pleased to report to the House that she has for some time contributed her considerable talent as chairman of the Royal Devon and Exeter trust.

I am delighted to be able to announce today that the then chairman of the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting, Dame Audrey Emerton, is now to take up her post as chairman of the Brighton hospitals trust. I think that that is very good news indeed.

Sitting on boards is not the only way for professionals to be involved, nor is it sufficient. I commend to the House the views of Professor Cyril Chantler, who is principal of the United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy's and St Thomas's, and is a policy board member. He described the old medical advisory committees as

> "functioning as a sort of Greek chorus, commenting on what was going on the stage but not taking part in the play."

He says that doctors need to contribute to

> "the strategic and operational management of the service, in hospital, in the community and in practice, and in the commissioning role at district and central level, rather than doctors simply seeing themselves as there to give advice."

I strongly agree, although I would extend the analysis to nurses, dentists, pharmacists and the full range of health professionals.

As Professor Chantler suggests, the existing professional advisory structure is not firmly integrated into the work of regional and district health authorities. It is peripheral, and that is why we will not be incorporating it into the new structure. We want professional advice to be integral in the new structure, and we want professional advice to become professional involvement. We require the new health authorities to promote a constructive partnership between health professionals and managers, as many of the best DHAs and family health service authorities are doing.

Teamwork is vital to the NHS, and I have been at great pains to point that out during my tour of the regions during the past six months. The Bill will make teamwork easier by removing some of the organisational boundaries, and enabling us to build on the considerable progress which has been made during the past four years.

The House will want me to address the question of accountability. There will be a full and accountable partnership between health authorities and the public on whose behalf they act. The Bill marks an important boost for accountability by cementing the devolution of decision-making to local level. The closer to patients that decisions are taken the more accountable the service will be to them. Health authorities are beginning to work much harder at explaining to the public what they do, and asking how they could do better.

I believe that they could be doing better still, and I shall insist that they do so. In the new structure, the public will have access to a single body which will be responsible for securing health care for them. The new authorities must work even more closely with the public—consulting, communicating and involving them in key decisions.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: As a Member who is sponsored by Unison—the union pays me personally nothing, in case the Secretary of State wishes to misrepresent that fact—may I press her on the question raised by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) about a very important issue for the northern region? Why cannot we, and the health service workers and administrators throughout the region, have access to the appraisal documents which were produced in conjunction with departmental officials upon which the decision to move the regional headquarters has been taken?

Is it not significant that, when the hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) intervened, he did not ask that pertinent question? He asked a safe question, which he knew the Secretary of State could answer.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend may wish to raise that point in his own speech. I have made the position clear. There is a requirement for consultation when there is a proposal to change services for patients. As many hon. Members will know, that consultation can be extremely lengthy and often delays necessary change, but it is important in terms of changing services for patients. Ministers have a duty to make sure that taxpayers' money is effectively used, and the streamlining outlined in the changes will result in better patient care. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) will know that another £139 million will go to his region in the year ahead. The changes will mean that we can do even more.

I was talking about the important role of the new health authorities in making sure that they involve local people in decisions. Authorities must consult and encourage local visibility. We are making much more information about the organisation of the service available to the public than ever before through annual reports, public meetings and the important NHS performance tables. None of that information was ever made available to the public when the Labour party was in power.

That is the accountability that matters to patients—information which enables them, or their advocates, the GPs, to exercise informed choices. We shall back all that up through clear lines of accountability between the NHS at local level and Ministers. Those lines will be reinforced by such measures as our codes of conduct of accountability and openness.

Let me briefly mention clause 3 and schedule 2, which provide for the transition to the new structure. Clause 3 gives health authorities wide powers to work together, so that, by 1 April 1996, they can be completely ready for merger. We are taking steps to manage the process effectively to minimise any disruption to services. The significant degree of joint working which is already in place will help, and some of my hon. Friends have referred to that.

Schedule 2 provides for the effective reallocation of the staff, property, rights and liabilities of the authorities which are being abolished. We will do all we can to minimise the distress to health authority staff. I take the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate and by the hon. Member for Workington—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Workington, having made his intervention, is no longer interested. He talks about being interested in staff, but when I talk about minimising the disruption to staff, he cannot even be bothered to listen. *[Interruption.]*

Mrs. Beckett: Is it not rather bad parliamentary manners for the Secretary of State to chide my hon. Friend for not listening when the hon. Member for Harrogate—to whom she referred—is not even in the Chamber?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Member for Workington was talking through my speech. That is a great discourtesy, particularly when the hon. Gentleman protests his interest in health service staff. But that will not surprise any of my hon. Friends at all, and I only regret giving way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) is fast asleep.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend did not intervene during my speech. The hon. Gentleman persistently made attempts to intervene, and he has proceeded to have his own conversation while I am discussing what we are doing for health service staff. I shall move on, as clearly we will have some fascinating speeches from Opposition Members, and certainly my hon. Friends are longing to get in.

I began by setting out the background to the Bill, and the enormous progress which has been made in a short time in implementing the health reforms. What is truly remarkable is that, throughout the period of substantial organisational change, the NHS has not only maintained its services to patients, but improved and enhanced them.

For every 100 patients treated in 1990-91—the last year before the reforms—118 were treated in 1993-94. *[Interruption.]* I find it extraordinary that Opposition Members cannot be bothered to listen to the staggering achievements of Health Service staff during the process of transition. I suppose—as ever—that the news is so

[Mrs. Bottomley]

good they cannot bear it. In 1994, we expect the number of patients treated to rise to 122 for every 100 treated before the reforms.

Whereas, before the reforms, 170,000 patients were waiting for more than one year, today that figure is just 60,000, and it is coming down. The figures which have been published only today show that, in the past five years, the number of hip replacement operations has risen by nearly one quarter, the number of cataract operations by 44 per cent., and the number of heart operations by 65 per cent. Those are impressive figures, and they mean an improved quality of life for many thousands of people.

While the implementation of the reforms has been a substantial management success, the changes should only ever be seen as a means to an end, and not an end in themselves. The real challenge lies in realising the full potential of the new NHS at a time when it must respond to profound changes in clinical practice, the aging of the population and the rising expectations of patients. Those changes have been recognised not least by the medical profession in its recent welcome statement on core values.

The measures contained in the Bill will draw our organisational changes to a successful conclusion. They are based on our experience so far, and on evolving practice. They reflect widespread consideration and discussion within the service and beyond. They provide the basis for a period of stability and constructive partnership. They will streamline and improve management; cut bureaucracy and costs; and ensure that even more power and responsibility is passed down to where it belongs—to those closest to the interests of patients.

The independent evidence that our reforms are working is mounting up. The OECD, the Audit Commission, the National Audit Office, the British social attitudes survey, and independent experts of all persuasions and none, say that the Government are getting it right.

The Bill is important and timely, and a good one. It confirms our commitment to a comprehensive, high-quality health service, which responds to the needs of patients and is true to its founding principles. It puts in place the final building block to create the first-class health service we need, fit for the 21st century. I commend the Bill to the House.

5.20 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I beg to move, To leave out from 'That' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

> "this House declines to give a second reading to the Health Authorities Bill; notes widespread concern over future provision of cancer screening services, the independence of regional public health directors and the delivery of medical education for doctors; fears that claims for reduced bureaucracy and savings to public funds will prove ill-founded; and believes that far from completing the NHS reforms the Bill fails to address the problems of hospital closures, waiting lists over one million, commercialisation of trusts, a two tier service with general practitioner fundholding and the fragmentation of a National Health Service into hundreds of health businesses."

I salute the extraordinary efforts of the staff of the national health service to maintain the level of that service in the face of the Government's enthusiasm for the anarchy of the internal market, the fragmentation of the service and the commercialisation of health provision. I make that point deliberately at the outset of my speech because I have observed from previous debates that if the Opposition do not mention what a wonderful job the staff of the NHS are doing the Secretary of State accuses us of attacking them and not appreciating their work in the public service.

Let it be clearly on record that the Labour party believes that the ancillary workers, nurses, dentists, physiotherapists, dieticians, cleaners, radiographers, radiologists, doctors, anaesthetists, consultants, clerical workers, managers and physicists—to name but some of the categories of staff—are unstinting in their loyalty to the health service and to the notion of public service.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): What about Ministers?

Mrs. Beckett: No, definitely not the Ministers.

Let our admiration for the level of patient care that is still provided in the health service be clearly and explicitly on the record. And let it be accompanied by an equally explicit and clear statement that it is, remains and always will be our view that the NHS is a public service which should not be—and by the Labour party never will be—regarded as a business.

It should not be necessary to detain the House by making such relatively simple statements about our support either for staff or for patients. I do so only because the Secretary of State has developed a rather tedious habit: if the Opposition fail to mention the staff of the health service, the right hon. Lady accuses us of attacking them and not appreciating their work. Yet if we mention them, she accuses us of being in the pockets of the trade unions. That is scarcely a sophisticated debating technique, and it has become deeply boring; as we are discussing a new Bill, I urge the right hon. Lady to turn over a new leaf and just drop it.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Beckett: On that point, by all means.

Mr. Streeter: Will the right hon. Lady make one further thing clear today? Would the Labour party abolish NHS trusts—yes or no?

Mrs. Beckett: We have made it clear repeatedly that we certainly do not intend to work with the current structure of NHS trusts, but we are exploring how to knit those trusts—

Mr. Streeter: So the Labour party will abolish them?

Mrs. Beckett: What does the hon. Gentleman mean by "abolish"? Those trusts exist, and the hospitals and services that they run exist; of course we do not want to get rid of those services—no one does. If the hon. Gentleman is asking me whether we intend to continue with the structure of those individual health businesses, as set up by the Government, the answer is most certainly not—everyone is aware of that.

What causes huge resentment in the House and widely outside is the Government's attempt to outlaw the questioning and criticism of their policies towards the health service by insisting that anyone who attacks those policies is attacking the service itself. Let me, once again, put it clearly on the record that the Opposition are not attacking the health service, whether that means the staff, the patients or anyone else involved in its efficient operation. We are, however, attacking what the Government are doing to the health service and we have not the slightest intention of being deflected from that attack.

Part of the problem is that the health service is under attack—from the Government. In particular, all the staff who work in the health service, at every level, are under attack because the Government are attacking them. They are under attack by threats that their pay will be linked to their individual performance. They are also under attack because that performance will obviously be measured, at least partly, against the yardstick of loyalty to the organisation and the extent to which staff are prepared, as they were recently urged by one of the Secretary of State's most loyal supporters, to put the interests of the organisation before the interests of the patient.

They are under attack because, should they dare to speak out about their concerns and anxieties in relation to patient care, their very livelihood is threatened by the new gagging contracts issued by so many of the trusts which have been set up by the Government's legislative changes. Finally, and perhaps most insidiously of all, staff feel themselves to be under attack when they hear people like Professor Caines say that the very notion of public service is at an end, when it was exactly to engage in the service of the public that most of them joined the health service in the first place, and they still take pride in that concept.

The Secretary of State is seeking wide powers in the Bill—in many cases, wider powers than those available to previous Secretaries of State through earlier legislation under Governments of every political shade. Much of the detail of what is intended to be done with those powers is left unstated in the Bill. Yet again, we are witnessing sweeping enabling legislation from the Government, with an immense amount of the detail and execution of it left to regulations which, of course, cannot be amended. We are greatly concerned about that aspect of the Bill and we shall seek to explore it in Committee.

One thing that is clear from the Bill and the schedules to it is that, apart from taking substantial powers, the Secretary of State seems potentially to be removing from the arena others who might possibly have a different point of view or a different perspective to express. For instance, I was surprised as well as dismayed to see that the Government intend to abolish local advisory committees. According to another proposal in the Bill—exactly the type that will cause public concern—in future when a local hospital is thinking of applying for trust status, consultation—which in the past had been compulsory—will be carried out only if the Secretary of State thinks that is necessary, and then under terms that the right hon. Lady will decide sometime between now and when the regulations are published. The Bill contains no suggestion as to what those criteria might be.

One thing that I should have thought that everyone in the House had learnt, at least from the experience of the workings of the Child Support Agency, is just how dangerous it is to leave all the detail—the framework of proposals—to regulations rather than just matters such as exact figures or precise dates, which have always been properly matters for regulation.

I listened with care to what the Secretary of State eventually said about the Bill. There are elements in it to which we can offer support—in particular, the proposal that district health authorities and family health services authorities should be merged. As my hon. Friends pointed out in sedentary interventions, the Labour party has long advocated that. Like the Government, we believe that such a merger could and should lead to more efficient management of resources, better planning and ultimately a better service for patients. We shall look forward to exploring in Committee the detailed implementation of that proposal.

That proposal, however, sits alongside the proposed abolition of regional health authorities. The removal of some functions from regional level and the apparent intention to devolve them to local level is a matter of concern not only to the Opposition but to people throughout the health service. We shall want to explore that issue, too.

As I am sure that the Secretary of State must be aware, widespread anxiety has been expressed about the loss from regional level of the maintenance of cancer registries or the handling of national confidential inquiries. However, the main matter that I shall first discuss is the Secretary of State's claim that those proposals and that aspect of the Bill are not merely part of the Government's so-called reforms of the health service, but a necessary part of completing the process of reorganisation.

It seems to us that that specific proposal is neither necessary nor desirable, and it leads us to have grave doubts about the real intentions behind that part of the Bill. We treat with considerable cynicism the Secretary of State's assertion that the changes that she proposes will automatically lead to improvements in patient care.

The Government appear to be managing the operation of the national health service with the same level of competence that they apply to managing the Conservative party. Indeed, if the Government were a privatised trust and not a publicly financed, publicly accountable, publicly run Administration they would definitely be in severe difficulty. Their public relations consultant, Mr. John Maples, has just advised them that the British electorate are unwilling to renew their contracts and that they, the Conservatives, can never win on that issue. In consequence, he advises:

> "The best result for the next 12 months would be zero media coverage of the National Health Service"—

not the best result for the national health service, but the best result for the interests of the Conservative party, to which alone the Government's concern appears to be directed.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Beckett: I am delighted to give way to the Secretary of State on the subject of the interests of the Conservative party.

Mrs. Bottomley: The right hon. Lady's account is bizarre. As I told the House this afternoon, in five years there has been a 65 per cent. increase in heart operations, a 44 per cent. increase in cataract operations and a 24 per cent. increase in hip operations. Those are dramatic achievements. The number of patients being treated now—

Mr. Morgan: What was the increase in the previous five years?

Mrs. Bottomley: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the increase in activity during the 1970s, when the Labour party was in power, was about 1 per cent. a year. The

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increase in activity throughout the 1980s was about 2.5 per cent. a year. Since our reforms, the NHS has been increasing the number of patients treated by about 5 per cent. a year. It is a much better, more efficient service, delivering much better quality.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I address these remarks not just to the Secretary of State but to everyone in the House. This afternoon it seems that the interventions have been speeches and not to the point. In future, let us have interventions to the point and on the subject in question. *[Interruption.]* Order. I was directing my remarks not only to the Secretary of State but to everyone in the House.

Mrs. Beckett: The Secretary of State tells us, as she did in her speech, about some of the achievements of the national health service. However, she was selective in the figures that she gave, quoting areas in which new technology is coming into play as well as changes in the manner of treatment. It is not at all clear to me that the figures that she gave my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) were for a comparable area of health care, but never mind—we are used to Ministers not giving accurate figures in the House or, indeed, anywhere else.

Although the Secretary of State highlights some of the genuine achievements of the staff of the health service and the development of health care, not only Labour Members but people throughout the country resent the Government claiming credit for those improvements, as though they all flow from the Government's reforms and changes. In fact, they have absolutely nothing to do with the Government's reforms and changes. Indeed, in many cases, those changes have seriously impeded the development of better health care, as everyone in the country recognises, except those on the Conservative Benches.

The Conservatives are seeking to avoid media coverage for the national health service, and if they were an organisation like a national health service trust they would be in serious trouble. Their professional team cannot be relied on any longer. As a result of a revolt last week by junior members of the team, senior board members found themselves unable to raise the finance necessary to run the business of Government. No private company worth its salt would survive in the marketplace after such a debacle. I suppose that, if the Government were not a public undertaking—if they had been privatised—we would expect them to do what Mr. Cedric Brown did recently and choose the moment of the lowest public esteem to award themselves a 75 per cent. pay increase, or at least something substantial.

The Secretary of State says that the Bill will complete the reforms that were begun in 1990. The phrase has a neat, tidy and finished feel, as though she were a ship's steward, conscientiously dashing about, reordering and rearranging the deckchairs on—no, not the Titanic on this occasion, but perhaps the Achille Lauro. The impression created by the Secretary of State's public statement, which she sought to reinforce in her intervention a few moments ago, is that soon everything will be satisfactorily completed and after her spate of demented and feverish activity she will be able to sit back and relax in her deckchair as the national health service liner continues on its voyage.

The reality, of course, is quite different. Like the Achille Lauro, the national health service has sunk—and public confidence in the Secretary of State's captaincy at the Department of Health has gone down with it, just as public confidence in the Government has descended to the depths. Contrary to the cheery picture that the Secretary of State tries to paint of the tidy, scrubbed deck of a floating national health service, all that we see are survivors trying to cope in the 485 separate leaky lifeboats of the individual health businesses that are the real result of the Secretary of State's reforms.

The Secretary of State asked why we were criticising the performance of the health service under her administration, and talked about all the improvements that she detects and the figures that she gives for specific operations. One of the reasons why we take what the Secretary of State says not with a pinch but with a bag of salt is that scarcely a day goes by without an NHS survivor contacting my office and the offices of my Opposition colleagues, alerting us to yet further deterioration in the service as they experience it.

Mr. Tim Smith: "It wasn't like that under the last Labour Government."

Mrs. Beckett: The hon. Gentleman is exactly right. That is exactly what they say on every occasion—"The health service is nothing like it was. Our health service is disappearing before our very eyes and we bitterly resent the speeches of Conservative Members who do not seem to understand what is happening in our health service." That is what they all say.

Mr. Smith: My experience is that complaints about the NHS were never greater than in 1976, 1977 and 1978, when the Labour Government cut capital expenditure on hospital buildings by 20 per cent. In comparison, there are very few complaints today.

Mrs. Beckett: I can only tell the hon. Gentleman that none of the people who have telephoned my office so far have been aged less than 18. They are all people who experienced the national health service and were treated by the national health service in the days that the hon. Gentleman is talking about. They all say what everyone except the Conservative party says—that the NHS is worse than it used to be, and that they are deeply upset and worried about the way that it is disappearing before their eyes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: As my right hon. Friend knows, I have been in hospital for some fairly long periods in the past couple of years, and it is interesting that, every time that I have been in hospital—sometimes for as long as three weeks—nurses, doctors, consultants and administrators have always come to my bed when they learned that I was a Member of Parliament, to tell me how worried they were about developments in the national health service. How can the Government possibly deny it?

Mrs. Beckett: My hon. Friend is entirely right, and he knows that his experience is shared by every Opposition Member. I find it extremely difficult to believe that people avoid saying the things to Conservative Members that they say to every Opposition Member.

I will give some further examples of reasons why we express anxiety—to which the Secretary of State seems to take such exception—about the service that is provided. Three thousand seven hundred operations were cancelled on or after the day of admission in the three months between July and September in London and the south-east alone. Recently, the surgical directorate at Whittington hospital in London decided to cancel all—yes, all—non-urgent surgery except for patients of GP fundholders. In Staffordshire last week, eight out of 11 consultants cast a vote of no confidence in the chief executive at the Foundation trust. A study carried out in Britain, France, Canada and the United States showed that British doctors were the most overworked, half of them wanted to practise abroad and one third wished that they had chosen another career.

Senior hospital doctors recently made a statement about the "disintegration" of the health service—their word, not mine—and drew attention to what they saw as the distortion of clinical priorities. They said that, although patients should, as the public expect, be treated on the grounds of clinical need and priorities and their sickness, rather than the finances of the trust, that was ceasing to happen. They alleged that patients of fundholders were being treated preferentially and that non-urgent patients were taken from long waiting lists at the expense of urgent patients, who then had to wait longer. That was all being done for financial reasons—to keep hospitals solvent—rather than for reasons of medical priority. In addition, it was being done at the direction of managers because of financial concerns rather than on the basis of clinical decisions made by the medical profession.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I thank my right hon. Friend for giving way. I will illustrate the point that she has just made. One of my constituents had his operation stopped after he had received the anaesthetic and was waiting outside the theatre. It turned out that the operation had been stopped on the direction of the hospital administration because of the overtime that would be involved if it were completed.

Mrs. Beckett: I just do not believe that no Conservative Members are told similar stories or are aware of similar concerns.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam) *rose*—

Mrs. Beckett: I admit that I might well believe it of the hon. Lady.

Lady Olga Maitland: Surely it is time to balance the debate. Is the right hon. Lady aware that whenever I meet constituents they tell me how much they appreciate the treatment that they receive in our local NHS hospital trust of St. Helier? They say how much they appreciate the dedication of the doctors and nurses, and the speed of delivery of treatment. Does the right hon. Lady agree that, as a result of health service reforms, 3,000 more patients a day are treated than before? Surely that is something of which to be proud.

Mrs. Beckett: First, that is not the result of the health service reforms. Secondly, as the hon. Lady must be well aware, those figures are nonsense. We are talking about finished consultant episodes, not people. All that the British public care about is when people are treated, the length of time that they have to wait and how their concerns are handled. Of course we are well aware of the dedication of national health service staff. In the hope of preventing questions such as those asked by the hon. Lady, I went out of my way at the outset to make it plain that we do not question that dedication.

I was speaking about the concern of senior hospital doctors at some of the changes they see. I am sure that the Government and Conservative Members must be well aware that it is not only those doctors who are concerned, but every patient who uses the health service and who objects to the outcome of care being determined not by the medical profession on grounds of clinical need, but as a result of Government policies. As well as the more general reports of what is happening, my office is contacted daily by people expressing fear and anxiety as a result of their personal experience of how the health service works today.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is the only person in the debate so far to have given statistics about what is happening in the service and improved patient care. The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) has relied on nothing other than anecdote. When will she provide facts? When will she make anything other than general assertions that the facts that we are providing about the health service and improved care are wrong? When will she say, in detail, why they are wrong, rather than simply making allegations? It would be extremely helpful to the debate if we could have no more anecdotes and a few facts.

Mrs. Beckett: I do not know what all that was about. The Secretary of State gives statistics about details of operations. What is the Minister of State asking for—alternative statistics? He knows perfectly well that there is widespread concern about the validity of the Government's statistics—everyone knows that. At the last Department of Health Question Time a Minister admitted that the Government's figures do not count people, but episodes of treatment.

Mr. Malone: We all know that.

Mrs. Beckett: The Minister of State says that we all know that. I rest my case and propose to go on with my speech.

Mr. Malone: There is no point in the right hon. Lady trying to be astonished about things that are well known facts. Of course such statistics are counted in completed consultant episodes—that has been the basis on which treatments have been considered for some time. On that basis, it has been shown that treatments have increased by a record number. The right hon. Lady cannot get away with trying to say that that is an astonishing revelation—it is well known.

Mrs. Beckett: I am delighted that the Minister of State has put that even more firmly on the record. It is certainly the Opposition's understanding that for a considerable time Ministers have sought to cloud the issue. When the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) spoke a few moments ago, she talked of people being treated and said that the number of people who had been treated had increased. But the figures that she was quoting did not relate to people, but to finished consultant episodes. We are pleased to have it on record that those

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are well known facts. I hope that Ministers will not trot out such statistics as proof of how many people have been treated in future.

The Minister of State mentioned levels of throughput. We are seeing changes in the method of delivery of health care, including new technology—everyone recognises that. But not one jot or tittle of the credit for any of that belongs to the Conservatives. It belongs to staff in the national health service and developments in medical technology. The attempts of Conservative Members to take the credit for it offends not only the Opposition but the general public.

The conflict between managers and clinicians is growing. There are increasingly regular reports of clinicians declaring their lack of confidence in the chief executive of their trust. Nothing in the Bill changes those concerns. On the contrary, it further centralises bureaucracy in the health service and further concentrates power in the hands of the Secretary of State. Waiting lists are still at record levels. Hospital in-patient waiting lists still stand at more than 1 million. We all know—I hope that this, too, will soon become an uncontested fact—about the many people who are not on waiting lists as they are yet to have their first out-patient appointment, but who are none the less waiting for treatment. Nothing in the Bill will assist them in their plight. Instead, the Bill's effect will be to withhold still further information from the public as regional staff become civil servants, bound by the Official Secrets Act and responsible only to the Secretary of State.

There is nothing in the Bill to address the number of complaints about the NHS. The Minister of State asked how we could raise certain issues without giving statistics, so I will give him this one: complaints about the health service rose by 57 per cent. between 1991 and 1993—so much for the Conservative party's contention that everyone is perfectly content with the progress of the service. The Bill does not respond to any of the issues. It responds to a different set of demands and a different agenda. We have seen the commercialisation and fragmentation of the health service and are now seeing the drive to introduce competition at all costs when it is co-operation in the provision of a public service that the public and staff wish to see.

There was an interesting report in the *Health Service Journal* at the end of last week suggesting that guidelines to be issued soon by the NHS executive would take a harder line. It said Ministers would take a harder line on the internal market and seek to

> "clamp down on 'anti-competitive developments' such as hospital mergers."

The article continued:

> "Contrary to the softer official line adopted in recent months, the guidelines reassert the efficiency gains which can be generated by competition".

In fairness, the article also stated that

> "Minimum intervention to protect the interests of patients"

might occur from time to time. But the public want co-operation in the provision of health care.

It seems that the ultimate agenda is the privatisation of the national health service in so far as it can be said that that has not already taken place. We are seeing its removal as a public service, and we are not the only ones to say that: the chairman of the British Medical Association also did so when he spoke on behalf of that organisation at its conference. He expressed surprise at the Prime Minister's lack of understanding of the fact that the health service is already being privatised. We are witnessing the virtual floating off of the national health service executive from the Department of Health.

If the changes contained in this Bill are laid alongside the structural changes taking place in the Department, it seems to me that the provision of health care is slowly being transferred to a quango. The NHS executive has been given responsibility for policy development in health care, a responsibility that surely ought to rest with Ministers and the Department. If they are not paid to set policy, what are they paid for? By further detaching functions from the Department and placing them under the NHS executive, the Secretary of State is in effect floating a separate arm of the health care business.

The danger, we believe, is that the same loss of parliamentary and public accountability will occur as occurred with the other Government Departments from which major functions were devolved. As a result of the creation of the Benefits Agency, hon. Members now have to take up queries and complaints not with the Secretary of State, who takes no responsibility for the service as it is provided, but with the chief executive of the agency.

One of the knock-on effects of that change was that information that had been given in parliamentary answers and published in *Hansard*—and thus been available to all hon. Members and the public, not just the person raising the query—was, for a long time, given only by letter to the hon. Member making the complaint or raising the query. It took a long campaign by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) before Parliament and public again gained access to this valuable information.

What the Secretary of State is doing by means of this Bill cannot be reconciled with what has been said here today. She is not devolving power. Far from it: she is just shifting the centre of power, floating service delivery off into separate businesses and thereby creating opportunities for privatisation. Shifting the centre of power in this way serves the second item on the Secretary of State's agenda. Rendering power and responsibility more diffuse shifts blame and disperses responsibility. There is nothing the Secretary of State would like better than to shift blame and responsibility elsewhere, so that they do not rest with Ministers.

Today the Secretary of State argued that organisational changes, particularly incorporating regional health authorities in her Department as offices of the NHS executive, would lead to more effective streamlining, to greater efficiency in the treatment of patients and to greater savings. She has tried to convince us that she is abolishing one tier of bureaucracy. All she is doing, however, is replacing one statutory tier of bureaucracy by another, more centralised bureaucracy. She is not even abolishing an entire tier. The Bill reveals that mental health review tribunals are to stay, on the basis of the existing regions. That is just one example of the fact that some regional functions are to continue, although it is not altogether clear how they will be managed, or what will happen to some of the other functions.

The substitution of the existing tier by another will create a bureaucracy that is to be more secretive. Staff will now be bound by the Official Secrets Act. They will be more tied to the Secretary of State's patronage and thus more tightly controlled by the centre. In other words, under the powers granted by the Bill, far from removing bureaucracy the Secretary of State is giving herself the opportunity, through patronage, to create a more pliant and amenable bureaucracy—all of which ties in with the Maples memorandum which issued instructions to stop up the leaks and silence any criticism of the service.

While the Secretary of State increases centralised control over the allocation of resources direct to health authorities, through a new formula, there will be top slicing of money for strategic development, research and development, and education and training. It is not clear what the new formula will be; it is not clear what the degree of top slicing will be. All those decisions rest in the hands of the Secretary of State, who is taking substantial enabling powers in clause after clause.

There are references in the Bill to the orders that the Secretary of State will lay. We shall want to explore and debate the possible contents of each order very carefully.

There is a real question as to whether this recycled organisational tier—recycled, not abolished—will do what the Secretary of State promises and will slim down the burgeoning bureaucracy of the health service. There is a growing belief, which I am coming to share, that there may be an increase in bureaucracy at the lower levels of the health service, because regionally based services will now have to be run by smaller units. The British Medical Association has argued that removing the strategic planning tier will mean that hundreds of trusts and authorities will have to acquire the skills to agree on regional specialties, public health policy and a host of other issues previously dealt with by the regions.

Local authorities will have to do this with a loss of economies of scale, and will have to combine with the contracting process inherent in the internal market. We believe that that too is bound to generate more bureaucracy. That would be entirely in line with current trends under the reforms, which show that the number of senior and general managers in England has shot up since 1986, from 5,000 to more than 20,000; and that total bureaucratic costs since 1987-88 have more than doubled.

Despite these unhelpful precedents, the Secretary of State said today that there will be savings. None of them were properly costed here today, and we have some doubts about them—partly because of the context of the overall effects of the Secretary of State's reforms, which have cost the British taxpayer will over £1 billion. We also doubt them because there is a planned reduction of staff of about 1,500, and we doubt whether the savings that have been identified could come just from those staff reductions.

We also doubt the savings because of the Secretary of State's remark—or so I thought—and the idea in the Bill that possibly as much as £150 million could be saved. A press release issued after the publication of the Bill contained a revised figure of nearer £60 million. The notes on clauses and the Bill itself actually make it clear that provision has been made for an increase in the short term in the money spent by Parliament as these changes are made.

It is just over two years since hundreds of civil servants were moved at considerable cost, not to mention disruption to them and their families, to Leeds. Now 200 of them are to be made redundant, thereby creating a great deal more cost and difficulties for their families. How can it be that only two years ago these people were so needed by the NHS that it was prepared to go to great lengths and considerable cost to move them all to Leeds, yet now, out of the blue, they are no longer needed? It is either gross incompetence or part of a different agenda.

Will the end result be that regional functions—for instance, advice on information technology, currently carried out a regional level—that will still be necessary will be contracted out? Is that the Government's secret agenda? If the functions cannot be performed owing to staff losses, will that be an opportunity for contracts in the private sector? There is certainly a widening circle of waste of public money—public money spent to take staff to Leeds, then spent to make them redundant and then, almost certainly, spent on the contracted out functions that could have been performed by those staff had they not been made redundant.

We question why the Government have proceeded with the changes in this Bill. Is it just that a further fragmentation of the health service will make it easier to privatise, as well as making it easier to bring private companies into the operations of the service? Certainly, if the Secretary of State's record is anything to go by, it is neither to slim down the bureaucracy nor to save money. She has been catastrophically bad at both.

We expect the changes in the Bill to lead to growth in bureaucracy at the expense of patients and of clinical care, but there are also wider concerns. We shall be looking closely at the allocation of responsibilities and functions as between health authorities and the regional offices. The Bill abolishes the local advisory committees, and any replacement will be dealt with by regulations. Here and elsewhere in the Bill it seems ever more clear that what the Government have in mind is dispensing with much of the expert advice that they currently receive. We do not believe that clinicians should be given excessive power to veto changes and improvements in the health service, but we do not believe either that it is advisable for management on the ground to do without the advice of experts in health policy and practice.

Who, under the terms of the Bill, will hold the contracts of junior doctors? Who will monitor the cancer screening service? Who will oversee the vocational training of GPs? Who will deal with complaints about trusts? It seems to be suggested that functions such as the oversight of communicable diseases and the handling of national confidential inquiries will mostly, or perhaps completely, be dealt with by the new, more local health authorities. However, there is deep disquiet as to whether that is the right place for them to be handled and whether such authorities will be able to or should deal with such matters.

There is alarm at what seems to be the loss of independence of the regional director of public health. The Secretary of State expressed surprise that we had drawn attention to that in our motion, although I notice that she did not go so far as to suggest that what we said was incorrect. It is an honourable part of the history and tradition of Britain that the holders of posts such as that of director of public health are whistleblowers in the interests of the general public. But in this new regional structure anybody at that level who blows a whistle will find himself on the street. There is widespread concern not only about what that will mean for the structure of the public health service below the level of regional director, but about to what extent the public will get the degree of oversight to which they have become accustomed.

[Mrs. Beckett]

As I said earlier, throughout the Bill the approach seems to be to discard in-house expertise whose impartial advice should be needed when judging the quality of information or advice which might be bought in from outside. That is only one example of ways in which long-standing and successful partnerships seem to be at risk. Despite what she said, the Secretary of State must know that the deeply held view of those in medical education, whether at undergraduate or postgraduate level, is that the combination of academic and clinical roles is an essential prerequisite of the training that has been provided hitherto. That view is held by the universities and by the health service.

Despite what the Secretary of State said about the consultations that have been held, she must be aware that that structure is perceived by people, including the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, to be put at risk by the changes. She must also be aware that there is real anxiety about the nature and scale of future medical education not only in the medical profession but in ancillary professions. Despite the impression given by the Secretary of State, that anxiety has not been dispelled.

The most professionally anarchic proposal of all is the Government's aim to devolve pay to local level. If anything will lead to increased costs and bureaucracy, it is that ill-thought-out policy. The time of managers will be used up in lengthy local negotiations on pay and conditions. Doctors, nurses and other staff will find themselves neglecting patients because they will be expected to attend to their own pay negotiations. The National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts has already said that the administration of local pay schemes alone will cost an extra £40 million.

The Secretary of State talked about people wanting to reduce matters to the lowest common denominator. No Opposition Member wants to do that, but that is what local pay is all about and that is what the Government are trying to achieve. They are trying to create a scenario in which pay and conditions can be cut, although where scarce skills are needed competition between trusts to attract and retain professional staff seems likely to lead to options for those specialties in which more than 480 different bargaining units will have to engage in competitive bids.

We do not intend to let the Government or the public forget what is already occurring in the structure for which the Government make such claims. An example of such an occurrence is to be found, I believe, at the Royal Marsden hospital, where a circulated memorandum suggested that someone should be hired not merely because he was the best in his clinical field but because removing him from another hospital would destabilise a competitor. Competition rather than co-operation will be further enhanced by local pay, which will also distort clinical priorities.

Skilled clinicians will no longer move from hospital to hospital for professional development reasons alone. Hospitals with research teams and research facilities will no longer seek to attract people primarily because they are innovators at the frontiers of scientific development: they will also depend on the pay that the chief executive can offer.

Some trusts will not be able to enter that competition. The director of personnel at the Havering Trust has already announced that he has to save £3 million in the next three years. How will that trust be able to attract or retain scarce skills during that period with the anarchy of purely local pay bargaining? How will patient care be delivered in that locality in those circumstances?

The Secretary of State expressed surprise that we wished to move a reasoned amendment rather than simply supporting the Bill. As we have made plain, we did so because we oppose the abolition of the NHS regions in their present form, although we welcome some of the Bill's other proposals.

Mr. Tim Smith: Ah!

Mrs. Beckett: I do not know why the hon. Gentleman says that; I made our position clear at the outset, but perhaps he was not here at that time.

Above all, oppose the way in which the functions of the regions will be dispersed and broken up. We oppose further fragmentation of the health service and we believe that behind the Bill lies the hidden agenda of breaking up and floating off different NHS functions and making them ripe for picking by commercial interests. As Mr. Maples advised, the intention is to silence the staff while that is happening.

At best, the Bill fails to address the real problems of health care in Britain. At worst, it exacerbates the problems that Government reorganisation has created. The Secretary of State repeated phrases that she has used in every speech that I have so far heard and read. There is the suggestion that under what she calls the old NHS there was a command and control structure, which she attacked. A command and control structure of a kind that no previous Secretary of State has enjoyed is precisely what the Bill introduces to the health service. For the sake of our national health service, that process, like the Government, must soon be brought to a halt.

6.6 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I am pleased to be called to speak so early in the debate. Those of us who take an interest across the spectrum of activities in our constituencies have to address the issue of health service delivery against the background and the experience of our constituencies. The changes that have been made in Herefordshire over the past few years, and especially the change in the make-up of the county's health authority and the bringing in of executives with particular expertise, have been beneficial. Therefore, the Bill is a logical next step and I have no quarrel with it in principle. I shall certainly support it in the Lobby.

I support the Bill's concept of endorsing local decision making in the NHS. That is very much at the core of the admittedly constituency interest that I wish to put before the Secretary of State and the Minister of State. We are greatly worried about how health services in Herefordshire could be affected if there is unsympathetic implementation of the Bill's proposed changes. I emphasise that the reforms must make sense to people if they are to be supported and understood.

My worries are about the imminent decisions that will be made by West Midlands regional health authority in its dying days. That authority has been charged with the responsibility of predicating the shape and number of health authorities in what is currently the west midlands region.

My Herefordshire health authority—I take the proprietorial "my" on behalf of my constituents—is already the smallest in the country, with the exception of that for the Isle of Wight. It is working fairly well and is consistently meeting all the national targets. It is financially sound, it is at the top of the efficiency index in the west midlands, its management costs are well below the average for equivalent-sized authorities, and it has taken more steps to identify further reductions in those costs. This year, it knocked £200,000 from its management costs.

What is worrying is that, on this coming Thursday, 15 December, the regional health authority will decide its policy for the counties of Hereford and Worcester. It is anticipated that the recommendation will be that there should be just one new health authority covering the two counties.

The authority has arrived at its recommendation—although I think that "decision" would be nearer the mark—without very much consultation, and certainly not without its own walls. Its own statement says that consultation is

"limited at this stage primarily to Health Authorities".

I inquired where the consultation had taken place and discovered that there had been little in Herefordshire. Indeed, I am not entirely sure who has been consulted.

The two county Members of Parliament—myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris)—had a meeting with the health authority chairman and the director of performance management, at our request. It was certainly not a consultation because we were making representations. I understand that the chairmen of the health authorities were not even consulted. The general managers of the four health authorities concerned were summoned to the regional chief executive and told what was to be the case.

What the matter boils down to is that, without much consultation, the regional management executive has determined what is to be the case and, presumably, will go out to consultation. What will be the value of that consultation if, as I perceive, decisions have already been made and written on tablets of stone?

I am not alone in feeling great hostility towards the proposed move. Everything in me shrieks against it. I do not believe that it is necessarily in the best interests of my constituents in Herefordshire. I am not alone in that view—the general practitioners and their council in Herefordshire are unanimous in their opposition to that particular shape for the health service. The clinicians, the consultants, the joint operation of clinicians and general practitioners, the Hereford medical forum and everybody else involved in the medical sector are unanimous in their opposition.

The foundation for that opposition comes from 20 years of local government experience. It shows that where Herefordshire has been linked to the larger population base of Worcestershire there has been an inexorable suction effect away from Herefordshire and into the heavier weight of Worcestershire. A classic example of that is the eight years of the Hereford and Worcester area health authority between 1974 and 1983. It was like trying to get hold of a cotton wool cloud. We could not get hold of the authority; it simply was not there in tangible form—it was too busy sitting in committees.

I am told that circumstances have changed and we have moved on, that I must not lock myself into 1974-type thinking and that I must adjust myself to today. However, our experience over the past 20 years is that, whenever small Herefordshire has been linked to large Worcestershire, because the demographic weight of population is to the east of the county, we have not benefited.

We actually made progress from 1983 onwards when we were given our own health authority. It was identifiable and small. At the time, we were told that it would be too small, but we said, "Let it run." It has been very successful and it has made progress. From my point of view as a Member of Parliament dealing with constituents and the health authority, I have found the lines of communication both short and effective. There have been good results in sorting out problems and unscrambling messes when they have occurred.

In Wolverhampton on 26 October, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State told the chairmen of health authorities and trusts in the west midlands region that the new health authorities would be the stewards of the local community. The question being asked in my part of the world is: how local is local? The west midlands—Birmingham—is light years away. I must inform my right hon. and hon. Friends that Worcester is also light years away. That might seem very parochial, but our area is sparse and large distances are involved. There is a range of hills in between. We are not the same. Over the years, we have tried to work in many different forums on a Hereford and Worcester basis, but none has been effective in its operation.

Where is the sensitivity to local needs? We need reassurance on that point from my hon. Friend the Minister. Herefordshire has a high elderly population, a low ethnic population and an old town. Redditch, on the other side of the joint county arrangement, has a high young population and a new town. Worcester has an old town and a high ethnic population. If the weight of population is to the east, how will sensitivity to the west be recognised?

In terms of finance, we are worried that the loss of sensitivity to the Herefordshire population profile will leave us at a disadvantage. We are very worried about the potential lack of sensitivity to the more rural parts of Herefordshire and beyond. My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for health matters in Wales knows full well how far into Wales runs the catchment area for Hereford, which is looked to as the centre for the provision of acute hospital care.

I am aware that my right hon. Friend said that we must not look for sectional interests on the area health authority, but unless there are people who come from the Herefordshire side of the hills there cannot be a recognition of what Herefordshire needs. I am not making sectional interest pleading; I am asking how Herefordshire's needs will be understood. It is not all number crunching. It might look very tidy from the inside looking out, but from the outside looking in it is not quite so tidy and comfortable.

All our experience suggests a shift of services to the centre of gravity of the combined area. Our worry is that that would be detrimental to the range of hospital facilities

[Mr. Colin Shepherd]

that will be available in Hereford—not immediately, as these things take time—and that over the years there will be a migration of services as people rationalise and strategic decisions are taken about what is done where and how. In 10 years' time we could find ourselves not with the present acute hospital unit providing a broad range of clinical services, but with a hospital providing an accident and emergency service and the ancillaries that go with that. That worry must be laid to rest.

I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary in his place. When I explained my fears to him, I am afraid that his reply merely underlined them. My fears reflect those expressed to me by my constituents. I very much hope that my hon. Friend will be able to reassure us.

The regional health authority will put a paper before the meeting on Thursday. The reasons given in that paper for its decision seem to me to be self-justificatory bull.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Not Herefordshire bull.

Mr. Shepherd: Definitely not Herefordshire bull—Birmingham bull.

It appears to me that the authority's attitude is that a decision has been taken, so it must make everything fit it. I am told that the new authority will operate best against

"a sensibly sized strategic canvas"—

marvellous; furthermore:

"Local sensitivity will be assured by Primary Care-led purchasing, and the extensive development of GP Fundholding"

covering 87 per cent. of the population. I wonder what the sensibly sized strategic canvas will be. I was told that Hereford is too small to support both a strategically focused health authority and an extended range of GP-focused purchasing. When I met the regional health authority chairman and his colleague, I was told about the "theology of numbers" for a successful operation, which is somewhere between 300,000 and 500,000 residents.

When the Herefordshire health authority started, we were told that the population was too small at 140,000. I pleaded with the then Minister and he accepted my arguments, and we have a successful health authority as a consequence. It covers 160,000 people, and the mid-Wales dimension takes the figure to 250,000—not far short of the bottom limit of the theology of numbers. However, having pursued that matter with my hon. Friend the Minister, I understand that there is no bottom limit but that it is a matter of what makes sense. The regional health authority seems to be making rules to suit itself. What is the foundation for that theology of numbers?

It is suggested that a single health authority would attract high-quality staff and administrative savings of £1.5 million, which would be available, if it materialised, for reinvestment in local health services. I understand that the Price Waterhouse report is distinctly suspect and that if there were a single commissioning authority or health authority for Worcestershire and one for Herefordshire, the savings would be not £1.5 million but £500,000.

I am worried about the numbers that will be put before the regional health authority on Thursday. The regional chief executive's report dated 21 July stated that the situation in Hereford and Worcester is much more complex and that local ownership and accountability within any arrangement is more important than financial considerations. That is intriguing, because it implies two lines of thought.

We have marvellous clinicians in Hereford. They like working there and do not wish to leave, and there is no reason for them to do so. The quality of life in Herefordshire is darn good, and they do a good job.

The third argument is a wonderful piece of jargon. It is that NHS providers in particular will find it easier to shape their future against a clearer purchasing and commissioning strategy. That is true whether the authority is large or small. The argument is also made that the functional clinical links developing between providers across the county make a clear purchasing view all the more important and urgent. Those links will be made whether there are one or two authorities because they make sense. That is not a reason but a reflection of something that will happen as a matter of logic.

It is said that the business cases for the Hereford and Worcester hospitals are nearing completion, and that the Hereford scheme in particular should have its outline case approved by the regional office by the end of December.

I have been pursuing the establishment of a hospital since 1974. Hereford has three clapped-out building sites, one of which has finally been identified as a site for redevelopment. It is expensive, maintenance is bad, and it is difficult to see how services could logically be provided. In addition, the site is dangerous. A cardiac arrest on the operating theatre in the general hospital would necessitate an ambulance run to the county hospital's intensive care unit, which is unacceptable. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to press for the completion of that hospital at the earliest possible moment.

Although the business case was presented in Birmingham today, I received from Mr. Brian Baker, chairman of the regional health authority, a note saying, "Hold on a second. We cannot go now on the shape of the Hereford hospital—not until such time as we know what is to happen in Worcester." That emphasises my worst fears. The two are interdependent, but decisions are being taken before we are ready.

I support the Bill's principles because they are right, but I urge my hon. Friends on the Front Bench to make a sensible arrangement for my part of the world, because it is different by virtue of its geography and demography. The reforms must make sense for people if they are to secure support.

What message are the Government sending my constituents? At 9.30 am on Thursday morning, the Local Government Commission will make an announcement, which I would bet heavy money will say that there should be a unitary authority for Herefordshire. It will recognise that the connection with Worcestershire over the past 20 years has not been to Hereford's advantage, and that its people think that they can do better. At 10.30 am, the regional health authority will say, "We are taking away Hereford's independence and will tag it on to Worcester to make a big merged health authority."

Although Hereford's health authority is small, it is good. It could be nicely merged with a family health services authority to form a new authority that is responsive to the needs of the people and understands them. The logical way for my hon. Friend the Minister to progress is to say, "I hear you, Herefordshire, and your worries. You will have a health authority in your own right." He can enter the caveat that, if that does not work, he will exercise the Bill's inbuilt powers to put Hereford together with another health authority, possibly

Worcester. He can do that if, in the light of experience, shortcomings are identified, and the individual authority is perceived not to make sense. I urge my hon. Friends on the Front Bench, as I support them tonight, to listen to us in Herefordshire.

6.28 pm

Mr. John Heppell (Nottingham, East): The Secretary of State said that the Bill exists to take account of Government reforms, but all those made so far have been utter failures. I see no reason why the Bill should not also be a complete failure.

The Secretary of State asked for facts and statistics. Government health reforms so far have cost £1.2 billion, which has meant that the cost of NHS bureaucracy has risen from £1.44 billion to £3.02 billion—an increase of 110 per cent. or £1.5 billion, which could have been spent on patients rather than on administration.

The right hon. Lady spoke about streamlining management. In 1986-87, the national health service had 500 managers. In 1989, it had 4,600 and by 1993, it had 20,010. That is an increase of 1,800 per cent.—not quite as large as the increase in prescription charges, but almost. In 1987, management costs were £25.7 million. Today, they are £49.8 million. That is what the Government's reforms have meant; those are the statistics for which my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was asked.

The Government say that they want to introduce further reforms that will save more money and make the NHS more efficient and effective. Does any Conservative Member seriously believe that we seriously believe what the Government say? They say that they plan to remove a tier of the health service, but when we examine the small print we find that they do not really mean that. They plan to remove regional health authorities—the section of the service that secures accountability at regional level.

It is no use for the Secretary of State, and other Conservative Members, to talk about the way in which people are appointed to trusts or regional health authorities. Every hon. Member—and, I suspect, everyone in the country—now knows that one overriding criterion ensures appointment to trusts, district health authorities and regional health authorities: allegiance to the Conservative party. More than half the 240 health authority chairs come from businesses, consultancies or financial institutions. They are directors and employers in firms that donate money to the Conservative party. Only 15 of those 240 have any medical background, but more than 120 have financial backgrounds.

If the appointees are not directors or other members of firms that give money to the Conservative party, they are members of the party. I know from experience—as, I am sure, do other hon. Members—that prominent members of Conservative associations are repeatedly appointed to trusts and health authorities. The same applies to Conservative candidates, both national and local. They are usually failed candidates, but what does that matter now? If a candidate cannot persuade the country to let him put his ideas across by means of the ballot box—if he cannot secure the changes that he wants democratically—it does not matter. As long as he has an allegiance to the Tory party, the Government will appoint him to a quango, such as a trust or health authority.

Not only those people themselves but their wives, brothers and brothers-in-law may be appointed. They have this in common: they are all yes-men, or yes-women, in relation to what the Tories want to do. In fact, regional health authorities do not pose much of a threat to the Government; they produce little opposition to the Government's proposed changes. Every now and again, however—not very often—we see a bit of independence and initiative, and hear a few murmurs of discontent and disagreement. For that reason, RHAs will have to go. The Bill is not about removing a tier of the NHS; it is about removing accountability.

Are the Secretary of State, the Minister and other Conservative Members trying to tell me that nothing needs to be done at regional level any more? I have taken time to read research paper 94/124, produced by the Library. A section beginning on page 11 asks:

> "Who will do what in the new NHS?"

I have highlighted the instances in which it is still necessary for the region to act, and almost every part of the section has been highlighted as a result.

The regional officers will still set the local research agenda within a national research and development strategy developed by headquarters, and will manage research and development projects. When the revenue allocations are made directly to health authorities, surely the NHS executive will use its regional tier to establish what those allocations should be. When the responsibility for public health functions goes to local health authorities, regional offices will ensure

> "that effective arrangements have been put in place".

When the professional advisory machinery is at local or multi-district level, the current sub-committees—the specialty sub-committees—at regional level will retain their responsibilities:

> "regional offices will be responsible for performance management of health authorities and for monitoring Trusts".

After that, they will have new responsibilities for GP fundholding. The regional tier will still have to do a great deal of work.

I find it hard to accept that the changes at regional level will save £150 million. How can 1,500 jobs disappear when all that work will still have to be done—unless, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South suggested, the plan is to contract the work out to private companies which are probably making large donations to the Conservative party? In any event, why are the RHAs being targeted in connection with bureaucracy? Bureaucracy has not increased in the RHAs.

Between 1992 and 1993, regional staff numbers fell from 7,845 to 3,905—a massive drop, as everyone would surely agree. Moreover, in the following year the numbers fell to 2,613. Meanwhile, bureaucracy has increased in the trusts, in the FHSAs and at district level, but predominantly in the trusts. If bureaucracy is to be tackled, they should be tackled. It is nonsense to abolish the tier in which bureaucracy has been slimmed down—the tier that has been made lean and mean—and preserve organisations in which bureaucracy continues to flourish.

A limit of 135 staff has been set for each region. Can anyone tell me how that number was arrived at? Is there no difference in the size of the regions? Is not the regional authority represented by the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) smaller than some others? If the size indeed varies, will not differing staff numbers be required?

[Mr. John Heppell]

The truth is that the figure was plucked out of the air—and, even if it is met in the short term, I am certain that it will not stay the same in the medium and long term. As I have said, the work that needs to be done at regional level will continue. I guarantee that no future assessment of the number of staff required will produce a figure of 135, if it is done correctly.

Although I agree in principle with the amalgamation of the district health authorities and the family health service authorities, I have very strong reservations about whether the Government will carry it out efficiently and effectively. I have evidence that in some areas it is not being carried out efficiently and effectively.

Mr. Malone: It would be a little presumptuous if it were being carried out wholesale while the Bill has not yet received a Second Reading. There are a number of co-operative arrangements in place, which is very different from sorting out the amalgamation once the House has sanctioned the Bill. Surely the hon. Gentleman understands that.

Mr. Heppell: I understand it, but it seems that the Secretary of State does not. My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) wrote to her pointing out that the Nottinghamshire FHSA and the Nottinghamshire health authority had combined—informally—to form a health commission and had proceeded to pick a new chief executive who is already in post and being paid. The chief executive of the Nottinghamshire FHSA has been sent home on what is described as "gardening leave". That person is on a salary of perhaps £50,000 or £60,000 but has been sent home before Parliament has even debated the necessary legislation because someone else has been given the job of taking over the new amalgamated health authority, which the Minister says should not yet be in place.

Perhaps the Minister will tell me that he proposes to take action against members of the health authority or the FHSA or against the chief executives of both bodies for proceeding without parliamentary approval. The Minister shakes his head. He clearly accepts that inefficiency has been engendered by the attempted amalgamation of two bodies without there first being in place a proper structure and without there first being a proper debate with the medical profession and members of other services involved. I am sure that the Minister will therefore accept that I am bound to have some reservations about the Government carrying out the reforms and achieving the savings they seek.

The Bill will be a failure because of what is not in the Bill as much as for what is in it. It does not tackle the real problems in the NHS. It does not deal with the fact that there are now 1 million people on the waiting list and that there is a secondary list of 1 million people waiting for out-patient appointments. The Bill does not tackle the fact that, since 1979, 147,790 beds have disappeared from the health service and that some people are now finding it impossible to get a bed.

The Bill does not deal with the fact that, in 1993 alone, 10,637 beds disappeared from the health service or that since 1979, 538 hospitals—or one in five—have closed. It does not deal with the patients charter. We learned only this week that the charter's targets are not being met. Nor does the Bill tackle the problems of increased prescription or dental charges or the cost of eye tests. It does not tackle the fact that we now have fewer nurses than ever—in 1989, there were 397,650 nurses but by 1992 the number had dropped to 361,460.

The Bill does not solve the problem of perks going to the most well paid people in the NHS or the excessive pay rises that some people award themselves. Last year, the average pay claim by chief executives was 8.5 per cent. although some awarded themselves 33 per cent. even while the Government were telling public sector workers that their pay should not rise by more than 1.5 per cent. How can the Government in all honesty say that to ordinary NHS workers while some chief executives award themselves 33 per cent.?

The Bill does not deal with complaints which have increased by 57 per cent. to 58,000 a year and nor does it tackle staff morale. My right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South mentioned the fact that the Government were trying to introduce locally negotiated pay. Only today I had a visit from a member of the British Medical Association, Dr. Gill, who is on the local negotiating committee. I am sure that he will not mind my mentioning that he told me that locally negotiated pay would be disastrous. It would mean that, in addition to their management and administration duties, hundreds if not thousands of doctors would have to attend one or two meetings a week to negotiate pay, whereas, at the moment, it is negotiated nationally and effectively and no one has complained.

The Bill gives the impression that it will cut bureaucracy but it will not; it gives the impression that this is the end of the NHS reforms but it is not; and it gives the impression that it will help the NHS but in reality it is a collection of bogus measures which are, if anything, simply a public relations exercise for the Government. The Bill's provisions are a smokescreen for the NHS reforms that have already taken place, and for the Government's betrayal of the service.

6.46 pm

Mr. John Whittingdale (Colchester, South and Maldon): I hope that the hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) will forgive me if I do not agree with him entirely. I find extraordinary the Opposition's constant desire to denigrate dedicated individuals who are trying to improve health care in their communities and especially strange is the idea that anyone who has had any association with Conservative politics—or who happens to be related to anyone in Conservative politics—should not be allowed to serve on a regional or district health board.

I shall not take up too much of the House's time because, despite the speeches that have been made so far, I do not think that the Bill is especially controversial. It is quite narrowly defined and technical, although that might not be immediately apparent—I note that schedule 1 will require 45 Acts to be amended, including the Polish Resettlement Act 1947, the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Act 1988 and the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975. Despite the wide-ranging nature of the Bill, I do not think that it is controversial, and it has received wide support, especially outside the House.

I agree entirely with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the Bill is the logical consequence of our national health service reforms which were undoubtedly the most radical change to the structure of the NHS since it was created. Much of the attention since then has been given to the establishment of NHS trusts, and I was pleased to hear my right hon. Friend announce today that the coverage of the trusts is to be extended further to take in, I believe, 98 per cent. of patients. Attention has also been given to GP fundholders whose numbers have been growing steadily, but the biggest NHS reform was the creation of the internal market and the separation of purchasers and providers.

The Bill reforms the structure of the purchasing side of the national health service, which I have always believed is at the core of the NHS. I do not take the ideological, rigid view that the NHS should use only publicly owned providers. I am happy to see it use privately or publicly owned providers, as long as they deliver the best possible treatment to patients. The core of the NHS is its purchasing function, and the Bill concentrates upon that.

Three and a half years on, we can now begin to make a judgment about the results of the NHS reforms. Despite what the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said in her speech, I have absolutely no doubt that the reforms have worked. NHS trusts have been an unqualified success. General practitioner fundholders are providing better care to patients and, as a result, the number of patients being treated has increased and the quality of care has improved.

A couple of weeks ago, *The Guardian* stated that the NHS reforms had achieved "considerable success" in helping to restore confidence in the NHS. I take it that that was not written by the KGB.

Inevitably, when reforms as great as the NHS reforms are introduced there will be some problems. I accept that one such problem is the number of layers of management created and the amount of money spent on administration. I do not accept the more simplistic charge that the reforms have simply created layers of management. An organisation the size of the NHS must have strong management. It spends the equivalent of a small country's gross national product, and it must have properly qualified, good managers to ensure that we receive maximum value for money.

One of the reforms' main intentions was to devolve responsibility downwards—to give real decision-making power to those who are involved in running hospitals and to the GPs who have chosen to become fundholders. Devolution of responsibility has led NHS trusts, quite correctly, to recruit more management staff. The problem is that that increase has not been matched by a corresponding reduction in the number of administrative staff employed elsewhere within the NHS. The recruitment of more managers in NHS trusts should mean that many managers are no longer needed at the upper level of the health service. The Bill is designed to address that problem.

The disappearance of regional health authorities will require one or two of their tasks to be performed elsewhere. A traditional responsibility of the regions was the allocation of funds within a region using a weighted capitation formula.

The House has heard me talk previously about the consequences of that funding allocation in the North Thames region. I do not wish to go over familiar ground in detail, but I repeat that there has been a problem. Although there is a national formula to distribute funds between regions, when a region such as mine adopts a different formula for the allocation of resources within a region it leads to unfairness, particularly in my district of North Essex.

Because the national formula does not take full account of the social deprivation factors which the region uses to distribute funds within North Thames, North Essex has been doubly penalised. I have raised the problem with the Minister previously, so I do not wish to spend too much time on it tonight. However, as a result of the changes introduced by the Bill, I hope that the Department will implement a single national formula to allocate funds between districts. That will remove the present unfairness and ensure that all districts are treated equally.

The regional monitoring role must continue to be performed. It has been suggested that part of the role can be performed by the new health authorities—in particular, that they will be responsible for monitoring GP fundholders. As the British Medical Association has pointed out, the new authorities will also be competing purchasers. It concerns me that they will be not only competing with GP fundholders, but given responsibility for them. Will the Minister explain how the system is intended to operate?

At district level, I believe it must make sense for a single body to be responsible for ensuring that patients receive the proper degree of health care. The division between primary and secondary care has always been pretty artificial; it is now breaking down even further.

More and more treatments can be performed in a GP's surgery and no longer require a visit to hospital. When hospital treatment is needed, it is often performed on a day-case basis and no longer requires an overnight stay. In some cases, GPs will come into hospitals and use their facilities to treat patients and, as a result, consultants and registrars do not need to be involved.

These changes—many the result of technological change within the health service—will inevitably alter the profile of the health service. In future many people will not need to go anywhere near hospitals; their local GPs' surgeries will become mini-hospitals. Judging the performance of the health service, as the hon. Member for Nottingham, East did, on the basis of the number of beds available or the number of operations performed will become increasingly irrelevant.

I congratulate the Secretary of State on the speech that she made earlier this year—I think it was to the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts conference—in which she drew attention to the changes that will take place in the health service. She highlighted the report by the United Kingdom chief nursing officers, who predicted that in future 60 per cent. of operations are likely to be performed on a day-case basis, 40 per cent. of specialist consultations will take place outside hospital and, as a result, 40 per cent. fewer beds will be needed.

The figures caused great uproar when they were first published, but it is an inevitable consequence of the technological change which is taking place in health

[Mr. John Whittingdale]

care. It is important that we should recognise it and debate now the consequences for the shape of the health service in the future.

Separation of the body responsible for the purchase of secondary care—in other words, the district health authority—from the body responsible for primary care is becoming increasingly daft. Many areas have recognised that already: commissioning agencies have been formed, with close co-operation between the two bodies.

In North Essex relations between the family health services authorities and the two DHAs are very good. Following my right hon. Friend's statement earlier in the year, the FHSA and the two DHAs talked about the structure of future health provision in the county. Clearly, the main question was whether future health authorities should be divided into two or three different bodies, or whether a single body should have jurisdiction over the whole county.

As well as engaging in wide consultation, the FHSA and the DHAs commissioned the King's Fund to investigate and make recommendations on that point. I was sorry to hear about the experience of my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd), who did not feel that sufficient consultation had taken place in his constituency.

Very wide consultation has taken place in Essex and, as a result, there is almost universal agreement that the most sensible structure is to divide the county along existing district health authority boundaries and to have two health authorities in future. I congratulate the three chairmen—Major-General Robert Wall of the FHSA, Alec Sexton of the North Essex health authority, and David Micklem of the South Essex health authority—on the way in which they conducted the investigations into future health provision in Essex. I think that their recommendations will enjoy widespread support and prove a great success.

I will touch upon one or two concerns that have been raised already in the debate. The first concerns accountability within the health service. I agree entirely that it is essential that the public have confidence and feel that they are fully involved in decisions affecting patient health care. The Bill is not entirely clear about the membership of the new health authorities—although I welcome the Secretary of State's clarification in her speech. I hope that members of the future health authorities' boards will be widely drawn from within the local community.

Clearly, the membership should include medical professionals. I especially welcome the announcement that the director of public health will be a mandatory executive on the health board, but I believe that a wide range of individuals who have specific skills to bring to bear should also be involved. I especially hope that there will be full involvement of the primary care sector. It is important that the new authorities should not be based mainly on the existing DHAs and that they should properly reflect the responsibilities of both the DHAs and the FHSAs.

As I have said, it is essential to try to increase public involvement in the provision of health care. North Essex health authority has been extremely good at trying to involve the public. I cite the public consultation exercises that the authority has carried out on the provision of cancer services in the county which has recently led to the recommendation that there should be a new cancer centre in my town of Colchester. I also cite the consultation exercise on the provision of orthopaedic services. The original proposals for orthopaedic services to be centred on a single site in Broomfield were dropped as a result of the consultation exercise and new proposals have now been introduced for two centres, one in Chelmsford and one in Colchester.

I also cite the exercise in determining public priorities for medical treatment within the county. Many consultative documents were issued by the health authority, but, unfortunately, there was a lack of response to the documentation. I know that the director of public health was rather disappointed by the number of responses he received. One parish council in my constituency complained about the number of consultative documents it received and said that it was unreasonable for it to spend so much time answering them. That is a problem. I hope that consultation exercises will be phrased in simple language so that they will generate a proper response from those who wish to participate.

One of the interesting results of the recent visit by members of the Select Committee on Health to Oregon, where a wide-ranging consultation exercise has been carried out, was the discovery that the people who came along to the public meetings were not members of the public at all. They were health professionals. There must be the danger that a limited response to a public consultation exercise may not properly reflect public opinion in the locality.

I commend the fairly novel approach of Alec Sexton, who is the chairman of North Essex, one of the health authorities. He has started to hold public surgeries and he invites members of the public to raise with him any concerns they have about the provision of health care. That is an extremely welcome innovation and I hope that his example can be followed widely by the new health authorities.

Another problem has arisen in my area which the new authorities will need to consider—the growing number of patients who are being removed from GP lists. In Essex, there has been a slow but steady rise in the number of removals, from 977 in 1991 to 1,154 in 1993. I entirely accept that the figure still represents only seven out of every 10,000 patients, but I believe that it is a cause for concern.

It has been claimed that the increase is the result of fundholding practices seeking to remove patients who will be costly to their budgets. There is no evidence to support that claim. Indeed, the evidence in Essex proves precisely the reverse. In my mid-Essex area, there are fewer removals by fundholders than by non-fundholding practices. I accept that a doctor must have the right not to have on his list a patient with whom his relationship has broken down, but it is not acceptable for a doctor arbitrarily to remove a patient from his list, especially if no proper explanation is given to that patient. In rural areas such as mine, real problems can be created if the nearest alternative practice is many miles away. I should like there to be a requirement for doctors to justify the removal of a patient from their list and, perhaps, for an arbitration scheme to be established to try to prevent the problem where possible. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that point.

I now turn to the responsibility of the new health authorities for long-term care. As the House is aware, lead responsibility for the provision of community care rests with the local authorities. However, the availability of social care is, obviously, a paramount consideration in determining whether a patient is to be discharged from hospital. If adequate social care does not exist, patients will have to be kept in hospital, thereby putting additional strain on the health authority's budget and occupying badly needed beds. Essex county council, in common with a number of other Labour and Liberal Democrat-controlled authorities, has announced that its community care budget is close to exhaustion. That will cause real difficulties for the health authority.

It has been claimed that, in Essex, community care has been inadequately funded. That simply is not true. The amount available to spend on social services this year stands at £175 million, which is an increase of 22 per cent. on last year's figure and 7 per cent. more than the national average. The change in the distribution of the special transitional grant, which some local authority social services departments claim has penalised them, has benefited Essex by a further £21 million. The principal reasons why Essex county council social services department is now in that position are simply mismanagement and the council's failure properly to plan its budget in advance.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I have listened with interest to the hon. Gentleman's comments about community care. The subject does not have a great deal to do with the Bill, but it is important to make one point. Does the hon. Gentleman recall, that in the first year of the care changes, the Association of County Councils made the point that community care was underfunded? At that time, the association was controlled by the Conservative party.

Mr. Whittingdale: I simply do not accept that community care has been underfunded. The hon. Gentleman will find that this area of local government responsibility has received better funding than almost any other and that the funding has been steadily increased since the changes were introduced. There is no justification for local authorities to claim that their budgets have been exhausted. Such claims have aroused fears among some of the most vulnerable people in society, which is a disgrace.

Essex county council's reserves stand at about £25 million. The council should simply transfer some of that money to make up any shortfall and it should take immediate action to ensure that such a situation cannot be repeated. I can see that you are looking at me, Madam Deputy Speaker; I am conscious that I have strayed a little from the Bill. I thank you for your indulgence.

I have no doubt that the Bill will result in a more efficient and streamlined structure for the NHS. It will consequently result in real benefits for patients.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the next hon. Member to speak, I must point out that, so far, no Back-Bench speaker has managed to make a speech in less than 20 minutes. If that trend continues, there will be some disappointed Members who will not have made a speech at all. I hope that I make the point clear.

7.8 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I cannot resist starting with a reference to the strong plea that the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) made on behalf of the Herefordshire health authority. I have a lawyerly connection with Hereford and, as a Member of Parliament for mid-Wales, I am well aware of the number of patients, especially from the south of the county of Powys, who go to Hereford for the very good hospital treatment in that ancient city. The hon. Gentleman's argument was sound and not merely on a local basis relating to his constituency, although that stands too.

I am glad to see the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), in his place. In his presence, I ask the Government to ensure that, during the reorganisation, close attention is paid to ensuring that patients who seek treatment, or are sent for it, across the Welsh border will continue to be able to receive it efficiently.

The consideration that the hon. Member for Hereford mentioned applies equally to constituents in Brecon and Radnor; and to my constituents, who go to Shrewsbury for much of their treatment. Indeed, it applies in particular to the Minister's constituents in Clwyd, many of whom gravitate towards Chester for treatment. Cross-border availability is an important issue. There has certainly been a feeling in my constituency that the Shropshire health authority has tended to look east, to the neglect of the western part of its catchment area. The reorganisation should not allow that trend to continue.

I have a feeling that, while drafting the Bill, the parliamentary draftsman was reading the Maples memorandum. We have four pages of Bill and 50 pages of schedules. I suspect that the instructions might have been to make it so dull that it would introduce legislative anaesthesia and possibly euthanasia of the Standing Committee—Oregon was mentioned a few minutes ago—so that the politics of the Bill, or indeed the whole Bill, would be forgotten.

Beneath that textual exactitude, which the draftsman so skilfully incorporated—especially in schedule 1—lies a breathtaking transfer of power. Breathtaking powers are to be placed in the hands of the Secretary of State and of unelected and extremely large public bodies. Of course no one objects to reorganisation if it improves the quality of service, unless one takes a dogmatic view as to whether all health care should be provided by the public or the private sector, which I do not. I hope that we will gain an assurance from the Minister in his reply, especially in answer to the hon. Member for Hereford, that it is improving the quality of service that drives this reform and not some organisational ethos, which is what crept into that remarkable jargon that the hon. Member for Hereford read to us earlier.

Reorganisation is unacceptable if the quality of service is not improved. We must bear in mind the fact that those extraordinarily large and totally unelected public bodies will take decisions that will affect the fundament of people's lives. They are the organisations that will decide—as some have decided not to—whether to pay for

[Mr. Alex Carlile]

extra coronary operations, above the number of operative treatments for which they have contracted. Like the existing Powys health authority, which is responsible for my constituents, they are the authorities that will produce proposals that may mean emergency ambulances only in a large and sparse rural area. No one could imagine a decision—based on financial stringencies, of course—that could be less calculated to serve the large, local, elderly population.

Those are the authorities that make arbitrary judgments—again like Powys—such as the decision that, as a matter of policy which I believe to be unlawful and capable of judicial review, childless couples will in no circumstances be able to gain fertility treatment on the national health service. Such decisions should never be taken, but the lack of any sort of democratic accountability, whether in the old or the new authorities, renders them more likely.

Beyond those general considerations, I must deal briefly with six specific issues. The first has already been mentioned—predictably so—and concerns how members of the authorities will be appointed. Will there be yet more epidemic and centralised patronage? I want to be fair. The Labour Government's record on epidemic patronage before 1979 was every bit as bad as that of Conservative Governments since. There is no reason for it to be so. For example, why will the Department of Health and the Welsh Office not advertise for possible non-executive members of the authorities? Why trawl among the great and the good and those with whom they happen to go to cocktail parties, rather than advertising every one of the posts in the regional press, so that the trawl can be made from the widest range of possibilities?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Rod Richards): May I enlighten the hon. and learned Gentleman by telling him unequivocally that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will soon be advertising the posts of chairmen of the new health authorities in Wales?

Mr. Carlile: That is a small step for mankind and it is right that the trawl should happen in that way, but why not in England, too?

Mr. Malone *rose*—

Mr. Carlile: I will give way in a moment. I seem to be drawing a chorus. Like two choirboys, singing seasonally, the Ministers come to their feet. Perhaps the Minister of State will tell us why every non-executive post on those health authorities should not be advertised.

Mr. Malone: The hon. and learned Gentleman should be aware that that is increasingly the practice. The availability of posts is advertised. The widest possible representation is sought among applicants, to enable the appointments to be made. That already happens in some regions, especially in the south and the west, which I represent. It is an excellent practice, it is being encouraged and it will be expanded.

Mr. Carlile: I feel a little like a swordsman rather successfully drawing blood. Perhaps I should keep on this tack and in another 10 minutes we might have an announcement that all the posts will be advertised.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North) *rose*—

Mr. Carlile: I am sorry, but I must get on.

Will the Minister of State assure us in his reply that each authority will have representatives of the executive and medical, nursing and midwifery staff on its board, as well as consumer representatives, who might best be drawn from the community health councils that have been serving the public so well?

On consultation, will the Minister of State be able to assure the House that the authorities will be statutorily required to consult with community health councils? We face the threat of some health councils being taken out of existence as a result of the changes. The Bill requires at least one community health council for every health authority area. One suspects that that may mean that, in some areas, there will be only one community health council for that health authority area. I hope that community health councils will be consulted, and that we can expect to see very few reductions in the number of community health councils.

I was encouraged to hear what the Secretary of State had to say about universities. Eloquent representations have been made by the vice-chancellors, and in particular by the principal of St. George's medical school, Sir William Asscher. He has made the point that the regional authorities will, in effect, be replaced by regional outposts, which could mean that the influence of the universities will be reduced. All the research which universities do and the facilities they provide at the clinical frontier may also be reduced.

I hope that the Minister will be able to confirm that we will not simply have a token university representative in each enlarged region, but that the proportion of university representatives will be maintained in the new structure so that the extremely valuable quantum of their influence is not lost.

The next point I wish to make briefly relates to public health. Representations were made on that issue by Labour Members earlier in the debate, particularly by the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). Public health doctors are concerned at the way in which the independence and discretion of members of the medical profession will be affected by the changes. Will they be able to speak freely on public health issues within the range of their responsibility, or will they always have to seek authority from the region—or possibly even from the Department of Health—before they speak on public health issues?

It is extremely important that consultants in public health medicine should have the liberty to express their medical opinion. There is a danger otherwise that the Government may naturally wish to play down a particular issue because of its political consequences, whereas public health specialists might wish to speak out to make the public aware of the medical consequences.

One way of dealing with the issue might be to require in the statute that each health authority should produce an annual report on the state of public health within its region, so that the public would at least be able to see the authority offering to make itself accountable on public health issues.

Midwifery has been subject to statutory supervision, which has ensured high clinical standards. At present, the regional health authority is the local supervising authority. The Royal College of Midwives has called for supervision to be retained on a statutory basis, and I hope that the Government will support and accept that call.

I suggest that the local supervising authority should be at purchaser level, so as to ensure the effectiveness and directness of supervision. In that context, will the Minister also tell the House whether the Government will retain maternity service liaison committees, which have served midwives and patients well?

I shall make a brief, but important, point about student nurses. It is right that nurse training has been improved, and that has been beneficial, but the Royal College of Nursing produced a survey within the last fortnight which showed clearly that many student nurses are simply not able to survive without working elsewhere during their courses. In many areas, it is extremely difficult for student nurses to obtain other work. The result is that student nurses—who work long hours and are gaining more and better professional qualifications—are being forced beneath the breadline. I do not think that we should be training nurses in that atmosphere.

Finally, I wish to mention the future of district general hospitals, and to do so I return to the speech of the hon. Member for Hereford. Hereford is a good example of a city with a district general hospital service—I shall leave the buildings out of it at present—which is extremely good. It does not provide the entire range of medical services, but the broad sweep is catered for by a competent group of clinicians.

The trend now, which one can understand, is towards emphasising centres of excellence, or specialist treatment centres—it does not matter whether they are in the public or the private sector—which provide good-value treatment in particular specialties. Those centres do, of course, have a role to play.

The Welsh Office Minister who is present tonight gave evidence to the Welsh Select Committee recently in connection with specialist treatment centres. In that evidence, he made the point that the percentage of treatment within the given specialty which the treatment centres in Wales provide is still very limited. I accept that that evidence is right, but the centres are a burgeoning trend.

There is a feeling in the national health service that the growth of centres of excellence may prove to be a threat to district general hospitals in cities such as Hereford. Ministers must watch closely as the situation develops. If district general hospital services are significantly reduced, we will inevitably see the closure of a large number of district general hospitals and, by that token, a reduction in services to the community. I hope that the Government accept that around every accident and emergency service there exists the need for a wide range of services which are best provided in a district general hospital.

During what I hope has not been too long a speech—I am the only hon. Member speaking for my party in the debate, Madam Deputy Speaker—I have sought to highlight six specific points of concern to me and to my colleagues. I have studied both the Bill and the notes on clauses, and not a great deal of light has been shed upon the clauses as a result of that study. Some light may be shed upon those real live doctor-patient issues by the Minister in Committee. Just a little chink of light when the Minister comes to sum up the debate tonight would be much appreciated.

7.28 pm

Mr. Peter Atkinson (Hexham): The lack of passion from Opposition Members during a debate on a matter that I always thought they claimed as their subject has been remarkable. Indeed, if one looks around the House tonight, one can see three Labour Back Benchers and three Opposition Front-Bench Members in their seats. That is extraordinary from a party that always says that it makes the running on health.

The reason for the lack of passion is that the Opposition are concerned where to step, because they know perfectly well that they have no real policy on the subject. They also know that the Labour party is moving slowly, steadily and inexorably towards an acceptance of the Government's health service reforms. It cannot do anything else, because—despite the blustering of one or two Opposition Members—it knows that our health reforms are working and that the health service has improved out of all recognition from when the Labour party was last in office.

Why should not the Opposition accept our recommendations? After all, in recent months they have accepted a great deal of what the Government have done in their period of office. The Opposition appear to have accepted competitive tendering, privatisation and even educational league tables. Some Labour Members even accept the idea of opted-out schools. It is inevitable that the Opposition will slowly move towards an understanding that our reforms have been a success.

On a more serious note, however, if one digs deeper into the Opposition's lack of policy, the makings of a policy can be found. A clue to it can be found in the Opposition amendment, which refers to "regional public health directors" and their document, "Health 2000", published in February, which spoke about a possible regional form of health service.

We know that the Opposition are seeking to break up the United Kingdom. We have heard about a parliament for Scotland and what is called an assembly for Wales.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not clear how those points relate to the Second Reading of a Bill.

Mr. Atkinson: If you will bear with me for a moment, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will prove how they do.

Just as the Opposition want regional assemblies for England, so they propose their form of regional health authorities. That proposal would re-politicise the health service, when the Government have successfully de-politicised it. Such a shift is extremely important.

I served on a district health authority for some years in the bad old days, when the DHAs were dominated by local councillors or the placemen of local councils. I must admit to being one of those placemen, because a local authority put me on a health authority board.

[Mr. Atkinson]

At the time, I had scant knowledge about the health service, but I am pleased that it is now run by professionals rather than those who were appointed to DHAs to politicise that service. That politicisation option had been proposed many years ago, but it had been rejected by the then Labour spokesman, Nye Bevan.

The result of the politicisation of the health authorities was quite appalling for patients, especially in regions dominated by the Labour party. Those Labour DHA members had at heart not the best interests of patients, but those of the unions and union members. Labour councils also appointed health workers from one DHA area to sit on the DHA of another. They were not interested in looking after the interests of patients; what mattered to them was looking after the interests of their fellow professionals by adopting a "make work, improve conditions" attitude.

Those DHAs resisted the closure of redundant 19th-century hospitals which should have been closed down years ago. They also opposed root and branch any form of contractorisation or tendering for hospital services. I remember that, when my local DHA eventually succeeded in privatising the cleaning services for one hospital, we were amazed to discover that that hospital worked on a 30 per cent. daily absentee rate. The contracting out of services revealed such arrangements.

In those days, we had to work with COHSE, the health service union. A greater misnomer for a union one could not find, because that union continually reduced hospitals and their patients to misery through regular strikes at hospital laundries. That action was one of the union's favourite tactics. That union now represents itself as a new union, Unison, but I am sure that its agenda is the same as that pursued in the old days.

One of the purposes of the RHAs was to sort out the mess caused when local authority boundaries and health authority boundaries were coterminous. That problem arose because of early reforms to the NHS in the 1970s. In those days, patients did not travel within their local authority boundary for treatment but continually crossed to where their doctors wanted to give them treatment, or where those patients wanted to be treated. The RHAs therefore had to have enormous financial departments to sort out the mess caused by such cross-boundary treatment.

All those problems have been resolved through our creation of hospital trusts. That is why it is perfectly timely for the top layer of bureaucracy in the health service to be abolished. I must commend, however, what RHAs have managed to achieve in recent years.

If I may be parochial for a moment, I am pleased that the headquarters of the Northern RHA will be relocated in Durham, rather than in Harrogate, as has been argued for today by some hon. Members. Durham is the convenient choice, because it is in centre of the region. That RHA has offered an innovative solution to a problem involving my district general hospital.

Mr. Bayley: Without becoming too parochial, is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that Durham is equidistant between Newcastle and Grimsby, which will be within the same RHA?

Mr. Atkinson: Given that the new authority will include Northumberland, Cumberland, Durham and parts of North Yorkshire, I believe that Durham is conveniently close to the centre of that region and has good road links.

My local RHA offered an imaginative solution to the problem posed by Hexham district general hospital. The solution may interest the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who might be faced with a similar problem in his constituency.

The small district general hospital at Hexham is rather archaic—it was built as a temporary hospital during the war—but it serves a large rural area, and is loved and appreciated by local people. The difficulty was that the hospital could not provide the wide range of services, expertise and specialties that are available in major teaching hospitals and major city centre hospitals. The RHA's solution was most effective, because it welded Hexham general hospital into a joint trust with the Royal Victoria infirmary of Newcastle, which is one of the leading teaching hospitals.

As a result of Government reforms, consultants from the Royal Victoria infirmary are now able to travel out to the district hospital to carry out operations. That change will bring the expertise of that major teaching hospital to the district hospital. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, who is on the Front Bench now, will pass on to his colleagues at the Department of Health our optimistic hope that a new district hospital will be built on the existing site in the centre of Hexham.

The RHAs have run their time. They served a necessary and useful purpose, because, in recent years, they have been helpful in establishing the reorganisation of the NHS. The final reform proposed in the Bill will ensure proper independence for the trusts, better financial savings and a better service to patients.

7.36 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): So far, hon. Members have addressed the issues of bureaucracy and accountability. I accept that they are important and central to the Bill, but the most important issue is whether the abolition of RHAs and the merger of FHSAs and DHAs will improve the health of the people.

The most fundamental principle of the NHS is that of equity—that patients, irrespective of where they live, should be treated on the basis of need and on their ability to benefit from health care. That is the absolute hallmark of a public-sector, tax-based health system—a system into which we all pay and from which we can all draw health care, when we need it, on the basis of need.

Under the Conservative Government, however, evidence has grown of stark, widening inequalities in health, both between different regions in the country and between different social classes—inequality in terms of access to health care and in terms of people's state of health.

Evidence of that appeared many years ago in the Black report, which was commissioned by the then Labour Government, but buried after the 1979 election by a Conservative Health Minister. The Select Committee on Health has also taken evidence of health inequalities. For instance, in our recent study of dental services, we learned that five-year-old children in Scotland, Wales and the North Western RHA had twice as many decayed, missing or filled teeth as children in the West Midlands, South West Thames or Wessex RHAs. What is more, the average number of decayed, missing and filled teeth is actually increasing in the poorest regions of the country, whereas it is decreasing in the richest region of the country.

There are disparities not simply between regions, but between social classes. In the Health Select Committee, we were told that adults in social classes IV and V, unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers, when compared with those in social classes I, II and IIIa, white collar workers, had more missing teeth and more than twice as many decayed teeth, but fewer filled teeth, showing a lower level of treatment.

Quite recently, in April 1994, an article by Peter Phillimore and others in the *British Medical Journal* identified the health inequalities in the Northern region. They found that adults aged less than 65 in the more depressed parts of the region, such as St. Hilda's ward in Middlesbrough or West City ward in Newcastle, were four times more likely to die—they had four times the standardised mortality ratio—than people living in more prosperous parts of the region such as Wylam ward in Tynedale or Whalron ward in Castle Morpeth. In other words, health inequalities are literally a matter of life and death.

The problem of regional inequalities was first tackled in 1976 by the last Labour Government by introducing the resource allocation working party, which funded regional health authorities on the basis of the populations in the regions weighted by death rates in those regions. That basis of funding the national health service has continued ever since.

However, the abolition of regional health authorities as a result of the Bill means that a new funding formula would be needed, because one can no longer fund on the basis of regions. Therefore, last year, the Department of Health commissioned research from a group of health economists at the university of York, to develop a new formula to fund district health authorities.

The researchers found that the current formula underestimates the need for health care in deprived areas, principally in the north of the country and in inner cities, because it takes no account of the health implications of social deprivation. They found that indicators such as unemployment, the proportion of the population who are lone parents, the proportion of elderly people living alone with no carer, and the proportion of ethnic minorities, were good indicators of the amount of health need and the resources required to meet it.

The York research team published its findings in the *British Medical Journal* on 22 October 1994. It estimated that, using its formula, the Northern regional health authority should receive 2.8 per cent. more in relation to acute care to meet the health needs of the population in the Northern region, compared with the health needs of populations elsewhere in the country. By contrast, the team found that, as far as acute care is concerned, the Oxford regional health authority received 4.8 per cent. more than its entitlement on a needs-based assessment.

The team also produced a formula for the provision of services for mentally ill people. It found that the North East Thames region received 15.4 per cent. less than its entitlement for psychiatric services, and that the Wessex region received 17.5 per cent. more than its entitlement when the health needs of the population in the region were taken into account.

The day before the researchers published their results—perhaps the timing was co-ordinated—the Department of Health issued a letter to all finance directors in the national health service in England, departmental letter FDL (94)68, which accepted the main thrust of the York researchers' argument and said that it would apply the York formula to the majority of the NHS budget. The Department made some modifications, but it chose the York formula as a basis for the new allocations to health authorities.

It therefore shocked me to find out last week, from a Department of Health press release, that next year's resource allocation to the health service provides exactly the same 4.4 per cent. increase for each regional health authority, irrespective of the health needs of the population in the region. That will perpetuate the health inequalities I mentioned earlier, and will undermine the principle of the NHS as a national health service, meeting the needs of patients equally, whether they live in Newcastle or Bournemouth.

The difference that funding on a straight percentage basis for each regional health authority in the country makes, amounts to very big money. With the help of some of the York health economists, I have calculated over the weekend the target allocations for each regional health authority if the York formula, which the Government have said they will accept, was implemented on the modified basis that the Government laid out in their letter to our health service finance chiefs.

Compared with the actual allocations that the Secretary of State announced last week, the new combined Northern and Yorkshire region will receive £128 million less than its target, according to the formula that the Government say they will apply. The North Thames region will receive £103 million less than its entitlement under the formula that the Government commissioned, and which the Government say that they will introduce.

By contrast, the South and West region will receive £40 million more than its entitlement based on the health needs of the population in that part of the country, and the Anglia and Oxford region will receive a massive £286 million more than its entitlement based on the health needs of the population in that area.

I do not argue for swingeing cuts in the health service in the south. However, if the Government wish to provide a comprehensive health service which provides equal access to treatment for people throughout the country, they should be moving towards the allocation of resources based on health needs. They need a strategy for gradually correcting the imbalance in resource allocation that favours the south at the expense of the north, and this year they had the opportunity to do it.

The press release last week, announcing the Department of Health's allocation for this year, said that the allocation amounts to a 0.85 per cent. increase in

[Mr. Hugh Bayley]

addition to the rate of inflation. Significant new money is going into the health service, and that new money could and should be targeted on the regions that are underfunded at present.

If one draws a line across the country from the Severn to the Wash, according to the formula that the Government themselves commissioned, north of that line the national health service receives £235 million less than its entitlement based on the population and the needs of a population; and south of that line the NHS receives £235 million more than its entitlement based on the needs of the population.

That is unfair; it is unjust. It is unacceptable to meet the health needs of people in the south by cutting the health care budget for people in the north. If we are to continue to have a national health service, health resources must be allocated on the basis of patient need for care, rather than party political geographical allocation, which benefits people living in Conservative parts of the country.

7.48 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Following the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley), I am intrigued by his discussion of formulae and allocation. I have not studied the York formula, and perhaps he served warning on me, as a representative of a constituency south of the line that he drew from the Severn to the Wash, that I should study it, and with care, but I am bound to say that study of those formulae rarely repays the effort as much as one hopes.

We in the North-East Thames region have, for some considerable time, perhaps been over-provided as a region. The resource allocation working party set up by the last Labour Government in 1975 started to move resources for a fairer allocation across the country.

Within the North-East Thames region we have had lengthy arguments about the allocation of resources between the various districts. The most salient point to come out of the discussion about formula is the distorting nature of the regional health authorities. They have not just distorted the allocation of resources across the country—doubtless that argument will continue—but have distorted the allocation of resources within regional health authorities.

They have done so to such an extent that the national formula used by the Government to distribute resources across the regions is discarded by the regions, which use their own formula. That formula is perhaps closer to the York formula, which reflects social deprivation and other such factors. North-east Essex has thereby suffered a double whammy. We are losing money as a result of the resource allocation working party and the trend towards allocating resources out of the London area. We have been losing money again as a result of finances being concentrated in the London parts of the North-East Thames region.

Thankfully, the NHS reforms have, over the years, begun to resolve that problem. There was a wide differential between the amount of funding per head allocated to my constituents in north-east Essex and north Colchester compared with those in south Suffolk. As a result of the NHS reforms, that gap has gradually closed, and we are today much closer to attaining parity.

It is important that bureaucrats, whether in the districts or in the regions, are having less and less influence over the allocation of resources. As we see the growth of GP fundholders, as fundholders attract resources on the basis of their patient lists and their characteristics, and use that purchasing power—not just within the district where the district purchaser has purchasing power, but anywhere—we see developing an NHS that allocates resources more intelligently according to the natural signals developing in terms of the internal market. Resources are used more effectively and carefully by the GPs acting as advocates for their patients and allocating resources accordingly.

It is no surprise that the Labour party, for all its modernising tendencies, should oppose the Bill. It has opposed every one of our NHS reforms when we have produced them. We no longer hear the scare stories about NHS trusts leaving the NHS. The Labour party is no longer able to make that charge, because it is ridiculous. No doubt the Labour party will make ridiculous and equally fallacious charges about the Bill. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Mr. Atkinson) said, perhaps the Labour party will eventually come to the same view on the Bill as it did about education league tables and grant-maintained schools. We expect the argument to continue to advance in our direction.

The achievements in my constituency as a result of the NHS reforms have been considerable. All our provider units, to use the jargon—most people still call them hospitals—have moved towards NHS trust status. As a result, our acute unit has been able to expand and use its resources more efficiently. We have opened a day surgery centre and new surgical wards. It was recently announced that the unit's facilities will be further expanded to include a day surgery.

That is not to say that those who work in Essex Rivers Healthcare do not have to work extremely hard, often under adverse conditions. We ensure that the money goes as far as it can. I pay tribute to all who work in Essex Rivers Healthcare and give them my moral support. We must not ceaselessly take advantage of the good will of those who work in the health service.

Perhaps one of the benefits of the continuing devolution of decision-making power in the NHS is that one day we shall get rid of the old Whitley council arrangements for negotiating terms and conditions. We could then apply much more modern terms and conditions, with better pay for those who most deserve it, rather than being hidebound by the existing bureaucratic pay and negotiating structures.

Essex Rivers Healthcare has to cope with discharge policy in the face of what my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) mentioned—the failure of Essex county council's policy on community care. Despite there having been a 66 per cent. real-terms increase since 1991 in the funding of community care in Essex county council, the Labour party has cocked it up—not to put too fine a point on it.

That just shows that, for all the caring good will—I am sure that those involved are nice people who care—they are incapable of delivering the policies that people expect and on which the most vulnerable in society depend. That inability has a knock-on effect in the NHS, and ultimately places a strain on the good people who work in the Essex Rivers Healthcare who have to make decisions about discharging patients. It is rich for the Opposition endlessly to say that they would look after the health service better than we do. That is another example of Labour policies, even in county councils, having a detrimental effect on the NHS.

The mental health services in Essex took on NHS trust status soon after the NHS trusts were first announced. We have a trust called New Possibilities, for people with learning disabilities. All the NHS trusts have become innovative examples of what can be achieved. The New Possibilities trust has started an employment agency specifically for people leaving the old-fashioned system of care under the health service. It moves people into the community and ensures that they find a job. That is an example of innovation that we should surely support.

We also have large numbers of GP fundholding practices that greatly benefit patients in the district. My constituency contains the first single GP fundholder. I urge the Government not to dismiss such innovation. In the initial study, single GP fundholding practices were found not to be cost-effective, but that was because they were given the same start-up funding as multi-GP fundholding practices.

Although I am certain that the money may have been put to good use, surely a single GP setting up as a fundholder does not need the same start-up money as a multiple GP practice. That must have had a detrimental effect on the cost-benefit analysis of the study. I urge Ministers to continue to study single practice GP fundholders—a good innovation that works extremely well in my constituency. I wish that we had more of them.

The abolition of the regions is a natural consequence of the NHS reforms. The existing regional structures have done good work over the years, but are part of the old command and control system—the Stalinist system, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State called it. That is no longer necessary, as so many decisions on the allocation of resources at local level are now taken at local level.

Opposition Members often criticise the rise in bureaucracy in the NHS, but the new policy gets rid of bureaucracy, and it is entirely natural that we should have moved some of the bureaucrats out of the regions and districts and into the hospitals and GP fundholding practices where the decisions are made. It naturally follows that we need to cut out the bureaucracy that has now become obsolete.

It is only natural that people sitting behind rows of desks in large office blocks feel that they are doing useful jobs; perhaps they are, but they are not as useful as they used to be, and they are certainly less important now.

I confess that, on my one visit to the headquarters of the North East Thames regional health authority, I was staggered by the size of the building. I lusted after the time when we would have NHS trusts all over Essex taking the decisions, and we would be able to get that distant London-based bureaucracy out of our hair. That has now happened, and we are better off as a result. We do not need regional interference in local policies of the type from which we used to suffer. The job of the regions is obsolete now that we have the trusts.

The development of specialist services is no longer planned by the regions in the way envisaged when the RHAs were first established. The Opposition amendment obliquely mentions cancer services. Decisions about cancer provision and anti-cancer strategy are being made now by the London implementation group, which is taking a more keen look at the general provision of cancer services across the regions—a view that a single region could never enjoy on its own. A much more co-ordinated approach is needed. We are moving towards a health service that takes the day-to-day decisions at a level ever closer to the patient; and strategic decisions are planned unashamedly strategically.

Although this may raise bogus fears about accountability, the only accountability that really matters is to the patient, when he or she gets the treatment required. As a party, we are happy to remain accountable to the British people. If they are not satisfied with the service, no doubt they will say something about it at the general election.

All the evidence shows that patient satisfaction has improved. Of course, Opposition Members go on talking up what usually prove to be false fears about the state of the health service, but more patients are being treated and are satisfied with that treatment. If one asks an ordinary person what he thinks about the state of the health service, he will pick up the adverse vibrations sent out to him by—usually—an Opposition Member. If one asks him, however, about his own doctor or hospital, he will say what marvellous treatment he has received at their hands.

Accountability brings me to the membership of health authorities. I am very pleased that, once again, Ministers have made it clear that we are not going back to the argy-bargy political meetings held by the old-fashioned health authorities at a time when people were appointed to them as part of the process of handing out the political spoils of office to councillors. People used to end up arguing about the PLO and many other things that had nothing to do with the health service. The real decisions were not made, and if they were made, they were made far too late.

Mr. Nicholas Brown *rose—*

Mr. Jenkin: I am not giving way.

The internal market in today's health service provides the information that is needed to make decisions in the service which allocates the resources. This Bill is a natural consequence of the continuing and successful reform of the NHS, and I commend it to the House.

8.3 pm

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I am one of the few Opposition Members to have served as a member of one of the new health authorities. I should like to assure my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) that I was not appointed because of my support for the Tory party.

My second relevant experience lies in the fact that I, like those who work for the RHAs, was once abolished. I used to be the leader of a metropolitan county council, but then I was abolished, and the father of the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) had a hand in that.

My third relevant experience—the most important one—has come during the past two and a half years of handling queries from constituents. Conservative Members may say that constituents are always complimentary about the nursing care that they receive and so on, but hon. Members are also brought a great many cases of real difficulty. I know of a whole series of such cases, of which perhaps the worst was the one that I

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cited earlier—the person whose operation was stopped after he had been anaesthetised. Such cases lead me to comment on this Bill.

I oppose the abolition of the regional health authorities, not from dogma but because I think that abolition will bring to the health service two things that we could do without: centralisation and fragmentation. One result of abolition will be that the strategic planning of the service moves from the region to the centre. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East pointed to the number of functions that the regional offices will continue to carry out.

The difference between the regional offices and RHAs is that the former are accountable upwards, to the NHS executive and to the Secretary of State, but they contain no members who are accountable to other bodies. The current RHAs may have been accountable only in a limited way, but at least there was more downward accountability. That means that strategic decisions will henceforth be taken out of the public eye, because they will be made exclusively in regional offices.

This, too, is very like the abolition of the metropolitan counties. A whole range of decisions previously taken by those democratically elected bodies moved away to regional offices and were taken by regional civil servants.

There will also be less coherence of service within a given region—that is where the fragmentation comes in. At present, RHAs at least consider the context of a region generally. With a series of separate authorities, there will be fragmentation, making it even harder to achieve an equitable distribution around a region. My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) has already pointed out the inequity of that distribution.

Furthermore, some services will be dumped when the RHAs disappear. They will disappear without trace—another striking parallel with what happened when the metropolitan counties were abolished. Some services, such as the Crown Prosecution Service, were immediately centralised; some remained in a recognisably accountable form. But the powers of such bodies—the joint boards for police, fire and public transport—were gradually whittled away, and smaller, specialised services were lost. That happened not because the powers to promote, say, an archaeology service disappeared, but because the authorities responsible for such services had no money with which to perform them.

The greatest loss, however, was the loss of accountability.

Mr. Michael Trend (Windsor and Maidenhead): The hon. Gentleman has made the rather serious allegation that some services might be dumped as a result of the Bill. Would he care to give us an example?

Mr. Gunnell: I shall shortly be offering a quotation precisely with that in mind.

I should like first to deal with the money that it is claimed will be saved. There is not much evidence that the £150 million savings have been thought through. The abolition of the metropolitan counties was based on the idea that enormous savings would accrue. Research showed that there would be no savings before or after abolition. The savings argument was bogus. We shall be surprised if any savings as a result of abolition go to the care of patients.

The region is not being entirely discounted. Under the process of accountability each region will be represented by one person, a respected local figure, and he will somehow be responsible for that region. How can one person take that on and be a respected local figure in the whole of the Yorkshire and the northern region? It is facile to say that such appointments will not be political because the eight people who will represent the regions will be on the policy forum at the centre and will inevitably be members of the Conservative party.

My experience of being appointed to an authority as a Labour party member was interesting. I was invited to meet the chief executive of the health authority and he asked whether I would be willing to serve on it. He knew my background and where I stood politically. I had many commitments at the time so I said that I had doubts about serving. I had been asked to serve because I was a member of Leeds city council and I suggested that another member of the council might be willing to serve. I was told that only three members of Leeds city council were acceptable. I am not sure what that made me.

One of the three was already on the regional health authority and another was on St. James's hospital trust. That left me and I was told that if I did not take the job there would be no representation from the city council. I discussed it with the leader of the council and we agreed that it would make sense for me to become a member of the health authority and chairman of the social services committee. It was clearly seen as a political appointment, and it is facile to pretend that such appointments are not. That is not to say that they are all political appointments, but the eight people who will be regional bosses will be the ears of the Secretary of State, and those ears will be very sensitive to the policies of the Conservative party.

There are non-political appointments to health authorities. I was one, and it is the job of people on such authorities to make them work. The new health authorities are probably not as bad as we say and not as good as the Government make out. One specific achievement by Leeds health authority which was brought about by the reforms is that before the reforms it was almost impossible to get an abortion in Leeds. As soon as the providers found out that there was income to be had from abortions, they became available in Leeds, and that was a welcome change.

A fellow member of Leeds health care was a non-political appointee. He is David Hunter of the Nuffield Institute for Health at the University of Leeds. In the research paper provided by the Library, Mr. Hunter states what would be lost when the regional health authorities were abolished as:

> "arbitrating in local disputes; providing a challenge to local myopia in service development and commissioning; encouraging innovation and new ways of doing things; and promoting health strategy development, community care and priority services, research and development, and health alliances. In theory, purchasers and providers ought to be able to inherit such an agenda. In practice some will but many more won't."

I have two questions about the changes and the merger between Leeds and Yorkshire. Why Durham? No contracts have been let because a site has not yet been chosen. However, £2 million has been spent on the centre in Harrogate to bring it to a high standard. Was that taken into account when the issue was discussed and studied?

Under the Minister's proposals, Quarry house in Leeds will lose 200 employees, which is, I think, 21 per cent. of its staff. A tremendous amount has been spent on Quarry house and if 200 staff are going there must be space for 135 from the new regional health authority without having to build anything extra. Have the Government considered the costings and found that it is cheaper to construct a new building in Durham than to use the space that they have created in Leeds by partly emptying Quarry house? The sums do not add up.

We oppose the abolition but look somewhat favourably at the merger of the district health authority and the family health services authority. As the chairman of the social services committee in Leeds I have worked with both authorities and to me it makes a great deal of sense to put responsibility for primary and secondary care together.

Why will fundholders be more directly linked to the regional offices than to the new authority? The authority should be responsible for fundholders as well because if it is not that will perpetuate the current inequity. Conservative Members have not answered our questions on purchasing. As the numbers of fundholders increase, the purchasing role of health authorities will decrease. By acquiring primary care they have obviously increased their purchasing powers a great deal. Will health authorities still have a real role in that context?

8.16 pm

Mr. Michael Trend (Windsor and Maidenhead): I welcome the Bill and the overall progress of the Government's health reforms. I recently had the honour to attend an international conference at one of the royal colleges at which people from health services all over the world were gathered. It was clear that our health reforms were in the international league and that other countries were looking to us with our experience. Not all of them had done what we have done, and the United States was on a completely different tack.

Fundamentally, the reforms are held together internationally by the purchaser-provider split, which was pioneered in this country and has made a real contribution to creating an excellent health service that the country can afford.

The Secretary of State spoke about the OECD report. It states:

> "The command and control system of the NHS lacks flexibility, incentives for efficiency, financial information and hence accountability and choice of providers of secondary care."

The health reforms have been widely praised and I also commend them. We began by addressing the trusts and fundholders. That is evidence of the Government's desire to have a more locally based national health system. Had any Government wished to create a centralised system they would have started by reforming or strengthening the centre. That was not what happened. First, more local systems in hospital and primary care were set up, and that shows the emphasis of the Government's reforms.

While that was going on, some people thought that the purchasing side of the equation was in danger of being left behind. Purchasing is central to the NHS. We have heard much about the so-called centralisation of the NHS through these reforms. Does the Bill centralise? I do not think that it does. It removes a vestige of the command and control system. It is extremely important that we understand that the new NHS will be based, and will be accountable, locally.

What about accountability? The present system is working well in both trusts and fundholding. It is part of the evidence that we need to examine to ensure that accountability is secure. As many of my hon. Friends have already said, we do not want to politicise the NHS, its management or its accountability. We must not forget community health councils, which are the voice of local people. I understand that their position remains unaffected by the Bill.

I am not at all sure about Labour's regional plans. The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) did not clarify its plans for regional health services. I suspect that she is trapped in the difficult logic of Labour's proposed governmental reforms—perhaps having tiers of regional government throughout the country—and she may want some conterminous boundaries between regional government and regional health authorities.

This is a debate about health services in the regions. However, I advise the Labour party to think carefully about its general plans for rearranging local government, or even central Government, on a regional basis. I do not think that the people of England would have any fondness for an end to their traditional national form of Government in favour of the imposition of new regional forms. It is a big can of worms for the Opposition. From the West Lothian question down to the English regions, it will provide a big headache for them in the months and years ahead.

I want to say a few words about the formal relationships outlined in the Bill. First, when the new health authorities come into being, they must respond to what Ministers want in the development of the NHS. There will be a conduit of organisation coming down from Richmond house through Leeds to the new outposts, to trusts and on into the primary system. The means to achieve that must exist.

Secondly, the new authorities must be effective. They must be able to do well the job that they have been given to do. They must be efficient and economical and able to direct scarce resources to the areas where they are most needed. Thirdly, they must be responsive to the local environment. It is extremely difficult to legislate for that, so I shall instead comment on the informal relationship that the Bill will establish.

Health authorities have not always been responsive, but that is not the same as saying that they have not been accountable. The lack of responsiveness has arisen out of the old command and control structure. There needs to be a culture shift within health authorities. I shall give an example from my constituency. A distinguished local hospital—the Edward VII—in Windsor belongs, together with two other hospitals, to the local community trust. Last year, satisfactory plans for its future were proposed by the East Berkshire health authority. Shortly after that, the East Berkshire and West Berkshire health authorities amalgamated to make one Berkshire health authority.

The new authority had different priorities and plans for health care provision in my part of the county. The new plans were not nearly as satisfactory as the ones that they replaced. One proposal was to remove the world-famous Prince Charles eye unit from the Windsor hospital. Another proposal was not to proceed with a number of elderly rehabilitation beds, which had formed part of the original plan.

There was a vigorous local campaign. I took part in it, as did the local newspapers. A large petition was presented to Parliament. Doctors, consultants and many other local people raised their voices. The significant factor was that no one appeared to be in favour of the

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health authority's new plans. No voices were raised in its support. The negotiations that took place, which were chiefly between myself and the health authority, were protracted. I was learning as we went along, and I felt that the health authority was also learning. The current position is more satisfactory because the eye unit has been saved and there are to be new and expanded clinical services. However, we have not reached any agreement with the health authority about rehabilitation beds for the elderly and it has now postponed a decision.

My argument with the health authority was not a local argument in the sense that I was saying that we had to have that unit for Windsor, that it must not go anywhere else and that I was sticking up for my people. Of course there was an element of that—there always is. My argument was that the provision of care for the elderly, especially rehabilitation care, would be more appropriately placed in local community hospitals rather than in acute hospitals at some distance—sometimes a great distance—from people who wanted to visit their elderly and frail relations.

We took advice from the King's Fund and others on current thinking and conventional wisdom. However, an impasse was reached because the health authority held one view sincerely and deeply and we held another—based on professional advice, not just narrow local considerations. In such circumstances and where all the local voices are ranged on one side, it is important that a health authority responds sensitively to the concerns of local people.

The new health authorities, whatever they be—regional or district, of whatever type or composition—must listen more to local voices. I thought I heard that message clearly in the opening remarks of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. She said that there needed to be more flexibility—I think that she used the word "visibility". The health authority should be more visible. For example, we heard earlier about the chairman of a health authority who holds local surgeries where he is available for local people to meet him.

We also heard today about public meetings on health matters—I have been to some—where almost everyone in the room is a health professional of some sort or another. The health authority calls the meeting and it sends a lot of people to it. Nurses and doctors attend, as do local Members of Parliament and local councillors. However, to get the general public involved, even through the CHC, is extremely difficult. It is only when a specific case arises, such as the Edward VII hospital, that the public have an understanding of the issues involved. Therefore, there must be far more "visibility" by the health authorities. They must work with local people because they are working for local people.

We want a locally based NHS and I believe that the Government are delivering that through their reforms. We want that locally based NHS to be responsive quickly and with the minimum bureaucracy and waste. The Bill will help to bring about that desirable aim. However, if we go too far or too fast and do not take public opinion with us, and if the health authorities are not responsive to local voices, we will risk many of the benefits of our reforms coming undone.

It is most important that the public's confidence in the national health service is maintained at the highest level. Recent research shows that public confidence in the NHS is higher and growing. The Opposition say, on the one hand, that the health service is falling to pieces, but, on the other, that it is excellent. A constituent of mine, who I suspect is a member of the Labour party, also holds both views at once. He tells me that the health service is falling to bits, there is no care, and people are struggling in the streets and dropping like flies. He then writes to the local paper saying that he has been in hospital for a certain procedure and cannot not speak too highly of the doctors and nurses and the care that he received, and that he felt considerably better. I wrote to him and pointed out that that was excellent news and perhaps he would take a less jaundiced view about the health service in future.

Confidence must be kept high. It is important to ensure that our health authorities in both their formal structure, which makes them locally based, and the informal advice and encouragement which we give them to listen to local voices, are the way forward. None the less, this is a good Bill. It will be good for patients and the national health service, and I hope that it receives a Second Reading tonight.

8.30 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): This strange Bill is both short and long. Its substance covers but four pages, while its schedules cover some 50 pages. That shows that it is a framework Bill that takes powers. In this case, it takes powers to the centre where they can then be used in a variety of ways, to be spelled out later in secondary legislation. That is the kind of Bill which the Government favour. If the Bill is a culmination, as we have heard, it is a culmination of a whole way of legislating, in which one takes framework powers in a Bill like this and then backs them up with a battery of further powers in which the meat and substance are filled out.

In some ways, this is a fairly uncontentious and perhaps even sensible Bill. For many years we have discussed whether it is sensible to have regional health authorities, whether their function could be defended or whether the time had come to remove them. It is possible to discuss that sensibly. The problem is that it becomes a more apocalyptic story about a process of health service reforms, of which the Bill is said to be a culmination.

I shall ask three questions about that process of health service reforms. First, will it improve the quality of the service? I understand that that question is fundamental when we sweep aside some of the possible arguments. Secondly, will it improve the accountability of the service? Thirdly and more specifically, although it is important, will it enable people better to complain about the service if things go wrong?

On my first question, I hope that the Bill will improve the quality of the service, because, for a long time, many of us have thought that the way to improve the commissioning—we prefer to use the word "commissioning" than "purchasing"—of health care locally is to amalgamate FHSAs and district health authorities. We felt that the division was artificial and made local health planning much more difficult. The fact that that amalgamation is taking place is, prima facie, an argument for the ability to drive quality upward as a result. However, I put it in terms only of potential rather than achievement because a huge job remains to be done.

If the Government say that the health agenda is complete in that respect, I argue that it has only just begun. A range of issues to do with the quality of health care are untouched. It is only the precondition for a concerted assault on issues of health quality. I refer particularly to primary care, where FHSAs, or their predecessors, family practitioner committees, have had the sole function of paying cheques to doctors. They have had no effective function in monitoring the quality of primary health care and seeking to drive up its quality.

I hope that a consequence of that amalgamation will be to provide the armoury whereby that can now take place because there is a huge gap in our ability to achieve health quality. For example, in the past year alone an extremely good report has been issued by the director of public health for the South Staffordshire health authority. It identified for my area, Cannock Chase, a number of appalling and worrying developments. It showed that we had the largest number of single-handed practitioners, the longest lists in the district and the highest number of referrals from Gps to hospitals, which usually indicates problems in the quality of primary care.

I took those problems to the Staffordshire FHSA. The analysis was linked to other evidence, which said that the area had the most health needs. As we have more ill people in the area, we have a mismatch: the poorest quality of provision and the worst health. The FHSA is the notional provider of primary health care, so I presented the evidence to it and asked what it could do about it. The answer, essentially, was that it could do nothing. It could have conversations with doctors and watch, but nothing more. That is wholly unacceptable. We must work towards a position where those who pay for or commission primary health care have far more ability to watch, monitor and drive up the quality of that care. That presents a huge agenda, and I hope that it will be grasped.

On the issue of hospitals, the Government must grasp the problem in relation to clinical outcomes, audit and performance, which is a hugely neglected area. Many of the matters to which we have devoted so much energy over the years are of minor significance compared with those hard indicators of the quality of care—not what goes into the system but what comes out of it.

Mr. Malone: I am tempted to invite the hon. Gentleman to come and join us because he is pointing out that the new system can tackle those agendas in a way that the old one could not. It is particularly important that he realises that the ability of GP fundholders to respond instantly to the patient need which he has identified is one of the great benefits of the reforms that are now in place. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that.

Dr. Wright: I am extremely grateful for the Minister's invitation, which is the best that I have had all day. Nevertheless, he rose a little prematurely, because I was about to add that, if that is common ground, as it should be, what should also be common ground is a serious attempt to look at inequities in health care. If that is not common ground, I simply ask the Minister to look at the evidence presented in last week's *British Medical Journal*, which brings together much of the contemporary evidence on inequalities in health care.

The professor who wrote the overview referred to the way in which "The Health of the Nation" devoted only one page to variations, not inequalities, in health among socio-economic groups, which are said to be the result of complex factors. The *British Medical Journal* stated that it is inconceivable that changes in the genetic make-up of different socio-economic groups have occurred over the past 15 years to produce the increases and differences in mortality in Britain. That is an appalling and devastating commentary on 15 years of social and economic policies that have produced a massive deterioration in health equality.

We use terms such as "life chances" in a glib and easy way, but here we are literally talking about life chances, which have deteriorated in the past 15 years as the result of a so-called trickle-down policy that was supposed to make everything come good. It not only failed to come good but came bad in a big way.

Surely we could at least agree on health policy aims to reduce inequalities in health, then apply our minds to achieving those aims. Instead, we have failed to agree and the position has grown substantially worse. There is a huge agenda to tackle.

Will accountability be improved? Is the Bill a decentralist or a centralist measure? Regional health authorities play a role in protecting and sponsoring health authorities and now trusts. They perform a variety of useful functions, and one must question what will happen to some of those roles when regions are abolished.

Only last week, almost all the consultants at the Foundation Mental Health Trust in Stafford passed a vote of no confidence in its chief executive. That was a fairly dramatic occurrence and, by implication, a vote of no confidence in a rather ineffectual trust board. Those consultants were immediately able to seek the advice and guidance of the region, which acts as a buffer between the centre and the localities. When regional offices are no longer statutory offices with a status and integrity of their own but simply regional outposts, the relationship will change and roles will alter.

Reference was made to problems in relation to the regional director of public health. The service needs every independent voice that it can get, and the Bill will reduce rather than increase independence. As the former chairman of a community health council, I regret that CHC statutory rights in relation to proposed trusts are removed by the Bill. We should strengthen the role of CHCs, users and consumers—not weaken them further. Every time that I hear the statistical arguments that were made earlier, the more I become convinced that the NHS desperately needs an independent inspectorate that can produce reliable information of a kind that does not exist at present.

The most crucial aspect of accountability is the composition of the new health authorities. I return to the nature of the Bill, with its few clauses and vast number of schedules. It is extraordinary that a Health Authorities Bill should fail to answer the fundamental question of who will serve on the new authorities. Schedule 1 on page 19 of the Bill states only that there will be new health authorities, whose members will be appointed by the Secretary of State. Earlier, the Secretary of State told the House that they will be the best people. I have evidence of the best people who have been appointed to such bodies in the past, but Conservative Members might find it embarrassing if I presented it now.

The new bodies will be the key commissioning organisations for health care in local communities, but the Bill does not say who will serve on them. Recently, the House considered the composition of police authorities.

[Dr. Wright]

It would not dream of allowing those authorities to be established by a Bill without any indication of their composition, yet it is doing so in respect of this legislation.

Recently, the chairman of the Conservative party said that one could not have serving on health bodies people who were not in favour of the Government's reforms. That is preposterous. One wants people who are committed to the health service. It seems that to be passionately in favour of or passionately against reforms is cause for disqualification. One wants people with an acute sense of public interest, who will defend it and the NHS at all costs. The Conservative party chairman has stumbled into a miasma of patronage, without thinking of the implications of his remarks.

There is now a test of whether the Government are prepared to roll back their public appointments process. Of course we need an open system and a commission publicly to advertise such appointments so that anyone who has something to contribute can apply, and normal civil service criteria could be used for selection. Such appointments must be taken out of the orbit of ministerial patronage and put in the arena of public interest. No wonder that Professor Chris Ham and Professor Hunter in Leeds both concluded that the Bill looks more like a centralising than a decentralising measure.

The complaints issue, which surfaced briefly in the debate, is dealt with by the Bill only in terms of transitional arrangements, yet it is the Bill's biggest lacuna. On any reckoning, the present complaints system is a total mess. Sir Alan Wilson and his committee were asked to investigate that aspect as a matter of urgency a year ago. The committee reported in May and consultation ended in August. We were promised speedy action, but Professor Wilson is now expressing regret and disappointment that there has been none.

Mr. Malone: There will be action. We shall bring forward proposals once we have considered what must be done.

Dr. Wright: That is good to know, but I can only go on the present delay. There was a clear expectation that there would be such legislation as was required in the present Session. The present complaints system has been called chaotic by everyone who examines it—the health service ombudsman, Sir Alan Wilson, the National Consumer Council and the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts. A report on the matter was welcomed and broadly endorsed by every relevant party.

The present complaints system undermines the most fundamental principles of the citizens charter in terms of speed, effectiveness and independence. It cries out for reform. This is a health Bill, but one that signally fails to take up the one option that would bring direct and immediate benefit to users of the service.

There is now a certain ambivalence in people's attitude to the health service, as hon. Members—including the hon. Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend)—have pointed out. Why do they feel passionately well disposed towards the service, yet passionately ill disposed towards aspects of the way in which it is run? I believe—this is meant, in a way, to be helpful to the Government—that something approaching a crisis of legitimacy is currently evident.

My theory—it is no more than that—is that the recent explosion of complaints about the service is not simply due to the fact that there is more to complain about; that is an easy point to make. I think that at one time people were not inclined to complain, because they felt that it was "their service"—or rather, "our service". Now they feel that it has truly become "their" service. A real test of legitimacy must be applied to the Government's proposals, and I do not think that the Bill meets it.

8.50 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Throughout the debate, Opposition Members have carped and jeered at the NHS. I entirely endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) said about people's responses to his questions about their experience of the services. I receive the same responses on doorsteps in my constituency. People tell me that they are worried about the health service, but when I ask them about their personal experiences, they always express gratitude for the care and support that they have received. When I ask, "Then why do you feel as you do?", they reply, "It is what they say on television; it is what those Labour party politicians say."

I am sick and tired of hearing a litany of disaster. I thought that it might be helpful if I quoted from the response to a questionnaire sent out by a GP fundholders' practice in my constituency, the Cheam family practice. That response is very revealing: 111 patients responded, 97 per cent. of whom said, interestingly, that they were entirely satisfied with the care that they had received. That is completely at variance with what the Opposition are trying to tell us.

Mr. Morgan: We surrender.

Lady Olga Maitland: I am delighted to hear it. I could take up hon. Members' time by going through the rest of the questionnaire, which contains many points that you now beg me to mention. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] You do not want to hear the truth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Lady must not keep using the word "you"; the Chair has nothing to do with this discussion.

Lady Olga Maitland: I stand corrected, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but there are times when I feel somewhat goaded.

It might be beneficial and educational for Opposition Members to hear a little more about the questionnaire, although originally I did not intend to impose it on the House. To the question

> "On entering the ward were you made to feel welcome?",

86 per cent. of patients replied, "Absolutely." When asked,

> "Were your family/friends made to feel welcome?",

98 per cent. said yes. When asked,

> "Did staff respond quickly to requests for assistance?",

82 per cent. said yes. When asked, "Were you given privacy?", 100 per cent. said yes. Again, 100 per cent. said yes to the question, "Was your linen clean?". There must be some sense of reality about the kind of patient care that is actually being delivered.

I welcome the Bill. At first sight, it might strike many patients as no more than an accountancy exercise; but many patients will benefit from it. Any GP's eyes will light up when he sees how his practice will benefit. Let me focus for a few minutes on how the Bill will affect patients in my constituency. I see them as the VIPs who are at centre stage in the whole scenario; the Bill, after all, is designed to improve facilities in their daily lives.

My regional health authority, South Thames, is scheduled to disappear as a result of the reforms. I shed no tears, because my constituents will be better served without it. The RHA's staffing level will drop from 400 to 135: that number will form the NHS local executive branch. It does not take much imagination to see how local medicine could benefit from the value of 375 salaries.

Moreover, it is plain common sense to merge Sutton, Merton and Wandsworth district health authority with the family health services authority. It strikes me as perfectly normal for GPs to work in ever closer partnership with the district health authority, and from the same building. In this instance all parties will operate from Wilson's hospital in Merton: as a result they will be not a telephone call or fax away from each other, but literally just a step from each other's offices. Daily, regular contact to discuss mutual problems—particularly when the GP is playing an increasingly important role in managing patient care—can only benefit all of us. In short, we shall have a one-stop shop.

The new chief executive of the combined health authority will be Mr. George Gibson. He is enthusiastic about making the GP the key link in the whole health-care system—the gatekeeper, as it were, who will determine who gets what and where. His input will ensure personal involvement as well. In his health authority alone, as a result of the Bill, Mr. Gibson will have the means to allocate £1.5 million more resources to front-line patient care—for instance, X-rays for lung cancer, tests for breast and cervical cancer, the delivery of effective drug rehabilitation care, health promotion such as anti-smoking campaigns, especially among schoolchildren, and more community health centres, especially on low-income housing estates. Indeed, why should there not be more district nurses?

In the same mode, Mr. Gibson wants to provide more mental health care to help families who must care for relatives suffering from schizophrenia, Alzheimer's disease or deep depression. All those conditions impose great strain on carers, who badly need psychiatric nurses to be on hand. I hope that his "wish list" will bring on stream child and adolescent psychiatric services: such services, sadly, are needed more than ever as children suffer from the pressures of broken families and drugs.

GPs, in turn, would have more resources to earmark for primary care. There would be help for children with special educational needs, crucial speech therapy and more physiotherapists. Surely he should have the power to employ a full-time carer or nurse if that means keeping a patient at home rather than in hospital, which is costly and not always necessary.

I cite the example of a local case involving four people suffering from sickle cell anaemia, which is a painful and miserable illness. Between them they were in and out of hospital 800 days a year, and pain management was the main problem. It was common sense to employ a full-time nurse to look after them and to help them cope with the pain and provide the support that they needed. They were able to stay at home in familiar surroundings and hospital beds were released for expensive acute care for others. I trust that the Bill will mean that more resources are made available to expand such services.

It must be right that a GP should have a direct say in all aspects of patient care. More important, he should be encouraged to take a more proactive role, even if that means attending refresher courses. He should also be coaxed into offering more services in his surgery and given the necessary resources to be able to do so. That should apply whether or not he is a fundholder, but, clearly, the GP who is a fundholder will have more say in how his patients receive the appropriate care and, in addition, will receive the benefit of the extra resources made available as a result of the Bill.

There are a number of enthusiastic GP fundholders in Sutton. However, there is anxiety to ensure that resources earmarked for primary care are ring fenced. That would certainly introduce the necessary discipline, especially where there is a temptation for a district health authority to become so immersed in its own spending plans that, despite the well-aired aims, GPs end up being sidelined.

My fundholding GP told me what the extra resources would mean to him. He would like to improve his premises so that he can deliver more surgical care. It is nonsense to suggest that patients should have to put up with what I experienced years ago when I had to attend out-patients at Bart's to have a boil lanced on my thumb. It should have been done by my GP in proper surroundings. In future, a GP should be able to deal with all manner of minor surgery from skin lumps and bumps and the removal of cysts to joint injections.

I know a GP fundholder who is also a fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. Once a week he carries out a minor surgery list which could include the treatment of hernias. Much routine work could be delegated in this way. With the extra resources, a fundholder should be able to employ physiotherapists, dieticians and counsellors and social workers should be brought in to work closely with patients who need extra care and support.

If we were to stretch a point, we could follow the example of the general practice in Aviemore in Scotland which was visited by a GP whom I know and his teenage daughter. She had broken her arm while walking on the moors, but the fundholding practice had a 24-hour casualty service. The girl was X-rayed and made comfortable and only then allowed to go to a hospital in Inverness for an operation. Had she had a clean break, all the services would have been available in the plaster room for her to have been fixed up without having to go elsewhere. Would it not be marvellous if resources released for primary health care as a result of the Bill could provide such services? I have no doubt that rural areas in particular would benefit.

GP fundholders should have the power to insist that their patients are placed in single-sex wards in general hospitals if that has been requested. I welcome the written reply that I received today from the Minister in this regard, but I am not certain that the patients charter standards to be issued next year, which will require hospitals to inform patients in advance when they will be accommodated on a mixed ward for non-urgent treatment, will be entirely satisfactory. The reply does not make it clear what patients can do if they find the arrangements unacceptable.

[Lady Olga Maitland]

Is the onus on the health service to comply with the patient's requirements if a single-sex ward is not available immediately? I hope that, when establishing their contract with local hospitals, fundholding GPs will make it a condition that patients's concerns will be top priority and that they will not be exposed to embarrassment and forced on to a mixed-sex ward. There has already been some publicity about the issue, but it is not only women who are worried—I am told that men, too, are not always keen to be on a mixed ward.

I heartily welcome the Bill. It may not hit the headlines, but the result will be that patients, at their most vulnerable, will benefit most. It is disappointing that the Opposition cannot bring themselves to support it wholeheartedly. The Labour party's proposals will rebuild overloaded bureaucratic structures, and pressure groups will have their say at patients' expense. Throughout the debate Labour Members have demonstrated their obsession with political appointments. Under a Labour Government, the health service would go back to the bad old days.

I am delighted that the Bill deals with the real world. It will become law and provide improved services which patients need so badly, while Opposition Members bicker about how they will increase NHS bureaucracy. I doubt that patients will thank the Labour party for putting jobs for the boys first.

9.5 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): Contrary to what the Secretary of State for Health and her colleagues have said in the debate, the Health Authorities Bill represents yet another blow against accountability, which has been attacked consistently throughout the Government's reform of the health service. Accountability must play a part in the provision of health services. However, with this Bill the Government are running away from accountability yet again and making the system less responsive to people's needs.

Accountability is essential because it is the only way to ensure that patients' interests come first. As a result of the internal market process, emphasis on cost cutting is defining priorities far more than the wishes of patients. Services are being planned by accountants and business managers whose priorities are financial and have nothing to do with the caring professions or with patients.

Under the Tories, business has taken over from service in the national health service. Patients have become "consultant episodes" rather than people. Applications for new equipment have become "business cases" to be negotiated with the private sector. In meetings, local health service managers talk about "strategic directions", "over-performance", "under-performance", "outturns" and "contract monitoring". They have figures and tables for everything—although most of them are designed so that no one, apart from the author and a chosen few insiders, can understand them. Bureaucracy has gone mad under the Tory Government.

In the current dispute over local pay, doctors are putting in about an extra 14 hours per week performing management tasks, including preparing invoices on patient charges, drawing up contracts, assessing prices and talking to managers. The public can ask legitimately: why are doctors not treating patients in that extra time?

Yes, patients are suffering. Last week, one of my constituents was told that he would have to wait for months just to obtain a consultant's appointment. He was also told that he would have to wait about two years to have a very painful cyst removed, even though the doctors knew that the man's employers had threatened to sack him if he did not receive treatment, because he could not continue to do his job in his present state. However, my constituent was told that if he could pay for the consultation—if he could find £50—he would be seen by the same consultant almost immediately. That is privatisation by the back door, and the Government know it.

The Bill further undermines the role of doctors and nurses in the decision-making process. It drops the duty to recognise local advisory committees of clinicians. It gives no details of any seats on health authorities that will be designated for medical staff. How will their expertise become part of the decision-making and oversight process? I know from my experience in social services that finding out about the practical problems and taking a practical approach to their resolution is essential if management are to be effective in securing improvements in services at the point of delivery.

Staff are a part of the accountability equation. Some months ago, a report by the health advisory service on mental health services in Doncaster was published. One of the problems clearly identified was the lack of consultation of staff and the lack of weight given to their opinions by management. If there are no clear lines of accountability in the NHS, that situation will be duplicated throughout it, with the inevitable consequences for planning, for the efficient use of resources and for patient care which flow from such failures. The report also found that a number of service users and their groups felt that the consultation was superficial. Clearly, people who matter are being excluded from the decision-making process.

The Bill is yet another example of how the Tories treat the NHS as just another business venture. Maples was right. The Tories will never win on the NHS because they will never learn that co-operative, collective action works and that people are central to success. They can only understand competition, selfishness and market forces. They do not understand that the NHS is staffed by people, that the services are delivered by people and that the patients who are treated are people. We are not dealing with machines making goods. We are dealing with people treating people and with the need to get the very best from the highly trained and skilled people in the NHS. The Government's approach, which undermines the rights of staff and patients, will not achieve that.

The Secretary of State says that a light touch is needed. That can only mean limited co-ordination and a lack of accountability which will prove damaging in the long term. The new regional executive offices should not be centralising bodies which consider themselves to be responsible to the centre. If that happens, there will be a lack of oversight and the loss of a strategic, regional, co-ordinated approach. We shall be left with an even more fragmented health service than we have now. The Government have put in place a system of mini-health businesses which are run by their sycophants at local level. Locally negotiated pay will take us further down that road. As the Government move to complete their reforms with the Bill, fragmentation of the service and privatisation by the back door will continue.

The Government now propose that the health care function of the Department of Health should be run by the NHS executive, which will take full responsibility for the NHS. The executive will thoughtfully help Ministers with parliamentary accountability. Presumably the executive will give them their lines to read at the Dispatch Box, as usual.

Another aspect of the proposals which suggests that someone in the Department of Health has a healthy sense of irony is the announcement that the Bill will reduce the costs of management in the NHS, a view parroted by the Secretary of State today. Surely that is a joke too far. Since the introduction of the reforms, in Doncaster alone administration costs have risen from £4 million to £6 million, a rise of 48 per cent.—[*Laughter.*] Conservative Members may think that that is funny; I certainly do not. Patients are entitled to know why that money is being spent on administration in Doncaster.

That figure is completely separate from the 300 per cent. rise in managerial costs locally. Yet the Government expect £150 million to be released for patient care as a result of the changes. They are living in cloud cuckoo land. How can the Secretary of State, who has presided over such a massive explosion in NHS bureaucracy, tell the House with a straight face about the merits of reducing costs to plough money back into patient care?

The Government do not—and, I suspect, dare not—say how they arrived at that £150 million, which is perhaps why they seem confused about how much, if anything, will be saved. If the changes follow in the tradition of the remainder of the Government's reforms, we can expect a vast increase in costs and bureaucracy. We shall find that health authorities have to take on some of the region's functions, but they will do so less effectively because of their lack of expertise. There will be local duplication of some of the work previously done by regional health authorities, and costs will undoubtedly increase as a result.

Frankly, I do not believe the Government's claims about the national health service. They perversely attacked it for inefficiency and waste, but then created a new system which put incredible bureaucracy and waste in its place. Their claims about bureaucracy are not credible, just as their claims about waiting lists are not credible and were exposed earlier in the debate.

The Government's business-oriented and competitive approach to the national health service is fundamentally flawed because their ideology is wrong. I look forward to kicking them out of Government so that we can build a national health service based on socialist principles, which mean that people come first.

9.15 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): The Bill was presented to the House as bringing to a natural conclusion the Government's health care reform agenda. The end result is supposed to represent the Conservative party's vision of a national health service safe in their hands. In opening the debate, the Secretary of State described it as the "final building block" in a national health service that will survive while the Prime Minister lives and breathes.

The Bill is not an impressive conclusion or summation of Mrs. Thatcher's vision when first embarking on the project. What started—indeed, what swept in—in the mid-1980s like Boadicea's chariot, and caused almost as much chaos, is ending in farce and confusion, as if Boadicea had been replaced by Mr. Bean. Heralded as a streamlining measure, it attracts bureaucracy and leaves unanswered more questions than it deals with.

Perhaps I may put this question to the Minister: if the Bill is supposed to save money, why is it followed by a money resolution? I suppose that the Minister will answer that it will save money later but may require expenditure of funds immediately. It certainly looks that way.

There is, and always was, a case for merging district health authorities and family health services authorities in England and Wales, but it follows logically that the opportunity should have been taken to provide the national health service with coherent boundaries at local level, to parallel the well understood community boundaries used by local government. There is no case for a separate, geographically incoherent map solely for the national health service, which continues to be disfigured by demarcation disputes with local authorities about community care provision. The Bill could have dealt with that structural issue, but it did not, and the present situation will be allowed to continue. Whatever else the Bill may be, it cannot be described as the completed reform agenda of which the Government boast.

The Government's second and more controversial structural reform is to convert the eight remaining regional health authorities in England to eight regional outposts of the NHS executive. The claim for that agenda is that it will abolish a layer of bureaucracy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) and others correctly pointed out, the Bill does nothing of the sort; it merely transfers the regional tier from the national health service to the civil service. The new structure makes the regional tier directly responsible to the Secretary of State.

As civil servants, staff will be subject to the terms of the Official Secrets Act 1911 and their first duty will be not to the NHS or to patients but to care for the Secretary of State in the community. It is perfectly possible—

Mr. Jenkin *rose*—

Mr. Brown: I would have given way, but I am beginning to share the Prime Minister's opinion of the hon. Gentleman, who did not give way to me, so I will not give way now.

It is perfectly possible that the agenda will increase rather than decrease the number of administrators needed. With the new joint arrangements between the different health authorities, it is quite possible that we shall put in place a new tier of administration, and do so in an ad hoc manner.

In any event, the changes must be set in the context of the rest of the Government's health care reforms. Before doing that, I should refer to the first-rate speech by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley), who spoke of the injustices of the Government's current method of allocating resources, with specific reference to the absolute nonsense of merging the Yorkshire and Northern regions.

The Northern region alone is the size of Wales, and the entire new region of Yorkshire and the North is the same size as Scotland; yet we are told that the resources

[Mr. Brown]

allocated to its regional office will be broadly similar to those allocated to smaller regions. It is difficult to conclude that that is anything other than a political decision. The Government are advantaging areas where there are Conservative seats at the expense of areas where there are predominantly Labour seats.

The broader context is well known, but it will not hurt to remind the House of it. Since 1988, the number of NHS managers has increased by an astonishing 1,538.3 per cent. In 1993 alone, the number of managers employed by the NHS increased by 13.5 per cent.—this from a Government who claim to be committed to cutting bureaucracy. Since 1987, total costs throughout the NHS have risen from £1.44 billion to £3.02 billion, with an increase of 110 per cent. in administration costs alone.

The proportion of the total NHS budget spent on administration, clerical and management costs rose from 8.77 per cent. in 1987-1988 to 10.8 per cent. in 1992-1993. It used to be a source of pride that administrative costs in the NHS were lower than elsewhere in the developed world, but the Government have thrown that advantage away with their new structure without demonstrating the corresponding benefits from the new system.

We shall want to examine in more detail in Committee the allocation of responsibilities and functions between the health authorities and regional offices, but a number of important questions ought to be raised now. Who will hold the contracts of junior doctors? Who will maintain and monitor cancer screening services? That question was put directly to the Secretary of State, who responded by praising the services. I join her wholeheartedly in so doing—that is not an issue of contention between the parties—but she did not say who will maintain and monitor the cancer screening services.

Who will be responsible for the vocational training of general practitioners? What provision has been made for a national overview of nurses' training? How will day-to-day responsibility for GP fundholders be managed, given that that responsibility is now passing directly to the Secretary of State even though the resources are to come from the local health authorities? It is a bit much for the Secretary of State to say that an incoming Labour Government would be centralising and totalitarian—she refers to us as Stalinist—when she is centralising significant powers theoretically in her own hands. When she said that a Labour Government would have authoritarian powers, she was perhaps referring to the structures that she will hand over to the incoming Labour Government.

The training of nurses is an important matter. Training is being devolved, as I understand it—I am willing to be corrected if I am wrong—to local consortia of NHS trusts. As I have said, those consortia—they have yet to come into being—could create a whole new tier of administration. The structure is bound to make the planning of nurses' training more problematic, and it may result increasingly in shortages of trained nursing staff.

The failure to address obvious long-term planning issues has been accompanied by a failure to invest in nursing training and the long-term future of the NHS. The Secretary of State seemed to recognise that problem, because, in what I took to be an effective adjustment of the contents of the Bill, she said that regional directors would be invited to take a special interest in that matter. That suggests that the case for a regional tier is almost being rebuilt as the details of the Bill are examined by the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) rightly pointed out that public confidence in the proposed arrangements has been further undermined by the lack of any democratic accountability. The public interest will be represented on those new structures by the usual Conservative business men or close relatives or friends of Conservative Members. The public find that quangosity wholly unconvincing and they are fed up with it.

A legitimate debate may be held about exactly where and how the lay interest of health service consumers should be represented in the NHS. I do not believe that there is any one absolutely correct method of representing local public interest, but it should surely be represented by people chosen by the public and it should specifically not be undertaken by those whom the Secretary of State has chosen—especially since they all seem to be drawn from the ranks of the supporters of the right hon. Lady's party and their relatives. *[Interruption.]* I am happy to give way to the right hon. Lady, who is muttering; perhaps she has thought of someone whom the public would accept.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has no recollection of Helene Hayman, among many others.

Mr. Brown: The Secretary of State offers me one name that she has managed to find from the great list of placemen—one person who she considers I might think reputable. I accept that one name, but we are looking for more than that.

Mrs. Bottomley: If the hon. Gentleman would like a great list of names, I would be prepared to discuss them with him. He should bear in mind, however, that a great many people in the Labour party are becoming progressively more embarrassed by the need to identify them. They wish that the Opposition would turn round and say that they support trusts and the progress made in health authorities and stopped putting the frighteners on their own people.

Mr. Brown: We do not support trusts, but it is permissible for members of our party to be members of them.

Mr. Mans: That is not true.

Mr. Brown: We have always made it perfectly clear that we do not support the trusts that the Secretary of State has established, but we want to participate in the democratic mechanisms of the NHS. A statement—now several years old—from the national executive of the Labour party authorised members of the party to become members of a trust if invited to do so. It is a lie spread by Conservative Members that members of my party would be under some disciplinary injunction if they participated in the work of a trust. That is wrong and untrue.

I suspect that the reason why there are not more Labour party members on trusts is that they are not chosen by the Secretary of State and those who advise her. In fairness to the chairman of the Conservative party, he made it perfectly clear that he wants to choose people who support the Conservative party to work on trusts and not supporters of its political opponents.

I took what the Secretary of State said to be an invitation for more Labour names to be proposed to try to give some respectability to institutions of whose very structures the Labour party is deeply critical. It would be easier to put such names forward were it not for the fact that the exact composition of health authority boards is unclear. It is astounding that we are having this debate when we do not know from precisely which areas those who are to serve on the new committees will be drawn.

We understand that the chairs will be appointed by the Secretary of State. As my hon. Friends have already said, in practice that will undoubtedly mean that those people will be political appointees of the Conservative party. The Secretary of State implies that I might be surprised. I am ready to be surprised, but I do not think that I shall be. The remaining five executive members and the five non-executive members will be left for the regulations to determine.

I have to say to the Minister for Health, who is presumably to steer the Bill through Committee, that we shall expect to have the details before the Bill leaves Committee. The Secretary of State has said that there will be a role for senior figures from the world of public health, that there will be a role for the medical dean or equivalent figure from the world of dentistry, and that for the other posts she will seek in her appointments—for they are indeed her appointments—people with health backgrounds, a full range of health professionals. What that will mean in practice remains to be spelt out in regulations; it is not obvious from the structure of the Bill. The House is entitled to a full explanation of what it is expected to be legislating for before we legislate, not afterwards.

The abolition of the regional health authorities removes the statutory position of universities and medical schools under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990. As I am sure the Minister recalls, that enables them to participate in regional planning and decision making. It is not obvious what arrangements will now be in place for their participation in strategic decision making, and the Bill does not guarantee a role for health care user groups in the decision-making process of health authorities.

As the Secretary of State contended in her introduction to the debate, one way of proving that everyone is content with everything is not to provide a unified system for processing complaints. My hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) referred to the work of Professor Alan Wilson, vice-chancellor of the university of Leeds, who chaired a committee to consider that subject and made some important recommendations, which the Secretary of State appears to have ignored. He recommended a single system, with similar features, for handling all complaints about NHS care and services. I took careful note of the Minister's intervention to my hon. Friend, but an intervention promising action in future is not the same as tackling the issue where it should be tackled: in a Bill that is intended to be the final building block in the Government's health care reform, although according to the Minister some cement is still to come—we shall see.

I should be happier if we were able to discuss Professor Wilson's recommendations in Committee. He recommended that the complaints procedure should be separate from the disciplinary systems. He recommended a three-level complaints procedure, including an independent panel chaired by a lay person and with a lay majority; he did not say anything about the Secretary of State appointing them all. He also made recommendations to widen the role of the Health Service Commissioner—another subject on which the Secretary of State has been silent. The Bill is intended to complete the Government's health reform agenda; yet the subject of complaints is not tackled.

Although the Bill sets out to draw several new boundaries, the one boundary that has been overlooked appears to be the most glaring omission—the case for a strategic authority for London. Health care in London has a range of problems; yet they are all tackled in an episodic and piecemeal way. There is no London wide health authority or health care strategy and no London wide review of the condition of accident and emergency services. There is chronic underfunding of London health care. High levels of special need, caused by social deprivation in London, remain unmet. Indeed, there is a specific threat to units such as the North Thames region ethnic minorities unit because the passage of the Bill may leave no one to finance it.

It is right to consider the other serious problems caused by earlier Government health care reforms which remain unsolved by the Bill: massive hospital in-patient waiting lists; a two-tier system of health care, of which the Conservatives are so proud, with GP fundholders able to fast-track their patients; hospital trusts which act like independent businesses and are almost impossible to call to account; and competition between hospitals resulting from the internal market and leading to inefficient duplication in some sectors and neglect of others.

Local variations in service provision seem to many to be politically driven. There are continuing bed and ward closure programmes. In 1993 alone, the service lost 10,637 beds. There has been a relentless encroachment on public services by private medical interests and an astonishing growth in maladministration and even corruption, as identified by the recent reports of the Public Accounts Committee. Now there is an absurd, expensive and inefficient row about performance-related pay and local rather than national pay bargaining.

We are told that all of this is the final, triumphant conclusion to the Government's health care reform agenda and the Government confidently ask the British people to judge them on the result. On that, we can all agree: I, too, hope that the British people will judge the present Government on what they have done to the national health service.

9.35 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): We have now heard from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) that he and his party are against trusts. That is not quite what the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said earlier. I am pleased that we have at last managed to get the admission from them.

Mrs. Beckett: This is deeply boring as well as extremely stupid. The Minister and his colleagues have

[Mrs. Beckett]

repeatedly been told by the Opposition that we are of course against the existence of national health service trusts. Had we come to power in 1992, we would have got rid of them. There are so many of them that all the individual hospitals are likely to be trusts. We are looking for a new way to re-knit individual health businesses into a co-ordinated structure. The fact that we are against health service trusts has never been in doubt, and it never will be, because they are destroying the national health service.

Mr. Malone: The right hon. Lady has now adopted an even more interesting position—I hope that she has cleared it with her shadow Cabinet colleagues. She is against trusts which are destroying the health service, but her party is going to do nothing about it as there are too many of them and they have succeeded—that is an extraordinary position. In fact, the pass was sold by the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) at the beginning of the debate when he helpfully said, from a sedentary position, that he and his party were the first ones to think of the reforms contained in the Bill, which were an extremely good idea.

Mr. Hinchliffe *rose*—

Mr. Malone: I shall be delighted to give way to the hon. Gentleman so that he can expand on his position at greater length.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I do not think that the Minister was around in 1989 when what became the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 was going through Standing Committee. The Secretary of State was, and she will recall that the Labour position was that we would bring together the district health authorities and the family health services authorities, which is now the Government's position. Why have the Government taken so long to come round to Labour's policies?

Mr. Malone: As the hon. Gentleman said, I was temporarily displaced at that time, but I continued to take a great interest in the affairs of the House. I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has intervened in the debate and confirmed that he thinks that the Bill's principles are sensible. I am sure that that view is shared by his Front-Bench colleagues and by others.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South did not know whether she was coming or going when she opened the debate. At one moment she argued that the Bill would ensure that the service was fragmented, split up and spread around the country so that there was, ultimately, no NHS, which would be the end of life as we know it. We then heard her say that she objected to the Bill because it would centralise everything. According to her, it is a centralising Bill and a fragmenting Bill at the same time, as well as being a privatising Bill. I am not sure which of the strands she intended to follow, but her arguments were entirely contradictory.

What the Bill does, and what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State set out to say that it does, is to put the final touches to a structure that is now firmly in place. It is a logical and reasonable Bill to conclude that process and is widely accepted by the country. At heart, the point of it is recognised by Opposition Members who, throughout the debate, have argued and given their views on the health service, but have not done much to criticise the essence of the Bill.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South said that the executive was being floated off by the Secretary of State. Nothing could be further from the truth. The NHS executive is part of the organisation, accountable to Ministers just like the rest of the Department of Health, and it will remain so. It is informed by internal market guidance, just as the whole service will be. There are clear and practical ground rules for judging the balance between local purchasers and national responsibilities. Local freedoms and responsibilities must be kept in balance, and there is a simple set of principles further to improve the efficiency and quality of responsiveness of the service to the needs of patients. That is what the internal market guidance is for, and it largely answers the points raised by the right hon. Lady.

The right hon. Lady also made the point that consultation on trusts would no longer be compulsory. I assure the House that there is no intention of abolishing consultation, which will be carried out by the Secretary of State or by the trusts themselves. It makes sense to cover the range of possible circumstances when consultation will be needed in regulations, so that we may adjust as necessary. That is better than rigid provisions that would entail primary legislation when circumstances changed. It is surely right to build in such flexibility.

The right hon. Lady also discussed the abolition of professional advisory committees. Frankly, I do not believe that they were much loved. They were widely criticised and were ineffective. We shall be looking to health authorities to demonstrate that professional input is far more integrated in their work—input not just by the professions but across the professions. The integration of such advice is important; there are many models in the best health authorities of nurses and doctors either in executive posts or being consulted in other ways. They participate in constructive discussions between clinicians, purchasers and trusts, and the help of outside experts is also called upon. This puts the consultation process well beyond the formality that it sometimes became. It was often ignored and left on the sidelines: we are giving it real life.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South also mentioned the independence of public health officials. District public health officers will report on the health of their local populations and will be free to comment on it. The regional role will become different under the new structure. It will be to carry out functions on behalf of the executive. No longer will there be a regional report on the health of a region's population. The experience of the whole service has been that, as care has devolved ever closer to the patient, it has become more important to identify local need. That is why public health functions, when devolved to district level, will be more effective at identifying trends and putting in place policies to deal with them.

A couple of ancillary, and sedentary, points were raised at the start of the debate in connection with the Northern and Yorkshire regional office site appraisal. Of course the Public Accounts Committee can call for full documentation. Some Members of Parliament, including one who raised the issue, have already asked for, and received, a summary of what has been proposed. The only details left out are estimates of prices, which must be left out as the district health authorities still hope to obtain better prices than have thus far been submitted. The whole process has been effected according to Treasury rules. There is nothing to hide; indeed, I am surprised that hon. Members brought up the subject at all.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) made a powerful constituency speech. I can reassure him that we have no preconceptions about the size of the authorities, about the organisation of the services that they will provide, or about whether local authority boundaries should coincide. I assure my hon. Friend that there will be consultation as the process continues, when provisional recommendations are drawn up by the regions. His powerful points of today will certainly be borne in mind. We adopted the same approach to the new regional health authorities, but that did not stop us changing boundaries in response to compelling local representations.

My hon. Friend also made a couple of points about the provision of services. Of course the Secretary of State has a duty, clearly set out in primary legislation, to provide the whole population in England with a comprehensive health service. I hope that he will understand that, when authorities of whatever sort are shaping their services, they will have to bear that in mind.

The hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Heppell) spoke about joint executives of district health authorities and family health services authorities. He underpinned the fact that those authorities are beginning to coalesce naturally and sensibly. I hope that he welcomes that. It has happened in my constituency and it has been very effective. The legislation recognises the coming together of structures.

Mr. Heppell *rose—*

Mr. Malone: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way. I listened to his speech and I wish to answer some of the other points that were raised in the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) was courteous enough to tell me that he could not be in his place for my winding-up speech because he has a constituency engagement. He spoke about weighted capitation, as did other hon. Members. Work is in hand to develop a new approach to resource allocation. It is a complex issue which needs a great deal of careful thought, but the Government remain committed to allocation by a formula which will demonstrate a clear need to devolve spending according to local need. That demonstrates our clear commitment to the principle of access to health care within and between regions in a properly informed way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North also spoke about health authorities competing with general practice fundholders. They are in partnership, not competition. The GP fundholding accountability framework, which has been published for consultation, should help to clarify that relationship in the best possible way. I hope that my hon. Friend understands that.

The hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) spoke at length about inequalities and resource allocation. I wholly refute his allegation that the north has been treated unfairly in resource allocations for 1995-96. Allocations to regional health authorities are not the real issue. The real issue is the allocation to district health authorities. Regional health authorities will take into account the directions in the new calculations when they make next year's allocations to DHAs. There is no sense in making major changes to regional health authority allocations for the final year when there is only one year to run.

Regional health authorities can be expected to manage changes to the DHA allocations at a sensible pace. I was glad to hear the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that it would be pointless if it caused substantial dislocation. As we move towards a new formula and its total implementation, we must move evenly so that dislocations do not occur.

Mr. Bayley *rose—*

Mr. Malone: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman. I said earlier that I did not intend to give way and my usual bonhomie in giving way must not be demonstrated now, as there are many matters to which I must respond.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) spoke about the public health function and the future of services. His fear that public health doctors will be gagged is entirely unfounded. Health authorities will be required to have medical directors of public health and to publish annual reports. That, not the regional level, is the right level for such reports. They will be crucial in determining the future of local services, and it will be for health authorities to decide which services are needed locally and which will be needed in specialist units.

The hon. and learned Gentleman asked what voices would be heard on the new authorities. I reiterate what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in her speech—that it is important that the boards comprise the best people locally to provide the balance of skills that are needed. We expect that a growing number of members in executive or non-executive positions will have backgrounds in nursing or medicine or in other professions. That is a growing trend throughout the health service and I welcome it.

The hon. and learned Gentleman asked about consultation with community health councils. He will be glad to know that there will be no change in the requirement on health authorities to consult CHCs, nor is there is any intention of changing their number. He spoke about the local accountability of health authorities. I entirely agree that new health authorities should be clearly accountable to local populations. That can be done in a number of ways—for example, by establishing a single local body. The Bill simplifies local accountability arrangements, and that means that, demonstrably, the public will be able to know who is providing the service and who is purchasing it on their behalf and they will have a far clearer input to it. Health authorities will continue to be required to transact all important business in public, to publish accounts, reports and strategic plans and to consult widely on all key proposals.

The hon. and learned Gentleman's final point was about the supervision of midwifery. The responsibly for that will shift from regional health authorities to the new health authorities. That is as the hon. and learned Gentleman wishes it to be, so I hope that he is reassured.

The hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) asked why the Northern and Yorkshire regional office is to be located in Durham. The decision on relocation follows an extensive appraisal of a wide range of options. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has authorised the regional health authority to pursue locations in Durham, subject to a strict cost calculation.

[Mr. Malone]

The hon. Gentleman also raised a point about policy board members not being representative of regions. We are not suggesting that they should formally represent regions. The argument goes to the core of what Labour Members think—that throughout the health service people should be representatives of sectional interests. That is not the way that we see it. We want them to represent the interests of the service and of the patients. We want them to be drawn from the widest possible constituency.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) made an interesting speech, with which I obviously agreed at exactly the right moment because he then went on to disagree with everything that the Government are doing. He said that the Bill centralises too much, but he was one of the centralisers. He also said that the Bill gives too many regulation-making powers to the Secretary of State.

I find it difficult to recognise the Bill that the hon. Gentleman described. It is always sensible to put in regulations the detailed provisions that may need to be adjusted from time to time. The majority of the enabling powers in the Bill already exist in relation to district health authorities—for example, provisions on membership and on joint working between authorities. There are already matters for secondary legislation. The hon. Gentleman may think that it would be far better to have a 700-clause Bill on these issues, but I do not. The future of the NHS is much better served by a flexible structural framework.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I understand what the Minister means when he says that some matters are better dealt with in regulations than in primary legislation, and on that point of principle there is no quarrel. However, on some of the key issues, we want to see what will be in the regulations before we let the Bill come out of Committee.

Mr. Malone: The hon. Gentleman makes a Committee point, which he and I can explore some time in the new year. My point is sensible and straightforward. The issues that will be subject to regulation are no different from those that have been subject to regulation in the past. Throughout the debate, the Opposition have suggested that something novel is involved— *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) would remain silent for a second, his hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East might hear what I am saying. There is nothing novel, in dealing with arrangements by regulation. Of course the Committee will explore the Government's intentions. I shall be glad to do so.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood asked about the remaining statutory right for community health councils to be consulted. I have dealt with that point, but I repeat that we remain committed to consultation. They will be among the bodies specified in the regulations to be consulted on the establishment of new trusts.

The hon. Gentleman also said that membership should be specified in the Bill. As I said, it would not be sensible to do that. It is far better to have wide powers and the ability to seek talent where we can and in the widest possible way than to follow the representative route wanted by Labour Members.

My hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend) made a constituency speech and raised a specific point about the Edward VII hospital. He asked what we could do about appropriate accommodation for the elderly. Suitable accommodation for elderly people is already available within a reasonable distance of the hospital. I have heard what he said and hope that he will take the opportunity either to write to me on that issue or to come and meet me, when I shall be happy to discuss the matter with him further.

The Bill is the last building block of the reforms that we introduced in 1990. I am sorry that, yet again during the debate, we have heard from Opposition Members, including the right hon. Member for Derby, South, appalling slurs against all those who serve on trust boards and health authority boards, in terms of their selection and interest. I challenge the right hon. Lady to give a single instance of misconduct. If Opposition Members have evidence that they have acted against the interests of the trust boards on which they serve, I invite them, with the protection of the House, to give a few instances instead of those vague slurs against people who give voluntary service in the best tradition of British public life.

Mrs. Beckett: I am not sure which debate the Minister attended, but as I said nothing about members of trust boards, I do not know what he is talking about.

Mr. Malone: The right hon. Lady and her hon. Friends forever talk about Tory placemen on boards. Nothing of the sort exists. If one wishes to discuss the position of people on authorities, one need look no further than the Labour party to see what instructions are given. I was fascinated by an Opposition Member's Freudian slip when he said that, at some point, the Labour party had "authorised" its members to serve on those boards. They get the authority from Walworth road, but it goes beyond simple authority. Not only is their appointment to boards authorised but they are given instructions. I quote from the "Guidance on participation" issued by the Labour party's national executive committee.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Malone: No. I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman once I have read out the instructions issued by his party.

The "Guidance on participation" says:

> "Labour party members may take up places on non-elected authorities and use them as a platform for our campaigning".

Labour Members are not in the least interested in serving the board—they are interested only in serving their party. That is not all. The guidance goes on:

> "Party members who are appointed to non-elected boards must discuss ways of reporting back to their local constituencies and other constituencies . . . Consideration should be given to ways of liaising with Labour Party representatives in other capacities . . . Members accepting appointments of this kind should inform Walworth Road so that the relevant Shadow spokespeople and Head Office policy officers can maintain a network of contacts".

The instructions given by the Labour party to its representatives on boards are more detailed than those the KGB ever gave Richard Gott of *The Guardian*. I do not know how they are delivered—whether it is by dead letter boxes in Islington or tete-a-tetes in the Gay Hussar—but instructions are clearly given to make it absolutely certain that Labour members turn to party interests when they are meant to be serving on boards in the public interest.

The Bill puts in place important reforms at the end of a series of reforms that now deliver better health care at a better cost than ever before. The health service is now recognised for its excellence not only in this country but abroad. Opposition Members should look at the OECD report and British attitude surveys that are now being published on the excellence which people now consider the health service delivers. As I asked the right hon. Member for Derby, South to do, I ask them to look at the figures on this matter. They should look at the number of operations, the treatment that is given and the services which the NHS can deliver in primary health care, which it was unable to deliver before.

That improvement across a system that is delivering better health care, better value for the taxpayer and increased volume of health care is something of which we can be proud. The Opposition have not made their case against the Bill. They tabled a token reasoned amendment but did not speak to it. I have every confidence in supporting the Bill before the House tonight, and I invite my right hon. and hon. Friends and Opposition Members who support the reforms to join me in the Lobby.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 267, Noes 308.

Division No. 16] **[22.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Mon)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, Bill
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry

Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Stephen Byers and
Mr. Geoffrey Hoon.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan Smith, Iain
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David

Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 60 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading), and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Health Authorities Bill [*Money*]

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Health Authorities Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any expenditure of the Secretary of State under the Act, and—

(b) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act, and

(2) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of sums received by the Secretary of State by virtue of the Act.—[*Mr. Malone.*]

10.15 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I wish to make some points about the credibility of a money resolution to a framework Bill such as this. The Opposition want to know how a Bill—which is essentially of a take-powers kind—which contains almost no specifics about the number of health authorities that it will create, can be absolutely definite about the savings that it will provide. Although the Bill estimates that money will be saved, it fails to show how that saving will be achieved. The Bill contains no details about how it will save £3 million in Wales; it makes no reference to where that money will come from.

The Bill contains categories of alleged savings for both England and Wales, but it does not address the major issues of a sectoral merger between the family health service authorities and district health authorities on the one hand, and geographical mergers on the other. How much money will be saved by each of those entirely separate aspects of the Bill? If the Bill is about savings, why do we have a money resolution?

That brings me to my final point: if there is a money resolution—in other words, the Government have to spend money in order to save it—is the Minister talking about a massive redundancy bill to deal with the existing chief executives of regional health authorities and those for the joint authorities which have been set up already? I hope that the Minister will respond to that point.

When the Minister sets up completely new health authorities, will the present chief executives of joint health purchasing authorities—which have already been set up on a non-statutory basis—be guaranteed their jobs? Their jobs will be remarkably similar to those which have been set up on a non-statutory basis— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Let us have some quiet in the House; an hon. Member is on his feet.

Mr. Morgan: Madam Speaker, I am grateful for your attempts to get a bit of 'ush—as they used to say in my part of the world.

This is an important point because it affects directly how much the Bill will cost the Government in the short term. Will the Government give the existing chief executives of the joint purchasing authorities any kind of promise that they will retain their job after the Bill is passed, or will they have to reapply for their jobs, as I understand is the case?

Using the powers in the Bill, the Government will appoint a new board and a new chairman of each new merged health authority, and they will be entirely responsible for appointing the new chief executives. If they choose not to reappoint the existing chief executives,

[Mr. Morgan]

there will be a massive redundancy bill. However, if they say, "In the general spirit of things, we will re-appoint the existing chief executives, although now on a statutory basis"—obviously there will be no redundancy bill. Is the calculation in the Bill of the huge cost that is to be spent by the Government to save money based on a redundancy estimate for the present chief executives of the joint purchasing authorities that are already in place, or is there an assumption, or even a promise to those chief executives, that they will keep their jobs?

Mr. Malone: There is no such assumption. The hon. Gentleman can proceed on that basis.

Question put and agreed to.

Privileges Committee

Relevant document: First Report of the Committee of Privileges (HC27)

Madam Speaker: I have not selected the manuscript amendment that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) submitted to me. No doubt he will deploy the arguments used in that amendment in his speech this evening.

10.19 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That Mr. Tony Benn be discharged from the Committee of Privileges.

The motion has been tabled in response to the first special report from the Committee of Privileges of 21 November. That report is very brief; I will read it to the House in full as it sets out both the background to the motion and the arguments for it. It says:

> "At the meeting of the Committee of Privileges which took place on 1 November, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, Mr. Tony Benn, drew attention to part of a speech he had made in the House on the previous day in which he had said:
>
> 'Whatever the decision of the House or the Committee, I am no longer prepared to accept the present restrictions and if I return to attend future meetings of the Committee of Privileges it is my intention to issue my personal report of those proceedings that I attend. My reports will be based on notes made at meetings of the Privileges Committee and they will be as fair and accurate as I can make them. It will be for the House to determine how to deal with that matter, but I believe that I have a duty to make my own position plain in advance. I hope that the House will understand and respect my reasons for doing so.'"

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the right hon. Gentleman's proposal this evening apply to future meetings of the Committee of Privileges on matters unrelated to this particular complaint?

Mr. Newton: That point will probably become clear from my subsequent remarks.

The report continues:

> "Mr. Benn issued a summary of the meeting to the press and the public later that day. Your Committee recognises that the action taken by Mr. Benn was in consequence of his long-held belief that all proceedings of select committees whether deliberation or evidence should be open to the public. Whatever the merits or otherwise of this view we cannot condone Mr. Benn's action in publishing any report of a deliberative meeting. This is clearly contrary to the rules of the House which apply to all select committees and which only the House itself can change. Since Mr. Benn has declared his intention of summarising future meetings we have no alternative but to recommend to the House that he should be removed from the Committee forthwith."

As the right hon. Gentleman fairly acknowledged in his speech on 31 October, it is for the House to determine how to deal with this matter.

No one disputes the right hon. Gentleman's integrity or the sincerity of his view that all Committee proceedings, including deliberation, should take place in public. For that reason, I can say for myself and, I suspect, for others, that it gives me no pleasure at all to move this motion.

I must, however, also say equally clearly that, like the Committee generally, I profoundly disagree with the position that the right hon. Gentleman has taken up. I must, of course, emphasise that the point at issue here is not—this may be the point that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has in mind—whether the Committee should take some or all of its evidence in public. The House has already reaffirmed that that is a matter for the Committee itself to decide.

Indeed, in a sense it is not even the issue whether the Committee should deliberate in public, although I must say for myself and, I suspect, many others, that I believe public deliberation—that is to say, discussion in public of how to proceed, of the content of evidence heard and of the conclusions to be drawn—would profoundly damage the search for consensus which is a key factor in the public standing and influence of our Select Committees generally.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: May I complete my remarks? Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

The essential point of the Committee's report, which underlies the motion, is that the Standing Orders of the House contain no provision for any Select Committee to undertake such deliberation in public. The House can, of course, change its rules on that, or any other matter, if it wishes, although I think that most hon. Members would agree that such a change could sensibly be contemplated, let alone made, only after a very thorough discussion of all the arguments, including the effects on the work of Select Committees.

Mr. Madden: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for allowing me to intervene as I do not intend to speak in the debate, but merely wish to ask a question before he concludes his remarks. For the benefit of the House, can he give us a clear sign whether he is giving a commitment that the evidence given to the Privileges Committee will be published without undue delay? Also, if any deletions are made, who would be authorised to make them?

Mr. Newton: It has been generally accepted—certainly it was indicated on behalf of the Committee—that every expectation is that all the evidence heard would be published, subject only to excisions, which the Committee would have to agree, for example, relating to court proceedings or to what might be construed in some senses as the irresponsible use of the privilege of the Committee to make allegations against other persons for which there appeared to be no foundation. The presumption is that the evidence would be published in full. Any decision to do otherwise would have to be taken by the Committee. I hope that that is clear.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: Yes, but other hon. Members want to speak.

Mr. Skinner: In the past 20 years, many changes have been made in Parliament—starting with the Register of Members' Interests and, more recently, televising this place. Why do the Leader of the House and his friends want to keep to that old-fashioned view about Committees meeting in private? Is it not time that they came up to date?

Mr. Newton: I hope that it is clear—

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley) *rose—*

Mr. Newton: May I answer first, rather than be drawn into serial interventions, and then I will gladly give way to my hon. Friend.

I hope that it is clear to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who has undoubtedly studied the report of the Committee's deliberations—the votes that took place on various motions—that the view that he attributed to me, as if I were expressing it on behalf of the Government, was widely shared by the majority of Committee members. I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson).

Sir Donald Thompson: My right hon. Friend answered my question.

Mr. Newton: Meanwhile, in the absence of any such changes being made by the House, surely it must be clear that such a change ought not to be brought about by one right hon. Member, however distinguished and sincere, deciding to substitute his rules for those of the House.

The Select Committee on Privileges has been asked to deal with serious issues relating to the conduct of hon. Members and the reputation of this House. It is important for the House as a whole that the Committee should make progress with its inquiries and agree a report. The Committee has found itself unable to make progress until the confidentiality of its deliberations can be assured. It has accordingly asked the House to change its membership and the motion that we are debating has been moved at the Committee's request. For that reason, I ask right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House to support the motion.

10.27 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I am grateful to the Leader of the House for the spirit in which he moved the motion and the words that he used. I ask the indulgence of the House to allow me to present a different case, which raises important constitutional questions.

The motion before the House is very simple—that I be removed from the Select Committee on Privileges on the grounds that I have written reports about the deliberations of that Committee. If the matter were as simple as that—my replacement by someone else—it would not warrant a debate, for many other Members of the House are as well or better qualified to sit on the Privileges Committee, and I make no special claim on my own behalf.

The real issue that we are debating, however, is very different, and the Leader of the House touched on it. It is whether the House should in this case reaffirm its existing practice that no report should ever be published which deals with the deliberations of the Privileges Committee. I hope to persuade the House to reconsider the matter by voting against the motion that the Leader of the House has moved. I regret the fact that the debate has come so late, as I think it raises an important matter.

May I first deal with some preliminary questions which Members are entitled to have disposed of? First, a vote against the motion is in no sense a vote against the Speaker. The Speaker asked for a report to be made to allow the House to reach its decisions in an orderly manner, and the Speaker is in no way committed to the recommendations of the Procedure Committee.

Secondly, it is a House of Commons matter, and it can be decided on its merits. The Leader of the House referred to voting, and I should like to make the same point. Three of my longest-serving Labour parliamentary colleagues voted to remove me, and Conservative Members should be quite free to reach an independent judgment on the matter.

[Mr. Tony Benn]

Thirdly, the House can amend, and has amended, Privileges Committee reports, and the House is under no obligation whatever to accept the report of the Committee. For example, in 1986—I was on the Privileges Committee then, as I have been for 10 years—there was a leak from the Environment Select Committee, and the Privileges Committee recommended that Richard Evans, the Lobby correspondent of *The Times*, should have his Lobby pass withdrawn for six months.

As a member of the Committee, I voted against the recommendation, and I tabled an amendment which read:

> "Your Committee thinks it right to recommend to the House that all proceedings of Select Committees should be exempted from any protection of privilege, and that all such Select Committees be advised to conduct their business in open session and to make all their papers public when they are sent to Honourable members."

At least my position on the matter is a consistent one.

When the report was brought to the House, it was defeated following an amendment by the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). I participated in that debate, and I have looked at the people who voted against the Privileges Committee report. They included Mrs. Thatcher, Michael Foot, the then leader of the Liberal party, the present leader of the Labour party and two members of the Privileges Committee—the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson), who has just intervened, and the hon. Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell). Therefore, there is a clear precedent for the Committee to have its recommendations rejected.

The fourth preliminary point which I want to clear away before I come to my argument relates to reports being issued. I was not arguing in Committee about the openness of evidence, although I believe that there should be openness, but that reports should be issued after each meeting of the Committee under the auspices of the Clerk of the House.

The draft report which I moved—which the Committee rejected—very simply said:

> "That minutes of each meeting, covering the evidence and the deliberations of the Committee, should be prepared by an official reporter, under the supervision of the Clerk of the Committee and published as soon as possible . . . That individual members of the Committee should be free to comment on those proceedings as is the case with the proceedings in the House itself."

Hon. Members may wonder what will happen if the House tonight rejects the Privileges Committee report. The answer is simple—the Privileges Committee will have to think again, as it did in earlier cases. But it is open to us tonight to change the procedure if we decide to reject the report. I hope that the Leader of the House will not tell us that the procedure is so tight that even a vote tonight against the motion cannot change it. Of course it can, and that is why I am speaking at some depth on the matter.

I shall briefly recall to the House the background to the events, although I am sure that everybody is familiar with them. In July, after reports appeared in the press about the alleged payment of money to hon. Members in return for asking parliamentary questions, the House referred the matter to the Privileges Committee. As the senior member of the Committee, it was my duty to summon the Committee, which I did. I moved the Leader of the House into the Chair in accordance with practice, and he will recall that the Committee had to adjourn rather prematurely because it had no authority to sit doing the summer recess.

At that meeting, I argued the point that I am now making—that the Committee should take evidence in public and deliberate in public. But the Committee decided to defer a decision on the matter until after the recess. On 18 October, the Committee met again, and the matter of holding evidence in public was put before the Committee. On the Chairman's casting vote—about which I make no complaint, as it was his casting vote—the Committee decided not to hear evidence in public.

On 31 October, in the light of the Committee's decision, the Opposition moved that that decision be reversed. During the course of that debate, I made the statement, which the Leader of the House quoted tonight, that I intended to publish a report of the Committee's proceedings. I do not believe in the leaking and briefing that characterises this place, where a quiet word is had in the Corridor. If you want to say it, publish it—that is the principle on which I have tried to operate.

I acted openly and honestly. I said that I would publish a report; I circulated a note to that effect to members of the Committee, as the right hon. Gentleman will remember. I was asked at a meeting of the Committee whether I intended to publish such a report. I said that I did, and I did it. I gave it to the Speaker; I gave it to the Clerk—I brought the very first copy to him—and I put it in the Library. It is still in the Library for anyone who wants to read it.

No member of the Committee complained about the accuracy of what I had written. One Government Member actually complimented me on having produced a "fair and balanced" report, which was the best that I could do.

On 2 November, Madam Speaker, without being triggered by a special question, announced that she thought that the matter was so important that the Committee should report on it. That is the basis of the report now before the House. On 21 November, the Committee met and recommended that I be removed from the Committee. That is the basis of the motion before us.

The real issue is not about me in any sense; it is about whether deliberations on this issue should be held in private. I should like to rehearse the arguments for secrecy so that hon. Members realise that I have addressed them with some seriousness.

The first argument is that the Committee of Privileges has always deliberated in secret, as have other Select Committees. The question before us is whether the Committee of Privileges should deliberate in secret in this case—I hope to show the reasons against such secrecy.

The second argument in favour of secrecy is that it would be unfair to witnesses for the Committee to be held in public. Many witnesses, however, would want to heard in public—perhaps the Committee would not want to hear them, but I will not go into that now.

The third argument is that public hearings would make a media circus of the proceedings. For heaven's sake, what have we had but a media circus on this matter from the very beginning? The fourth argument is that public hearings might lead to a breach of natural justice. I heard one hon. Member describe the editor of *The Guardian* as a "whore out of hell" under the protection of privilege. If natural justice is breached, it can be breached in the House as well.

The fifth argument in favour of secrecy is that the evidence would be published later, so what does it matter? Under present practice, however, the deliberations of the Committee will never be reported.

The sixth argument, the most extraordinary one of all, was put by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), who said that members of the Committee would not feel free to speak their minds if they knew that they were to be reported. The House has debated the matter twice, on 13 July and 31 October, and I never saw any sign of hon. Members being inhibited from commenting. In this case, there cannot be a difference between the Privileges Committee and the House.

People think that it is the evidence presented to the Committee of Privileges which is interesting; for my part, it is not. What is interesting is how senior Members of the House approach the problem before them. From the point of view of the public, it is an understanding of the workings of the Committee which I have always found so interesting and which makes me rather sorry that I may not remain as a member of that Committee.

I do not accept any of the arguments for secrecy. Reports are often made about discussions of other Committees, even Cabinet committees—what was Bernard Ingham doing for years but briefing people on what had happened? Indeed, some Labour party committees of which I have been a member have very occasionally leaked. I cannot really accept that the need for secrecy is a valid argument. Why should the Committee of Privileges be so uniquely protected?

I believe that the issue before us is of unique importance, and it is uniquely important that the public should know what individual members of the Committee say about issues before it, as well as hearing their conclusion.

The Nolan committee, which the Prime Minister announced, will cover much of the same ground as the Committee of Privileges, including the secondary part of our inquiries. I understand that it will be holding public hearings, and I hope to give evidence to it.

I come now to the cases before the Committee. The media had been, and have been, publishing reports that suggested that there may have been bribery, corruption, fraud, blackmail and forgery involving Members, directly or indirectly. I do not know whether those allegations are true, but one thing is certain; those charges have gravely damaged the democratic process, and I shall tell the House why. Some of our constituents may now be wondering whether, when they elect Members of Parliament to represent them, some of the Members that they have elected—only a tiny minority, but some of them—may have been using their position not to represent their constituents but to peddle their influence for money.

That is what makes it a uniquely important question. Were such a suspicion to become widespread—I very much hope that it would not—it could completely undermine the basis of trust between the electors and Members of Parliament. I think, and I say to the House, that it must face the fact that there is legitimate concern on that score—a concern that is deepened by the apparent determination of the House not to allow its deliberations to be known.

I shall now discuss another aspect of the matter. That is that there is in this case a straight conflict of loyalty between our duty as Members of Parliament to those people who elected us, and our obligations to follow the conventions of the House. Parliament cannot survive if it is a closed little club to which all Members of Parliament are supposed to transfer their allegiance as soon as they come here, because it is a fact that our first responsibility must be to those people who sent us here. I think that, if we subordinated that responsibility to ancient conventions of the House, we should be betraying the trust put in us by those who elected us.

If I were to accept the conventions that the House apparently wishes to impose again tonight, consider what I would be doing. If someone wrote to me from Chesterfield and asked, "What is being said on the Committee about these cases?" I would say, "I cannot tell you." Even if they said to me, "What are you saying on the Committee? Tell me", I could not tell them, because the restrictions cover my own reporting of my own comments in the Committee.

How can I possibly accept such a restriction? The right—*[Laughter]* I am sorry, but that is the view. Hon. Members can laugh; they often do laugh, and I shall come to some examples of the punishment that they have imposed on people who have tried to argue that case in earlier centuries.

It would be a wholly unacceptable limitation, not on my rights—I have no rights in the matter—but on the rights of those who elected me, to know what is being done in their name. With all the talk about free—

Sir John Gorst (Hendon, North) *rose*—

Mr. Benn: I shall just finish this paragraph; then I shall give way.

With all the talk about open government and freedom of information and league tables, is the House of Commons Privileges Committee to say that it will not move? I think that the House had better take seriously the arguments that I am putting forward, because they are serious arguments and I believe that they are very widely shared by a lot of people, judging by the enormous amount of mail that I have had on the matter, from many people who have said, "We have never agreed with anything that you have ever said before in your life, but on this question, we believe that you are right."

Sir John Gorst: What is the difference between the example that the right hon. Gentleman has given and, for example, a constituent of the Prime Minister asking him to reveal what took place in Cabinet? It might be argued that, after all, he elected the Prime Minister; why should not the Prime Minister have the same obligation to him as the right hon. Gentleman claims for his constituents?

Mr. Benn: All Prime Ministers employ hundreds of press officers to tell their constituents what a marvellous job they are doing. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Well, one has to accept the fact. However, there is a total difference between the two cases. If one is here as a Member of Parliament representing one's constituency on a House of Commons matter, one's duty is to them. If one is the Head of a Government, one has to justify what one's Government have done. I think that the hon. Gentleman has made an error.

I now come, if I may, to the attitude to the cases that are before the Committee. First, there are different ways to consider how the matter should be approached. The first way is trial by media. Stories of sleaze and scandal

[Mr. Benn]

may help to sell newspapers and boost circulation, and I suspect that that is why they have had such extensive coverage, but that is no basis for tackling the matter.

Secondly, there could be trial by Members of Parliament. There is another view, which I think may have influenced some of my colleagues—it even came out in part in the speech of the Leader of the House—that the House of Commons should somehow proceed as quickly as possible to deal with the matter. I think that some Opposition Members think that what I have done is to delay their opportunity to expose some Government Members for political advantage.

I do not take that view. As I shall show, the matter should not be handled by the Committee of Privileges at all. I believe that what is at issue is the reputation of the House of Commons as a whole. The most serious criticism of all that can be levelled in relation to this subject is against the House for setting such low standards and for failing to maintain them, raise them or do anything about the problem.

On the subject of individual Members, as I told the Leader of the House, I am not a muck raker by instinct. I am not so interested in what hon. Members have or have not done, but I am interested in how the House of Commons could have allowed a situation to develop in which it is apparently possible for such things to be done within the standards that we have accepted.

I shall tell the House what I believe the Committee should do, as I might not be there to argue the case when the report is made. First, the House should decide that service in the House of Commons is a public service, and that the use of parliamentary influence in return for payment should itself be treated as a breach of privilege.

Secondly, the principles that underlie the rules applying to Ministers—which apply to the Leader of the House and which applied to me for 11 years—should, with suitable amendments, be applicable to every Member of Parliament. One of those principles is that there should be no conflict between the private interests of Members and their public duty.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Does what the right hon. Gentleman is now relating to the House fall within the terms of the motion?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): It is going fairly wide, but I trust that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will keep within the terms of the order.

Mr. Benn: Madam Deputy Speaker, not only am I not going wide of the order, but I am giving reasons why I should not be removed from the Committee of Privileges by saying what I believe the Committee should do in the circumstances. That is why I should like to serve on the Committee, and that is what I would say were I on it.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I thank the right hon. Gentleman, and I am glad to see that he is wearing his Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve tie. I am listening carefully to what he is saying—as, I am sure, are all hon. Members, because we all care as deeply as he does about the way we conduct our proceedings.

First, is the right hon. Gentleman saying that if, in future, an hon. Member writes regular columns for a newspaper and uses material to which he has had access because he is a Member of the House, that would be excluded? Secondly, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that some Conservative Members, myself included, wrote to the Speaker to ask for the matter to be referred to the Committee of Privileges because of the behaviour of the newspaper person who came here? If so, has the right hon. Gentleman taken that on board in his considerations?

Mr. Benn: Peddling one's position as a Member of Parliament to buy political influence for a private employer is totally different from the case that the hon. Gentleman makes. If the hon. Gentleman takes that view, it is permissible—all my papers have been given to the British library in any case—*[Interruption.]* If that is his argument, I do not think that it merits any serious consideration—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the House knows my view on seated interventions.

Mr. Benn: Thirdly, the powers to investigate hon. Members who breach the rules should be transferred to a court, as happens with contested election petitions. The House may know that, in the 19th century, when an election was contested or bribery was alleged, an election committee, like the Committee of Privileges, would meet. But that election committee always voted with the majority party in the House, and the House wisely decided to transfer the power to judges in an election court. Two judges sat without a jury and reported to the House, which acted on their report. The matter under discussion should be dealt with in the same way.

Legislation should be introduced to enforce the rules by extending the list of offices that lead to disqualification—from Government contractors to those who peddle their influence for money. That should be dealt with by statute. It should be illegal for any outside organisation to pay Members to exercise their influence in the way that has been alleged. If I paid an elector to vote for me, I would be guilty of bribery and would be unseated from this House. I see no difference—

Mr. Devlin: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Seriously, this is not in order. The motion relates to whether the right hon. Gentleman should be discharged from the Committee. I am sure that we are all fascinated by what the right hon. Gentleman has to say about how Parliament should be run, but surely that is a proper subject for a newspaper article, not for this debate?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before the right hon. Gentleman continues—*[Interruption.]* I do not expect hon. Members to intervene when I—or any other hon. Member—am speaking. The right hon. Gentleman has certainly been deploying his case in some detail. I hope now that he will stick rather more closely to the terms of the motion, also bearing in mind the fact that this is a short debate, and that others will wish to speak in it.

Mr. Benn: I do not know whether you recall it, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I made the same points in the debate on 13 July—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I can deal only with what is before me now.

Mr. Benn: The reason why I repeat them—

Mr. Skinner: Further to the point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. My right hon. Friend is putting a case in defence of remaining on the Committee. In the process, he is being threatened by Tory Members, and seemingly by you, with the idea that, if he does not shut up, he will be gagged. That says something about this place, that does.

Madam Deputy Speaker: By long-standing practice, our speeches should be relevant in this place. While it is perfectly permissible to sketch in some background, it is a different matter when the background becomes the foreground.

Mr. Benn: I do not want to fall out with you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I am explaining how the contribution that I wish to make to the Privileges Committee justifies my remaining on that Committee.

I shall finish with the recommendation that I shall make to the Nolan committee, if it will hear me, even if I am thrown off the Committee of Privileges. In addition to the Register of Members' Interests, I believe that every parliamentary candidate should register his interests, and returning officers should send those interests out to every elector with the polling cards, so that people can know these things before they vote.

If the motion to remove me is agreed to, I shall still be able to submit the same points to the Nolan committee, and I shall also be allowed to speak once the Privileges Committee report is finally published.

It is for the House to decide what to do about the actions that I have taken. If it decides to remove me, I shall make no complaint. I ask for no special favours. If I am guilty of anything, I am guilty of the same offence that has been repeated century after century when people have tried to bring the activities of Parliament to public attention. In the 17th century, Members who circulated their own speeches made in Parliament were punished. Dr. Johnson never came to the House: he bribed officials to help him write his parliamentary reports. Cobbett and Hansard were put in prison.

The truth is—I know it is painful for the House to recognise—that most of the improvements to our democracy have been made by people on principle breaking the rules. I hope that the House will be persuaded to change—

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): All this was surely just as true when the right hon. Gentleman first joined the Privileges Committee. The rules on secrecy were exactly the same then, so why has it taken him all these years to make this stand?

Mr. Benn: I shall give the hon. Lady the simple reason. There has never been a case of bribery, fraud, corruption, blackmail and forgery brought before the Committee until this date. The hon. Lady spoke about breaking the rules. She would not have the vote if the Pankhursts had not chained themselves to the railings.

The House often has to face the fact that unfair rules are contested. My experience of the political process is that the last people to get the message are those in the House of Commons itself. The message is fully understood. The hon. Lady would not have the vote but for the suffragettes. In a modest and non-controversial way, I am pushing the conventions.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I had not intended to intervene in the debate, although I shall support my right hon. Friend. I am a little worried about the line that he is taking of a one-man campaign against the abuse of this place and the ineffectiveness of the Committee. I remind the House that other people on the Select Committee feel just as strongly, and take the line that the proceedings should be in public. I do not disagree with my right hon. Friend for taking that line, as long as he makes it quite clear that he is not the only one on the Committee who holds a principle and has a judgment on how this place and the Committee should be run.

Mr. Benn: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for voting for me, but they are not trying to remove him from the Committee. I have to defend myself because mine is the only name on the Order Paper. My hon. Friend wanted to resign from the Committee, but I was opposed to that because I believe that one should stay on and fight one's corner. That is the difference between us, and it is an appropriate point.

Constitutional reform is moving to the top of the political agenda, and the House might inch cautiously towards a reform of its own procedures. If the House decides to retreat again behind the traditional practice of deliberating in secret, it will be a great mistake and will damage the House.

Hon. Members will have to decide on a free vote. I say openly to the House that I would not feel able to continue to be a member of the Privileges Committee if it was to be a condition of my membership that the practice of secrecy was to be maintained and I could not tell my constituents what I was saying in the Committee.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point) *rose*—

Mr. Benn: I am not giving way.

Dr. Spink: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made accusations of crimes and corruption such as fraud and blackmail which be believes have taken place. If he believes that and does not come to the Committee with an open mind, would he be a proper person to sit on the Committee?

Madam Deputy Speaker: If I had thought that the right hon Gentleman was out of order when he made the point, I would have intervened.

Mr. Benn: The hon. Gentleman was not listening. I said "charges" of bribery, fraud and blackmail, and I expressed no judgment on the matter. I have not associated myself with any of them.

[Mr. Benn]

For all the reasons that I have given, I ask hon. Members to reject the motion, and invite the Committee of Privileges to think again about a matter that may be rather more serious for our electors than the House itself seems ready to accept.

10.58 pm

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): On 2 November Madam Speaker stressed that the behaviour of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) had implications that were of great importance for Select Committees generally. Therefore, I should like to speak on that matter, because as Chairman of the Liaison Committee I entirely agree with Madam Speaker and feel bound to say that the view expressed by the right hon. Gentleman has many dangers.

Much of what the right hon. Gentleman said was not to the point, which is simply whether Select Committees deliberate in public and in particular whether the actions of one member should be allowed to override the decision of the Committee and the rules of the House. He put forward various reasons why he thought that should be so.

In many ways this is a sad occasion, because the right hon. Gentleman has done great service to the House. I can think of no one who, in listening to some of his speeches, has given me more delight. He has a keen mind. However, I feel bound to say that on this occasion he is fundamentally and profoundly wrong.

It is important that hon. Members should be allowed to deliberate in private, for the simple reason that they may change their minds. They may be persuaded by the arguments. When the right hon. Gentleman goes into a Committee it is virtually inconceivable that during the course of the deliberations he may change his mind.

The real point that I want to make is that it is through deliberations in private that Committees reach a consensus. The reality is that over recent years we have introduced a system of departmentally related Select Committee which have been a great improvement in getting the Government called to account. One of the strengths of those Committees has been the fact that they have produced unanimous reports. We all know that a Committee's report is far more likely to have influence and to call the Government to account if it is unanimous than if it splits along party lines.

It is a difficult process. Hon. Members have to listen to all the arguments in the light of the evidence they have taken, very often in public, and then weigh the arguments and persuade each other of the right outcome.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that a number of hon. Members, including me, who believe, and voted accordingly, that the Committee should be open to the press and public, nevertheless accept—and here I disagree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—that its deliberations should be in private, and for very much the reasons stated by the right hon. Gentleman?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that there are those of us who strongly believe, no less so than my right hon. Friend, that the proceedings should be in public, but equally strongly believe that to have the deliberations and the reaching of conclusions in public would be like a jury reaching its decision in public? I hope that the right hon. Gentleman understands the distinction between the two views.

Sir Terence Higgins: The hon. Gentleman and I are reaching a consensus, and one which I hope is widespread throughout the House—so much so that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield is alone in the position he holds.

Committees must reach a consensus and it would be difficult to do so in public, not least because very often the view, the process and the consensus are not what the Government want. We do not really want the Whips listening to every word said during the deliberations.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The right hon. Gentleman said that he would not necessarily like the Whips to listen. May I put to him a problem in the Select Committee on Members' Interests? A Whip has now been appointed to that Committee. Its very credibility is completely undermined. Will he oppose that appointment?

Sir Terence Higgins: That is a separate issue that the House might wish to consider. I feel bound to say to the hon. Gentleman— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. As the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has just intervened, I do not now expect a sedentary intervention from him.

Sir Terence Higgins: The hon. Gentleman made an important point that the House might wish to consider on another occasion. I have considerable sympathy for his view.

Much of what the right hon. Member for Chesterfield said related to and was a repetition of what was said in the debate on whether the Privileges Committee should take evidence in public. It did not relate to whether the Committee should deliberate in public. The right hon. Gentleman takes a partisan view about everything.

Mr. Skinner: What is wrong with that?

Sir Terence Higgins: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman what is wrong with that: this House does not carry out its duty as effectively and efficiently as it should if all its work is done on a party political basis. It is not true to say that there are no issues on which we can reach a consensus, and everything must be done on a party political basis. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) both take that view, but I do not share it. The House does not carry out its democratic duties as efficiently if it decides that everything must be done on a straight—I feel bound to use the word "hack"—party political line. The operation of Committees has been much more effective as a result of reaching a consensus.

The rules of the House have been refined over many years, so there is much to be said for them. At the same time, if there is to be a change, the House must debate it and reach a conclusion on it. But the right hon. Gentleman sought effectively to hold the Committee and the House to ransom. Whatever else the House and the Committee might want to decide, the right hon. Gentleman thinks that his views should prevail. That is not a modest approach to the issue. Once the House has considered the matter, as it should, it will conclude that the arguments for continuing to deliberate in private are extremely strong—in my view, they are overwhelming.

Those who truly have the House's interests at heart will not take the view expressed by the right hon. Gentleman this evening. It is right that the House should vote in favour of the motion and he should be removed from the Committee, sad though I find it, because few people have made such a notable contribution to the House.

11.6 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I wish to make just a few observations on the motion, without discussing the specific case with which the Privileges Committee is currently dealing.

I much regret the fact that the House must debate this motion and that the Privileges Committee has found it necessary to refer the matter to the House. I regret the fact that the position of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has become the focus of attention, rather than the normal workings of the Privileges Committee and the serious allegations into which it should have been inquiring before now. Everybody should regret the delay that has taken place between July and this issue now coming to light, given that the Committee has not yet had an occasion on which to examine the substantive issue. Had the House accepted the motion which we tabled on 31 October, this would not have arisen and it would not have been necessary to debate the motion moved by the Lord President.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I welcome what the hon. Lady has said so far. We are in danger of fighting the last battle in the wrong ditch. Much of what has been said this evening has ensured that the scent has gone cold in terms of the original allegations about which the House should be concerned.

The hon. Lady says that we could have united on the Labour party motion, on which I agreed with her and for which I voted at the time. Did not that distinguish between evidence sessions and deliberative sessions? That is the point before the House tonight, but we are now being invited to open up the whole proceedings, including the deliberative sessions, on which there is no unanimity.

Mrs. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is right, and I remind the House that the motion that we tabled suggested that the Committee of Privileges should exercise its power under Standing Order No. 108, so that when examining witnesses it would sit in public except for clear and compelling reasons. Our motion did not ask for the Committee's deliberations to be in public—although in fairness to my right hon. Friend, he made his personal position clear in the debate on that motion.

If the House had accepted that motion, the Committee would have been able to reach agreement and my right hon. Friend would not have been moved to issue the document that he did, following the first sitting of the Committee.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) made it clear throughout the Committee's deliberations that he would not accept anything short of its deliberations being made public—and the right hon. Gentleman has followed that independent line. Who is to say that he would not have gone down that road even if the House had accepted the motion?

Mrs. Taylor: Some of us are at a disadvantage because we are not members of the Committee of Privileges, and the whole House is at a disadvantage because of the ruling that we cannot be party to all the Committee's decisions and discussions. If the House had accepted the motion on 31 October, the atmosphere in which the Committee operated would have been different and less divisive, and it would not have become a partisan issue.

I share the regret expressed by the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) that there was united opposition to the motion on the Government Benches. We tabled the motion in the hope of securing recognition of the validity of our argument, not to divide parties. We tried to be reasonable, and if that motion had been passed and evidence was taken in public, the whole issue might not have arisen.

Sir Terence Higgins: I did not make the remarks that the hon. Lady attributed to me. I clearly expressed the opposite view.

Mrs. Taylor: I confused the right hon. Gentleman with the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer).

The totality of opposition among Government Members to the 31 October motion made this a partisan issue, and that has not proved beneficial to the subsequent work of the Committee of Privileges or to subsequent debates on the Floor of the House.

It is unfortunate that the basic allegations that are the subject of the Committee's inquiries and public concern about them have been pushed to one side and that my right hon. Friend has become the focus of attention.

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): The allegations have been pushed to one side only because the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) insisted on being the focus of attention. If he had kept quiet, we could have got on perfectly well.

Mrs. Taylor: If our motion had been agreed to on 31 October, the allegations would have been discussed much more quickly.

My right hon. Friend's conduct and decisions were undertaken without consulting my right hon. and hon. Friends, but I respect my right hon. Friend. As others have said, he has strong feelings and a strong feel for parliamentary traditions. He also understands well that it is sometimes necessary to kick at those traditions to bring about change. The question before the House is whether my right hon. Friend's unilateral action justified delaying the Committee's inquiries, which was the consequence of his action.

It is difficult to determine the Committee's position because its members are not allowed to leak its discussions. I understand, however, that the Committee of Privileges has not yet finalised its decisions on how to proceed with the examination of witnesses, nor has it excluded the possibility of hearing witnesses in public. If that is indeed the case, my right hon. Friend's actions have been pre-emptive, in that he has not exhausted all the opportunities to ensure that the Committee meets in public for at least part of the time.

As for the debate about whether the Committee's deliberations as well as its taking of evidence should be public, I should make my position clear. I believe that evidence of the kind that the Committee of Privileges will need to take should, whenever possible, be taken in public. That was the essence of the motion that we tabled

[Mrs. Taylor]

at the end of October—although we made provision for the Committee to hear evidence in private if there was good and compelling reason for it to do so.

Personally, I do not think it best for the deliberations of a Select Committee to take place in public. I support the view expressed a few moments ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick): I think that the position is very similar to that involving juries, and I do not think that it would be helpful to the workings of Committees to make their deliberations public.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): Will my hon. Friend make an exception? Let us suppose that a vote was taken during a deliberative Committee meeting. Could I tell my constituents that during a meeting of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, when we discussed the Pergau issue, I voted in favour of Lady Thatcher and Charles Powell being brought before the Committee? Does my hon. Friend agree that, if a partisan vote takes place in a Committee, it should be published?

Mrs. Taylor: I think my hon. Friend will know that votes taken on such Committees are made public—although not necessarily immediately; that may be his point. Certainly the deliberations of such Committees are not made public, and I feel that that might inhibit valuable discussion.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield said that tonight's vote should be a matter for the House, not a question of party affiliation. I think that his comments about the way in which his colleagues have already voted on the question of his remaining a member of the Committee show that Opposition Members on the Committee did not treat this as a partisan matter, and I believe that they will not do so this evening. Opposition Members view this as a genuinely free vote, and I hope that Conservative Members will approach it in the same way—although I must say that there has been some disappointment about the unanimity of their voting on all issues relating to the Committee of Privileges in recent months.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield pointed out that the House was not obliged to accept a report from the Committee of Privileges. That is true, as were other technical comments that he made, but I take issue with one of his remarks: he said that if the House supported the motion, no reports dealing with deliberations should ever be published. Whatever the outcome of tonight's vote, the House can always make that decision at any subsequent date, and can always recommend to any Select Committee—including the Committee of Privileges—that such deliberations should be made public in future.

My right hon. Friend has drawn a distinction between the conventions of the House and the interests of those who elect us. I do not think that there always has to be such a distinction. My right hon. Friend had not exhausted all the possible ways to get part of what he wanted out of the Committee of Privileges—the part of our resolution moved on 31 October relating to the examination of evidence in public. I still believe that that is the most important objective. I know that my right hon. Friend, who has raised some serious issues, wants to ensure that the public interest is defended, but, although I sympathise with his intention, I cannot support his tactics. He has not explored all the possibilities for getting what is in the public interest.

It would be overridingly in the public interest to have the relevant parts of the Privileges Committee sitting in public. I am afraid that my right hon. Friend's actions have not helped to achieve that objective. The Privileges Committee has not reached a final decision and I still hope that it will be able to consider the widespread anxiety outside the House about the allegations, the issues raised in the debate on 31 October and the possibility of taking at least some evidence in public in order to restore public confidence in the Privileges Committee and in the House.

11.21 pm

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire, North-West): We have a curious situation. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is recognised as a distinguished, if at times eccentric, parliamentarian. This is one of his eccentricities. He is in this place because he was democratically elected with a majority of 6,414 by the electors in his constituency. He accepted that it was right that the views of a majority of them should prevail and send him to this place, just as each of us has been sent here by a majority of our electors.

The right hon. Gentleman arrives in this place by a democratic process but then behaves as an autocrat—all but he must abide by the majority decision. He is part of a Committee that the House democratically agreed under its rules should deliberate in private. The right hon. Gentleman accepts democracy when it suits him but rejects it when it suits him. That is the road to anarchy,

Mr. Bill Michie *rose—*

Sir David Mitchell: I shall not be long; the hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As I said, that is the road to anarchy. If we vote tonight—and it looks as if we shall—on whether to remove the right hon. Gentleman from the Committee, I shall vote in favour but with great regret because I think that the Committee would have been all the better for having the benefit of his advice. However, he cannot come to the Committee having been elected as a democrat and then not abide by the democratic process.

11.22 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I greatly regret the withdrawal or loss of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) from the Select Committee on Privileges, not least because he enlivens its proceedings and, more important, brings to its deliberations his intelligence and his talents and great experience as a parliamentarian. The Committee will be the poorer for his loss.

The central point, however, is a simple one: there is a division, still unresolved, among members of the Committee as to whether we should take evidence in public. It is no secret that that that is the view taken by members of my party. We have very strong views about that. Making committee deliberations public is a minority view. I think that my right hon. Friend, who normally approaches matters with great clarity, confused the two issues in his speech. We all know that it is common practice for Select Committees to hear evidence in public, but I know of no Select Committee—let alone the Privileges Committee— which deliberates in public.

My right hon. Friend mentioned the Nolan Committee in order to bolster his case, but he has not done that. I am a member of the Nolan Committee and I hope that most of the Committee's evidence will be heard in public— I am sure that is what Lord Nolan would wish—but there has been no suggestion that the Committee should deliberate in public and, so far as I know, we have no intention of so doing.

Although analogies are very difficult in this area, I think that the courts and the trial process offer at least a rough guide. As my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said, evidence is taken from witnesses in public, and that is as it should be, but when the jury retires there is no report of the discussion that takes place. Common sense dictates that certain issues should be discussed with others privately in the hope of having a very frank exchange and reaching agreement.

In conclusion, to mix up the two issues is to do the House a disservice. The issue of whether witnesses should be heard in public is quite separate from the issue of whether Committees' deliberations should be reported as they proceed—let alone that members of the Privileges Committee should be entitled to make a running commentary on the proceedings as they develop.

11.26 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I am particularly sorry that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who I think is the oldest serving Privy Councillor in the House, should find himself in dispute with a Committee on which he has served for 12 years. He has never found it necessary to make this point before now.

The right hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) suggested how the vote on the matter should proceed, and I think that all hon. Members agree with her. Everyone wants it to proceed as quickly as possible—not least the people concerned, who have obviously had a very unpleasant time while the matter has been hanging over their heads.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield tried to raise emotions about the matter by comparing it with *Hansard* or Mrs. Pankhurst. That is somewhat ridiculous, to put it mildly. There is a difference between the way in which Select Committees work and the way in which matters on the Floor of the House operate. On the Floor of the House there is an obvious political divide which is seen time and again in the Division Lobbies.

I have served on Select Committees and I have been Chairman of the Procedure Committee for the past 12 years. It is amazing how much members of a Select Committee work together to try to produce a completely unanimous report, because they know that such a report will have a specific effect. There is a great difference between the political operation of proceedings on the Floor of the House and the operation of Select Committees upstairs.

Mr. Bill Michie: Will the right hon. Gentleman explain why, when we debated and voted on whether parts of the Select Committee's investigation should be made public, on a tied vote, the Committee Chairman gave status quo as a reason for voting to keep the investigation private? As as I understand it, there is no status quo for a Select Committee. There is certainly no politics involved. To this day, it has never been explained to me why the Chairman took that view.

Sir Peter Emery: I believe that I speak with some little authority on this. On the whole—I do not say without exception—the Chairman of a Committee will vote in one of two ways. He will vote either to have the matter heard again or to stay with the way in which the matter has proceeded until that moment. I cannot tell what was in the mind of the Chairman—the hon. Gentleman must ask him and not me—but those are the two matters that a Chairman would normally take into account.

I need not go over the difference between the taking of evidence and a Committee's deliberations. That has already been thoroughly debated. There are, however, times when all the evidence should not be taken in public, especially if, as may well have been the case in this Committee, one wants to cross-question a witness at some length. It seems, therefore, much more sensible not to have half the evidence come out when there is still as much cross-examination again to take place at a later sitting. That problem is real and must be considered. It must be understood, however, that the Committee can decide: the House should not be the decider of that matter—it should be left to the Committee, the people considering the situation, to decide.

That point leads me to one of the most deliberately misleading points in the speech by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. He has suggested that there is a degree of secrecy and he seems to feel that something is going to be covered up. In my judgment, that is not the way in which the Committee of Privileges has worked in the past. In previous reports from the Committee of Privileges, the evidence has been published and the cross-questioning has been published. The public have been able to see exactly what has gone on in the evidence-taking.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman has used the word "see". The relevant word is "read", not "see". We are talking about "reading" as well as about "seeing" and "hearing".

Sir Peter Emery: I am willing to be taken to task on that matter. I am saying that members of the public can see in the writings and the publications exactly what has taken place. There is no secrecy or no cover-up in that. That is the major point. There is no way in which the House will stop a debate on the report. It will come to the House and will be debated fully. I have no doubt that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield will speak again in that debate. He will have that right and nobody will stop him from doing so.

The Select Committee on Procedure has looked at the matter in a slightly different way. It has considered not the deliberate leaking of information by a member of a Committee, but the unofficial leaking of matters considered by the Committee and the deliberations of a Committee. Paragraph 225 of the report, "The Workings of the Select Committee System," from the 1989-90 Session says:

"publication causes even more immediate harm, in that it can affect the way in which the Committee subsequently deals with the Report. Sometimes that is exactly the intended effect—motivated perhaps by a desire to marshal support for, or more likely against, an individual recommendation or set of conclusions. On other occasions the aim of a leak may be to ensure that a particular extract from a draft

[Sir Peter Emery]

Report . . . will leave the desired political impression on the public consciousness, an impression which may not be erased when the Report is eventually published formally."

Paragraph 226 of the report states:

"leaks . . . are subversive of the Select Committee system as a whole and are therefore, quite apart from being wrong in principle, extremely short-sighted."

What worries me is that, if the right hon. Member for Chesterfield won the vote tonight, the working of every Select Committee would be affected. The secrecy of deliberation is all-important. Anyone who has served on a departmental Select Committee knows the arguments that take place between members, often across party lines, before the recommendations are made. If those arguments took place in public, it would massively alter the way in which members argued their case during the Committee's deliberations.

Sir John Gorst: If what my right hon. Friend describes were to take place, the result would be that most Select Committees would reach their conclusions by means of private deliberations in the corridors outside the Committees.

Sir Peter Emery: That is exactly the point, and that is the last thing that I want.

There is an overwhelming case to support what my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House suggested. It would be wrong to allow an individual to alter the procedures for the workings of Select Committees. Those procedures have stood the test of time and there is no way in which secrecy could be maintained. The public will know exactly what has happened and they will know the recommendations.

It is essential that we pass the motion, for the defence of Select Committee proceedings.

11.35 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): There will be a vote and I shall be voting against the motion, but I accept that the Committee faced a difficult decision. I accept that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) realised the difficulties; hence their reason for voting with the rest of the Committee.

The Committee was faced with a difficult decision because it would have been difficult to proceed if one member—my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—because of his integrity, as the Leader of the House stated, decided to do as he promised in the House. In those circumstances, the Committee clearly could not proceed and I understand the reasons.

I understand the reasons, so why do I intend to vote against the motion? The explanation is simple and clear. Evidence to the Committee should be in public and the deliberations should be in private. I am strongly of that view—no less strongly than my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield.

The allegations made against some hon. Members are serious. Hon. Members on both sides of the House think that the standing of the House is in question and that is a matter of great concern. Outside, people feel that there is sleaze and that Members of Parliament are on the make—not just some Members, but virtually all of us. It is important for the public to understand that that is not so. If some hon. Members have behaved in a way that they should not have, it does not mean that the rest of the House of Commons should be viewed in the same light, but we do not know if that is so, as it is up to the Committee to decide and report to the House.

I cannot for the life of me understand why the evidence should be heard in private. The right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir Peter Emery) asked why some hon. Members said that the Committee's deliberations will be secret, as the reports will be published. Of course they will—that is not in dispute—but, in the main, people outside this place will not see those reports. They will be seen only by parliamentarians, the press and those who take the closest possible interest in public affairs. Our constituents will not go to the public library or write to the Vote Office to ask to see the report.

If the evidence is taken in public, it will be reported and filmed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) pointed out. People will see it on the television screen and judge accordingly. That is why it is important.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I fondly, and perhaps naively, think that we are interested in justice and truth. In the hon. Gentleman's argument, is there not a danger that we will lose sight of that justice and truth?

In allowing the publication of evidence as it is given, one will inhibit the finding of truth and justice because newspapers will report tendentiously and partially. In a court—where evidence can be given in open court—the judge can control the errant journalist who misreports the court. The Committee will not have such powers, and surely there is a danger—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be short in any case, but particularly so tonight.

Mr. Winnick: Clearly the Committee cannot be conducted as if it were a court. The argument that the hon. Gentleman is putting forward is that no evidence at all should be taken by Committees, and that is totally unacceptable.

It is necessary to vote against the motion because my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield has made a stand. I shall support him tonight because I believe that the restrictions on the proceedings being televised or reported are wrong, and they can no longer be defended. The main argument in favour of the motion is basically that the Privileges Committee has always acted in this way. Of course it has, but the time has come for a change. It is important for the standing of the House. The public are no longer willing to accept the view that all of this must be in private and that, in due course, a report will be published.

I accept entirely—hence my earlier intervention—that the deliberations must be in private, and this is where I disagree with my right hon. Friend. It would be a denial of justice if the deliberations were held in public. But as far as the main work of the Committee in taking evidence is concerned, it is necessary that it be in public. If the action that my right hon. Friend has taken has in some way persuaded the majority of the Committee that the evidence should be taken in public, he will have done very useful work—not only for the Committee but for the House as whole. That is the reason why I shall be voting against the motion.

11.41 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I shall be very brief. When I was appointed to the Committee on Privileges, I really did count it to be a privilege. When I went to that Committee for the first time and saw the other members, I felt that I was amongst those Members of the House who would speak for the House as a whole, and not for their party. Above all, I felt that they would not speak for their own personal interests and ambitions. What horrifies me is that the Committee has now been delayed by nearly three months as a result of what has happened.

That may be acceptable to members of the Committee, but the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said that it was quite disgraceful that that should be so, and that we should have got down to the heart of the matter. Of course we should have, and that is what we all really want to do. The actions of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) have made that quite impossible for the Committee. I deplore that, and we must put this affair behind us and get on with the task that we were given, which was to pass judgment—I say this and I mean it—as individual members of the Committee; not as members of the Labour, Liberal Democrat or Conservative parties. The sooner we do so, the better it will be for the House and for the view that the country takes of the House.

11.43 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) put his views very well on behalf of the members of the Committee who would have liked to see the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) remain a member of the Committee on Privileges.

It must be put on the record that the majority of Opposition Members voted for the meetings of the Committee to be held in public, but we were not aware at the time the first debate took place that the goalposts would be moved, and that we would then have a debate about the deliberative sessions also being held in public. That was a subsequent matter which was laid before the Committee. No matter how we had voted on the original motion, I do not believe that there would have been unanimity at that time, and we would not have therefore avoided the debate this evening. We are in a extraordinary position, because, despite having had a vote in the Committee of Privileges and a vote on the Floor of the House, some hon. Members are still demurring from the decision reached on those occasions.

Hon. Members must ultimately ask themselves whether something is so intrinsically evil that they cannot continue as members of the Committee. Despite the fact that I would like to see the evidence of that Committee taken in public, I do not believe that the issue merits the stance taken by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. I suspect that it is a case of fighting the wrong battle in the last ditch. The right hon. Gentleman has led us along on an engaging argument, as he has done so often in the past, with which most can agree for 90 per cent. of the way, only to find that the final 10 per cent. is so far beyond that which was originally argued that it loses the support of the majority of those who might otherwise wish to support him.

I regret that we are in that position as a result of the publication of the right hon. Gentleman's version of Hansard, "Bennsard", which he says follows on from the tradition of Cobbett and *Hansard*. In many ways, his publication follows the tradition of people such as Bakunin, because it has more to do with anarchy than democracy and abiding by majority decisions. The right hon. Gentleman is trying to insist on his own way, rather than abiding by a decision of the House.

The other issue before us is simple: the reputation of the House. As long ago as July, we were charged by the House with responsibility to decide on the issue of cash payments for questions. That matter has dragged on. We are agreed that that matter has brought the reputation of Parliament into disrepute and that it needs to be resolved quickly. In many ways, the scent has gone cold. Other issues must now be resolved: for example, the House has already referred the case of Mr. Peter Preston and the articles published by *The Guardian* to the Committee.

How can the Committee make progress if it has to spend all its time in a quagmire of debates on procedural questions and wrangling about the motion before the House? It is time wasting self-indulgence. It does nothing to enhance the reputation of the House and that is why I shall support the motion in the name of the Leader of the House.

11.46 pm

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): I support the decision that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House took in casting his vote in the Committee in favour of the status quo. That follows precedent. It has been the tradition of all the Committees that that involving privileges is one which must be held in private.

It is absurd not only that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) should have succeeded in delaying the Committee's proceedings for so long, but that he should have made his stand on the publication of his own view, not of the evidence before the Committee, but of the deliberations of the Committee. That was surely the one aspect of those two aspects that commanded no support in the Committee.

It is crucial that we undertake the prime purpose required of us by Madam Speaker to investigate the allegations against hon. Members. The idea that such an investigation should be held in public and before the television lights, as the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) would have us believe, is nothing more or less than soundbite judgment. I refuse to believe that that idea should be given any consideration in the laws of natural justice. We should not move towards a judicial procedure being hijacked in that fashion.

As for proceedings in the House, it is essential that the proper precedents are followed and the proper actions taken. The sooner we do that, the better.

11.47 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I opposed the original motion. If I recall it correctly, I voted against those on my Front Bench, because I believed that the Privileges Committee was riddled with commercial interests.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will forgive me for what I am about to say, but I think that what he is doing is wrong. I have told him that privately and I think that he understands the position that I take.

[Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours]

I want to dwell on the issue of speaking freely. I have spent 12 years on the Public Accounts Committee, nine years on the Select Committee on Members' Interests and seven years on the Select Committee on Procedure. I have seen minds changed inside those Committees. I can remember hearing the Brown inquiry and the Mates inquiry, when people visibly changed their conclusions. They would never have done that had the cameras or the press been present in those Committees. They would never have reviewed their position.

I can remember a Procedure Committee meeting in 1990. I am not breaching privilege by saying that we were discussing a select committee for Northern Ireland. I do not want to reveal what happened on that occasion, but the Chairman of the Committee will remember the discussion. We could never have had that discussion if the Committee had met in public. I believe that what we did was in the public interest.

Over the years, I have sat on the Public Accounts Committee, when we have taken evidence. On one or two occasions I asked witnesses, "Would you be prepared to speak more freely if the public were not admitted to this Committee?" and have received an affirmative response. The truth is that people will not always speak freely if they know that what they say will be published.

I take the example of Mr. Ian Greer, giving evidence on lobbying to the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I can remember, without going into detail, a specific issue that Mr. Greer believed would be commercially sensitive. I shall not reveal what it was. I believe that we took the right decision in not publishing that information.

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of the proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [9 December].*

The House divided: Ayes 181, Noes 52.

Division No. 19] **[23.50 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Sir Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Coe, Sebastian
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
McLoughlin, Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Simon Burns and
Mr. Michael Bates.

NOES

Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Burden, Richard
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corston, Jean
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Gerrard, Neil
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Heppell, John
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Llwyd, Elfyn
Macdonald, Calum
Mackinlay, Andrew
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morley, Elliot
Mullin, Chris
Pickthall, Colin
Pope, Greg
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Jeremy Corbyn and
Ronnie Campbell.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That Mr. Tony Benn be discharged from the Committee of Privileges.

ESTIMATES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 131 (Liaison Committee),

That this House agrees with the Report [8th December] of the Liaison Committee.—[*Mr. Wells.*]

Question agreed to.

EDUCATION

Ordered,

That Mr. Dennis Turner be discharged from the Education Committee and Mr. Greg Pope be added to the Committee.—[*Mr. Dixon.*]

HEALTH

Ordered,

That Tessa Jowell be discharged from the Health Committee and Mr. John Austin-Walker be added to the Committee.—[*Mr. Dixon*]

HOME AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Mr. Stephen Byers and Mrs. Barbara Roche be discharged from the Home Affairs Committee and Mr. John Hutton and Ms Janet Anderson be added to the Committee.—[*Mr. Dixon.*]

NORTHERN IRELAND AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Mr. Jim Marshall be discharged from the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee and Mr. Thomas McAvoy be added to the Committee.—[*Mr. Dixon.*]

SOCIAL SECURITY

Ordered,

That Mr. Jimmy Wray be discharged from the Social Security Committee and Mr. Malcolm Wicks be added to the Committee.—[*Mr. Dixon.*]

PETITION

Local Government (Buckinghamshire)

12.1 am

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I rise to present a petition on behalf of some of my constituents and those of my hon. Friends who represent other Buckinghamshire constituencies. It reads:

> "To the House of Commons, The petition of the Friends of Buckinghamshire declares that the £13 million the Local Government Commission says it would cost to set up its new councils in Buckinghamshire and the ongoing costs of up to £5 million a year would be better spent on improvements to services provided by the existing county and district councils. Breaking the county up would damage important countywide services such as Education, social services and libraries. The MORI opinion poll carried out on behalf of the Commission showed that only 19 per cent of respondents favoured the four unitary council plan. Nearly twice as many said they wanted no change to existing councils, or change limited to the creation of a new council for Milton Keynes.
>
> The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons rejects the Local Government Commission's recommendations for Buckinghamshire."

The petitioners are headed by my noble Friend Lord Carrington, and an identical petition signed by 25,000 people in Buckinghamshire has been presented to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

To lie upon the Table.

Stage Hypnotism

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

12.2 am

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): I am glad of the opportunity to raise this issue. I have been informed that the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) wishes to speak later, and I am happy with that, as I believe, is the Minster.

Stage hypnotism has been a long-standing concern of mine since I was alerted to its dangers by one of my constituents, Mrs. Margaret Harper. Some years ago, her daughter, Sharon Tabarn, was hypnotised at a club in Leyland in Lancashire. At the end of the trance, she was told to come out of it as if she had had a 10,000 volt electric shock. Her husband took her home in a somewhat dazed state, and five hours later she died.

The coroner's inquest found that this was an accidental death. The expert witness, a Dr. Heap, declared that there was no connection between hypnosis and any physical side-effects. That is patent nonsense. The Home Office pathologist said:

> "It is hard not to think there was a link."

My view is that the coincidence is too great to be dismissed and that evidence from other incidents shows that the link is likely to be real.

Following the tragedy, Mrs. Harper began, and still sustains, a campaign to ban stage hypnotism, and she has pulled together a vast amount of information, some of which I have sent to the Minister. I began to put questions to Ministers about the issue and was passed from one Department to another, no one seeming to want to take responsibility for the problem, although, to be fair, it crosses the responsibilities of Home Affairs in the context of licensing, of the Department of Health and of the Department of National Heritage, no doubt because of the stage element.

I was alarmed by the answer to a question from the Minister for Health, who wrote:

> "The Department has not investigated the medical effects of stage hypnotism and currently has no plans to do so."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1994; Vol.237, c.52.]

On 15 March this year, a Home Office Minister answered a further question by writing that he had no present plans to review the licensing guidelines for acts of hypnosis, to institute a central register or code of conduct or to install compulsory public liability insurance. Given the level of concern and the obvious potential of misused or badly used hypnotism to do severe damage, those answers are unacceptable and complacent.

I have had letters from all over the country giving disturbing accounts of the effects of stage hypnosis, some of which I have passed to the Minister. I shall give some examples. Mr. Cannon from Barnet in the summer of 1992 was hypnotised and as a result he has had violent headaches ever since. He describes it as having made his life hell. A Mr. Hill of Rotherham was hypnotised by one Henry James—I do not think that it was the Henry James—and is subject to violent headaches, violent uncontrollable anger and persistent panic attacks. He was hospitalised several times on anti-depressants and has a permanent sleeping disorder.

Dean Chambers from Blackpool had his arm paralysed for four weeks as a result of the condition under which he was placed under hypnosis. A young man from High Wycombe who was hypnotised by Paul McKenna, who is quite famous in this area, had to go to a psychiatric unit two days later where he was detained for six weeks and was still receiving treatment seven weeks later. While he was hypnotised he was put into regression, which is against the code of conduct, and was left unattended, which is also against the guidelines.

Mr. Nickson of Prestatyn became unable to work as a result of stage hypnotism, and was unable to hold a conversation and has attempted suicide. His case is attested by Mr. Trevelyn, the consultant psychiatrist for Clwyd. David Burill of Blackpool was hypnotised by Alan Bates and collapsed immediately after being brought round. He went crazy—his words—and had to be re-hypnotised by Bates. He suffered from violent headaches for weeks afterwards.

Ruth McLoughlin, a Glasgow university student, was hypnotised in October by Stefan Force and doctors found afterwards that her heart rate had dropped to a dangerously low level. Those are a few of the complaints that I and others have received.

Dr. Prem Meisra, who works in Glasgow, described a patient who became a compulsive eater of onions after being told to eat onions instead of apples while in a trance. It sounds funny but it is not. Another of his patients went into a trance again every time someone clapped, and a further patient began to suffer from a schizo-affective disorder.

This is plainly a highly dangerous business with potentially, perhaps actually, huge consequences for the national health service, as well as for the people concerned. In some instances, it may even have consequences for spectators. In the past, the Home Office has referred complainants first to the guidelines, which are worthless because they are largely ignored; secondly to the fact that responsibility for performances lies with local authorities; and thirdly to the Hypnotism Act 1952, which apparently covers the eventualities.

In August, on advice from doctors, Devon county council banned a stage hypnotism show by Mr. David Tabb. He used a loophole in the Act—the fact that, if stage hypnotism is called research, the licensing orders do not apply—and continued with his performance, which he called research, in a local pub. I shall quote Mr. Tabb's comment to *Stage and Television Today* on 25 August. He said:

> "Under the wording of the act you don't need permission for research so I just say my show is private research and there is nothing they can do. Basically the act is a load of wallop, but I haven't heard a dicky bird from the council since."

Obviously he is a man of great literary ability.

It is clear that the Act is not working as intended. Local authorities are reluctant to take cases to court because that is expensive and because they would end up prosecuting their local pubs, hall or other venues. We must separate the different groups involved.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Could the hon. Gentleman be a little more specific about the place where the law was evaded? As I recollect, the event was due to take place in Taunton and the council that attempted to ban the performance was not Devon county council but

Taunton Deane borough council. It was on that basis that I raised the matter and corresponded with my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Pickthall: That is correct. I have had correspondence about the event in Taunton Deane. We have some evidence of another event in Devon and another in Lincoln where the loophole was used. I also have experience locally in Preston where the local council, despite its views, was unable to ban a performance because the performer declared himself to be involved in research.

There are three different groups. First, there are the legitimate and trained professional users of hypnosis for medical reasons. I think that all their organisations want to ban stage hypnotism, which they feel brings their profession into disrepute. They also often have to unscramble the sad consequences of stage hypnotism. Secondly, there are the societies of stage hypnotists. They seek codes of conduct and licensing regulations that will protect the reputation of what they view as responsible stage hypnotism. There are two such organisations, both of which have been in touch with me about the debate. Both have asserted that they want a register of stage hypnotists, an enforceable code of conduct and the closure of the loophole in the Act.

Thirdly, there are the unorganised, individual pirates, many of whom seem not to care in the least about the after-effects of what they do. Obviously, that is the group about which we are most concerned. I understand that, for many people, it is relatively simple to learn to hypnotise someone else. It is possible for someone to learn quickly how to hypnotise people and within days to be doing so on stage, even though that person does not understand, and possibly does not care about, the consequences of what he is doing. It is those "cowboys", as the other groups call them, that we are most worried about.

I have not come here tonight to urge a ban on stage hypnotism. I am not in the business of declaring that that form of entertainment, which I personally find distasteful, should be banned, although my constituent—the mother of the lady whom I described at the beginning of my speech—would want that. Although my instinct is that a ban is needed, if I were to propose one I fear that the Minister would reject it out of hand. I recognise that the Government's policy is to remove regulations, so I ask at this point for an improving alteration to the regulations.

Furthermore, attention should be paid to making the guidelines more effective and binding. In the longer term—I recognise that this is outside the Minister's remit, although I hope that he feels that it is reasonable to support it—it is vital that the Department of Health examines the effects of stage hypnotism on people who are liable to suffer badly from its after-effects. After all, it is a medical matter. We would not entertain for a moment the idea of untrained, unskilled, unlicensed people operating on people's bodies—in public, for that matter—but we seem to be prepared to allow untrained, unlicensed people to operate in people's minds in public.

The Department of Health should examine the behaviour and expertise—or lack of it—of some stage hypnotists whose victims claim have done them serious damage. Such research should enable sound judgments to be made on whether the Campaign Against Stage Hypnotism is correct in its demand for a ban on health and safety grounds.

Because the effect of hypnotism can be funny, it is easy to turn it into a funny subject. It is, however, extremely serious and many people have been seriously hurt by it. I hope that the Minister, in so far as his remit with the Home Office allows, can offer some assurance that the matter will at least be looked into.

12.17 am

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): I congratulate the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) on raising the subject of stage hypnotism, which is clearly a serious and growing problem.

My constituent, Miss Gibbs, has raised with me the case of Mr. Christopher Gates. On 10 march this year, they went to see the Paul McKenna hypnotic show at the Wycombe Swan theatre, where Mr. Gates was hypnotised for more than two hours. As the hon. Gentleman said, Home Office guidelines were not followed, as he was put into regression and left unattended throughout the interval. After the show, he felt unwell. He was referred to a psychiatric unit for four weeks. Nine months later, his condition has deteriorated severely, and he now thinks of himself as eight years old and behaves like an eight-year-old. He must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will investigate this matter with the seriousness that it deserves. I want the Home Office guidelines strengthened and effectively enforced.

12.18 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Forsyth): I congratulate the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) on securing the opportunity to discuss the topic of stage hypnotism. I am not sure whether he is aware that we have in our presence a former president of the Federation of Ethical Stage Hypnotists in the shape of the Under-Secretary of State for Schools, my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), so I answer this debate with considerable trepidation. Hypnotism is not a subject that features regularly in the House's deliberations, although it may offer some answers to the problems that have been experienced of late.

I entirely accept the hon. Gentleman's point that this is a serious matter, and I am sure that I speak for everyone in the House in extending my sympathy to the hon. Gentleman's constituents—the family of Mrs. Tabarn—who died so unexpectedly last year. I fully understand the distress and sense of loss experienced by her daughter.

I will begin by describing the legislation that applies to public exhibitions of hypnotism. Under the Hypnotism Act 1952, licensing authorities for public entertainments—district councils and London boroughs—may attach conditions to public entertainment licences to regulate or to prohibit exhibitions or performances of hypnotism. In places where no public entertainments licence is in force—because, for example, no music or dancing takes place—the licensing authority's authorisation is still required before any public exhibition of hypnotism takes place.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I am not an expert on stage hypnotism or any other form, but if one is willing to be hypnotised, one is acquiescing. It

[Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva]

is a matter of personal choice. How does one strike a balance between personal choice and the adverse effects that may result?

Mr. Forsyth: I agree with my hon. Friend that personal choice is exerted when deciding to be hypnotised, but the whole point is that, once one is hypnotised, personal choice is somewhat diminished. That is the reasoning behind the legislation.

The licensing authority may specify conditions on which the exhibition shall take place. Anyone who gives a public performance of hypnotism as an entertainment without authority, or in contravention of a condition of licence, commits an offence. So does anyone who hypnotises a person under the age of 18 as part of a public performance. Demonstrations of hypnotism for scientific or research purposes, or in the course of medical treatment, are outside the scope of the controls in the 1952 Act.

The concern of the hon. Member for Lancashire, West stems from Mrs. Tabarn's untimely death last year, only a few hours after she had been hypnotised in the course of a public display at the public house where she worked. I certainly understand her family's feeling that the two events were connected, but, as I understand it, the coroner did not find a connection, and his verdict was that Mrs. Tabarn's death was due to natural causes.

The hon. Member for Lancashire, West mentioned the Home Office pathologist, and I saw a letter that he sent to Sheffield university in which he stated that, as far as he was concerned, there was no evidence that the hypnosis show the night before could have brought on the cause of Mrs. Tabarn's death.

I am aware also that opinion is divided on whether people taking part in exhibitions of hypnotism can suffer physical or psychological harm as a result. I am not aware of any incontrovertible evidence of harm. It seems that there is not a case for banning stage hypnotism altogether, as some have advocated—although the hon. Gentleman distanced himself from that view this evening.

Although watching or participating in a display of hypnotism may not be everybody's cup of tea, it is clearly an entertaining and enjoyable experience for many people. The hon. Member for Lancashire, West recently sent me some papers about hypnotism that included letters from members of the public claiming that they or someone they know suffered adverse effects.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) for his contribution. He also wrote to me on behalf of a constituent who feels that her friend suffered after-effects following a demonstration of stage hypnotism. I am not competent to judge whether or not those claims are valid.

Another question that has arisen about the 1952 Act in the last few months is whether it can be effectively enforced. My hon. Friend the member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) has been in touch with me about an unauthorised display of hypnotism in a public house in his constituency. It seems that the hypnotist concerned claimed that the performance was being conducted for research, and argued that he needed no licence or other authorisation because of the exemption that I mentioned earlier.

It is not for me to interpret the law in that or any other particular case, but it seems questionable whether a performance of hypnotism in a public house can genuinely be described as research. However, the local licensing authority, on which responsibility for enforcing the requirements of the Hypnotism Act 1952 rests, did not feel able to initiate a prosecution.

Further concerns over enforcement were raised by an article published in October in *Stage and Television Today*, which the hon. Gentleman drew to my attention. It suggested that other stage hypnotists were to conduct demonstrations for research purposes, so avoiding the licensing requirements of the Hypnotism Act. Clearly, if it were possible to circumvent the controls in the Act on entertainments involving hypnotism simply by labelling the performance "research", the purpose of the Act would be undermined.

In fact, the issues arising out of stage hypnotism and the legislation controlling it have never been clear-cut. The Home Office issued guidance to licensing authorities in 1953, at about the time when the Hypnotism Act came into force. That guidance was revised in 1989, and issued as a Home Office circular to local authorities. The circular is quite detailed: it sets out the legal provisions of the 1952 Act, and provides model conditions that licensing authorities might wish to apply to entertainment licences either to prohibit or to control exhibitions of hypnotism.

The circular suggests the conditions that might be imposed if an authority chose to regulate rather than prohibit public exhibitions of hypnotism. They include a requirement that the exhibition shall be conducted in such a way as not to be likely to cause harm to anyone attending it. Although it is not obligatory for licensing authorities to impose the model conditions set out in the Home Office circular, I understand that many do so.

It seems clear, therefore, that there are genuine concerns—whether justified or not—about the possible adverse consequences that some people might suffer after participating in performances of stage hypnotism. In addition, there are apparently problems over enforcing the controls in the Hypnotism Act; as a result, performances are taking place that are not licensed, but no action is brought against those who may have breached the licensing requirements.

Indeed, I believe that the event in Lancashire to which the hon. Member for Lancashire, West referred was not licensed or otherwise authorised, but that no proceedings were instituted. I understand, however, that the licensing council concerned subsequently advised all venues where public performances of hypnotism might take place of the licensing requirements, and of the sanctions and penalties that unlicensed performances could entail.

In all the circumstances, I do not think that we can let matters rest. Like other Departments, the Home Office is progressively reviewing regulatory legislation for which it is responsible. The purpose of those reviews is essentially deregulatory, to remove unnecessary constraints and controls; but when regulation is essential it will be retained, and it can be strengthened if public safety requirements suggest that that is necessary.

I am impressed by the representations that I have received from my hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Lancashire, West, and it is therefore my intention that officials review the workings of the Hypnotism Act shortly.

Mr. David Nicholson: I am glad to hear how seriously my hon. Friend and the Home Office are taking the matter. May I remind my hon. Friend that I have intervened not only on behalf of my local authority but on behalf of Avon and Somerset police, whose job it is to enforce the law in this regard?

Mr. Forsyth: Indeed. My hon. Friend has drawn my attention to representations from the police and the local authority, and that played no small part in persuading me that we had to take the matter extremely seriously.

That is why a review will take place. It will examine evidence of the possible risk of harm to people taking part in public entertainments involving hypnotism, and the appropriateness of the present regime of control that the Act provides. The Home Office guidelines will also be scrutinised.

The review will examine the arrangements for enforcement and, if necessary, prosecution, to establish whether the present arrangements are satisfactory. It will draw on medical expertise, and will involve consultations with all interested parties—particularly the local authorities on which responsibility for licensing and enforcement falls.

Clearly, I cannot anticipate the outcome of the review. It may reveal that no substantial change is needed; but I think that the Government need to consider very carefully whether the arrangements established more than 40 years ago for the control of public exhibitions of hypnotism remain the right way in which to deal with today's circumstances.

I thank the hon. Member for Lancashire, West for providing an opportunity for us to debate an important and interesting topic.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Tuesday 13 December 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords]*
As amended, considered; to be read the Third time.

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

Parental Consultation

1. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education by what methods she consults parents about their view of the level and extent of the education service.

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr. Eric Forth): All the Department's Ministers frequently meet parents and their representatives, both in formal meetings and when visiting schools. We regularly consult parents' organisations on a range of issues.

Mr. Mackinlay: When contemplating parents' views and representations, does the Minister reflect on the fact that since 1989 there has been a doubling in the number of appeals from parents who have been refused their first choice for their children's school? On appeal, some 17,000 people have had their request for a school rejected. Does that not show a failure of the Education Reform Act 1988, and is it not time that we reviewed it to ensure that parents have true choice about school admissions?

Mr. Forth: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has quite caught up with the rest of his party, or certainly with his party leader. There is a new air blowing through certain elements of the Opposition on choice, and we welcome that. We want to give parents the maximum possible choice of schools. Happily, about four out of five parents get their first choice, but every year a certain number are inevitably disappointed and have to go through an appeals procedure. I suspect that that will always happen, because man has yet to devise a scheme under which everybody gets just what he wants all the time.

Mr. Colvin: Do Ministers' consultations with parents reveal their anxiety about the reorganisation of local government? Can my hon. Friend assure us that new unitary authorities such as that for New Forest, if they come into being, will have the resources to enable them to deliver an education service that is as good as, if not better than, the previous one?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend raises an important point. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State keeps a close eye on developments in local government reorganisation. We feel that the initial onus is on parents and local people to make representations to the Local Government Commission in the first place if they are uneasy about the possible impact on education of the proposed changes. Beyond that, we think that it should be possible to make arrangements in areas where unitary authorities emerge to protect the education service and to ensure continuity and effective delivery in the newly defined areas. We shall keep a close eye on the matter.

Mr. Dafis: Local government reorganisation is already under way in Wales and will soon be under way in England. Local authorities will set up transitional committees charged with the task of describing their service delivery plans, including those that relate to education. Will it not be almost impossible to carry out that task properly if there is no certainty for local education authorities about the number of schools for which they will have to cater? In view of that, is it not totally irresponsible at this time—

Madam Speaker: Order. This is Question Time and hon. Members are drifting towards making statements and putting arguments. I am sure that the Minister has heard the question. Can he make some stab at an answer?

Mr. Forth: Intriguingly, I do not think that we got to the punchline. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman may have had in mind something to do with grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Dafis *indicated assent.*

Mr. Forth: I thought that it might be that; in that case, the answer is quite clear. It is incumbent on present, future and even transitional authorities to liaise with the Funding Agency for Schools, as was always the intention in the Education Bill, now the Education Act 1994. I recall that the hon. Gentleman served with great distinction on the Committee that examined that Bill. Those bodies should work together to ensure that sufficient places are provided in each locality. I see absolutely no reason why that should not be the case.

School Inspections

2. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools will be inspected each year under the new school inspection arrangements; and if she will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): This is mainly matter for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, who heads the independent Office for Standards in Education. However, I can advise that around 3,000 schools will be inspected this year.

Mr. Hendry: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the rate of inspection in primary schools will be stepped up to ensure that inspection targets are met? Can she also confirm that the inspectors will give praise where praise is due and that they will be not only rigorous in identifying problems but equally helpful in providing solutions?

Mrs. Shephard: Clearly, encouragement is also important. I can reassure my hon. Friend that I attach the utmost importance to regular and rigorous inspection of our schools. Around 1,000 secondary schools have been inspected and the cycle is on target to be completed within four years. By the end of this term, about 800 primary schools will have been inspected, and I intend to ensure that the four-year cycle for primary and special schools is successfully completed. I welcome, therefore, the three-point action plan announced by the Office for Standards in Education and will keep it closely monitored.

Mr. Don Foster: Further to the answer that the Secretary of State has just given, is she aware that, to meet the target for primary schools, the number of schools to be inspected in the three subsequent years after the current academic year will have to be double the number of schools inspected this year? How can that be achieved without reductions in the length of inspections and the number of inspectors at a time when the budget for Ofsted has been reduced for next year compared to what we were told it would be last year?

Mrs. Shephard: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not entirely familiar with the action plan which has been prepared by the chief inspector and which we absolutely intend he should adhere to. I wish to reassure the hon. Gentleman that funding will rise next year to nearly £100 million and in the public expenditure survey period to £121 million, which is hardly a cut.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Will the new inspection arrangements focus properly on standards achieved in English and mathematics? Is my right hon. Friend aware that many specialist and advanced teachers cite lack of facility in basic English as the main stumbling block to achievement at a later stage in education?

Mrs. Shephard: We have made it clear throughout that the reform of the national curriculum and the main thrust of tests must put facility in English, maths and science at a high premium.

Mr. Blunkett: Will the Secretary of State confirm that the fact that only 60 per cent. of the primary schools that should have been inspected actually had inspections by this autumn is entirely due to the fact that the privatised market tendering system for individual schools has failed? Will she further confirm that the Government's programme and their claim to be interested in standards have been shown to be an entire myth, given that £13 million has been cut from the Ofsted budget for next year and the reading recovery scheme funding programme has been stopped? Is it not time that the Government admitted that their blarney and hot air about standards of achievement are nothing more than a smokescreen for cuts and failure?

Mrs. Shephard: If Opposition Members were remotely interested in standards—time and again, they have proved that they are not—they would welcome the fact that, after only four terms, 2,200 schools will have been inspected by Christmas and 3,000 inspections will have been completed by the end of the year. Schools and governors welcome the inspection process and the information that it gives them, and, above all, pupils benefit. The new system is operating successfully; it is a huge improvement on what went on before. The hon. Gentleman is right: the chief inspector should take early corrective action to meet the target of four-yearly inspections of all schools. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that.

Higher Education

3. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of young people are now entering higher education; and what was the figure 10 years ago.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): The Government's policies have led to record participation in higher education. Some 30 per cent. of young people now enter full-time higher education compared with 14 per cent. 10 years ago.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply and congratulate him and the Department on the excellent figures that he has just provided. I also thank him for taking the time and trouble recently to visit our local university in south-east London, the university of Greenwich. His visit was much appreciated by all concerned. It is an excellent university doing a first-class job. May I ask my hon. Friend what he is doing to encourage more links for research between the universities and industry so that we can develop a good partnership?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comment and, indeed, his interest in his local university in Greenwich. I was delighted with the provision that I saw there. The message is that local participation and the role of the university in the local community and its link with industry there are extremely important.

On my hon. Friend's specific point, the Department is taking a number of measures, including enterprise and higher education, and have given a commitment to assess all kinds of research, including contract research, in the funding council's next research selectivity exercise.

Mr. Pike: Is it not regrettable that many county councils are unable to give people discretionary grants because they simply do not have enough cash? It is no good the Minister saying that they have a choice. If county councils do not have the cash, they cannot give grants. What will the Minister do about that?

Mr. Boswell: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting, if somewhat irrelevant, point. I was under the impression that the local authority financial settlement was about £17 billion. I have held a series of discussions with interested parties in the light of the Gulbenkian report on discretionary awards, and the Department is continuing to review the position with a view to securing achievements; but the funding is there and it is open to local authorities to provide that funding for the purpose.

Mr. Barry Field: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the great success stories in education was the unshackling of colleges from the control of local authorities? Has that not given greater diversity of choice to sixth form students, who, rather than furthering their education, were held on to by schools because of the budget that they represented? Will he ensure that, in future, the careers service is up to this new challenge?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks. We believe in diversity and choice. We believe in the benefits of unshackling the further education sector, with its natural and characteristic progression towards higher education where appropriate.

Special Needs

4. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what funding has been added to local education authority budgets to meet the extra costs incurred by the implementation of the new code of practice for special educational needs in primary schools.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The code of practice has been widely welcomed as reflecting existing best practice in schools. Many schools will have been following the procedures recommended in the code, and its purpose is to encourage others to do so.

Mr. Bayley: Given the great demands on the special educational needs co-ordinator, as spelt out in the code of practice, will the Secretary of State say what account she has taken—in the funding that she has made available to local authorities—of the problems of rural authorities such as North Yorkshire, which has a large number of small primary schools, and where the heads of schools, who would normally be the special educational needs co-ordinators there, also have formidable teaching commitments?

Mrs. Shephard: As the hon. Gentleman will know, the code followed extensive consultation and included points on the work load of teachers, head teachers, and so on. Indeed, it was redrafted in the light of the concerns expressed. The Department is funding research into effective practice by SEN co-ordinators, or those who have to fill that role in small rural schools. We will publish the results and will look at all aspects of implementation, as it is obviously very important, including the question of resources. The main point is that the code is building on existing best practice.

Sir John Hannam: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the new code of practice. Will she outline what measures are in place to ensure that schools spend what they should on children with special educational needs?

Mrs. Shephard: The only extra requirement for schools, resulting from the code, is that they should publish their policy on special educational needs by August next year. In-service funding of £5.6 million will be provided through grants for education support and training to local education authorities to help schools with that.

Student Loans

5. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations she has received regarding delays in the processing of applications for student loans in the current academic year.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has received a copy of a letter from the chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of Universities in the United Kingdom to the chief executive of the Student Loans Company, and 14 other letters about delays in the processing of loans. The Department has also received a number of telephone calls from students, their parents and higher education institutions.

Mr. Steinberg: In terms of what the Minister said, there appears to be chaos in the Student Loans Company. What will he do about the thousands of students who failed to get their loans this year? Will he explain a parliamentary answer that he gave me last week in which he said that he was considering putting private finance into that company? What will be the consequences of that in terms of interest rates for students who took out such a loan afterwards?

Mr. Boswell: Perhaps characteristically, the hon. Gentleman has managed to muddle two separate issues. First, there is currently what I consider to be an unacceptable delay at the Student Loans Company in relation to the repeat application procedure. I should acknowledge that more than 200,000 loans have been granted in the current year—the number has risen by over one third—but the new procedure has led to delays, partly owing to the inability of students to return their forms.

The company has written to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals explaining the position. We have encouraged the company to deal with it as a matter of urgency; it is doing so, and hopes to resolve the problem by Christmas. It has also undertaken, at our request, to examine the repeat application procedure, and we have invited the National Union of Students to join in.

The involvement of private finance, whether in the Student Loans Company or elsewhere, is kept under constant review.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: May I thank my hon. Friend for his efforts to tackle the problem? Students at my local university undoubtedly had problems, particularly—as my hon. Friend pointed out—with the repeat application procedure. I am glad that my hon. Friend has confirmed that he has no intention of privatising the Student Loans Company. The only pressing issue is the financing of loans.

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what she has said. We are anxious to tackle the position in conjunction with the Student Loans Company, and it is being addressed as a matter of urgency.

As for the longer-term prospects, I should remind the House that the whole purpose of the Student Loans Company was to offer students concessionary loans on very favourable terms, thus enabling them to pursue their studies. In a recent study of graduate employment, one of the newspapers listed a series of starting salaries, none of which would have required the initial repayment of loans by any of the employees.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Does the Minister recognise that the House will be shocked at the complacency with which he has approached the issue? He has issued not a word of apology to the thousands of students who have been deprived of essential resources. If the elderly had been deprived of the chance of obtaining their pensions, or the unemployed prevented from drawing their dole cheques, there would have been a national uproar. How can the Minister address the House with such complacency when students are denied the resources they need to sustain themselves at college?

Does the Minister not recognise that Members of Parliament are finding it difficult to get through to the Student Loans Company to protest about the situation on behalf of the students whom they represent? When will the Minister do something?

Mr. Boswell: Interestingly, the hon. Gentleman seems to have drafted his supplementary question before listening to my answer. I readily acknowledge that I was not satisfied with the position; nor, indeed, is the Student Loans Company, which is doing something about it as urgently as possible. As for the hon. Gentleman's specific point, his hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) asked me about the number of representations that we had received and I gave him the answer—14. The position became apparent recently, and as soon as it became apparent we tackled it vigorously and urgently.

Mr. John Marshall: Did my hon. Friend say that there had been a 30 per cent. increase in the number of student loans paid out? Does the problem not lie in the fact that the Student Loans Company listened to inaccurate forecasts from Opposition Members, who said that there would be no demand for student loans? Does the increase not underline the fact that the scheme has become much more popular than the Opposition ever expected?

Mr. Boswell: The purpose of the loans is to be available to those who wish to avail themselves of them; the facility is intended to enable them to pursue their studies. The figure mentioned by my hon. Friend is not entirely accurate—he may have misheard me. The total increase this year is 35 per cent., and that is despite the administrative difficulties that I mentioned.

Grant-maintained Schools

6. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to phase out extra capital grants to grant-maintained schools.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Robin Squire): The distribution of capital resources continues to reflect Ministers' judgment of appropriate funding levels in each sector, and our commitment to setting up grant-maintained schools on a sound basis. The detail of the capital grants regime for grant-maintained schools is now a matter for the Funding Agency for Schools.

Mr. Michie: Another Tory pledge has not been fulfilled. Following the Budget settlement, local education authorities now face cuts while grant-maintained schools still receive three times as much capital per head. Is it not about time that the Government treated local education authorities with fairness rather than prejudice, and eliminated a gap that is not only indefensible but immoral?

Mr. Squire: The hon. Gentleman is misled and his comments are facile. Let me briefly give him some reasons why. He seeks, presumably, to make a pound for pound comparison, yet he knows, or should know, that every GM school is not able to draw on capital receipts or to transfer from revenue expenditure to capital, like local education authorities can. To take one further instance, GM schools attract VAT, and LEA schools do not. Spending £1 in a GM school, therefore, is not the same as spending £1 in an LEA school. The Government are satisfied that the settlement is fair to GM schools, but not excessively fair.

Mr. Robert Banks: I offer my most sincere thanks to my hon. Friend and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education for approving the application for grant-maintained status from Nunmonkton school in my constituency. It is the result of a remarkable campaign by all 19 pupils—*[Interruption.]*—all the parents and all the villagers. They have led the way against North Yorkshire county council's decision to close the school. It means that the school can go ahead and will be saved, and I pass on the appreciation of all the villagers to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Squire: I am obviously grateful for my hon. Friend's kind comments. I agree with him that Nunmonkton school has all the prospects of being an excellent school and the House will have no noted the derision with which Opposition Members greeted his announcement that there were 19 pupils at the school. All people worried about small rural schools will know which party not to trust.

Dr. Wright: Although the Government have talked the language of diversity, have they not given us the practice of discrimination in relation to the funding of GM schools? Has that discrimination not been established both by the Education Select Committee and by the National Audit Office? Once the pot of gold and the bribe are taken away, interest in moving to GM status will wane by the day.

Mr. Squire: In light of current discussions, I am not sure whether interest in GM schools is waning or whether it would be wise for me to comment on that, if one considers the hon. Gentleman's party. As he should know, revenue funding for GM schools is on the same basis as revenue funding for LEA schools, and he heard my earlier answer on capital funding.

School Building Programme

7. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will review the provision of capital expenditure in the school building programme.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Budget announcement meant good news for schools capital, with an additional £21 million above the published baseline for 1995-96. We have made clear our willingness to consider changes to the criteria for distributing capital, which were agreed with the local authority associations some 10 years ago.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Southend's Lancaster school for disabled children, many of whom are in wheelchairs, has been unable to undertake essential work demanded by the Health and Safety Executive two years ago. Does the Minister see any merit in the all-party representations that he received on 14 November from Essex county council that its spending was inadequate and discriminatory? Has any concession since been made to Essex county council?

Mr. Squire: As my hon. Friend may be aware, the announcement on 1995-96 capital guidelines will be made shortly and I cannot, for obvious reasons, preview that announcement. I can say to him, and underline, that responsibility for building and conditions for LEA schools remains with the local authority. As I have already made clear, the guidelines were drawn up in discussion with local authorities many years ago and I am open to suggestions from a significant number of authorities that there is room for those guidelines to be changed.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister agree that, where a Government have given authority or promoted large-scale urban or suburban development in any region, there is an obligation to provide matching provision for primary schools and secondary schools in those neighbourhoods? Is this a matter not just for one Department of State but for all Departments? Will he assure us that that principle will be followed in the announcement to which he referred?

Mr. Squire: I can certainly confirm that the most important aspect of the capital criteria is provision for basic needs. Although there are sometimes arguments about the exact cost of specific projects, there is no argument between the Government and local education authorities about the importance of ensuring that every child has a school place when he starts or changes school.

General National Vocational Qualifications

8. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress has been made with the development of an advanced diploma for the GNVQ; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: I understand that my hon. Friend is referring to advanced general national vocational qualifications—the new "vocational A-levels". They are a success. They are motivating students of all abilities to work hard and achieve high standards. Ofsted and the Further Education Funding Council inspectorate have confirmed that standards in advanced GNVQs are comparable to two GCE A-levels.

Mr. Brandreth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he confirm that he will continue to do everything he can to enhance the standing of advanced GNVQs so that they are increasingly recognised not only by employers but, in time, by universities?

Mr. Boswell: Universities are already accepting advanced level GNVQs in significant numbers. Approximately 85 per cent. of people who applied received offers from universities and there is a gate project designed to inform universities and admissions tutors of their exact merits. The Government have done a great deal, but the task now is to ensure rigour and effectiveness in GNVQs and their acceptability by higher education institutions.

Lancashire Schools

9. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she is making of the work of the Institute of Education in determining the added value contribution of schools in Lancashire to the education of their students.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department has established close links with the Institute of Education about its work on value added in Lancashire schools and on other aspects of school improvement and effectiveness.

Mr. Prentice: Are not the conclusions of the Lancashire study inescapable, showing that the publication of raw data is in itself highly misleading and can be very damaging? Does the Secretary of State agree that it is no more appropriate to publish raw data in that form than to judge the effectiveness of the economy by using a single measure such as inflation?

Mrs. Shephard: I understand that the Lancashire study is producing results consistent with other work—namely, that the prior attainment measures at age 11 are the best predictors of performance at age 16. In the light of that, I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will be doing all he can to persuade the National Union of Teachers to co-operate in the administration of tests for 11-year-olds.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the enormous support given to school performance tables by the parents of children in Lancashire is reflected elsewhere in the country? Does she further agree that we are witnessing a desperate attempt by the Opposition to shift their ground? Are they not moving from ignorance, prejudice and outright opposition to performance tables in an attempt to fudge the issue and claim that they supported them all along?

Mrs. Shephard: I agree with my hon. Friend that performance tables are popular and easily understood and that they provide the facts. Schools recognise that they are a major factor in encouraging improvements in performance. They are important to parents, pupils, governors and the communities served by the schools involved.

Mr. Blunkett: Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating Lancashire county council and a range of other Labour authorities which have been working on added value, not to denigrate the schools involved but to increase standards and opportunities and to ensure that all children have a chance to achieve? Does she accept that *she has done a complete about-face* in accepting that added value and not crude league tables is the way forward?

Mrs. Shephard: I remind the hon. Gentleman that, far from performing a U-turn, Ministers launched a consultation exercise on assessment in 1992 and at the same time asked for respondents' initial views on publishing value added measures. No doubt that escaped the attention of the Opposition, who at the time were busy opposing the publication of performance tables.

Primary Schools

11. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to improve resources in primary schools.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is for local education authorities to decide the level of resources to be available to primary schools and to the other education services for which they are responsible.

Mr. Bennett: What advice can the Secretary of State give to head teachers in Tameside and Stockport who find that they are receiving between £300 and £200 per pupil less than neighbouring schools just across the border in Manchester? Given that they have checked up on the way in which local authorities spend their money, and given the capping that those authorities are under, it seems extremely difficult for those head teachers to find out why they should be receiving so much less than schools in Manchester. The only explanation that they can come up with is that the Government are treating schools in Thameside and Stockport unfairly. Does the Secretary of State agree that if league tables are to be used, at least some measure ought to be taken of the amount of money that schools have to spend in the first place?

Mrs. Shephard: I remind the hon. Gentleman that even with the capping rules all LEAs will be able to increase their education budgets next year if they so chose. They will be greatly helped by the low level of inflation, which is two percentage points lower than was forecast when the 1994-95 settlement was agreed. Local authorities therefore receive a windfall benefit this year. That will benefit the hon. Gentleman's local authority as well as all others.

Sir Peter Fry: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one way in which we could help to improve the resources in primary schools is to recognise those LEAs and those schools which are already educating the rising-fives? In the current financial settlement, that is proving difficult without any Government grant. Will my right hon. Friend give an early response so that those who are making that pioneering progress are getting some kind of assistance from the central taxpayer?

Mrs. Shephard: That and other matters are under consideration in our review of work on education for children in the pre-school years.

Mr. Kilfoyle: Does the Secretary of State accept the evidence that there are lasting benefits from educating pupils in smaller classes in their early years? If so, when will she seek a significant national shift of funding towards primary schools?

Mrs. Shephard: Funding priorities are a matter for local education authorities. I must repeat that to the hon. Gentleman. The size of classes therefore depends on the decisions made by LEAs. In any case, there is no evidence that marginal increases in class sizes threaten standards.

School League Tables

12. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to introduce further school league tables; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend intends to publish the national curriculum assessment results for 11-year-olds in national school performance tables once the assessment arrangements for this age group are satisfactorily established. Full consultation will be undertaken in due course on the presentation of the data.

Mr. Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be best not to try to dress up school league tables with subjective and therefore dangerous value added judgments? Will not a Rolls-Royce always be a Rolls-Royce and a Mini always a Mini? How can objectivity, which is vital, be achieved in that important area?

Mr. Forth: My hon. Friend is correct in saying that it would be quite wrong to seek to massage or tweak the published performance data on schools to try to conceal bad performance. However, I think that there is broad agreement that an appropriate and factual measure of value added by schools is something towards which we are working and which we would probably envisage implementing in stages over the next few years. Nevertheless, I must not underestimate the difficulties. The recent report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State by the Schools, Curriculum and Assessment Authority brought out rather well the difficulties and the potential in that area and we are working towards that end.

Mr. Miller: The Minister seems to recognise that it is necessary to ensure that one is comparing apples with apples. Does he agree that schools such as Cambridge Road school in my constituency, which has inadequate playing facilities, and John Street school, which is in a battle with the community action programme about the availability of classrooms, are disadvantaged? Should not his priority be to correct that disadvantage before seeking to make comparisons?

Mr. Forth: I certainly hope that the local education authority would make a priority of such schools. That is something on which everyone could agree. However, I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that we should somehow excuse or explain away inadequate school performance simply because of difficulties in respect of premises or location. The truth, and the real giveaway here, is that many schools in difficult and deprived areas operating in difficult circumstances are producing magnificent results year after year. We want to find out how they do that and then make sure that everyone else does the same.

Mr. Jenkin: Is not the vital point about league tables not so much the quality of the analysis as the fact that they make schools concentrate on outcomes rather than inputs? If we had concentrated more on outcomes over the past 20 years, would we not have a better education system?

Mr. Forth: Yes. My hon. Friend makes a very important point. We are now reaching the stage at which most people in education are at long last looking at outcomes, results and achievements and are no longer obsessed with how much money is required to produce those results. Money is and always will be important, but the main requirements and factors affecting educational performance have nothing whatever to do with money.

School Meals

13. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice she receives from the Department of Health about the nutritional value of school meals.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department is represented alongside the Department of Health on a project team drawing up voluntary nutritional guidance for school meals providers. This forms part of the nutrition task force's programme of action to achieve the targets set in the Government's "The Health of the Nation" strategy.

Mrs. Kennedy: I am grateful to the Minister for that interesting reply. Would he be interested in new evidence which shows that one in nine of our schoolchildren starts the day without breakfast, and that more than half have snacks, biscuits and crisps later in the day instead of a hot school meal? As part of its studies, will the project team consider the link between poor nutrition and the performance of our schoolchildren, and will the Minister publish the results?

Mr. Squire: I should like to ponder the hon. Lady's last two points, but she was correct to highlight the problems that too many school children face by not having even one decent meal a day. One reason why school meals are so vital is that, assuming that parents take them up, they ensure that every child has at least one square meal a day. When the proposals are published next summer, I hope that they will persuade more schools and local education authorities to put more effort into that very important area.

Mr. Dykes: Ignoring Labour party propaganda on the subject, and in view of the recent worrying publicity in the borough of Harrow about the fact that a small number of children from low-income households are not receiving proper nutrition at lunchtime, may I ask my hon. Friend to have special discussions with Harrow local education authority to ensure that that problem is resolved?

Mr. Squire: I invite my hon. Friend to forward to me any evidence of problems which may exist in Harrow. On the wider issue, he will be aware that it is precisely to ensure that children from low-income families are properly provided for that an LEA is required to provide free school meals for the children of parents on income support.

Derbyshire Education Committee

14. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will increase the amount of Government grant paid to Derbyshire education committee.

Mr. Squire: In 1995-96, Derbyshire's education standard spending assessment will increase by 0.7 per cent. I will shortly be announcing annual capital guidelines for education capital work in 1995-96.

Mr. Skinner: That grant is not good enough. Is the Minister aware that more than six years ago, when the reorganisation plan for north Derbyshire was in process, the Government promised that Bolsover school would be placed on one site with the necessary money to implement that? More than six years have elapsed, but the Government have failed to carry out their promise. Instead, they have been cutting the grant for Derbyshire schoolkids ever since. It is time that they put a stop to that.

Mr. Squire: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman enjoys his daily rant, even if the House is coming to expect it. I repeat to the hon. Gentleman that, as the House is aware, it is the responsibility of LEAs to bid for capital work separately. As I reminded the House in an earlier answer, the order for those capital bids was determined some time ago in conjunction with LEAs. Those priorities must be the basis on which the Government fund capital funding.

Mr. McLoughlin: Is my hon. Friend aware that Derbyshire county council holds back from schools as much of its budget as it possibly can? Will my hon. Friend confirm that schools in Derbyshire would receive more money if they followed the lead taken by 30 per cent. of secondary schools and became grant-maintained?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend is certainly right to say that, for all sorts of reasons, strangely enough not alluded to today by Opposition Members, grant-maintained schooling makes a lot of sense. As to the way in which Derbyshire local education authority handles its funding, that is its responsibility, including the way in which it funds individual schools within the total sum that it chooses to set aside.

Pupil Numbers

15. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals she has to reduce the numbers of pupils per class in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: Determining the size of a class is a matter for the school concerned. Last year, teacher numbers increased by 1,300 and education support staff increased by more than 6,000.

Ms Hoey: The Minister said recently that the number of children in classes made no difference to the performance of those children. Would he prefer his child to be taught in a class of 30, 25 or 20?

Mr. Forth: That would depend entirely on the quality of the teaching, the quality of the school, the dedication of the staff and so on. The hon. Lady is quite correct; I have said, and I repeat today, that there is no proven causal connection between class size and educational output. If the hon. Lady thinks otherwise, I should be glad to see any evidence that she can produce.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Prime Minister believe in the principle of referendums?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated in the House on several occasions that there may be circumstances in which I would support one. Clearly, in the case of Northern Ireland that is so, for I have already announced one.

Q2. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Thompson: Bearing in mind reports today of an official survey showing that 11-year-old pupils do not have sufficient command of English to answer questions in science and mathematics, and bearing in mind the mounting evidence of the damage being done by the National Union of Teachers' boycott of tests, will my right hon. Friend urge Opposition Members with influence on that union to urge it to drop the boycott today?

The Prime Minister: What my hon. Friend says illustrates the importance of regular testing of pupils and equally regular reporting of the results. I welcome very much the fact that most teachers' unions have now called off their boycott. It is high time that the NUT did the same, and I hope that it will do so.

Mr. Blair: On railway privatisation, is it right, as the report to the Transport Select Committee states, that the costs of legal consultancy fees and relocation costs for British Rail alone are now £100 million, and that when underwriting and City fees are added in the total cost may be as much as £700 million? Are those figures right or wrong?

The Prime Minister: They are certainly not figures that I recognise, but if the right hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue the matter I will give him a more detailed answer.

Mr. Blair: I believe that the £100 million figure was given in a parliamentary answer. Perhaps the Prime Minister will check that. Is it also right, as the report indicates, that if the privatisation targets are to be met, the rail network will virtually have to be halved or there will be savage reductions in the timetable across the service? Can the Prime Minister guarantee that if there is found to be the remotest possibility of those things happening he will cancel the privatisation?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is using yet another of the scare stories which have surrounded the privatisation process for some time. Since the start of the rail privatisation process, there has been no shortage of scare stories; that is just the latest one. As recently as 24 November, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport stated and restated unequivocally that franchise services would be broadly based on the existing timetable. That remains the position.

Mr. Blair: The Prime Minister has not given that guarantee. If he proceeds with a privatisation which has no popular support, which will put the future of the railways at risk— *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) should not be barracking from a sedentary position.

Mr. Blair: If the Prime Minister proceeds with a privatisation that has no popular support, which will put the future of the railways at risk and, in the process, spend hundreds of millions of pounds which should be spent on providing a better public transport service, will that not show how completely out of touch the Government are with the British people?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is quite wrong. His comments about rail privatisation are precisely the same as the comments that his predecessors made about almost every privatisation that has occurred. Each privatisation has proved a success. The initial costs of past privatisations have been more than outweighed by efficiency and benefits, and that will be the case for rail users as well. The right hon. Gentleman relies on precisely the same scare stories which existed for each privatisation that has occurred. If he seeks further assurance, it will come tomorrow when the franchise director launches the pre-qualification documents. The right hon. Gentleman will then see how wrong he is.

Gibraltar

Q3. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the position of Gibraltar within the European Union.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As the present appalling restrictions at the Spanish border, with four-hour delays for people and eight-hour delays for vehicles, seem designed to cripple the economy of Gibraltar, and as the European Union seems unable to prevent these illegal blackmail activities, will the Prime Minister give guidance to Ministers to the effect that there should be no further concessions to Spain in the EU until the problem is resolved? Is the Prime Minister aware that it would hearten the loyal people of the rock if he would visit Gibraltar and assure them of the full support not only of the Government but, I hope, of every party in the House of Commons which believes in freedom?

The Prime Minister: On my hon. Friend's second point, I can guarantee that we have no intention of deviating from the commitment that we made to the people of Gibraltar in the 1969 constitution. That commitment is there and it will remain. With regard to his first point, we have already made strong protests to the Spanish Government about the secondary checks imposed by the Guardia Civil at the frontier between Gibraltar and Spain. It is very important that the controls should cease and we have made it absolutely clear that the Spanish Government must bring them to an end. They are aware of our views, and we are in contact with them about it.

Engagements

Q4. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave a few moments ago.

Mrs. Michie: Can the Prime Minister explain how an assembly for Northern Ireland will strengthen the United Kingdom while a Scottish parliament will apparently weaken it? The situations may be different, but surely the principle is the same.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady graciously admits, the situation is not just different—it is wholly different. A tax-raising assembly is proposed for Scotland, whereas in Northern Ireland an assembly is proposed which will give Northern Ireland proper control over local government matters. That power already exists in Scotland.

Q5. **Mr. Haselhurst:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Haselhurst: Amid all the discussions about the European Union in the long term, does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a practical and urgent agenda to try to ensure that the single market is working fairly and openly, so that British companies have a genuine opportunity to compete successfully in civil aviation, energy and other spheres in which there are currently impediments to competition?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about that and about its importance. At Essen during the weekend it was self-evident that that is an agenda on which Britain is increasingly winning the arguments. There is wide recognition of the fact that the liberalisation of aviation, energy, telecommunications and a range of other areas is vital to Europe's future competitiveness. A great deal of work needs to be done to ensure that. It must figure very prominently in the Community's agenda in future, and we will ensure that it does.

Mrs. Adams: Is the Prime Minister aware of the havoc wrought in the west of Scotland at the weekend by severe flooding in which lives were lost? Is he further aware that the Scottish Office Minister who visited the Paisley area yesterday gave us little comfort? Will the Prime Minister visit the stricken areas and make a statement that adequate funding will be available to reimburse families and local authorities?

The Prime Minister: I know that the whole House will wish to join me in expressing regret at the loss of life and the very significant damage following the severe flooding in Strathclyde. As the hon. Lady may or may not know, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland with responsibility for industry and local government was able to make a statement about the flooding to the Scottish Grand Committee this morning. He said that grant aid from central Government might be available under the Bellwin scheme.

Q6. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Gallie: Has my right hon. Friend seen the "Scottish Engineering Quarterly Review" issued this week, which shows that orders are up, investment is up, recruitment is up and optimism is strong? Is he further aware that today Jetstream Aircraft at Prestwick announced yet another order? Is that not good news in the run-up to Christmas?

The Prime Minister: I must confess that I have not seen the journal to which my hon. Friend refers, but I will ensure that it is delivered to me regularly in future. I am pleased to hear my hon. Friend's good news and delighted to hear about Jetstream. A further order will be another welcome endorsement of the success of Scottish manufacturing.

Q7. **Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McCartney: The Prime Minister will know that the blood transfusion service is a unique service in the United Kingdom national health service. Last year, the

British people gave 2.5 million units of blood freely and saved thousands of lives. Does he appreciate the dismay and disgust at the Bain proposals to privatise the service and close down five regional centres, from Plymouth to Lancaster, with 1,000 job losses? When will the Prime Minister put the national health service before private greed and abandon that proposal?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that the NHS is getting more resources and more funding year after year. He also knows that there are areas which can be dealt with in the private sector without harm to patient care and that where that releases resources for patient care it is economically and medically sensible.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the results of the past four general elections show that the good sense of the British people can normally be relied on? Against that background, does he further agree that, if the 1996 intergovernmental conference produced substantial changes in the European Union the use of a referendum might be justified, but that in the intervening period speculation about the type of question to be asked is entirely bogus?

The Prime Minister: In advance of the IGC, it is extremely difficult to know precisely what the question in a referendum might be. I have said that I am not prepared to close the door on the possibility of one, but, equally, that there are important constitutional matters to be considered and it would be very unwise to make snap judgments as to how to deal with that matter. As I understand it, two days after I stated that last week, it suddenly became the Opposition's position as well.

Q8. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Jackson: According to official figures given to me by the Child Support Agency last week, that body has processed just four claims for compensation in the past 12 months. Will the Prime Minister ensure urgently that the thousands of families who have suffered from the incredible incompetence of that body are fully compensated for their financial and emotional losses?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady knows, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is looking at the child support arrangements. He will be responding to the Select Committee's report and will make an announcement as soon as the Government have finished their deliberations. Proposals for any changes will be brought forward at that time.

Pergau Dam

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): With your permission, Madam Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the Pergau dam in Malaysia.

I have now considered the written judgment of the divisional court. As I told the House on 17 November, I needed to establish whether, in the light of this judgment, the Overseas Development Administration can continue to run an aid programme of benefit to this country as well as to the recipients of aid.

I have considered whether there are particular forms of aid which in the light of this judgment should not be financed under the authority of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980. I have concluded that the activities financed by the Overseas Development Administration are not in general vulnerable to the kind of legal challenge brought in the case of Pergau. In the light of this, and having now considered the written judgment and taken legal advice, I have decided not to appeal. I have asked the ODA to ensure that all new spending decisions are weighed carefully, in order to respect fully the implications of the court's judgment.

In co-operation with the National Audit Office, my officials have carefully reviewed all projects receiving finance under the aid and trade provision, to see whether any of these projects approved under our previous understanding of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980 might fall outside the interpretation of that legislation now given by the divisional court. It appears that in the light of this review three projects might be held to raise legal difficulties following that judgment. These are £22 million of ATP support for a British sub-contract for the metro in Ankara, which was approved in 1990 and is in progress; a £9.3 million contribution to the costs of a television studio in Indonesia, approved in 1985 and completed several years ago, for which soft loan payments are continuing; the Botswana flight information region project, costing £2.9 million of ATP, approved in 1988 and physically complete.

In each of those projects, issues were raised about the strength of the economic or wider development case, though in none of them did the ODA accounting officer ask for a ministerial direction.

My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced to the House on 17 June 1993 new procedures for ATP projects as a result of our review of the programme. All ATP projects approved since these new procedures were introduced fully meet the criteria laid down in the Act as now interpreted by the divisional court.

In the light of the judgment, arrangements will be made for the outstanding commitments to Pergau to be met from funds voted by Parliament outside the scope of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act. In order to avoid any possible doubt, similar arrangements will be made for the other three ATP projects I have mentioned. In the case of Pergau and the Indonesian project, which are financed by soft loans, the Export Credits Guarantee Department will continue to make the necessary payments under the relevant statutory provisions of that Department. A supplementary estimate will be sought to replace the relevant appropriations in aid from the ODA. In the case of the other two projects, which are financed by mixed credit, funds will be sought under the authority of the Appropriation Act. The necessary supplementary estimates will be laid before Parliament in due course.

A number of hon. Members have called for the money which ODA has spent in the past, and would have spent in the future on Pergau, to be available for other aid purposes. But the aid and trade provision of the aid programme for previous and future years was set on the assumption that the cost of Pergau and the other three projects would be met from within it. For the future, a financial obligation has been lifted from the aid programme and will have to be met outside the scope of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act. It is not self-evident to me or to the Government that the Government should in consequence ask the taxpayer for additional money to allow the ODA to expand its aid activities.

The Government have concluded that, in respect of expenditure on the four projects in previous years, no adjustments will be made to ODA's future budget. Under our system of annual budgets, the books for those years are effectively closed, and we believe that they should remain so.

For the future, the planned aid programme again contains provision for all four projects. Expenditure on the four projects is expected to be £34.5 million this financial year and £31 million next financial year. It might be thought harsh if the aid programme were reduced by those amounts. The Government have therefore decided that funding from the Reserve will be provided to meet the costs of the four projects, thus releasing an extra £34.5 million this year and £31 million next year for overseas development.

For later years, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced to the House on 29 November increases of £56 million and £115 million in the aid programme in 1996-97 and 1997-98 respectively. Final figures for the aid programme in those and later years will as usual be determined during the annual public expenditure survey in the light of all relevant factors.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Points of order are taken after the statement.

Mr. Cohen: Will you check whether the loudspeakers are working, Madam Speaker? I did not hear the Foreign Secretary say that he was sorry.

Madam Speaker: Increase the loudspeakers, please.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): First, may I thank the Foreign Secretary for sending me a copy of the statement a short time ago?

I welcome the fact that the aid programme will no longer have to bear the cost of the four projects, estimated at £34.5 million to date. Will the money that has already been spent on those projects—that spent on Pergau alone comes to £35 million—be repaid, since those funds have clearly been misappropriated? In the case of Pergau, the funds were unlawfully

[Miss Joan Lestor]

misappropriated. Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm how much has already been lost on the four unlawful projects? That lost money could otherwise have been used to alleviate poverty and to feed the hungry of the third world, where most people imagine that much of the aid budget is used.

Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that, when I first raised this matter in the House, in 1989, I was advised by the Minister that I was imagining a link between defence sales and aid. The Secretary of State has since admitted to what he coyly described as a brief entanglement—which occurred in 1988—between our aid programme in Malaysia and our support for defence exports. That admission is not a full confession, but it is certainly a start.

Does the right hon. Gentleman believe that promises given by a former Prime Minister are always defensible? Is it common practice for aid projects to get a provisional go-ahead, but to undergo rigorous reassessment? It should not be the guiding force of Ministers to prop up the tarnished reputation of former Prime Ministers. Furthermore, if we are to accept the Secretary of State's claim that at no time did he seek legal advice on the project, we can only conclude that he was either incompetent or so dismissive of the monitoring process that he felt that there was no need for him to cover his tracks.

Can the right hon. Gentleman also tell the House which of the three new projects that he mentioned—the metro in Ankara, the television studios in Indonesia and the flight information centre in Botswana—the former Prime Minister had a hand in? Were any of them queried by the former permanent secretary, as in the case of Pergau? Either way, the Secretary of State's case does not really stand up. As a recent editorial in *The Times* put it:

> "If the loan was illegal, his position will be untenable."

It was and it is.

Mr. Hurd: I sent the hon. Lady a copy of my statement in advance, I hope in sufficient time. She does not seem to have read it with any great care because I have already answered several of the questions that she asked. The amount already spent on Pergau is £24 million over the past two years. The hon. Lady's first question, which I think goes to the heart of the matter, shows a misunderstanding as to how the aid budget is arrived at. It is not plucked out of the air. We do not say, "Let us spend £2 billion on aid," and then decide how to spend it. It is built up out of our estimate of needs and commitments. Part of those commitments for the past two years was certainly the aid and trade provision, and part of that was Pergau. Everybody knew that, questions had been asked about it, and it was known in Parliament and through Government.

It is not a question of money having been filched from the aid programme. When that programme was approved by the Government and voted by Parliament it was known to everybody who took an interest in it. It included the ATP and a commitment to the Pergau project, which had been discussed.

The arrangement that I have announced says that we will not open the books on the £24 million that has already been spent. However, for this year, when £34.5 million will be spent on the four projects, and for next year, when £31 million will be spent, the aid figures announced by the Chancellor will remain and will not be reduced because of Pergau. They will thus be available for such extras as extra relief for Bosnia, which will certainly be needed.

Much of the ground covered by the hon. Lady has already been covered in debate, for example on 17 November. The 1988 entanglement was examined in depth by the Select Committee, and its report is available to the hon. Lady. I repeat what I said on 17 November: that at no time while I have held this position have I approved or been aware of any link between the provision of overseas aid and defence sales. I ask the hon. Lady, as I asked the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), to accept that.

I have already dealt with the question about the ODA accounting officer. As I said in my statement, in terms of the three additional projects of which I have told the House, there was no question of the accounting officer asking for a direction. I will need to check this and let the hon. Lady know if I am wrong, but I do not believe that there was any involvement by the former Prime Minister, my noble Friend Baroness Thatcher, in any of these projects.

The arrangement that I have announced, the decisions not to appeal and on how to honour our commitment to Pergau, which with the other projects brings substantial benefit to British industry and to our trade, coupled with our arrangements for financing and the decision not to reopen the books on the £24 million that has already been spent on Pergau and, equally, not to cut the aid budget for the present year and the coming year, are equitable ways to settle the matter.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that by far the greatest part of our aid budget goes to the poorest countries, that ATP represents only about 5 per cent. of our aid budget and that it has been of considerable benefit to British industries in overseas markets? Does he agree that, after all, those industries help to fund the aid budget in any case?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He is perfectly right. Eighty per cent. of the aid budget goes to the poorest countries, and 92 per cent. goes to the lowest and middle income countries. I think that ATP is between 5 and 6 per cent. of the total and, of course, the Pergau commitment is a small part of that. I believe that the ATP which was put into action was invented by the Labour party. It has proved itself in a modest way to be a help to British industry.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Like the hon. Lady, I would like to thank the Foreign Secretary for sending me the statement in advance. I have read it carefully and I genuinely admire the gall with which he wrote the sentence:

> "I have asked the Overseas Development Administration to continue to ensure that all new spending decisions are weighed carefully".

The whole House knows that that spending decision was weighed carefully by the ODA. It recommended against it, it was steamrollered by the Foreign Secretary and the previous Prime Minister, and it was subsequently found to have acted illegally by the courts. It is not a minor technical matter to be treated like a page of the telephone directory.

As for what is self-evident to the taxpayer, which the Foreign Secretary included in his statement, it is clear that the money was misused and the taxpayer believes that the limited budget for overseas aid should be used for its proper purpose and that the Foreign Secretary should reinstate those funds.

Mr. Hurd: I do not wish to repeat myself on reinstatement of funds. I believe that the decision I have announced is equitable; it will enable the aid programme this year and next year to undertake activities for which there will be a crying and continuing need in Bosnia and which otherwise they would not have been able to do.

On the right hon. Gentleman's main point, an undertaking was made in circumstances on which the Select Committee has reported in detail. It was twice made by the Prime Minister of Britain to Malaysia that we would help the projects, which they and we believed was developmental. When the time came in 1991 for me to decide whether the promise should be kept, it was clearly more expensive than it was supposed to have been three years earlier, but the right hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that the fact that keeping a promise is more expensive than was supposed when it was made is not always a reason for breaking it.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our defence sales and aid proceed quite separately and that the September 1988 memorandum of understanding on defence matters with Malaysia does not mention overseas aid?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Select Committee examined the matter exhaustively under the chairmanship of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and I have nothing to add to its report, which seems to me a balanced account. I simply repeat what I said before: that since I have held this position I have never approved or been aware of any linkage between aid and defence sales and I am confident that no such linkage exists.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): This is a long and appalling story which, as the Foreign Secretary well knows, began with an aid for arms protocol signed by the former Secretary of State for Defence and has now ended with himself being judged to have been a law breaker in terms of the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980, which it is his duty to administer. Surely some sign of regret or remorse, let alone an apology to the House of Commons, would be much more fitting than the rather strident tone in which he has addressed the House. Although he has made restitution for the next two years, he must be aware that unless further restitution is made, £181 million, which has still to be paid by the British Government to complete the Pergau project, will be deducted from what would otherwise be the legitimate overseas aid budget?

Mr. Hurd: As regards the future, when the Treasury and spending Ministers discuss spending in the public expenditure survey, they take everything into account and these events will be taken into account. I cannot say what decision will be reached on that in the public expenditure survey next year. The right hon. Gentleman is not contesting what I have said about the equity of the arrangements that I have announced for this year and next year; they are equitable and will give the Overseas Development Administration funds that it did not expect in order to carry out its duties.

As regards regret, the right hon. Gentleman knows the arguments. He does not agree with me, but I believe that the penalties which the national interest would have incurred had we broken in 1991 the undertaking given in 1989, would have been formidable. The court has not said the Pergau dam should not be financed or that Lady Thatcher's promise should have been broken; the court did not deal with any of those matters or with the question of arms. It simply dealt with the specific point of whether or not funding of the Pergau dam should be taken under the 1980 Act.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that much of the pseudo-indignation from Opposition Members is manufactured, in the sense that this money, which is allocated to the aid and trade budget, could have been used for other aid projects? We have already heard from my right hon. Friend that more than 91 per cent. of our aid budget goes to specific purposes. Will he also confirm that the Pergau dam has never been subject to corruption, that it is a triumph of British engineering, that it will generate electricity, which will be of value to Malaysian development, and particularly for development in the northern region of Malaysia, which is a very under-privileged area?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with all my hon. Friend's points. He speaks with close and sympathetic knowledge of the matter and I repeat my estimate of where the national interest lay. Of course, since then, the ATP policy and the aid policy have changed. An application from Malaysia—because its standard of living, its development, has been so successful in the past few years—for ATP on this kind of project would not now be granted. The House knows of the change of policy. We are not talking, therefore, about what would be approved in future. As I said in my statement, it is quite clear that the guidelines have been tightened and projects for a Pergau dam in Malaysia would not be approved today. That was not the question in 1991. The question then was whether the word given by the Prime Minister of this country should be kept.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Will not the Secretary of State accept that the link between arms and aid was judged by the courts to be unlawful? How, then, can a promise that is unlawful be expected to be kept? Is not it a fact that if a council had been found guilty in the courts of misappropriating such a level of funds it would have been surcharged and, perhaps, independently taken to gaol? Why should there be different standards between central and local government?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman cannot have read the judgment. He can have read only the initial advertisements of the World Development Movement. The court was not asked to deal with any question of a link with arms sales, and therefore did not do so.

[Mr. Hurd]

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the ATP was originally an initiative of the previous Labour Government? As the Opposition are always talking about help for British industry, is there not a very substantial element of humbug in their attitude to this matter?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. ATP, I believe, has justified itself. It has not taken over the aid budget; it is between 5 and 6 per cent. of the aid budget. It has justified itself in helping the development of countries that we want to help, and at the same time giving help to British companies. I see no harm in that, provided it is done within international rules, which it has been.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Why should the taxpayer have to foot the bill for illegal misconduct by the Secretary of State, bearing in mind the fact that, if the Secretary of State were a local government councillor who flouted the advice of his officials, thereby incurring illegal expenditure, he would be surcharged, probably bankrupted and certainly barred from holding public office? Will he now do the decent thing and resign?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is being synthetic, I think. The criticism that reached me from the ODA on the Pergau project did not relate in any way to its legality. The question was whether it was economically sound, and Sir Tim Lankester said that, in his view, it was not. There was no question, no query raised, at that time as to whether it was a development project in accordance with the 1980 Act. I had to decide whether it was in the national interest that Sir Tim Lankester's doubts on the matter should prevail over the promise that had been given. Keeping the promise turned out to be more expensive than had been supposed when it was given. I did not think that it was in the national interest that it should be broken.

Sir Giles Shaw (Pudsey): If there is any regret to be expressed, it would, on my part, be that this issue may have damaged the huge importance of ATP. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, as a proportion of total aid, the ATP should be increased from its current level of 5 or 6 per cent., that it provides, and has provided since it started, some £4 billion of income to British industry, many of them small companies, and that its administration is crucial if we really mean to gain export access to difficult markets, which only the Government can help us to achieve?

Mr. Hurd: I do not want to prejudge the decisions that we shall make about how the ODA will use the amounts announced in the Budget speech and the extra amounts that I have announced today; but I note what my hon. Friend has said about the importance of ATP, and I am both certain and keen that it should be preserved.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): There is a gang of serial crooks in the Government. We should consider all the ones who have been in court. When will one of them, instead of acting arrogantly, have the decency to admit that he or she was wrong and resign? That is one of the problems with this Government. May I tell the Foreign Secretary that I might have expected him to be the fellow to do it. There is a vacancy in a flower stall outside Waterloo station; the Foreign Secretary should go and fill it.

Mr. Hurd: The court decided that it was illegal to finance the Pergau dam under the 1980 Act. It interpreted the Act in a way in which it had not previously been interpreted, causing me to say that we must look through all the ODA projects to make absolutely sure that the law was being complied with. That we have done, with the results that I have mentioned.

That was the nature of the court's judgment. I have no desire to cross swords with the court, and have not done so in any way. As I have decided not to appeal, we must obey the court's verdict strictly. I believe that we can do that while still preserving an aid programme that is able, within the limits of the ATP, to help British industry.

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): In accepting my right hon. Friend's statement, the whole House will know that he was not Foreign Secretary at the time and that no personal responsibility attaches to him.

The Pergau dam project has attracted a great deal of criticism, but is it just coincidence that, since the signing of the contract, our trade with that country and that part of the world has increased considerably, providing many jobs for people in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hurd: I feel strongly about the merits of the matter. I must obey the court's decision, as I have decided not to appeal against it, but I do not feel penitent about taking a robust view on where this country's interests lie.

Since the decisions of 1988-91—as my hon. Friend pointed out, I was responsible only for the final decision, but I entirely understand the reasoning behind the others—our trade with Malaysia and its neighbours has increased enormously. Those are the most expanding markets of the world, markets in which Britain has been strikingly successful. Does the House really believe that we would have enjoyed that success if in 1991—strikingly and stridently—we had decided to tear up an undertaking that we had given?

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Did not Lord Justice Rose clearly state that the Foreign Secretary should agree

> "to take appropriate steps to make good the deficiency in the overseas aid budget"?

As £24 million of that budget was spent unlawfully on the Pergau dam, could not the Foreign Secretary at least modestly restore that £24 million?

Mr. Hurd: I have been into that. The court said that what it described as the "unravelling" was not a matter for it, and that is obviously true. I believe that what I have done—I have not reopened the past books relating to the £24 million, but have dealt with the rather larger sums involved in this year's and next year's budgets—is an equitable way of dealing with the difficult situation that was created.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): What progress has been made in the restoration of British business links with Malaysia?

Mr. Hurd: They were never wholly interrupted. There was a pause and a breakdown in public sector contracts as a result of the Malaysian Prime Minister's indignation over what he read in the British press, but that has passed and we are on track for a further steady expansion of our trade with Malaysia.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): The Foreign Secretary informed me that there was no link between defence sales and aid. Thanks to the stirring work of the World Development Movement, it has been shown that he misled the House. Many of my hon. Friends have requested either his resignation or perhaps words of regret. Is he willing to give either?

Mr. Hurd: I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman is referring to. The events of 1988, for which I have no responsibility, have been fully examined. If he is saying that, since 1989, a connection has been made between defence sales and overseas aid provision, he should say so. If that is what he is implying, he should say so. I believe it to be wholly untrue. I do not think that that sort of insinuation does good.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the majority of this country's population see nothing wrong in using aid to create British jobs? If it has been found to be against the law, is it not time that the law was changed? May I take issue with him on the £65 million from the reserve? That money is still coming from the taxpayer. It is still increasing overseas aid and it will not be welcomed in my constituency, particularly on a day when hon. Members have been asked to increase the burden of taxation by £800 million. More and more people in this country are beginning to say, "When does charity begin at home?"

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend's views on this matter are well known. Charity does begin at home, but it does not necessarily end at home. I hope that today's announcement illustrates that.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): The Foreign Secretary cited the evidence of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs almost in his own, or in the Government's, defence. Is he aware that one person refused to give evidence to that Committee—that dreadful woman, Baroness Thatcher? Until we know why there was a link in a letter of 8 August 1989 to the Malaysian Prime Minister, how can any of us be really convinced that there was no link in her mind between arms sales and the Pergau dam project?

Mr. Hurd: That is not a matter for me. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues went into the matter carefully. I am not saying that their report justified everything that happened because it did not. It showed a good deal of understanding of my position in 1991 and it came to the conclusion that I did not have much choice at that time. Despite the fact that my noble Friend did not give evidence, the hon. Gentleman would agree that the Committee did a thorough job.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the World Development Movement's decision to pursue the court case and the manner in which it was exploited by the Opposition parties and by some sections of the British media were damaging to British interests, British jobs and our relations with Malaysia? One good thing, however, has come out of this. Will my right hon. Friend give the House an indication of how the additional sums in the overseas aid budget will be used this year and next?

Mr. Hurd: The World Development Movement was entirely entitled to act as it did and it showed considerable perseverance and skill in doing so. I am not so sure whether, against the background of the opinions expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), it did good to the cause of support for British aid and the people that it has helped. That is a matter for the World Development Movement to judge. The opposite opinion to the sort of views that it has expressed may have become quite strong.

On the last question of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff), I do not know yet, because the decisions that I have announced today have only just been taken and we have only just had the Budget figures of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. We need to put those two together and to decide how the Overseas Development Administration is to distribute the money. The human emergencies in the world, whether caused by civil war or famine and whether they occur in Africa or Bosnia, are not likely to diminish. The Chancellor's Budget announcement and the arrangements that I have announced today will enable the ODA to continue a tradition, which it has successfully established, of giving quick, prompt, adequate aid to deal with those emergencies. I imagine that some of the money will go for that purpose.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Are the appraisal reports into ATP projects, which are conducted by independent consultants, still being revised at the request of departmental officials if it is considered that they might be embarrassing for the Government?

Mr. Hurd: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would examine the announcement made in 1993 by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State about the change in procedures following our review. Were he to do so, I think that he would be satisfied about the procedures. If not, perhaps he will let me know and I shall try to satisfy him.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Does my right hon. Friend agree that in the eyes of most people in this country there is absolutely nothing wrong with linking an appropriate portion of aid with trade? This case has revealed that the present rules are too inflexibly drawn. Will he introduce proposals to widen the bands under which such decisions can be made, so that in future

[Mr. Spencer Batiste]

the Government can make sensible judgments without the danger of their being second-guessed by every lobby group on any subject?

Mr. Hurd: I am glad that my hon. Friends are strongly endorsing ATP and that the Opposition are not condemning it as such. That is useful. Of course, ATP has to take place under international rules which have been tightened since the period that we are discussing. It is not a good idea to have a race to subsidise exports, but it is right that, within international rules and the law, we should persevere with ATP, concentrated on those markets that make most sense, such as the poorer countries in which there are good trade prospects for this country. I am encouraged by today's exchanges to be robust in persevering with ATP.

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): The Secretary of State said that he believes that what he has announced today fulfils his obligation to the court after its judgment against him. What legal advice has he received, and is it unambiguous that his response is right? If the advice proves to be incorrect, will he resign?

Mr. Hurd: I have, of course, taken legal advice on the question of past payments. I am advised that it is not for the court to direct what should happen in that respect. I stand by what I said about the present and the future, and that is not open to legal question.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): May I urge my right hon. Friend not to be blown off course by the Opposition's synthetic anger? When shaping future aid policy, will he be sure to take into account the employment prospects for British workers, just as the French, Germans and Americans do? Is not that what aid for trade is all about?

Hon. Members: Bribery.

Mr. Hurd: I am sorry that this has become a party matter because there is an underlying problem which is not being dealt with by the Opposition in their desire to make trouble. If they examined recent events they would see what that underlying problem is. I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Does the Secretary of State recall the pictures that the nation saw of emaciated and dying children in Ethiopia and Somalia a few years ago? What does he think of a Government who preferred to use the aid budget to sell arms to what he has admitted are rich countries? Does not that fill him with shame?

Mr. Hurd: The record of this country and of the ODA in particular, often operating through non-governmental agencies, in taking prompt and effective help to the type of disasters to which the hon. Gentleman refers is second to none. Instead of making such remarks in order to cause the Government trouble, the hon. Gentleman should take a little pride in what we are doing overseas, whether in Rwanda most recently, or before that in Somalia, which he mentioned, or every day in Bosnia where we are supplying 20 per cent. of the international aid. Our record in dealing with exactly the type of problems that he mentions is unmatched.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Can my right hon. Friend give us an idea of how many Labour Members persistently press for companies in their constituencies to be involved in projects linked to ATP? Does not that reveal the gross hypocrisy of much of what we have heard from them this afternoon?

Mr. Hurd: There is strong pressure—I cannot give the figures—from constituency members, of course, that ATP help should go to projects in which they are interested. There is also very strong pressure from individual Labour Members that their constituents should benefit from the sale of arms to the third world.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): Earlier in his statement, the Foreign Secretary referred to evidence given to him by Sir Tim Lankester, the former permanent secretary at the Overseas Development Administration, and he described Sir Tim's reservations as being on economic grounds. When Sir Tim Lankester came before the Public Accounts Committee, he described the Pergau dam as an abuse of the aid project. The courts decided that it was illegal. I think that it is wrong for the Foreign Secretary to say that it is a party political issue. The only two things missing from his statement this afternoon were an apology and a resignation.

Mr. Hurd: I do not wish unnecessarily to repeat myself. I have described what the court decided. The court did not say that it was wrong to finance the Pergau dam. The court did not say that it was wrong to take into account political and commercial considerations. The court did not enter at all into the question of arms sales, which bulks so large in the controversy. The court simply said that it was not right. It produced a new interpretation of the 1980 Act and said that the financing of the Pergau dam did not fall within that interpretation of the Act. I am complying fully with that judgment.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will my right hon. Friend stress time and again the lavish use made of ATP procedures by our export competitors? Is it not a fact that the Government have given skilled support to British exporters, which has been good for jobs, not least jobs in the constituencies of Labour Members?

Mr. Hurd: That is certainly true. As a result of all that has happened, the importance of ATP is, if anything, more clearly established. I repeat the point that I made before. I am against having an international race to subsidise exports. I believe that there should be international rules on that—indeed, there are—and that they should be strictly enforced. Within those rules, I see no case whatever for sitting back and giving an advantage to our competitors.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): On a number of occasions this afternoon, the Foreign Secretary has stressed the importance of abiding by the verdict of the court in this matter. However, is it not equally important for him to abide by the policies of his own Department as set out in the annual report, which say that aid should be targeted on poor people in poor countries? Why, since he has been told by the court that he may not use that sum of money for aiding the Pergau dam, is he standing in the way of using it for purposes for which Parliament has voted?

Mr. Hurd: We are complying with our own policy. Of the aid budget, 80 per cent. goes to the poorest countries. The quality of British aid is often praised, as it was, for example, in the latest OECD report. From the aid budget, 92 per cent. of the aid goes to low and middle-income countries. We have nothing to be ashamed of in that respect. As regards the past, I have answered the question about reopening the books. As regards the present and the immediate future, the arrangements that I have announced today will enable us, for example, to give more effective and more immediate help to the kind of cases to which the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) referred a few minutes ago.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): There are one or two questions which the Foreign Secretary has not yet answered. I remain puzzled as to how the Foreign Secretary had no knowledge of what he described as an entanglement between arms sales and aid, which was known to the Prime Minister and to Lord Younger. Was he merely naive, or was he kept in the dark?

Mr. Hurd: I was Home Secretary.

Mr. Foulkes: He was a member of the Cabinet. There must be some collective responsibility for decisions taken by the Cabinet.

The right hon. Gentleman accuses us of making this a political issue. May I assure him that we support ATP, but we do not support ATP stealing money from humanitarian aid and help to the poorest of the poor? We do not support money going into unsound economic projects, which the Pergau dam was clearly seen to be. He made some amazing revelations in his statement today. How do a television studio in Indonesia and a metro in Ankara fit in with our aid policy of helping the poorest of the poor? How can they possibly be the kind of projects that we should be supporting?

As many of my hon. Friends have rightly said, in the good old days, any Secretary of State caught red-handed, in the way in which this Secretary of State has been, would have done the honourable thing and would have gone back to writing novels, which the Foreign Secretary does so well. However, if the Foreign Secretary is not willing to do that, I assure him, on behalf of all Opposition Members, that his standing would rise immeasurably in the House if he would simply apologise for his mistake.

Mr. Hurd: On the hon. Gentleman's specific points, he has his chronology a bit wrong, but I do not complain about that. The reference to ATP stealing money simply does not wear, because the figures for the aid programme included ATP and the commitment to the Pergau dam. There was no secret about any of that. There was no question of filching money.

The total of the aid programme took into account the commitments that had been made. That is how the aid programme is constructed. This talk of filching or stealing money surreptitiously from the aid programme is completely wrong. As it is completely wrong, what the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) followed up with is also completely wrong. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Indonesia?"] I will go into that. That is a programme of £9.3 million of support from the ATP. It was approved in 1986 by the then Minister of State.

In Bandung, it is designed to bring together a widely scattered community of poor people and make it possible for that community to function more effectively. If the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley thinks that that is a wrong use of money, I would not agree with him. I believe that it is a good use for the money and my right hon. Friend was right to approve it. We believe that it may fall outside the Overseas Development and Co-operation Act 1980. In order to be absolutely sure, it is being financed as I have said.

Offices (Intrusion)

4.16 pm

Madam Speaker: The House will be aware of press reports about an intrusion last Friday into the suite of offices of the Leader of the Opposition. I have made inquiries into this matter and I understand that the intruders concerned were two research assistants and a guest. I am satisfied that there was no malice whatsoever in their action, which resulted from an excess of seasonal spirit and a mischievous walkabout.

Nevertheless, it must be understood that it is a privilege to work in, and have access to, the Palace of Westminster and I do not expect that privilege to be abused. In this instance, it has been abused. I have therefore given instructions that the researchers concerned should have their passes withdrawn with immediate effect and until 1 February.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. This relates directly to your statement. I understand that the Administration Committee is currently reviewing the arrangements for the issuing of passes to the House of Commons. It appears that, at the moment, anyone who is nominated by a Member of the House for a pass is automatically issued with one unless anything is known on security grounds. In addition, there appears to be a very long list of organisations whose employees are issued with passes. Indeed, the list is so long that the Administration Committee has been unable to supply me with it.

My point of order is this: as it appears that virtually any Tom, Dick or Harry can be issued with a pass to this place, and undoubtedly a very large number of people have passes which give them access to the House, I wonder whether arrangements can be made to invite hon. Members to submit evidence to the Administration Committee so that more sensible criteria can be devised before passes are issued.

Madam Speaker: That is a matter for the Administration Committee and for the Serjeant at Arms. I will ensure that the point raised by the hon. Gentleman is referred to that quarter.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I refer you to page 380 of "Erskine May", which states:

> "Opprobrious reflections must not be cast in debate on heads of state or governments of independent Commonwealth territories or countries in amity with Her Majesty, or their representatives in this country"?

You will recall, Madam Speaker, that yesterday, in answer to questions on the recent European Union summit, the Prime Minister said:

> "Indeed, I must say that some of my fellow Heads of Government could scarcely find their way to their Parliaments with a guide dog."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1994; Vol. 251, c. 625.]

That is an opprobrious reflection on the Heads of Government of countries which are in amity with Her Majesty.

Is it little wonder, with the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) referring to our partners as collaborators, warmongers and beggars, and with the Prime Minister now suggesting that some of his fellow Heads of Government are visually challenged, that the British Government are seen on the continent and in the European Union as a bunch of exceedingly rude whingers? Would it not be appropriate for the Prime Minister to apologise and, perhaps, to offer a suitable donation to the appropriate guide dog charity?

Madam Speaker: The Prime Minister is responsible for his own remarks, as are all other members of the Government and Members of Parliament. I remind the House of the words of "Erskine May", and I add to them that not only good temper and moderation but tolerance of other people, whether in this country or abroad, are equal characteristics of parliamentary language.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you authorise the House authorities to release the names of the three men who intruded into the office of the Leader of the Opposition? Can you establish why they were not searched when they left the office?

Many hon. Members find it difficult to understand—indeed, we do not believe that it is credible—that three men should walk the length of the Palace of Westminster and just happen to enter the Leader of the Opposition's office. It is not a credible story. We believe that their motive was deliberate—that is, to enter that office, knowing that they had no right to enter, and to do whatever they set out to do. We understand that no checks have been made.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Our suspicions would not have been so great had it not been for the recent memorandum from the vice-chairman of the Conservative party, Mr. Maples. Bearing in mind the distance to the office of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, it seems almost incredible that those three people claim that it was simply a mistake on their part. What would have been the position if the person in charge of the office at the time did not take the necessary steps to identify the three concerned and to call in the authorities?

There is a feeling among Labour Members at least that this is a minor Westminstergate—a deliberate attempt unofficially to find out information from the office of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. Therefore, I urge you, Madam Speaker, to consider it appropriate that further steps should be taken to look into the matter.

Madam Speaker: I have made extensive inquiries into the matter. I even went to the offices of the Leader of the Opposition very early this morning to refamiliarise myself with their geography. I am totally satisfied that, as I have said in my statement, no malice was intended. I gave my reasons why I thought that those three people—they were not all males; there were two males and one female—were there. A thorough police inquiry has been carried out, too. The police tell me that they are satisfied that nothing was taken and that nothing was disturbed. In all seriousness—we must be serious about such matters—I am sure that that would be the view of the Leader of the Opposition himself.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: We must leave the matter as it is. There will be no further points of order on it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it on this matter?

Mr. Skinner: It is on security. During the past five years, and increasingly lately, there have been questions about the reduction in the number of police and security people positioned around this building. Most of the time the matter has been ignored, and we have been assured by Ministers that everything is all right. It is apparent to many people who are in this building on Fridays in particular and to the security people that there is not sufficient manning to cover all areas. I suggest that it is time that we looked at the number of people who have been removed from security and police positions, so that in future police and security officers are able to do their job effectively. I think you will find, Madam Speaker, that there has been a severe reduction in their number.

Madam Speaker: I am in touch with police and security figures not monthly but on a weekly basis. I do not discuss security matters across the Floor of the House, but if the hon. Gentleman would like some details about those matters I know that the Serjeant-at-Arms will be happy to place them in front of him.

Cleveland County Council

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Yesterday you heard my point of order about the promised deposition of the details of submissions made to the Local Government Commission in relation to the dismantling of Cleveland county council. I thank you, Madam Speaker, because your admonishment of the Treasury Bench yesterday resulted in the details being placed in the Library as your procession was passing it at 2.30 this afternoon.

My point of order is that the summary, which has taken nine months and four days to deliver, is a single sheet of paper. It does not say how many submissions were made in favour of the recommendations and there is no detail of the submissions which opposed the recommendations—in fact, there is no total of submissions received. The summary is little more than a repeat of the recommendations of the Banham commission. My two-year-old grandson could have done better than that in half a morning.

Frankly, the Government are treating the House with contempt and preventing any hon. Member who wishes to oppose the order from receiving necessary information. We are told that the order has been laid down and that the matter may be discussed next Monday. The Government are treating the House with contempt, and that is unacceptable. I appeal to you, Madam Speaker, to use your powers to urge the Government to act decently for a change.

Madam Speaker: I am very pleased that I was able to help the hon. Gentleman yesterday, but I certainly cannot help him on this matter. I am not responsible for the quality of material that is provided by the Government—I have many responsibilities in other respects, but that is not one of them.

I can only suggest that the hon. Gentleman see the Minister concerned—I realise that it may be a little late if the matter is to be debated next week—and perhaps make some representations to obtain the information that he requires.

Ways and Means

Madam Speaker: Before I call the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I inform the House that I have selected amendments (a) and (b), standing in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

4.27 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move,

1. VALUE ADDED TAX (FUEL AND POWER)

That—

(1) The Value Added Tax Act 1994 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In section 2 (rate of VAT) in subsection (1) the words "and paragraph 7 of Schedule 13" shall be omitted, and the following subsections shall be inserted after that subsection—

"(1A) VAT charged on—

(a) any supply for the time being falling within paragraph 1 of Schedule A1; or

(b) any equivalent acquisition or importation,

shall be charged at the rate of 8 per cent.

(1B) The reference in subsection (1A) above to an equivalent acquisition or importation, in relation to any supply for the time being falling within paragraph 1 of Schedule A1, is a reference (as the case may be) to—

(a) any acquisition from another member State of goods the supply of which would be such a supply; or

(b) any importation from a place outside the member States of any such goods.

(1C) The Treasury may by order vary Schedule A1 by adding to or deleting from it any description of supply for the time being specified in it or by varying any other provision for the time being contained in it."

(3) The following Schedule shall be inserted immediately before Schedule 1—

"SCHEDULE A1

Charge at Reduced Rate

The supplies

1.—(1) The supplies falling within this paragraph are supplies for qualifying use of—

(a) coal, coke or other solid substances held out for sale solely as fuel;

(b) coal gas, water gas, producer gases or similar gases;

(c) petroleum gases, or other gaseous hydrocarbons, whether in a gaseous or liquid state;

(d) fuel oil, gas oil or kerosene; or

(e) electricity, heat or air-conditioning.

(2) In this paragraph "qualifying use" means—

(a) domestic use; or

(b) use by a charity otherwise than in the course or furtherance of a business.

(3) Where there is a supply of goods partly for qualifying use and partly not—

(a) if at least 60 per cent. of the goods are supplied for qualifying use, the whole supply shall be treated as a supply for qualifying use; and

(b) in any other case, an apportionment shall be made to determine the extent to which the supply is a supply for qualifying use.

Interpretation

2. For the purposes of this Schedule the following supplies are always for domestic use—

(a) a supply of not more than one tonne of coal or coke held out for sale as domestic fuel;

(b) a supply of wood, peat or charcoal not intended for sale by the recipient;

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

(c) a supply to a person at any premises of piped gas (that is, gas within paragraph 1(1)(b) above, or petroleum gas in a gaseous state, provided through pipes) where the gas (together with any other piped gas provided to him at the premises by the same supplier) was not provided at a rate exceeding 150 therms a month or, if the supplier charges for the gas by reference to the number of kilowatt hours supplied, 4397 kilowatt hours a month;

(d) a supply of petroleum gas in a liquid state where the gas is supplied in cylinders the net weight of each of which is less than 50 kilogrammes and either the number of cylinders supplied is 20 or fewer or the gas is not intended for sale by the recipient;

(e) a supply of petroleum gas in a liquid state, otherwise than in cylinders, to a person at any premises at which he is not able to store more than two tonnes of such gas;

(f) a supply of not more than 2,300 litres of fuel oil, gas oil or kerosene;

(g) a supply of electricity to a person at any premises where the electricity (together with any other electricity provided to him at the premises by the same supplier) was not provided at a rate exceeding 1000 kilowatt hours a month.

3.—(1) For the purposes of this Schedule supplies not within paragraph 2 above are for domestic use if and only if the goods supplied are for use in—

(a) a building, or part of a building, which consists of a dwelling or number of dwellings;

(b) a building, or part of a building, used for a relevant residential purpose;

(c) self-catering holiday accommodation;

(d) a caravan; or

(e) a houseboat.

(2) For the purposes of this Schedule use for a relevant residential purpose means use as—

(a) a home or other institution providing residential accommodation for children;

(b) a home or other institution providing residential accommodation with personal care for persons in need of personal care by reason of old age, disablement, past or present dependence on alcohol or drugs or past or present mental disorder;

(c) a hospice;

(d) residential accommodation for students or school pupils;

(e) residential accommodation for members of any of the armed forces;

(f) a monastery, nunnery or similar establishment; or

(g) an institution which is the sole or main residence of at least 90 per cent. of its residents,

except use as a hospital, a prison or similar institution or an hotel or inn or similar establishment.

(3) For the purposes of this Schedule self-catering holiday accommodation includes any accommodation advertised or held out as such.

(4) In this Schedule "houseboat" means a boat or other floating decked structure designed or adapted for use solely as a place of permanent habitation and not having means of, or capable of being readily adapted for, self-propulsion.

4.—(1) Paragraph 1(1)(a) above shall be deemed to include combustible materials put up for sale for kindling fires but shall not include matches.

(2) Paragraph 1(1)(b) and (c) above shall not include any road fuel gas (within the meaning of the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979) on which a duty of excise has been charged or is chargeable.

(3) Paragraph 1(1)(d) above shall not include hydrocarbon oil on which a duty of excise has been or is to be charged without relief from, or rebate of, such duty by virtue of the provisions of the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979.

(4) In this Schedule "fuel oil" means heavy oil which contains in solution an amount of asphaltenes of not less than 0.5 per cent. or which contains less than 0.5 per cent. but not less than 0.1 per cent. of asphaltenes and has a closed flash point not exceeding 150 degreesC.

(5) In this Schedule "gas oil" means heavy oil of which not more than 50 per cent. by volume distils at a temperature not exceeding 240 degreesC and of which more than 50 per cent. by volume distils at a temperature not exceeding 340 degreesC.

(6) In this Schedule "kerosene" means heavy oil of which more than 50 per cent. by volume distils at a temperature not exceeding 240 degreesC.

(7) In this Schedule "heavy oil" shall have the same meaning as in the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979."

(4) In section 97 (orders etc.) in subsection (4) (orders requiring approval) the following paragraph shall be inserted immediately before paragraph (a)—

"(aa) an order under section 2(1C);".

(5) In Schedule 13 (transitional provisions and savings) paragraph 7 (fuel and power) shall be omitted.

(6) This Resolution shall apply in relation to any supply made on or after 1st April 1995 and any acquisition or importation taking place on or after that date.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

This year's Budget is being debated on the Floor of the House rather frequently and at an earlier stage than usual. This debate should conclude our discussion of the tax measures that will take effect before the Finance Bill is introduced. It will also put in place, intact, the Budget judgment and keep the Government's economic policy on course.

A healthy economic recovery forms an essential background to the debate. The House is familiar with the Government's record of growth, rising industrial production, rising manufacturing production, falling unemployment and good records on productivity and inflation. We know that the recovery must be sustained and made stronger to deliver the prosperity and the increased number of jobs that are essential aims of all economic policy.

Keeping our recovery going and ensuring that it is one of the strongest and most effective in the developed world imposes certain duties and obligations on the Government and the House of Commons. In order to sustain our recovery and to keep it strong, we must keep inflation down so that high inflation does not halt recovery again, as it often has in the past. We must also ensure that we can deliver healthy public finances.

The Government have other obligations, such as supporting increased competitiveness in industry, but our two preconditions for a sustained and strong recovery are to deliver a macro-economic climate in which inflation is low and to deliver healthy public finances as quickly as we can upon emerging from the recession.

I emphasise those points because they underline the decisions that the House is being asked to take. We are growing so strongly and the business community is so optimistic about the outlook for output and jobs because the Government are on top of the job of keeping inflation down and delivering healthy public finances.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Will the Chancellor explain one matter that he did not explain last Thursday? In the past 10 years, the average error in the public sector borrowing requirement has been £10.5 billion. He wants to raise £800 million. Why is he in such a hurry? Is he now a convert to fine tuning? Will the Pergau financing mean further increases in taxation? Why cannot he wait until February, during consideration of the Finance Bill, and make a decision in the light of further information?

Mr. Clarke: Confidence in policy requires clear consistency of purpose and determination to put that purpose into effect. I had a similar exchange with the right hon. Gentleman last week and explained that, of course, these are not exact forecasts or spot figures, but the best forecasts that we can make and that there is a variation around a median line.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) was in the Treasury at a fairly terrible time—I think that he was there when the International Monetary Fund took over for a time because of the inability of the Government of the day to deliver healthy public finances. Even when he was in office, he did not take the view that £10 billion on the PSBR here or there was something that the Government would ignore. He and his colleagues published forecasts and missed them rather badly. The downward track on which we are setting the PSBR is essential to the restoration of confidence, as is our commitment to take no risks with inflation.

I think that we would all agree that the past week has been one of slightly greater than usual political turmoil. Fortunately, that has not shaken confidence here or abroad in Britain's ability to keep on course with its recovery. Many countries are going through substantial political crises. Usually, that has a knock-on effect on confidence in the Government's abilities to deliver their economic aims. That has not happened here, in part because of the prompt action that we took.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Is it possible that confidence was not dented because people think that the present solution is rather better than the one we had before? As we are talking about changes in solutions, and given the state of the housing market and the fact that mortgage interest relief at source is going down, why does my right hon. and learned Friend still think it wise to knock that market on the head again by making people insure their mortgages?

Mr. Clarke: That was as helpful as ever. Confidence was retained overnight not least because I had a monetary meeting and raised interest rates first thing the next morning. It was extremely important to do so to reconfirm the fact that political turmoil would not threaten our commitment to low inflation and to demonstrate that our policy of considering the economic evidence, looking forward and ensuring that, if inflation pressures are incipient, we act in good time and keep control of events remained unshaken. Confidence was retained before I proposed my package of measures on Thursday.

As I told the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne, a prompt reaction to events to put in place the Budget judgment was essential to keep us on course. In the short term, the interest rate change was never likely to be welcomed by people concerned about the housing market. The present difficulty is that our manufacturing economy is roaring ahead, with very strong growth, while the housing market remains distinctly flat. In the medium-term interests of anyone involved in the United Kingdom economy, it is essential that a low inflation climate is retained and that it lasts. People involved in the housing market probably realise more than anyone else in business the dangers of returning to boom and bust, and of the apparent prosperity that inflation brings and its effects thereafter.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Most people clearly have no confidence in the economic competence of the Government, and the Chancellor knows that. The Government's humiliating defeat on VAT undoubtedly dented them, but does the Chancellor accept that it has in fact reinforced the standing of the House of Commons? Letters to national newspapers and hon. Members have shown that the vote has almost reaffirmed people's faith in parliamentary democracy and the workings of the House of Commons. As a parliamentarian, I think that is excellent. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree?

Mr. Clarke: I regard myself as a parliamentarian, and I am extremely glad about anything that raises confidence in this House, which needs raising by a quite considerable extent. I accepted the judgment of the House, which, although I will not labour the point this afternoon, was reached in an extraordinary way. The House, having confirmed the tax in four separate votes, changed its mind in circumstances where—the hon. Gentleman will concede—background events had a lot to do with the decision.

I have accepted the decision, and that is where we now are. I am explaining that it is necessary to proceed with the resolutions so that the key economic policy of low inflation and healthy public finances is dealt with properly by the Government with the support of the House.

Virtually every major economy in the western world faces serious problems with its public finances as it emerges from recession. The general level of deficits throughout the European Union and across the Atlantic is far too high for comfortable and sustained growth, and every Government is having, or trying, to take action to deal with that problem. I believe that the British Government are tackling the problem more effectively and more promptly than almost any of our competitors in the developed world. That is one reason why confidence in Britain is so high—not only in the financial community, but among the business men and industrialists upon whose confidence we depend to get investment going to sustain our current good performance.

We are doing better than anybody else at the moment. That is why the House must accept—if we accept the House's verdict, as we do—that, having lost potentially £1 billion of tax revenue in the next financial year and

[Mr. Clarke]

£1.5 billion worth in years two and three of the survey period, it is essential that it confirms the action necessary to fill that gap in the public finances.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I go back to the question of the interest rate increase. The Chancellor gave the impression that the increase was not as a result of the defeat in the House of Commons, but that it arose simply because he felt that the judgment had to be made at that time. Why, then, only a fortnight ago, when I asked him directly in the House whether there would be an increase in interest rates before Christmas, did he tell me that he had no plans for such an increase?

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, I am quite certain that I never answer questions—either in the House of Commons or from journalists outside—about my intentions regarding interest rates. It would be totally irresponsible for any Chancellor to do that, as it would cause turmoil in the markets.

I have always explained my policy on interest rates, which is to ensure that we act in good time to keep control of events and to stop inflationary pressures building. The decision on interest rates to which the hon. Gentleman referred was taken the following morning, and not before, and it was taken on the basis of a judgment of the inflationary pressures. But, at the request of the Governor, we had brought forward the timing of the meeting so that, if we decided to raise interest rates, we would do so in good time before any turbulence in the markets after the decision of this House. I make my decisions on the evidence of the meetings that I hold, but the House must bear in mind the fact that those decisions, and their timing, have to include, among other things, the surrounding political events and the possible consequences of a defeat in the House of Commons the night before and the loss of a billion pounds worth of taxation.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Chancellor said that the manufacturing economy was "roaring ahead". Will he tell us when we last had a balance of payments surplus on our trade in manufactured goods, and when he expects us to move into surplus again?

Mr. Clarke: It is a long time since we have had such a strong balance of payments recovery at a time of economic recovery. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is because the recovery is export-led: in volume terms, our exports are up 10 per cent. on a year ago and investment is beginning to press ahead. The course for our balance of payments is improving precisely because this is a competitive country. It is attracting inward investment because it the best place in western Europe in which to invest if one wants to manufacture modern products.

As I said in my statement last week, when it came to filling the gap in the Budget judgment, I turned first of all, instinctively, to public spending. It was obviously right to look at that side of the account. I know from last week's intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), as well as from his representations to me for about as long as I can remember in his capacity as chairman of the Conservative finance committee, that he wanted me to do just that.

As I explained, to make further changes in the public spending total for next year and the year beyond at this stage, after the end of the public spending round, was simply not practicable. I could not do that because of our enormous success in the two successive public spending rounds, which reduced general Government expenditure by at least £43 billion over the four years covered by those two public expenditure surveys. That sum was taken out of general Government expenditure without disturbing the Government's policy priorities and, so long as efficiency is maintained, without threatening the delivery of good, high-quality services.

I accept that a further adjustment to recover money out of those public spending totals may well have been attractive to a number of hon. Friends, as it was to me, but it would not have represented good competent government. It was too late in the year to make such a change. We had just settled the survey and health authorities, local authorities and Government Departments had made their plans on the basis of the figures that we had provided. If we had gone ahead, within 36 hours, to find areas of public spending from which we could have quickly recovered the money further required, it would have been damaging.

I know that my hon. Friend for Bridlington is not alone in making representations to me about public spending—my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) and others have also done so. Because I was unable to go further on this year's public spending round, however, does not mean that we are lessening our determination to keep public spending under control. In years two and three we have already committed ourselves to filling the expenditure gap by £300 million. The tight public spending control of the kind that we are delivering is not a short-term, temporary Government policy; it is one of the hallmarks of Conservative government that we keep tight control of expenditure.

The resolutions deal with the need to raise taxation. We know that the ability to raise or to reduce taxation is directly linked to control of public spending. If one cannot control that spending, one has lost control of one's taxation policy. In future years we will stick to that principle, but this year, for purely practical reasons, we did not attempt to alter the public spending totals.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept, however, that choosing to recover money in taxes has had an inflationary effect of 0.4 per cent., which has meant indexing benefits to the tune of nearly £600 million? Surely he would have faced a much easier task if he had found the money elsewhere. When does he think that the borrowing level will be at a pitch where he will be able to justify reducing taxes? Can he tell us what the criteria would be?

Mr. Clarke: We looked at alternative packages, but one of the attractions of the package that I am commending to the House in the resolutions is that the impact on inflation is rather less than that of the taxes that it replaced. I accept that there are disadvantages in the new package, and, if I am pressed, I will explain why what I am now presenting is, as everyone realises, my second choice, starting from where we were before I prepared this year's Budget. Nevertheless, the substitute package has one advantage, because it slightly reduces the impact on inflation.

On the borrowing requirement, we published in the Red Book the public sector borrowing requirement that we now expect to be sustained. We published our expectation that general Government expenditure will fall as a proportion of gross domestic product. Judgments about taxation in future years must be made on the same basis as the judgments about taxation that I made this year and last. The lower one gets the PSBR, the more one gets public spending under control and the more one is able, when conditions begin to improve, to consider how far one can reduce taxes rather than increase them.

According to the Government, judgments about taxation must be made, and will always be made, on the basis of the health of the real economy. We are committed to industry, to jobs and to prosperity. Our past policy of declining to decide on low rates of marginal taxation was based on our belief that that stimulates a healthy economy. We will make changes in taxation only as and when we believe that it is in the interests of a healthy economy to do so.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): The Chancellor may talk about judgments on taxation, but how can we trust his judgment to match what he has said about taxation? Before the election, he told us that there was no need to extend the scope of VAT and he made specific promises not to increase the rate of VAT. When he came back to the House, however, he offered proposals that went against everything that he had promised. What will happen on a wet night in Dudley tomorrow?

Mr. Clarke: Before the election, the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends campaigned on a policy of increasing taxation in order to increase public expenditure. They also ran a campaign suggesting that they had somehow done their calculations and discovered that the Conservative party would be obliged to raise the rate of VAT. We did not.

The hon. Gentleman has no quotations from me about VAT. He may, however, be referring to some remarks that I made during the election campaign, which were made at a time when his party and my party believed that the recession was over and that public finances would not fall into a worse state. The difference is that when, thank heavens, I am glad to say we found ourselves charged with the responsibility for turning the recession into the recovery, we took the necessary steps to deal with the deficit to get us back on course.

The hon. Gentleman's party opposed every increase in taxation and every spending reduction. Had the Labour party taken office, it would have put into effect the budget of the late John Smith, which would have meant increased taxation and increased public spending. The Opposition would obviously have turned a dangerous borrowing position into a catastrophic one. I recall that that is exactly what the Labour party did when it last took office in similar circumstances.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): Did or did not the Prime Minister say that the Conservative party would not extend VAT? The truth is that he said just that. Will the Chancellor, just like the Prime Minister told us before the general election, now tell us that he will never extend VAT to food, travel, children's clothes, books and newspapers? Will he repeat the Prime Minister's promise?

Mr. Clarke: Did or did not the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends tell us that, if elected, the Labour party would put up child benefit and all retirement pensions? The Opposition would not have done that if they had been remotely responsible upon taking office and discovering that the PSBR was in crisis. The hon. Gentleman looks shocked at my response. He appears to be saying that if the electorate had made a mistake at the election, the Labour Government's reaction to discovering that public finances were in crisis would have been to raise public expenditure on those items by enormous amounts.

The hon. Gentleman has wrung that lemon of the old election quotations dry. As he asked me to give undertakings about the future, let me tell him that we have put in place a policy to match the occasion, which has dealt with the crisis and turned the recession into recovery. The hon. Gentleman cannot even come up with any proposals. Any question to him is waved away and he refuses to give any undertakings about any future Budget, which I hope he will never deliver.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): I do not believe that we should take too many lessons from the Labour party. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that some time ago the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) said that those who pay tax on more than £50,000 should be taxed even more? According to press reports at the weekend, however, the hon. Gentleman's accountant has managed to do some clever tax fiddling for him.

Mr. Clarke: I will not comment on my hon. Friend's second point. We are beginning to quote the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) with approval; I have done it myself. There is no point in Opposition Members shrieking derision at their hon. Friend. He is almost the only Labour Member who attempts to make positive proposals. His hon. Friends do not say that they disagree with him: the inclination to go for higher taxation is not disowned. They are silent when we press them, and we shall press them again in the debate.

I shall now deal with the substitute indirect taxes to replace those that the House has rejected and with the increases in duty. The debate is sensible, certainly in the context of Conservative Members. We will support the resolutions but we will do so with some regret. When I was preparing my Budget I rejected those indirect taxes, because, although they raise the necessary revenue, they all present disadvantages which, until we had the vote, I had hoped to avoid.

The first issue is duty on alcohol, which I am obliged to raise to make a contribution to revenue. I received a large number of representations about the excise duty on alcohol before I prepared my Budget. I do not meet many of those who wish to speak to Ministers, but all Treasury Ministers meet deputations. I met representatives of the brewers and of the Scotch Whisky Association because, as hon. Members will recall, last year I reflected my concern for the situation that they faced following the opening of the single market and the ending of frontier controls.

One of the delegations was a powerful one and consisted of some of my hon. Friends. It was led by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) who urged on me the importance to the British economy of the Scotch whisky industry and the need to ease its burden of duty. I accepted that case when I presented my Budget. I had hoped this year to repeat what I did last year—to freeze alcohol duties for the benefit of the British brewing industry and the Scotch whisky industry.

[Mr. Clarke]

Unless one wants to load even more on the other chosen sources of revenue, it was impossible to stick to what would have been my preferred policy of repeating that freeze. I assure my hon. Friends who are interested in this matter, and certainly those who came to see me about it, that force majeure compels me to do this: it is not a change of policy. I continue to believe that in next year's talks we must explore the objective of approximation of duties across the European Union. That has been made even more urgent.

I assure the House that we shall sustain and strengthen our actions against the illegal importation of alcohol and tobacco. I am satisfied by recent evidence showing that we are becoming more effective in our operations against criminal gangs of smugglers. Since the ending of frontier controls, we have steadily strengthened the intelligence gathering part of our effort and are becoming steadily more successful.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): What items other than excise duties could the Chancellor have examined in his second look at the Budget? Is he aware of the jobs that will be lost in brewing and distilling and the effect that that will have on regional economies? Will there be less smuggling because of the increase in duty?

Mr. Clarke: I told the House a few days ago about the alternatives and I do not propose to go over them again. Those who argue for alternatives should face the fact that they are either increases in direct taxation by raising the rates or squeezing the allowances, increasing taxation on business in various ways or indirect taxation. That involves the possibility of raising the rate of VAT on its narrow base or indirect taxation in the form of increased duties. I shall not rehearse again the process by which I arrived at the decision. It had to be indirect taxation.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I am grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for his efforts to stop smuggling. Of course, we could have put VAT on newspapers and I would have welcomed that. Does he accept that, inevitably, if we are to have any success on the approximation of duties with other countries, at some stage the Government will have to reduce our duties to the level of those in other countries? We cannot expect the problem to be solved by other countries putting their duties up to our level.

Mr. Clarke: That may be so, but I do not want to anticipate our negotiating position. I am grateful to my hon. Friend because, without going wider than the terms of the debate, he sometimes shows a slightly fuller understanding than other hon. Members of how European negotiations proceed. I am all too familiar with coming back from European negotiations and, unless I have received agreement to every last dot and comma of the negotiating position with which I set out, being accused of taking part in another humiliation for Britain. One must go to Europe with a negotiating position. Our position is strong, and we have chosen a perfectly legitimate area in which to raise revenue. We need approximation to make sure that revenue is not lost in one country and gained in another, and that trade is not distorted by goods going across borders.

We would be reluctant to lose that source of revenu altogether. It is perfectly legitimate to raise duties on alcohol, which some people welcome because they blame alcohol for crime and other problems. The difficulty is unlawful smuggling and the legal trade that is encouraged when people go shopping and take advantage of lower duty.

We must get the loss of duty in proportion. I sympathise with the argument that jobs and so on will be lost, and that sympathy has twice been demonstrated in my Budgets. Nevertheless, with the greatest respect to them, the brewers and the Scotch Whisky Association negotiate in the way that perhaps one negotiates in Europe—by slightly exaggerating the consequences. Changes in brewing have much to do with changes in custom, trade and consumer taste and changes in the industry.

The brewers are making healthy profits, as are manufacturers. I am extremely glad that, because of the recovery, sectors of our industry are showing a healthy recovery in profits. To put the matter in proportion, the best estimate by Customs and Excise of the current loss of duty from goods smuggled from across the channel is about £65 million a year. We must put in proportion the idea that we can simply afford to wave away all that revenue without recovering it elsewhere.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray) *rose—*

Mr. Clarke: I give way to the hon. Lady, who is interested in the Scotch whisky industry.

Mrs. Ewing: The Chancellor will appreciate the importance of the industry to my constituency, which has more than 40 distilleries, in terms of direct and indirect employment. Essentially, I am concerned about how the Chancellor reconciles his decision to put 26p on a bottle of whisky with the reduction of 20p on a bottle of champagne. What kind of message will that send to the other members of the European Union, where 40 per cent. of our export market is based, when he argues for the reduction of discrimination against Scotch whisky?

Mr. Clarke: My statement last week put another 8p back on to sparkling wine, and that was in line with the way that we had based duty before. If one is scraping the barrel for arguments, the champagne thing is fun, but it is fairly irrelevant. The sparkling wines in question include champagne, but they also include many other sparkling wines that are manufactured in this country. The change about which so much fuss was made was a perfectly ordinary, common sense move to bring the duty on sparkling wines into line with that on fortified wines. There was no logical reason for different amounts. My corrigenda statement at the end of last week was to put another 8p on wines, which included Champagne.

The serious point about whisky is that I would have preferred to freeze duty. Scotch whisky is a major employer in the hon. Lady's constituency and in that part of Scotland; it is also one of our most successful industries. The Scotch whisky industry has been even more successful than the brewers in responding to pressures on the trade. It is a successful exporter and is building up its position in many important markets.

The best argument was made by the hon. Lady. In due course, when arguing about the approximation of duty, we shall encourage other countries not to discriminate against spirits in their pattern of duties, and perhaps to increase the duty on wine to reduce the distortion. This year, forced as I was to find the revenue, I have not been able to maintain the freeze, but I shall certainly address that key question in talks with our European partners against the background of the policy that I have described.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, whatever impact personal imports under the single market may have on excise duty or on the trade of off-licences and supermarkets, there is no reason why the brewing industry or the distillers should suffer? It is no more difficult to ship British beer from Burton on Trent or from London to a hypermarket in Calais than it is to ship beer from Strasbourg, Amsterdam or Copenhagen. There is therefore no reason why there should be a negative impact on the volume of production by British distillers and brewers.

Mr. Clarke: I might, with caution, try out that argument on a brewer, but my hon. Friend should bear in mind the position of off-licence retailers and others who have no such protection against the trade.

I turn to the duties on petrol and diesel, which also will not be welcomed by many right hon. and hon. Members. Again, it was quite impossible to raise the necessary revenue without making a further addition to duty on petrol and diesel over and above that which I had previously resolved to impose. Nevertheless, even with the moves we have made, which have good environmental consequences and are welcomed by the environmental lobbies, petrol remains cheaper in real terms than it was 10 years ago. After both increases in duty, unleaded petrol will still be cheaper in Britain than in most of the major economies of western Europe, including Germany, France and Italy.

Tobacco is subject to many of the arguments that I deployed earlier. We are caught in a dilemma.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North) *rose*—

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way shortly to my hon. Friend, who has a constituency interest in the matter.

The Government are following a policy of raising taxation on tobacco to reduce consumption. That policy has been supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House for some time, so it is not possible to argue against the duty simply on the basis that it is damaging the tobacco industry. It is a positive act of policy to reduce sales and there is no point in shrinking away from it. However, it is never Government policy to damage British sales in favour of continental sales; therefore, the same point that I made about differing levels of duty on alcohol applies. Personally, I am in no doubt—and nor is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health—that European countries should follow our commendable health policy and raise their duties on tobacco to approximate with ours.

Mr. Harry Greenway *rose*—

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend has many constituents who work in the tobacco industry, so no doubt he has a point of view.

Mr. Greenway: I know that the Labour party spokesman wants to go much further than my right hon. and learned Friend, but does he not realise that cigarettes are not only being imported from France and Germany, where duty is much lower, but smuggled too? Does he accept that that means jobs are being exported from Britain? In Gallahers in Northholt, 204 jobs have been lost within the week. My constituents' jobs are being exported to other countries. They cannot accept that, and why should they?

Mr. Clarke: I am sorry to hear about the loss of jobs at Gallahers. As the economy is recovering so strongly, and new jobs are being created, I hope that his constituents do not have to wait too long before resuming work in other jobs. My hon. Friend would find it difficult to maintain that the loss of jobs is directly related to my statement last Thursday. I doubt whether that was the critical decision-making factor. It is also by no means easy to demonstrate that it was a result of smuggling; it is a result of changing habits. The point of taxation policy is in part to discourage smoking. My remarks on smuggling remain. We must tackle smuggling ever more effectively and keep up pressure on other Europeans to raise their duties.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Chancellor give way on that point?

Mr. Clarke: I must get on.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have waited patiently.

Mr. Clarke: Sooner or later, I shall have to refuse someone. I have not picked out the hon. Gentleman, but I shall certainly make him wait.

I have covered all the resolutions before the House bar one—the first resolution that the Opposition have sought to amend. I can tell from the amendments that they believe that they have read into the first resolution an intention to extend VAT to zero-rated goods. I hope that I am not cutting out a large part of the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), but before he launches on that I should like to give him a reassurance and undertaking, as it looks like that when one first reads it.

The first resolution is a wholly technical resolution of a kind that has been tabled ever since VAT was introduced in Britain in 1972. It means merely that if, in the course of operating the duties on fuel at an intermediate level and the new ones I have announced—particularly those on fuel—it turns out that anomalies are creeping in and that the drafting is incorrect, that can be changed by order and would not require fresh primary legislation. I am advised that it is quite essential to the proper operation of a complicated tax such as VAT.

The argument has been made before; it is not original. If the hon. Gentleman pretends to read into it a tremendous intention to extend VAT to other zero-rated goods, I shall repeat the undertaking that has been given by all my predecessors since Tony Barber, because the drafting on the Order Paper is the same as that used by Labour Chancellors and not just by Conservative Chancellors. The Government have no intention and would never extend VAT to zero-rated goods without primary legislation. At the moment I have not thought about any future Budget and would not do so. To press the amendments, although they appear to be aimed at a serious political point, would impede the sensible operation of the tax and I hope that the Opposition will not do so.

[Mr. Clarke]

I hope that the Labour party will turn instead to taking the third opportunity to try to produce a macro-economic policy of its own. If it plans to vote against any of the resolutions, it must have some germ of an alternative idea in mind about how it would tackle the problems.

I do not wish to ask difficult questions for which the Opposition are not yet ready; I have only straightforward fundamental questions. Is the level of public borrowing too high or too low? Is the general level of taxation we are proposing too high or too low? If the Opposition are unable to answer those questions, they are unable to make a serious contribution to an economic debate.

I hope that we do not hear any more about loopholes. There were £10 billion worth last year and there are none this year. The windfall tax is based on the assumption that when and if a sale of the national grid goes ahead, one taxpayer might be exposed to a particular sum of money replacing a stream of revenue. I shall not go into that again, but at the moment the Shadow Chancellor is putting forward policies that are so shadowy as to be invisible.

This evening the House will vote in a responsible way for resolutions that will deal with the gap in the public finances and, far more important, with the key issue: to back the Government's economic policy which has put Britain on course for recovery.

These resolutions keep intact the economic policy of the Government. That policy is a successful economic policy and is sustaining growth and bringing down unemployment. It must be kept on the road. It is the only sensible economic policy on offer in the House and is strongly supported by the business and financial community. These resolutions are consistent with strong and decisive action, which will give us a powerful manufacturing industrial economy again. I commend the resolutions to the House.

5.9 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): I beg to move amendment (a), in line 7, leave out "for the time being".

This second debate on the Budget, like the mini-Budget last Thursday, arises because the Chancellor got it wrong over VAT on fuel. He got it wrong by going ahead with it in the first place. He then got it wrong by refusing to listen to the representations that were made before the Budget. He got it wrong a third time by refusing to rethink even when the strength of opposition became clear.

Events have already shown how right we were to defeat the Government last Tuesday. If the Chancellor gets it wrong on an issue as crucial as VAT, why should anybody believe that he can get anything else right? He has already made his views clear about VAT. He wanted VAT on fuel at 17.5 per cent.—not next April but this April. He has voted for VAT on children's clothes. He favours a principle, as he told a constituent, of going even further, and wants to extend VAT to other goods as well. He said at a by-election that not to extend VAT to items, including food, transport, books, newspapers and children's clothes, was "an anomaly". Therefore, we will need more from the Chancellor than the assurances that he gave at the end of the debate, about existing legislation and statutory orders, before we believe that it is not his long-term plan to extend VAT to other items.

I noticed when I raised the issue with the Chancellor this afternoon that, once again, he refused to give the promise that even the Prime Minister was prepared to give before the last election—that they would not extend VAT to those items.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman will confirm whether it is Labour party policy never to extend VAT to any of the zero-rated goods?

Mr. Brown: I have said on many occasions that it is not our proposal to do that. The question is whether the Chancellor will tell us his policy on these matters. The hon. Lady should think twice before she intervenes to ask about promises, because when she spoke to her constituents during the previous election, she said, "We need low taxes." She has been unable to deliver that, so perhaps an apology from her to her constituents would be in order before she proceeds to interrogate anybody else.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose—*

Mr. Brown: I shall give way to the Chancellor if he will answer the question that I put to him earlier. Will he repeat the promise that was made by the Prime Minister, that the Government would not extend VAT to food, children's clothes, books and newspapers, and transport? Will he repeat that promise, yes or no?

Mr. Clarke: That is a bit rich considering that the hon. Gentleman just ducked, with no great elegance, the question that was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait). He said that his party has no proposals to extend VAT to those items. We have no proposals to do so. He makes extended and distorted use of quotations that I have never considered.

I have said for years that, if we went back and started again, there is a case to be made for having a lower rate of VAT and fewer exemptions. But I have had a policy. I have not extended things. I have had two Budgets. Will the hon. Gentleman give—as he is making so much of this—the guarantee for which my hon. Friend asked? Will he get up and say—he should not if he ever wants to be Chancellor—that he will never extend VAT to any of those goods?

Mr. Brown: I notice—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes or no?"]—very clearly that the Chancellor has given something away this afternoon that he will live to regret. He has said that he will not give the guarantee that he will not extend VAT to food, children's clothes, books and newspapers, and transport. The Chancellor is now on record in the House of Commons as saying that he refuses to give that guarantee. This is a very revealing afternoon for the House, and I believe that, if the Prime Minister were sitting next to him, he would be very angry indeed that his statement had been contradicted by the Chancellor.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I shall give way once more, but then I must move on.

Mr. Ottaway: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He is particularly keen on telling people what they have pledged and what they have not in elections. Is he aware that his own election address in 1992 for Dunfermline, East contained the pledge that Labour would be tough and protect the environment? It also said that the polluter must pay. What is that if it is not a carbon tax? Is it not just the same as VAT on fuel?

Mr. Brown: Those are precisely the sort of proposals that we have been making—for example, the proposal for a landfill levy, which I notice that the Chancellor is now prepared to support. But before we leave the question of VAT, perhaps the Chancellor will answer one question. He gave a guarantee to the House only a few minutes ago that he would not extend the coverage of VAT other than by primary legislation. Will he therefore withdraw the VAT transport order?

Mr. Clarke: I have been answering questions all afternoon. The hon. Gentleman is answering none, but I am happy to answer questions in his speech as well, if he likes.

The extension of the VAT transport order was done partly under these resolutions and partly under the Finance Bill as well. The VAT zero rating on transport is designed to protect passenger transport. It has now been extended to air balloon rides, funfair rides, to things inside theme parks. This legislation covers anomalies of that kind, but in this case a combination of an order and, I think, measures in the Finance Bill has been used as well.

The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well what we are talking about. He comes out with a litany about children's clothes, food, and so on, but he has refused to give a guarantee this afternoon that he will not extend VAT to those as well.

Mr. Brown: The Chancellor made a promise that lasted for about three and a half minutes—that he would never proceed with extending VAT other than by primary legislation. The VAT transport order was laid by the Chancellor. Will he withdraw it and put the measure in the Finance Bill so that we may have a proper debate on the matter, or will he dishonour yet another promise? I think that the House knows exactly where the Government stand on issues such as VAT.

We must look at the Budget as a whole and look at its effect on the living standards of people throughout this country.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I shall give way if the hon. Gentleman wants to ask me something that I have been talking about in the past few minutes.

Mr. Davies: Indeed. Before the hon. Gentleman moves on to other subjects and tries to bury this issue, will he or will he not give a guarantee to the House this afternoon that he would not extend VAT if ever he were Chancellor?

Mr. Brown: We judge the Conservatives by their actions. The hon. Gentleman has the gall to come to the House this afternoon and talk about promises on taxation. What did he say to his electorate in Stamford and Spalding? He said:

> "We are absolutely committed to continuing to bring down taxes."

Yet another promise has been broken by Conservative Members. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members are clearly living up to the Maples memorandum this afternoon. They are behaving as though they want to disrupt the debate entirely, they are so embarrassed by the broken promises of two years' standing over the whole issue of taxation.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Answer the question.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman asks me to answer a question that the Chancellor will not answer. The Chancellor made a promise five minutes ago and broke it five minutes later.

I want to look at the issues affecting the Budget in relation to living standards. Let us look at how it affects the home owner. Let us look at the Budget overall. Home owners are faced with mortgage rises that have already come through since September and are facing likely mortgage rises from decisions on interest rates that were announced last week. The Chancellor must justify and explain to the House why the very same home owners are also being hit by the withdrawal of mortgage tax relief and the imposition of a home insurance tax. We have seen even in the social security statement—at a time of growing insecurity in the jobs market, which has been recognised by surveys and opinion polls only this week—the withdrawal of support for mortgages when people are unemployed.

Home owners have been hit by this Budget, as they were by previous Budgets. They have been hit with interest rate rises, the withdrawal of mortgage tax relief and home insurance tax. As they will tell Conservative Members—no doubt Thursday's by-election in Dudley will serve as a starting point—unemployed people are now hit by the withdrawal of mortgage tax relief.

How has the Budget hit motorists? We have often heard the Chancellor defend an increase in the cost of petrol; but let us examine the overall cost to the motorist. The price of petrol has now risen twice, a car insurance tax is being introduced and vehicle excise duty is being increased. It is no wonder that motoring organisations express worries about people's ability to hold on to their cars.

Let us consider the cumulative effect of Budgets on widows. The starting point at which a widow paid tax used to be £99; now, as a result of the changes made by the Chancellor, it is £93. The Chancellor tells us that we should not worry about his decision to cut duty on champagne, but I believe that people will observe the contrast between his ability to cut champagne duty and his ability to tax widows at the same time.

The Chancellor also defended his measures in relation to beer and spirits this afternoon, saying that last Thursday he raised the tax on champagne. What, however, is the final result? Beer is up by 1p and whisky by 26p, while champagne is down by 19p.

Mr. John Townend: Does the hon. Gentleman really think it sensible to levy a higher tax on a bottle of claret costing £25 than on a bottle of cheap Australian sparkling wine costing £3? The previous position was an illogical anomaly that the Chancellor has put right. It is ridiculous to make out that we are trying to benefit the wealthy by cutting the price of champagne.

Mr. Brown: That shows the difference in the priorities of the parties. I regard it as an anomaly that widows who used to start paying tax at £99 are now starting to pay it at £93. I think the hon. Gentleman would agree that, in a

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Budget that raised everyone's taxes, it was not a priority for the Chancellor to cut duty on champagne for people who have enough money to afford it.

Two weeks ago, the Chancellor said that he had "listened to the concerns" of industry. He said:

> "No Chancellor can remain unmoved in the face of this".—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1096.]

Let me ask the Chancellor and the Chief Secretary how many jobs they expect to be lost as a result of the rise in beer and whisky duties. If the Chancellor could not remain unmoved in the face of those concerns two weeks ago, will he now tell us how many jobs he expects to be lost?

The Chancellor presented a second argument. He said that he could have introduced no alternative measures that would not penalise middle or lower-income Britain. He gave us the impression that he had been as fair as possible. But what did Mr. John Spiers, of BESt Investment, say in the *Financial Times* only last week?

> "If we had written it ourselves we could not have come up with a better Budget for the tax shelter industry."

Those are not my views; they are the expert views of people close to the industry, who do not usually speak highly of this aspect of Budgets.

Mr. Spiers went on:

> "I cannot see why ever anyone should pay capital gains tax again."

Commenting on the Budget, the *Financial Times* said:

> "The scale of the incentives dangled by the Chancellor suggests sponsors and venture capitalists will be queueing round the block to launch venture capital trusts."

That leads me to a statement issued by the journal of BESt Investment, entitled "Tax Shelter Service". The Chancellor had better be aware of the implications of the measures that he is asking us to approve. The company states:

> "The Budget may have been regarded as boring . . . but for the tax shelter business it contained arguably the most exciting combination of measures ever seen. The Government is now offering up to 60 per cent. tax rebates on investments . . . Investors will have no less than four opportunities for sheltering tax . . . As a result we cannot see why anyone should choose to pay capital gains tax in future."

Why is all that happening? Why is the Chancellor's Budget leading to the biggest ever boost for the tax avoidance industry? Far from ending tax abuses, as the Chancellor implied he was doing in his speech last week, he has opened up many more. Far from dealing with the criticisms of executive share options that have been put to him—not least by the vice-chairman of the Conservative party—he has cost himself much more money, and in the process has introduced more tax shelters for the capital tax avoidance industry.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose—*

Mr. Brown: I am happy to give way to the Chancellor, but I think he should explain why the tax shelter industry describes the Budget as the best boost that it has had for years.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman keeps slipping between the words "tax shelter" and "tax abuse". What he describes are people trying to explain the tax advantages of investing in small, emerging, growing companies through the vehicle of venture capital trusts. It is new investment in new businesses and new jobs. It is absurd to describe those tax reliefs as a tax abuse; they are good for small industry and good for employment.

Mr. Brown: If the Chancellor were telling us the whole truth, he would mention the fact that he has extended the tax reliefs to the property industry. He has reopened all the abuses that made the closing down of the business expansion scheme necessary. Far from simply helping new manufacturing industry to get off the ground, as the Chancellor implies, the Budget—in two instances—extended the capital gains exemptions to the property industry. It is for that reason—the return of 60 per cent. tax relief, not the creation of jobs—that the tax avoidance industry is telling people about the great new opportunities that are available to them.

Last year, the Chancellor said that we would receive £1.3 billion from capital gains tax revenues. Now, in the Budget, he has downgraded the amount to £800 million. Despite all that he says about the boom in the economy, he has frozen the amount that he expects to receive next year at £800 million as well.

The Chancellor tells us that there is not a single alternative that he could consider, other than penalising middle and lower-income Britain, and that it would be wrong to end the tax privileges surrounding executive share options. In fact, the Chancellor's Budget has opened up even more opportunities for tax avoidance—opportunities available both to those who hold executive share options and to those who are prepared to avoid their capital gains tax liability throughout the 1990s and probably beyond.

I remind the Chancellor that it was not me alone who raised the question of capital gains tax abuses. The vice-chairman of the Conservative party put it thus:

> "Although in the 1980s Conservative seemed to promise a classless society . . . the reality is now that the rich are getting richer on the backs of the rest who are getting poorer. Excessive pay packages especially in the privatised utilities cause real offence. Could we in future tax share options as income not capital gains and introduce some level of options above which tax would be charged as they rise in value not just when they are exercised?"

The Chancellor says that, by refusing to do that, he loses only £60 million. Indeed, he said in the House last week—the Chief Secretary nods—that the sum was only £50 million to £60 million. That is not an insubstantial amount; it could be used to defray the rising cost of dental treatment or eye tests, for instance. It could have given a better deal to many people who face tax rises. I do not see how the Chancellor can justify the loss—if it were so—of £60 million through this scheme. Even the *Financial Times* has said:

> "the real joy of executive share options is that there is no risk of losing money."

The Association of British Insurers and the National Association of Pension Funds have said that the schemes may not be in the interests of shareholders, the public or employees. All the research that has been carried out recently shows that two thirds of the schemes do not have performance targets. The all-party Select Committee that examines these matters—its members come from both sides of the Chamber, but it is dominated by Conservative Members—criticised the schemes and commented that they rewarded short-term performance and not the long-term needs of the economy. Yet the Government have refused, even though it has cost £370 million on their own figures, to deal with the problem.

If the Chancellor of the Exchequer examines carefully the Treasury's assumptions about the revenue that it loses as a result of executive share options—I do not believe that he has—he will find that the assumptions are wanting, and that the loss is substantially larger. Perhaps the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will do us the courtesy of responding to my arguments one by one when he replies later this evening.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer should understand that the estimated £60 million is based on some strange assumptions. Those who hold executive share options include Lord Young, Sir John Nott and other well-known Conservatives. It is assumed that those men, who are sophisticated in terms of financial markets, will buy shares other than at the best time for share values. It is then assumed that they will sell just about every share on the day that they buy them. It is further assumed that most of the capital gains tax exemption has been used in other ways and is not available to be set against share options. The next assumption is that none of the advantage is transferred to wives or spouses.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I shall give way if the right hon. and learned Gentleman can correct what I have just said.

Mr. Clarke: I am advised that the figure that I used includes the possibility of transfers to spouses.

Mr. Brown: Why is it not stated in the assumptions underlying the proposals, especially as the Chancellor of the Exchequer promised at the beginning of the year that all the assumptions—the promise was based on a freedom-of-information gesture—would be explained to the House? In fact, the necessary statement has not been made. That is why we have a figure as low as £60 million. The Chancellor has been wrongly advised.

Why is it also assumed that men or women with executive share options will fail to perceive the advantage of defraying up to £200,000 of their capital tax liability by using the various schemes that the Chancellor has over time introduced, or by continuing to use the reinvestment relief that is available? It seems that the assumption behind the Treasury calculations is that the business acumen, flair and entrepreneurial spirit for which share option holders have been praised by the Government desert them on the day that they get hold of an executive share option. The Treasury's £60 million is based on a guesstimate that share option holders will act irrationally and against their interests when it comes to dealing with their own finances.

The main tax planning tool is the annual capital gains exemption—the spreading of disposals to wives. At the same time, it is assumed that shares will be bought when it is not the best time to buy them and when they do not represent best value. The Government's assumption will lose the Treasury substantial moneys.

As I have said, Lord Young has executive share options. He could pick up £1.1 million in profit on share options. Let us assume that he is granted them and decides not to sell in one go. He can then spread his capital gains tax liability over 10 or more years. He can transfer some of the shares to his spouse. He could take up a venture capital trust now. He could secure reinvestment relief and invest in property. As I have said, he could use up all his capital gains tax liability by means of such schemes. There is no reason why he or anyone else around him should have to pay CGT. None of these factors is properly taken into account in the Treasury's calculations.

If a few men in the privatised utilities can set against their share option liabilities—they run into £3 million for three top directors of PowerGen and £1 million for the top man at National Power—the various schemes to which I have referred, the moneys that will be received as a result of executive share options will be far less than assumed. The Government have not calculated the cost to the nation properly; they have not been serious about tackling the abuses which have arisen; and they are unaware of the anger throughout the country at the fact that they are prepared to penalise middle and lower-income Britain while allowing those who are extremely rich to go ahead and cash in their executive share options without paying a proper amount of tax.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree with his departing colleague, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), that those who fall into the so-called category of the undeserving rich are those earning less than £60,000 a year—I ask the question in the light of the hon. Gentleman's recent remarks—or does he feel that the figure should be pitched a little lower than that?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman has misread the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn. I talked to my right hon. Friend about those remarks on the day he made them. He never mentioned "undeserving rich". He and I have made a distinction between those who create wealth, start businesses and provide jobs—they deserve rewards for doing so—and others who under the Government have been given, because of monopoly positions or other privileges accorded to them, unfair rewards that cannot be justified in any taxation arrangements that the Government may make for them. When a millionaire can avoid paying any income tax, there is something extremely wrong with the taxation system. The hon. Gentleman should put his question to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, not to me.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I shall give way once more and then I wish to conclude my remarks.

Mr. Clappison: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, especially as he has said that he wants to bring his remarks to an end.

Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will consider his overall macro-economic strategy and say something about borrowing. Does he accept the Government's approach to borrowing, or would he be prepared to accept a higher level of borrowing? Which is it?

Mr. Brown: I have said on many occasions that the aim of policy that is directed towards the public sector borrowing requirement should be to enable us to fund consumption. Investment is justified in certain circumstances, as any company or family would invest. The golden rule to which I would adhere is that consumption should be funded over the cycle by revenues. In my view, investment justifies borrowing in certain circumstances. That is a far more prudent policy than the

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one that the Government pursued over the 1991–1993 period. Either they misled us about the real position of the economy or they have been entirely incompetent in implementing their policies.

The executive share option issue will not go away. We heard today that Mr. Maurice Saatchi of Saatchi and Saatchi is proposing at some stage to cash in share options that would be worth about £5 million. He obviously meant it when he said words to this effect, "Don't let Labour ruin it." I refer to the slogan for the 1987 election. The tax bombshell was for others; the tax bonanza was for him.

For people like Mr. Saatchi and those in the privatised utilities, there is a national lottery that does not involve scouring the country looking for the winner. Winners are known in advance. By naming those who occupy the boardrooms of privatised utilities, we can predict with precision those who are making the millions. It is a lottery in which the participants do not win once: they win every year under the Government. Indeed, many people have been winning for 15 years. They are the happy few. Many of them are part of a band of tax avoiders under a Cabinet whose members make promises to take good care of them.

We propose that the Government should consider levying a windfall tax on utilities. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he would not consider the proposal in detail because he rejected the concept of a windfall tax, despite the fact that one had been imposed on the banks by a Conservative Government in 1981.

Let us consider the facts; the House should be aware of them. Utilities have made profits of £45 billion during the recession, doubling their profits. The profits of electricity units increased by 250 per cent. Profits within the water industry have virtually doubled to £1.8 billion. National Power has trebled its profits during the same period. PowerGen has doubled its profits. In the past few days, it has been reported that Northern's dividends have increased in value by 30 per cent. while Eastern's and Southern's have increased by 25 per cent. and 24 per cent. respectively. The business is so lucrative that many electricity companies are buying back their own shares and making extra payments in dividends.

Is it not obvious—

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): They should cut prices.

Mr. Brown: The price cuts will be coming from next year. We must deal with the situation that has arisen this year and last year as a result of the excess profits that have been made.

Mr. Peter Rost, a former Conservative Member, who now represents the Major Energy Users Council, said:

> "The right course is for the taxpayer to benefit. It is right to claim back the money and use it to pay for policies that benefit the economy as a whole."

He speaks for a substantial body of opinion. Artificially created profits have resulted from the monopoly position that the Government have given to industries through privatisation and their profits have doubled during the recession when most ordinary industrial companies had no profits. That should be re-examined.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer should consider the position in relation to the national grid. Will he confirm that, for the purposes of sale, the national grid was valued at £1 billion or less when it was sold to the electricity companies and that it is now valued at nearly £4 billion—some people say £5 billion—that a windfall profit will be made as a result of its demerger, that the Government have a golden share in the national grid which they should use to extract the best benefit for the country, and that the electricity companies are even resisting a scheme that would give a substantial amount of the money to their customers? Is it not right that the public should share in the benefit from the windfall profit, which has accrued not because of the companies' good management but because the Government gifted them the resource?

If the Chancellor rejects the idea of a windfall tax, let him consider the comments of Sir Geoffrey Howe in 1981, who said that the business sector—this was his justification for the windfall tax—had largely been protected from the effects of recession. That has happened in relation to the utilities because of the monopoly position. When the Chief Secretary to the Treasury argues against that view this evening, he will be arguing against Lady Thatcher's position when a Conservative Government were in power. Sir Geoffrey Howe said that profits

> "have increased sharply, both absolutely and by contrast with the experience of most other businesses."

That has happened in relation to the utilities. He said that he could not avoid the conclusion that he should require banks

> "to make a special fiscal contribution."—[*Official Report*, 10 March 1981; Vol. 1000, c. 772-73.]

If it was right for the banks with windfall profits to make a contribution, it is surely right for the utilities to do so, especially when we know about the profits to be made by the national grid.

The Chancellor says that he knows nothing about the taxation benefit that may accrue, but will he confirm that, the day after the Budget, a week before his mini-Budget, the President of the Board of Trade met the electricity companies to discuss the windfall that should come to the Treasury once the sale had taken place? The Chancellor looks as if he knows nothing about it. He should check what sources of revenue are available before he introduces new taxes on ordinary people.

The Chancellor prides himself on being tough on ambulance men, tough on prison officers, hard on the people that he has been up against, including teachers, and hard on doctors; but when it comes to the utilities and to people at the very top with substantial sums of money, he is a soft touch, and the Budget is increasingly viewed as unfair.

Let us apply the fairness test to the Budget. It is clear that income tax cuts were made between 1979 and 1992 for people at the very top—the top 1 per cent. received 30 per cent. of tax cuts and the top 5 per cent. received nearly 50 per cent. of tax cuts. However, the top 5 per cent. do not pay 50 per cent. of tax rises; at best estimates, they pay only about 10 per cent. That is not a fair approach, given the substantial benefits that they received throughout the 1980s, which even Mr. Maples has been forced to acknowledge.

What is the strategy behind the Budget statement and the follow-up statement that had to be made last Thursday? It is the only strategy that the Conservative party has left for the next election. It is not an economic strategy but simply an election strategy. There are no taxes that the Government will not be prepared to increase and no suffering that they will not be prepared to impose to create the scope for what they think is the election-winning card—a tax cut next year, running into an election next year or the year after. That is how the Prime Minister in particular views the position.

Let me tell the Chancellor the facts about taxation which will confront the electorate in 1996 or 1997. In 1992, £37 billion was paid in VAT. Next year, it will be £48 billion. Despite all the promises at the previous election, the amount taken in VAT has risen by £11 billion and much of that amount arises from increases announced by the Government.

The Chancellor went to the electorate with a pledge that he would lower income tax. Let us consider what has happened in relation to income tax and national insurance. In 1992, total income tax and national insurance paid amounted to £72 billion. Next year, it will amount to £90 billion. In 1992, £57 billion was paid in income tax. By next year, it will be £70 billion. Even if the Government were able to cut the basic rate of income tax by 5p in the pound, the overall tax bill would be higher in 1996 and 1997 than in 1992 when the election was fought.

As a result of all the tax rises that have taken place, next year the British people will pay £50 billion more in taxation than they paid in the 1990–1992 period. Even a cut of 5p in the basic rate of income tax will not undo the damage that is equivalent, as the Chancellor admits, to 7p in the pound. That is why Conservatives will be embarrassed in their explanations to the electorate in the next election campaign.

When we face the next election, we will have tax rises that have been real and lasting, that have happened all the time and that have hit the many most. That should be compared with tax cuts that people will realise are token, an attempt at a pre-electoral bribe and beneficial to the few most. An election year tax cut, contrived to obscure relentless increases in taxation, year after year, will not impress the British people, especially when it is clear from what we have said today that the biggest beneficiaries of the Budget and the mini-Budget statement will be people at the top who are able to shelter substantial capital gains through tax avoidance.

Where the Chancellor could have been fair, he has been unfair. Where he could have taxed excesses at the top, he has taxed the daily purchases of the vast majority. Where he could have closed tax shelters, he has opened them up. He has taxed beer but cut tax on champagne. He has even introduced new taxation on ordinary savers but given millionaires huge windfall help. A tiny minority of the people stand to benefit most as a result to his measures.

These are not the Budget measures of a caring or competent Government. These are the Budget measures of a Government who are out of touch with the British people. The House, by its actions and speaking on behalf of the public, stopped VAT on domestic fuel rising to 17.5 per cent. It is time for the House and the people of this country to stop the Government. What the people of Dudley, West will say on Thursday, the whole country will say at the earliest possible opportunity, and the Government will go.

5.47 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): I apologise to the House and, more particularly, to the Front-Bench spokesmen, that I have an unbreakable commitment that will keep me from the bulk of the debate, including the winding-up speeches. I assure the Whip, however, that I shall be here for the vote and I shall, I hope, compensate for my bad behaviour by making a short speech.

I always enjoy these occasions, not least because my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer clearly revels in these exchanges. He revels in that good-natured bruising, rather like Brian Clough in happier days, as he berates his opponents and even, in more hilarious moments, his friends. I thought that I should get in with an early bid for his favour by saying how much I welcome his decision to present the Budget resolutions. It would have been ill-advised to take the implied advice of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and to allow the elasticity of the public sector borrowing requirement to cope with the statistical problem.

Similarly, I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's decision not to place any further pressure on public spending, partly because it is often an illusory gesture that only rephases public spending commitments, but also because the local government settlement this year is extremely stringent.

I should like to reflect on the unique nature of the corrigendum, as my right hon. and learned Friend called it, to the original Budget statement. It has come about because of a taxpayers' revolt. Taxpayers did not exactly take to the streets, but they nevertheless made it known to Members of Parliament in the most powerful and genuine way imaginable that VAT on domestic fuel was inequitable and challenged a great many of the inherent value judgments about our taxation priorities. That is not a wholly novel experience, because almost exactly the same thing happened with the community charge.

My mind strayed back to the happy days before the 1979 general election, when Tory policy on taxation and public spending was reinforced by the experience of proposition 13 in California, where Howard Jarvis and Paul Gann pioneered a revolt on the streets to enforce tax discipline and, subsequently, public spending discipline. The movement that we are experiencing is subtly different.

There is no doubt that the pressures being put on us are against any disturbance of our inherited tax pattern. The community charge was a new tax and the extension of VAT to domestic fuel was an innovation involving an existing tax, but it was deemed to go beyond the original social objectives of VAT, which is what I shall dwell on for a moment.

I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor did not have much time to manoeuvre, but he responded to last week's events by reinforcing all the old traditional taxes. We have in fact diverged fractionally from our European Union partners as a result of this exercise, but I dare say that there will not be many damp handkerchiefs on that account.

The House must recognise the disciplines on it that are implicit in the strong public reaction against further taxation, especially in certain respects. The hon. Member for Dumfermline, East (Mr. Brown) is perfectly right to take up the cudgels against the extension of VAT. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor responded fraternally, but it was a bit of a custard-pie exercise. I did not think that it was altogether real politics. Is it seriously supposed that any party wants to extend VAT to food, transport or housing? The hon. Member for Dumfermline,

[Mr. John Biffen]

East points across the Chamber, but I would love to know what he thinks in his heart is the difference between his conditional stance and that of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Those are bound to be conditional stances because we do not conduct our fiscal policy in a vacuum. It is conducted with the advice, guidance and nudging of our European Union partners—and with the negotiating skills of which my right hon. and learned Friend feels that he is possessed. That brings us into a genuine confrontation with our European partners, not necessarily a bitter confrontation, but one that the House must recognise. Their taxation policies proceed from quite different social and economic backgrounds from ours.

We have always had a cheap food policy. Historically, it was based on free trade, but there are now social considerations in deciding to have a zero rate on food and travel and, until recently, on fuel. We know what storms are released when one begins to disturb that social pattern. It is a matter of great anxiety for Chancellors and shadow Chancellors that their tax manoeuvres are constrained in that way, but our experience of the past few months is that they are so constrained.

There is a European context to this debate. That is not the paranoia of a Tory Euro-sceptic, but the calm reflection of someone who tries to be tolerably well informed about what is happening around and about. One cannot talk about convergence, cohesion or a single currency without accepting that they have implications for a fiscal pattern that will have broad comparability across the European Union.

I watched Opposition Members this afternoon with an almost missionary zeal and I have to ask what the parliamentary Labour party's position is on Europe, or that of Labour Back Benchers. Originally I would have said, and will still say, that they are today's Trappists and tomorrow's sceptics. There is not a significant element in the Labour party that would trade in our present taxation pattern and social objectives expressed in our low or zero rates of tax over wider areas of the Community. For them, there is no merit in that. There may not be much merit in it for many others, but it becomes politically impossible to put taxes such as VAT on food, travel and housing if it is seen as part of a deal inspired by external agreement and force.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Surely the real comparison is not between the United Kingdom and other countries, but between the total taxation levied on the typical individual or family in Britain when the Government came to power and that levied 15 years later. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) constantly points out, despite the fact that a central plank of the Government's programme was to reduce taxation, the average share of the typical family's gross income that goes in tax has gone up in 15 years from just over 32 per cent. to 36 per cent. That is the real comparison.

Mr. Biffen: I am happy to acknowledge the underlying shift in public spending that has occurred under the Conservative Government. I suspect that the hon. Gentleman will find that roughly the same has happened in other western European countries, because in many ways they have exactly the same social characteristics as us. They have the same population structures and the same demands from the elderly and the young, which all make for a powerful spending base for the Government.

My point is that we have come to finance that spending in accordance with our past social and economic judgments as to what were acceptable balances of taxation. We shall not find it easy to move away from that which will inevitably bring us into conflict with other economies that have different taxation patterns but which requires movement on our part in the light of common commitments within the European Union.

My thoughts on the matter were given a particular focus by *The Times* on Monday. At the Essen summit meeting, Mr. Kohl said that the Prime Minister's Euro-sceptic critics would be

"swept away by the wind of history, as they deserve".

It is nice to be told to hitch up one's Lederhosen and get marching into the future, but it is not like that. The social and economic judgments that have created our tax policy and structure came about because our constituents put pressure on their Members of Parliament who, in due course, determined the system that we now have. It is not one that can be easily mortgaged to outside interests, and nor should it be.

5.58 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I always enjoy following the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), whose contributions are nothing if not individual. However, it is important to put it on record that this particular tax change was an entirely self-inflicted wound for the Government and did not originate in Brussels.

It is extraordinary that the turntable has revolved to such an extent in two weeks. We were told initially that the extension of value added tax on fuel was absolutely crucial to the Government's Budget requirements and that the £1.5 billion revenue that it would raise was irreplaceable but, within a fortnight, the Government came up with alternative measures and settled for almost half of what they had said was absolutely essential. They have settled for £750 million to £800 million instead of £1.5 billion.

We were also told that if the House of Commons were so foolish as to vote down the extension of VAT, it would have a catastrophic effect on interest rates, which would rise by 2 to 3 per cent. The Chancellor may, of course, have been simply trying to protect himself from what he saw as the future effect of his current economic policy. But, so far, there is no sign that any such emergency increase is anywhere in the wind.

Indeed, the Governor of the Bank of England, giving evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, of which I am a member, made it clear that, as far as he was concerned, although the outcome of the vote may have affected the timing of the increase—at his request, the meeting was brought forward to 8.45 am as opposed to 9.30 am—the increase was related to the overall economic situation and his judgment of what was required at the time and had nothing whatever to do with the changed circumstances resulting from the vote.

Just for the record, it was interesting that the Chancellor indicated that he decided to increase interest rates. Of course, technically that is absolutely true, but the Governor of the Bank of England made it clear that the increase was at the Governor's request. So there may have been a slight difference in perception of exactly who was making the decision.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North made an interesting point about taxation and the distribution and balance of taxation, which had not been made before in the debate. The Government and the Conservative party ought to address it. When Conservative Members set out a policy of cutting income tax in 1979, many naive souls thought that they meant just that; nothing else. Some people thought that if they voted Conservative, they would pay less income tax. Hooray! Hallelujah! Reassuring speeches continued throughout the past 15 years saying that that would be achieved without any cuts in education or health. The Conservatives said that there would be painful spending cuts in general, but when it came to the specifics, Ministers were always ready at the Dispatch Box to say that social security spending was being protected, health spending was being protected and education spending was being protected.

That was, of course, a fantasy world. The standard rate of income tax was reduced, but that reduction was more than compensated for in other taxes elsewhere, which fell more unevenly and more unfairly. The intervention of the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) was more about the burden that has fallen on the average family when it calculates its total tax payment than about the deductions at source on its income.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Is the hon. Gentleman trying to say that the Government tried to deceive the electorate by saying that income tax would come down, but that any shortfall would not have to be made up from expenditure taxes? That is not true. The hon. Gentleman must remember that we fought those general elections in that period on a manifesto which said that we would switch taxes away from income tax to expenditure taxes. That is exactly what we have done.

Mr. Bruce: I seem to recall that Lord Howe, as he now is, said that he had no intention, when challenged, of doubling the rate of VAT. Of course, he was right, since it has risen from 8 per cent. to 17.5 per cent. That statement was specific. Indeed, when pressed at the last election, the Prime Minister said, in a formula that we all now recognise, that the Conservatives had no plans to increase taxes. That phrase means, of course, that they will do whatever they please as and when the time arises. However, the public have learn to understand that formula.

When the Chancellor made his second Budget speech, I made the point that he seemed absolutely determined to ensure that he got the revenue for which he settled from the most painful and irritating taxes on consumers, which they would really feel. I described that as "the politics of pique". I believe that it is just that. I find it extraordinary that the Chancellor could have found the money in other ways, causing less irritation and, indeed, less inflationary pressure, to which I shall return, yet chose not to. In fact, in his Budget, he gave away just over £1 billion in tax reductions, which he clearly decided were more urgent and more important than responding to the public demand not to extend VAT on fuel.

Certainly, quite a number of those tax changes were not urgent, or required or necessary to any strategy, public or private, which had been declared or communicated to the electorate. If the Chancellor had been in touch at all with public opinion, he would have recognised that he had room to manoeuvre, and could have made a virtue of not going ahead with the second tranche and saved the Government from the embarrassment of being defeated in the House.

I agree that the Government's defeat in the House of Commons has had a beneficial effect on the public's belief that the House, perhaps, for a change, has some real control over the Executive. However, the Chancellor has done nothing to improve the credibility of the Government, of which he is a member. Indeed, he could have retrieved a little of that credibility if he had been only a little more sensitive and a little more in touch.

The pique has gone into taxes on drink and petrol. The Chancellor tried to say that it was all the Opposition's fault. From the Liberal Democrats' point of view, all I can say is that we clearly identified alternatives which would have provided the money that he now says is necessary and which would not have caused the irritation and inflationary pressure.

When I questioned the Chancellor in his opening speech on that inflationary pressure, he said—perhaps it was an understandable answer—that the new tax changes were slightly less inflationary than the extension of VAT on fuel. My understanding is that VAT on fuel would have put 0.4 per cent. on the retail prices index, and the subsequent changes announced will put 0.3 per cent. on the RPI. However, when we are working with inflation levels of 2 per cent. or thereabouts, those increases have significant impact, which one would have thought that the Chancellor would wish to take on board.

Of course, 0.1 per cent. on the retail prices index, as, indeed, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury was telling the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee yesterday, has an immediate effect on the uprating of social security benefits. From reading the Chancellor's statement, I understand that social security charges rise by £160 million for every 0.1 per cent. on the retail prices index. In those circumstances, I put it to the Chancellor that, if he had not sought to get that money from putting up taxes at all, he would saved himself more than £600 million in social security uprating requirements. It seems strange that he did not take that opportunity.

I want to address the particular point of the extra duty on drink. A serious industrial issue arises, which the Chancellor has acknowledged and accepted. Indeed, I welcomed his response to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), which implied that he was prepared to look at the issue again to see whether there could be an adjustment in the distribution of drink taxes that would be beneficial to the whisky industry and, incidentally, I suppose, to gin makers as well. The Chancellor said on 29 November that his reason for not putting duty on drink was that he recognised the industrial issue and the concerns over smuggling. He said:

> "No Chancellor can remain unmoved in the face of this".—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1096.]

Having been moved then, a week later he had moved right back again. He has put pressure on the industry in ways that most of us who have a direct interest in the health of the Scotch whisky industry cannot understand. We have distilleries in our constituencies and therefore a real understanding of the industry's difficulty in the face of tax changes, which has been acknowledged in the past two Budgets.

[Mr. Bruce]

Wine is relatively less taxed than whisky. With the greatest respect to a few vineyards in the south of England, wine is not one of the United Kingdom's great beverages that we produce in substantial quantities and not one of our great industries. On the other hand, Scotch whisky has a global market in which we are pre-eminent. It is clearly acknowledged by the industry that its health in the home market is a major determinant of its continuing ability to sustain a healthy export market. If the Chancellor were determined to take his money from alcohol, he should have gone for the wine market rather than for the whisky industry.

I find it puzzling that the Chancellor seems to be more concerned about the sensitivities of the wine and champagne industries, which are not British—we do not make those products in significant quantities—and rather less concerned about a major home-grown industry. I hope that he will address that concern in a radical fashion, which will give the industry some confidence and optimism in its future regime.

I am not alone in that view. The Institute for Fiscal Studies, referring to that point, stated:

> "If the relevant measure of 'sin' is the alcoholic content of the drink, then there may be an argument for narrowing the 'tax per litre of alcohol' gap between spirits, and wines and beers. This would have the added benefit of lessening the current discrimination against a largely domestically produced good."

I hope that the Chancellor will consider that recommendation seriously, because it would be extremely welcome. I take his response to the hon. Member for Moray as a sign that he might be prepared to do that.

The increase in tobacco duty seems to be widely recognised as an area in respect of which there is a clear and unarguable health problem and where tax is a reasonable way of dealing with that problem. However, in the Liberal Democrat alternative Budget, we would have used the money specifically for the national health service.

We are particularly cross about the petrol tax. The Government do not seem to have a strategy for transport. The lead story in *The Guardian* today refers to the completely shambolic state of railway privatisation and the lack of a transport strategy. People in rural areas know that we do not have the potential for significant public transport development. As a consequence, the Government have simply increased the cost of using a car, particularly in rural areas, without a corresponding reduction elsewhere.

The Liberal Democrats believe that the Government should have cut vehicle excise duty, at least on small fuel-efficient cars. That would have reduced the tax on car ownership. As a result of that, one could have justified increasing tax on petrol so that that was a tax on use rather than on ownership. Increasing petrol tax while increasing vehicle excise duty imposes a burden with no compensation for people living in rural areas.

The Chancellor could have found the money in other ways. Indeed, I sent him a letter in which I enclosed my suggestions for raising that money. At least £600 million worth of tax cuts in the Chancellor's original Budget were unnecessary. The savings in respect of social security uprating by not including it in taxes would have been about £600 million. There were other areas where waste could have been eliminated in Departments, and that would have provided more revenue than the Chancellor has raised.

Perhaps the Chief Secretary to the Treasury would care to answer a question to which I have not received a satisfactory answer. He suggested to me yesterday that there was no way of cutting public expenditure in the current year once the Budget is set. I do not accept that it is not possible on procurement strategies, about which the Chief Secretary knows something, to say that, as the inflation outturn is better than expected, one is looking for additional savings to come back. I do not believe that that could not or should not happen.

I also want to know why the Government have done nothing about the more than £500 million that they are spending on consultants when the civil service analysis suggests that they have produced only £10 million of material benefit. That is clearly an area in respect of which there is identifiable waste inside and outside the Government.

For the benefit of the House and the Chancellor, I say that Liberal Democrats accept the need for a disciplined approach to budgeting. The Chancellor wanted to know what level of borrowing is acceptable and whether it was too high or too low. We have been working on the convergence criteria as a reasonable base to work towards. Three per cent. of gross domestic product is about £22 billion.

When we approached our budgetary exercise this year, we were quite clear that as the public sector borrowing requirement was well above that level, we could not justify an increase in borrowing and our Budget was calculated within that framework. I hope that the Government will acknowledge that we have accepted that discipline and that we have included it in our calculations. As the finances improve, we shall be able to select different priorities and people will be able to debate the choices. However, in the present climate, the Government have left us with very little room for manoeuvre, although I believe that we have found some quite creative ways of manoeuvring.

In his response to me the other day, the Chancellor said that our suggestion for taxing benefits in kind that are paid to employers on employers' national insurance charges was administratively impossible. I have checked that and, frankly, the Chancellor was talking absolute nonsense. That is a perfectly routine matter.

The Chancellor knows perfectly well that, as the threshold has never been increased in living memory above £8,500 a year, and as form P11D is required for everyone who earns more than £8,500 a year, it is simply a matter of ensuring that benefits in kind are declared and that the tax is calculated. It is nonsense to suggest that that cannot be done.

The Government have rushed into a situation where they simply did not need to create such pain. They have caused the maximum amount of pain for the minimum amount of gain. That is a rather churlish exercise, which I believe was motivated by pique. It ignores many of the arguments that the Government had previously put forward.

That point has been noted outside this place. Roger Bootle of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation—which includes the Midland bank—has written:

> "The Chancellor seems to have missed a trick. He surely could have raised the necessary money without increasing excise duties at all . . . thereby saving a full 0.4 per cent. on the RPI. This would have helped the battle against inflation directly and would have minimised the danger of an increase in wage inflation. In addition, it would have helped to reduce public expenditure, not least on benefits which are tied to the RPI. It seems particularly odd to target alcoholic drinks which the Chancellor ostentatiously left alone in his Budget"—

except for the cut in champagne. The City, like me, believes that the Chancellor has created irritation for no purpose.

Many of us are left with the belief that the Government have acted deliberately to try to get the message across to people that they had to increase taxes and that the Opposition forced them to raise those unpopular taxes. The truth is that the Government imposed those taxes on themselves. They have created the situation for themselves. They had enough disciplined means operating within their own constraints for raising such taxes. The Government are trying to get their hands on revenue so that they can give it back to people later and hope that they will be persuaded that that is great generosity resulting from the success of a Conservative Government.

Given that the Chief Secretary has already made it clear that the tax increases of the past two years were necessary and justified because of the potential borrowing requirement of £50 billion, will he tell us what level borrowing would have to be reduced to, to justify tax cuts, or at least will he tell us what the criteria would be to determine whether tax cuts were justified?

The House and the country are entitled to expect that the Government's argument that required tax increases should be the same argument that justifies tax cuts. If the Government have not been able to create the economic performance to justify that, they should not introduce cuts imprudently for purely political reasons when the economy cannot stand such cuts. If the Government are prepared to lecture Opposition parties about discipline, I hope that they will accept the constraints that their own discipline imposes on them.

6.18 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I preface my remarks by declaring an interest as parliamentary adviser to the Scotch Whisky Association. I shall elaborate on some of the points made by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) in connection with the industry.

I have never been a great enthusiast for VAT on fuel, but given the need for additional revenue I understand why my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) felt justified in introducing it. There is a perfectly valid argument to be made for it, not least that VAT on fuel applies in most European Union countries. Of course, in the case of most goods and services which attract VAT, the consumer can choose whether to purchase them. Fuel is a necessity.

That is not an argument against imposing VAT on fuel, but it is self-evident that it would be necessary to protect from its impact those on low incomes, particularly pensioners and others on social security benefits. I was one of several hon. Members who voiced concern on that score when the VAT proposals were announced in April 1993. I am bound to say that I was astonished that the need for a package of compensation was not recognised by Ministers and announced at the time of the April 1993 Budget, or at least soon after it. Instead, it was not until November last year that detailed proposals were announced. It was not surprising, therefore, that during those six or seven months a campaign against the tax built up a substantial head of steam. The campaign was never effectively countered, with the outcome that we saw a week ago—a case, I fear, of a defendable policy poorly presented.

Despite the fact that the first stage of VAT and the first stage of the compensation package were already operative, the House decided last week not to implement the second stage. That seemed to be an illogical, if not perverse, decision. However, the decision was clear, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor was right to accept it—indeed, he could not do otherwise. He was then forced to find alternative sources of revenue, and he spelled out the various possibilities that were open to him last Thursday and, to some extent, again today, and gave us his decisions.

The increase in respect of petrol is clearly unwelcome, but it is a well established source of revenue and should procure what the Chancellor wants. The House will not be surprised to know that I welcome the increase in tobacco duty. It is also a well established source of revenue and again should produce what my right hon. and learned Friend wants. I hope, too, that it will play a part in persuading smokers to reduce their consumption and in dissuading those who might be tempted to take up the habit from doing so. I am particularly concerned about the incidence of smoking among young girls.

If people choose to smoke, they should be free to do so, provided that they do not cause offence to others. However, given what we know of the effects of smoking, it is surely the duty of Her Majesty's Government to take every possible step to discourage the habit. It is clearly established that price is a factor, especially among the young.

Mr. Ottaway: My hon. Friend says that smoking should not be encouraged and refers to its detrimental effect. He says that the Government should intervene where relevant. I hope that my hon. Friend will not go as far as consultants at the Mayday university hospital in Croydon, who refuse to treat patients who habitually smoke. After all, they are civil servants whose duty is to serve the community and not to dictate the terms on which they are prepared to do so.

Mr. Sims: My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) tempts me on that issue, not least because the Health Select Committee, of which I am a member, is currently considering priority setting and where funds should be most appropriately used. Much as I would like to launch into a dissertation on that interesting matter, you would rightly rule me out of order, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I certainly would not endorse the action that my hon. Friend has described.

Mrs. Lait: As my hon. Friend knows, I share many of his views about a policy of high taxation acting as an effective deterrent against smoking. Will my hon. Friend share his thoughts on the availability of cheap cigarettes,

[Mrs. Lait]

particularly to the young market, through illegal importation? Does my hon. Friend agree that that undermines our policy of high taxation?

Mr. Sims: Naturally I do, and I am very concerned about that matter. It must be tackled. We cannot let it continue. There are various other ways in which Government policy could reduce the incidence of smoking. For instance, I would like a more robust approach to tobacco advertising. Again, however, if I launched into that subject, I might try your patience, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The increased duty on alcohol is far from welcome in any quarter. Indeed, the reasons for that were spelt out by my right hon. and learned Friend himself in his original Budget statement. There is no doubt that the increase will exacerbate the problem of cross-channel traffic in alcohol, especially beer, and it will have an adverse effect on brewers and on off-licences. For the reasons that I have given, I am especially concerned at the effect of the increase on the fragile home market for whisky. That was recognised by the Chancellor in the past, by freezing the duty at existing levels in the previous two Budgets, but his present proposal to increase the cash differential between spirits on the one hand and beers and wines on the other can only harm the whisky industry.

The proposal will also affect European markets at a time when minimum rates in the Union are being discussed. We want to persuade our European partners to reduce discrimination against spirits. As the hon. Member for Gordon said, Britain is a large producer of spirits, whereas our European partners are wine producers. Increasing rates on spirits must surely weaken our Government's negotiating position.

Similarly, in overseas markets the Scotch whisky industry is constantly trying to overcome the high barriers of domestic duties which are erected against imported spirits and urging that they be reduced. How much more difficult its case will be made when our own Government increase the domestic level of duty on spirits.

Will the measure produce the increased revenue for which my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor is looking? The reason for freezing the level a couple of years ago was that the duty had reached the point of diminishing returns. After the 1992 uprating, the total Treasury take on whisky declined by £80 million. Last year, the duty remained unaltered, and that produced an extra £45 million, although it is still below the 1991 level.

The Treasury must be aware that whisky is a particularly price-sensitive product. Will the increase in duty produce any revenue gain at all? Certainly, I doubt whether it will do so to the extent that my right hon. and learned Friend hopes. Perhaps in winding up the debate my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will tell us what the Treasury forecasts as its yield from the increased duty on whisky and whether those expectations are well founded. The last time the duty went up, receipts went down. Why should that not happen again?

At 10 o'clock tonight I shall support my right hon. and learned Friend in the Lobby by voting to increase the tax on petrol and tobacco for the reasons that I have given. However, I fear that he is wrong about alcohol. First, his proposals will damage the whisky industry; secondly, they will weaken our negotiating stance in Europe; thirdly, they are unlikely to produce the revenue that he requires.

I have been critical of several of my hon. Friends who were sent to Parliament—as I was—to support our party, our Prime Minister and our Government and who chose to withhold their support for one or two specific matters despite being well aware of the possible consequences of their actions, on which I need not elaborate. I have no intention of being so self-indulgent: I refuse to put my Government at risk simply because I have doubts about a specific issue.

I shall follow my right hon. and learned Friend into the Lobby when we come to vote on the increase in tax on alcohol, but I shall do so with a heavy heart as I believe that it is a step which will prove to be ill considered both in principle and in practice.

6.31 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): My remarks will be brief. I hoped to intervene during the Chancellor's speech, but he would not give way.

I think that Ministers of the Crown are completely out of touch in their handling of the increase in tax on tobacco and I think that they have made a major error of judgment. The right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) has some experience in his constituency of the matters to which I shall refer.

It is assumed that the increase in tobacco tax will reduce consumption. However, I argue that it will increase, for the reason given by the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait). She is absolutely correct about what is happening in the marketplace. The reality is that one can buy black market cigarettes in any town in the United Kingdom. A huge secondary market has developed in cigarettes costing between £1.50 and £1.80 per packet or £15 per carton.

In Workington one can buy as many black market cigarettes as one wants. They are freely available, and the situation is the same all over the country because of the current tax regime. I do not smoke, so I shall not purchase black market cigarettes; indeed, even if I did smoke, I would not purchase them because I would be cheating the Revenue. Nevertheless, black market cigarettes are available anywhere in the United Kingdom because of the difference between the retail price of cigarettes and the price charged by black marketeers who sell them at substantially reduced prices.

It is wrong to assume that all cigarettes sold on the black market are imported cigarettes. Most of the cigarettes that are sold on the black market in the United Kingdom are made in Britain. All the major brands are available. One can purchase black market cigarettes from pubs, shops and social clubs in all parts of the country.

As a consequence of that thriving black market, the price of cigarettes will fall. The people who want to smoke—including young people—will purchase black market cigarettes. The Budget will not raise revenue in the way that the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) imagines; it will reduce it. More cigarettes will be made available to young people at a lower price. Clearly, the Government have not taken that consequence into account.

Smokers—the people we are trying to target for health reasons—recognising that they will have to pay more for cigarettes each week, have a reason for finding and purchasing black market cigarettes. If the measure is carried, the Government can do nothing to prevent that development, except intervene in the area of smuggling. People are entitled to bring large numbers of cigarettes into the country, but many re-sell them within the United Kingdom.

The Government should start by looking at any United Kingdom port—such as Edinburgh, Newcastle and Hull—which trades with European ports. They are all routes by which large numbers of cigarettes are imported into the United Kingdom. People travel to Europe, fill their vans with cigarettes and return to the United Kingdom to sell them on the black market. Only last week in Wales some people were prosecuted for importing large numbers of cigarettes on a very organised basis—they were clearly running a business.

Many shopkeepers in the United Kingdom sell cigarettes, tax paid in full, across the counter. They, too, will suffer because their revenue will fall as a result of the Government's measure. We do not require extra technology to deal with the problem. The Government are mad if they are prepared to reduce the number of customs officers when hundreds of thousands of people are coming through British customs carrying cigarettes far in excess of their own requirements. In effect, the Government are inviting black marketeers to enter the market.

We should consider what has happened in other countries where high prices have created product shortages. In the Scandinavian countries, high prices for spirits led to the development of a black market in home-produced "hooch". In the end, those countries were required to liberalise the market and reduce duties and internal taxation so that the legitimate internal market in spirits and beer could take off. The Government's Budget measure will have unintended consequences, and that is very wrong.

The answer is harmonisation, but, due to the principle of subsidiarity, there are varying views as to whether it can be applied in these conditions. There has to be harmonisation of the tax regime for cigarettes throughout the European Community. That will mean a substantial increase in the rates of taxation in other European countries, but Ministers have a duty to press for that.

In the meantime, the Government must act to protect local retailers, who will lose business. They must also act to protect young people, who may be drawn into smoking as a result of the reduction in cigarette prices that I believe will occur throughout the United Kingdom.

6.39 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) said about health, although not with his political arguments. I share his concerns about the dangers of young people being lured into smoking. That is a non-political view that hon. Members on both sides of the House share.

The pre-Budget submission that the Confederation of British Industry made to the Government was entitled, "Recovery in progress: do not disturb." That headline was appropriate before the Budget, was reflected by it and is still a good summary of the current state of affairs, despite the political upheavals of the past few weeks.

With unemployment of 11 per cent. in the south-east compared with 9 per cent. in the Rhondda valley—I thought that it would be a long time before a Conservative Member of Parliament for the south-east would be saying something like that, but there it is—in constituencies such as mine we are only too keenly aware of the need for a sustained recovery, which will lead to a rise in living standards.

While we want to encourage that sustained recovery and ensure that it is maintained, it is essential that we do not allow it to turn into a boom that is followed, as night follows day, by a bust. There is a danger of that happening.

The economy is showing the most superb set of performance figures. Underlying inflation is 2 per cent., which is its lowest level for a generation, especially over a sustained period. We all know that inflation is the enemy of investors—both commercial investors and the elderly person with savings trying to live off fixed interest. Inflation is the danger to them all. It is a credit to the Government that they have managed to get inflation down to their target. They set a range of between 1 and 4 per cent. and expressed a preference for getting it in the lower half of that bracket. The figure is wobbling on the edge of the bracket, but let us hope that the Government can keep it on target.

The OECD confirmed the second good set of performance figures—this year, the United Kingdom economy is predicted to be the fastest-growing major economy in the European Union. That should come as no surprise when one studies our export performance. One of the most exciting aspects of this recovery is that it is export-led. How many times have we had booms when all the surplus money generated simply went in house price increases and was wasted unproductively? This time, exports are leading the way and house prices are fundamentally stable. Our exports to the European Union are up 17 per cent. on a year ago, while the economies of the other member countries grew by only 5 per cent. It comes as no surprise, therefore, when commentators say that we are closing the trade gap.

It is also fair to say that inward investment is transforming our industrial practices, as ideas and concepts are imported from overseas to make ours a more efficient and productive economy.

Perhaps privatisation is a controversial subject, but it has been a fundamental success and is very much a part of our economic revival. As the Opposition are constantly saying, "That's not true," we must consider how we achieved it. Throughout the 1980s, productivity grew faster here than in any other European Union country. Since 1979, investment in plant and machinery has risen by 54 per cent. and business investment by 35 per cent.—

Dr. Reid: Growth was slower.

Mr. Ottaway: If the hon. Gentleman is patient, I will get to that issue in a moment.

Against that background, one is tempted to argue, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The Budget largely did that and it reflected the views of the CBI, with one notable exception. The measures contained in last year's Budget show signs of fulfilment. The aim this year—rightly—is to continue the reductions in public expenditure that have partially been achieved by the tight control of inflation, while ensuring that public expenditure continues to decrease as a percentage of gross domestic product. This afternoon, the Chancellor put that succinctly when he talked of "filling the gap."

[Mr. Ottaway]

The net effect is a welcome and continuing decline in the public sector borrowing requirement, which is projected to go into surplus by the end of the decade. Given the way in which forecasts have constantly been beaten, and the growth in the economy, I predict that in his November 1996 Budget the Chancellor will be able to forecast a nil PSBR for 1997-98. Then, the challenge will be to start to reduce the national debt.

After all, the relatively small size of that debt has given us a competitive advantage over our rival economies, both in Europe and the world. As we have to pay a relatively small amount of interest each year, we have been placed in an enviable position when compared with other economies. That, coupled with the strong emphasis on private pensions that was brought about by the reforms of the past decade, means that we will be paying out much less in pensions to an aging population than other countries. Those two factors give us a highly competitive edge and bode well for the future.

I do not need to remind the House why we are here. Obviously, most people would demur when asked whether they supported the introduction of new taxes. If we carried out a survey on whether to introduce income tax, I am sure that the country would be emphatically against it. No one likes new taxes, but, as Oscar Wilde reminded us, the only two things in life that are certain are death and taxes.

We debated value added tax on fuel in two Budgets and on other occasions. My only concern was whether the people least able to pay would be unable to do so. Once the package of compensation for the unemployed, the old and those on low incomes was established, however, I had no personal quarrel with the increase. As the people with the largest houses would be the hardest hit, the proposal struck me as one that might have come from the Labour, rather than the Conservative, party.

What puzzled me about last Tuesday was the fact that the introduction of the second tranche was ultimately brought down by Members who voted for it on other occasions and I regret the fact that those Conservative Members involved seem to have an alternative agenda that has little to do with protecting the elderly and more to do with disrupting the Government. As the Conservative party braces itself for what I suspect will be a massive by-election defeat in Dudley, I hope that those Members will realise what they are doing to one of the oldest political parties in the world.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why does not the hon. Gentleman look at his hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind hon. Members that the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) was correctly looking at me, the person to whom he was addressing his remarks.

Mr. Ottaway: I am aware of the presence of other hon. Members in the Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I have no quarrel with the Chancellor's decision to make up the shortfall in funding by introducing excise duties, on which we will vote tonight. We have a growing problem with cross-border smuggling and I welcome his anti-smuggling proposals. He was right not to increase the duty on wines and spirits in his original Budget. His forced decision to raise that duty will do little to help the drinks trade, especially in the south-east of England.

During his short statement last week, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor said that the introduction of excise duty on smokers would be a healthy deterrent. In my intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), I asked whether it was appropriate for the medical profession to decide whom to treat. A serious problem at the Mayday university hospital in Croydon is a matter of some concern to me. If the duty is to be a deterrent, what do we say to drug addicts or alcoholics? We must remind ourselves that those who refuse to treat people who habitually smoke are there to serve the community, and not to dictate the terms on which they do it. I shall return to the motion before the House.

The decision of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to raise interest rates by 0.5 per cent. was particularly interesting. He was quite right to do so to maintain confidence in the global markets. Statements from the Chancellor and the Bank of England suggested that the rise was likely to happen anyway. It did, however, have a noticeable steadying effect on the markets, which have remained particularly stable in the aftermath of the decision of the House on Tuesday.

I found the Opposition's statement that the increase in interest rates was a major blow to the economy most concerning. One can only assume that if they had been in a similar position, they would not have introduced that interest rate increase. How they can reach that conclusion is beyond me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We would not have been in that position.

Mr. Ottaway: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he would not have introduced an interest rate increase?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There is a good reason why I deplore seated interventions.

Mr. Ottaway: I am happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman if he wants to say what he would have done. As I thought, he has nothing to say.

It is perfectly obvious to a moderately well-informed observer such as myself that inflation pressures are stoking themselves up in the economy. With output growing by 5.9 per cent., the dangers of those pressures reappearing are always close to the surface. It is possible that the Labour party believes that inflation is licked and that it does not have to bother about it. That would be to defy history where, in any economic cycle, inflation will rise and fall.

Confidence is growing, but employers are also complaining about skill shortages. The warning signs are clear for all to see. In my constituency, I recently received a report that the price of paper had risen by more than 20 per cent. in the past four months, and there was strong evidence that paper suppliers were acting in unison to force up the price.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Ottaway: The Opposition spokesman, who frequently speaks a lot of sense, nods in agreement. Why, therefore, did he say that the interest rate rise was a danger to the economy?

The Governor, who has by far the best access to data in the economy, firmly believes that there are inflationary pressures. Under the circumstances, it would be plain folly not to raise interest rates as a warning shot to the economy.

The most depressing thing has been the lack of concise proposals from the Opposition. The Chancellor asked the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) a simple question this afternoon—did the hon. Gentleman think that the Chancellor's expenditure and taxation plans were too high or too low? My right hon. and learned Friend got no reply.

The President of the Board of Trade put a similar question to his opposite number, the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), during the Budget debate last week. The reply was that the right hon. Gentleman could not say what the position would be in three years' time, so how could he say what the Opposition's economic proposals were? That was a perfectly reasonable position to take. However, the question my right hon. and learned Friend asked this afternoon was whether the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East thought the Government's figures were too high or too low. It is a sign of the paucity of arguments from the Opposition that the hon. Gentleman was unable to respond to that question.

The nearest we have seen to sound policy from the Labour party has been the Commission on Social Justice, which was set up by the late John Smith as a blueprint for a new economic strategy, no doubt designed to entice the middle-class voters the Labour party needs to win an election. It is a curious document, strong on rhetoric and weak on remedies. Not unsurprisingly, it attacks the Government's policies of cost-cutting, deregulation and privatisation, although I fail to see how that squares with the party's intention to scrap clause 4. The Labour party will have to try harder to convince my constituents when they argue that the reforms of the 1980s have made the economy less efficient.

The document makes the plea—often repeated by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East—that our alleged economic failure has been due to a lack of investment. The flaw in that argument is that investment has not been particularly weak. From 1960 to 1990, investment in machinery and equipment as a percentage of GDP was well ahead of that of America and Canada, and only marginally behind that of Germany and France. Britain's investment shortfall is due mainly to exceptionally low levels of housebuilding. It is the quality, and not just the quantity of investment that matters. One need only look at the rusty investments of the steel industry in the 1970s to have that point underlined.

Finally, there is the question of what the Opposition would do to stimulate investment if they were in power. There are several ways in which they could do this. I can imagine a Labour Government proposing direct Government intervention by renationalisation, or another similar proposal.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No.

Mr. Ottaway: No? Fair enough. A Labour Government could offer tax incentives to industry.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes.

Mr. Ottaway: They could cut corporation tax.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes.

Mr. Ottaway: Finally, they could encourage savings and discourage consumption. It is interesting that the Borrie commission rejected the final three proposals, and the only one which it was prepared to look at was renationalisation.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We are the Labour party.

Mr. Ottaway: I know—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not expect to have to remind Members twice of the same fault.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to intervene, but there must be a little give and take during a debate. You are excellent in the Chair, but I would ask for a little flexibility, as I am not in any way being discourteous to you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We simply cannot conduct a debate on the basis of cross-Floor arrangements, simply because it is very confusing. At the very least, Members ought to think about the *Hansard* reporters.

Mr. Ottaway: We are deeply indebted to the *Hansard* reporters, and I apologise for the rapport that the hon. Member for Workington and I have been generating.

The point that I was trying to make was that, of the four proposals extolled by the Borrie commission, the one it was most prepared to look at was renationalisation. As the hon. Member for Workington said—improperly, from a sedentary position—"We are the Labour party." He was implying that the Borrie commission was not binding on him. The Opposition have said that on a number of occasions, and that is fair enough.

If the Opposition want to have any chance of winning votes in the south-east of England and in the midlands—the battlefield of British politics—I suggest that they leave the commission proposals as a consultative document and not look at them at all. Otherwise, they will make absolutely no progress.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his advice.

Mr. Ottaway: I am always pleased to hand out advice to the Opposition, and I hope to continue to do so. I remember an occasion in the 1980s, when the late John Smith was a shadow trade and industry spokesman and I was a fairly green Member, when I was going on about the shipbuilding industry, and he asked what I would do about it. I felt rather flattered that an Opposition spokesman should ask me for my opinion, and yet again I am pleased to give the Labour party advice.

[Mr. Ottaway]

This debate has been brought about in difficult circumstances. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), I do not mourn the loss of VAT on fuel. The circumstances in which that loss has been brought about are regrettable, but I do not believe that either the Budget or the Government has been blown off course by recent developments.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. As you know, there is to be an important debate tomorrow on fisheries. I understand that it is normal for Government motions to be put down by half past two, but, as of now, no motion has been put down. Many colleagues would like to table amendments which could strengthen the Government's position. I do not know whether this has anything to do with the authorities of the House, but it would be much appreciated if something could be done to get a motion put down quickly.

Madam Deputy Speaker: My understanding is that a motion can be put down at any time until the House rises. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman's point will be taken on board by those more able to deal with it than I.

6.58 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Far be it from me to intrude on private grief, but while listening to the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) attack his unwhipped colleagues I was struck by the thought that perhaps the hon. Gentleman and many of those Conservative Back Benchers who voted for 17.5 per cent. VAT on fuel would, in due course, thank those unwhipped rebels for saving them from having to defend that policy during a general election campaign.

Afterwards, I thought the better of that, because people will remember those Back-Bench Conservatives who wanted the 17.5 per cent. VAT to be imposed on fuel and who voted for it. They will also remember those Conservative Back Benchers who, when they stood for election in 1992, advocated tax cuts, but delivered the biggest tax hike in history in last year's Budget. When they go to the electorate next time, they will have to answer the question, "Why should we believe you this time when you did not tell us the truth last time?"

The Chancellor's revised Budget is better than the original one, but that is not due to his decision, but because he could not convince enough of his own Back Benchers to stay with him, so they voted for the Labour amendment. The way in which the Chancellor sought to proceed with imposing 17.5 per cent. VAT on fuel demonstrated how out of touch he is with the reality of life for ordinary people. He never really understood the depth of anger that ordinary people felt at the imposition of VAT on fuel and the reasons for it.

That public anger was compounded not only by the reality of 8 per cent. VAT on fuel and the prospect of 17.5 per cent. VAT, but by the decision of companies like British Gas to charge people with bank accounts less than those who do not have them, because that latter group pay in a certain way. That decision angered an awful lot of pensioners, as did the 75 per cent. pay increase, equivalent to £740,000, paid to one British Gas boss. Although the Prime Minister said that he too felt that that increase was unjustified, he refused to condemn it. If workers had been asking for 2 per cent. pay rises instead of a 1.5 per cent. settlement, no doubt the Prime Minister would have pronounced them a danger to the country. The 75 per cent. increase was an appalling example of bosses following the dictum, "Do as I say, not as I do."

The Chancellor does not seem to have appreciated or understood the anger in the country caused by that pay increase and the proposed VAT increase. He paid the price for that misjudgment. The Chancellor and his colleagues should now not only admit that it was wrong to propose to increase VAT on fuel to 17.5 per cent., but they should urgently implement the Prime Minister's own wish to make a law to allow shareholders to control directors' salary increases. Perhaps they should go further by allowing shareholders to reduce directors' salaries at each annual general meeting if those directors have cut jobs or failed to make the company prosper.

The Government should also intervene to put an end to the British Gas wheeze of offering cheaper bills to those who hold bank accounts. That policy penalises the poor and pensioners who may never have had a bank account and who do not want one now. Many people feel angry about that decision because of its implications for civil liberties. A middle-aged business man came to my surgery the other day and said that he did not want a bank account because he paid his bills within seven days. He wanted to know why he should be penalised in that way.

Dr. Reid: I agree with my hon. Friend that the depth of the resentment felt against the direct debit discount offered by British Gas is far more widespread than that company and hon. Members appreciate. Can my hon. Friend think of any good reason why that discount should not be offered to all those who pay their bills on time rather than just to those who pay by a particular method, which is exclusive to certain sections of the community?

Mr. O'Brien: It is obvious that British Gas aims to increase its profits at the expense of poor people and those who do not have bank accounts. That is unacceptable and the Government should take action to prevent it.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Has the hon. Gentleman any evidence that British Gas pays all its bills within seven days of receiving them?

Mr. O'Brien: I have no evidence that it does and I suspect that it may not.

The compensation for the 8 per cent. VAT on fuel needs to be extended. As well as his package of tax rises, the Chancellor also cut the amount of help that he is giving to pensioners to compensate for that VAT. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's bribe on Tuesday night to the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Sir A. Bowden) seems to have been forgotten. He has also cut into the compensation package that he first announced in last year's Budget and which he confirmed last week. He attempted to take away any gains that pensioners might have received, because he could not raise VAT on fuel to 17.5 per cent.

From April 1995, single pensioners will receive just 20p instead of the 50p that they had been promised. The total compensation for a single pensioner will be 70p while pensioner couples will receive £1.05. The Chancellor's claim that that will be enough to compensate all pensioners completely ignores the fact that heating costs vary enormously both according to household type and by regions. The right hon. and learned Gentleman could and should have been more generous and kept his original promise to pensioners.

Many vulnerable people will receive no compensation for that 8 per cent. VAT on fuel, which remains unchanged. Low-paid workers, who get maximum help with housing benefit, will be offered no help with their gas and electricity bills. That will leave the poorest 20 per cent. of households 85p a week, and £44 a year, worse off as a result of VAT at 8 per cent. The compensation scheme also excludes many on unemployment benefit. Households headed by someone who is unemployed will be £1 a week—£52 a year—worse off. It also fails to address properly the needs of the disabled, because those on disability living allowance will not receive any compensation.

We must ask whether the increase in taxes on cigarettes, beer and car fuel was really necessary. Surely, as hon. Members have already said, £1 billion was within the margin of error in the Budget. Not only that, but as the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee has already said, the margin of error in previous Budgets in the past decade averaged around £10 billion. The Chancellor had his own rather large margin of error in last year's Budget. He told us then that the PSBR deficit was £50 billion and that he needed to impose VAT at 8 per cent. on fuel to reduce the PSBR over the year to £38 billion. In fact, he had his figures wrong, because the PSBR was £46 billion—£4 billion less than forecast. The estimate for the outturn this year is not £38 billion but £34.5 billion. The loss of £1 billion was therefore well within the margin of error in this year's Budget.

The current Budget forecasts also gave the right hon. and learned Gentleman plenty of room for manoeuvre. For months the Chancellor has been trumpeting an on-going trend of lower unemployment. The Red Book cites an unemployment figure of 2.4 million people, spread over a number of years. That is the normal way in which the unemployment figures are recorded and I do not quarrel with that. The Budget Red Books do not try to estimate or predict our future levels of unemployment.

The departmental budgets have been set according to that Red Book figure. For most of the Departments that will cause few problems, but for unemployment-sensitive Departments, such as the Department of Social Security, it means that, according to table 6.5 on page 119 of the Red Book, the DSS budget will increase from £67 billion to £70 billion and up to £79 billion in 1997-98.

If the unemployment rate was to fall to 2 million during next year there would be plenty of room for the DSS budget to change. It is clear that that would have an impact on the overall PSBR. The £1 billion that the Chancellor was looking for would therefore be found easily.

I accept that other things might happen, for example, that inflation or interest rates may rise. We know from evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee that there is leeway in the Red Book for interest rate rises in the future. There may also be inflationary pressures caused, for example, by the increasing cost of raw materials. There remains enough flexibility within the PSBR, however, to meet the targets within the margin of error without raising the extra £1 billion from new taxation.

The real gap is not in the PSBR, but in the Chancellor's credibility, to which he alluded in answer to a question from the Chairman of the PAC earlier today. The tax rises have been introduced to protect the rather ragged reputation for financial prudence that the Chancellor liked to have. Last week's defeat was a humiliation for the right hon. and learned Gentleman, but it is all the greater when we remember the spectacle in the closing stages of the debate.

Then, the right hon. and learned Gentleman tried desperately to buy off his the hon. Member for Kemptown with £120 million. He did that not because he believed that it should be done—or he would have done it himself earlier—but because he had been forced into it. He lost anyway. VAT on fuel was bad politics and bad economics, and pursuing it in the Budget showed the bad judgment of the Chancellor and the Prime Minister.

The City knows that the Chancellor and his Conservative predecessors cannot be trusted on the economy. That is not just because of the Lawson boom, the two harrowing recessions or withdrawal from the ERM but because of the pre-election tax cuts which went wrong after 1987 and 1992. That is why there were feverish midnight telephone calls to the Governor of the Bank of England after the Chancellor lost the vote.

Those calls were an attempt to bring forward by 45 minutes the meeting scheduled for the following morning, so as to get an interest rate rise announced as quickly as possible. The City had to be steadied by Steady Eddie in case it started to panic because it did not trust the Chancellor. Only that meeting with Steady Eddie George, the Governor of the Bank of England, and the raising of interest rates prevented severe problems.

Ordinary mortgage payers and businesses are paying higher interest and higher taxes because the Chancellor lost last week's vote through bad judgment and his ragged reputation had to be saved. Perhaps it would have been better if the person responsible for the bad judgment had gone and interest rates had not had to rise. The other reason for the Chancellor's decision to recover the £1 billion is that he secretly harbours fears for the economy. I share those fears, and the Governor of the Bank of England sees them as great difficulties.

The economy lacks capacity. It is coming out of recession quicker than expected and that brings its own problems. The damage that has been inflicted by two Tory recessions and the neglect of manufacturing over 15 years mean that its capacity for recovery is constrained. Unless investment rises sharply the capacity buffers will be hit some time next year or shortly thereafter, and inflation will take off. The hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) was right to say that inflation has not been licked and is always there. The Chancellor knows that, and that is the reason for his decisions.

Mr. Ottaway: Why did the hon. Gentleman's Front-Bench spokesman say that the increase in interest rates was a mistake?

Mr. O'Brien: It was increased at that time because of the Chancellor's error of judgment in trying to pursue the policy of increasing VAT to 17.5 per cent. He could not even convince his own Back Benchers. The rise need not have occurred at that time.

I understand that the minutes of the meeting before the one last week between the Chancellor and the Governor will be published in two weeks. At that time, the Governor

[Mr. O'Brien]

foresaw difficulty in the economy and its capacity, and pointed out that it might be necessary to raise interest rates at some stage. However, the rush and the feverish phone calls before the vote and almost immediately after it to bring the meeting forward were caused exclusively by the Chancellor's misjudgment. That is why people are paying higher interest rates.

The recoveries in Canada, Australia and the USA started before our recovery. The USA is already hitting inflation problems despite interest rate rises and despite the fact that the recession there was not as bad as ours. The economy is ill prepared for recovery and the Bank of England has accepted that. The Governor said as much in giving evidence to the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service.

The Governor voiced concern about a lack of capacity in the economy and pointed to survey evidence of business men who feel that they must be operating above normal capacity. That must be taken into account. He said that delivery times were direct evidence that capacity problems might be on the horizon; that the situation had to be closely monitored; and that it was a matter of feeling our way towards our capacity limits. The Governor was clearly concerned and warned that, if there were pre-election tax cuts next year, he would have to consider or perhaps demand interest rate rises. Conservative Members should be careful about thinking ahead and saying to themselves, "Perhaps the Chancellor has tax cuts up his sleeve to be announced just before the election," because the Governor gave fair warning that he would ask for interest rises to compensate for such cuts.

The Chancellor decided to damp down the recovery, and it seems that his objective was to prevent us from hitting the capacity buffers too soon. That was another reason for him pressing ahead with his tax rises. He realises that the economic news is not as good as it appears, that there are tangible dangers on the horizon, and that he may not be able to deliver tax cuts to his Back Benchers in the next Budget. He tried to damp down the recovery in this and the previous Budget, and the new tax increases on cigarettes, car fuel and alcohol have two main purposes. The first is to protect the Chancellor's battered reputation and the second is to slow down the economy to respond to weaknesses that have been caused by the failure of Government policy over the past 15 years.

The tax cuts are unjustified, and the way in which the Chancellor decided to raise money is open to question. Perhaps he can justify tax increases on cigarettes and petrol and perhaps even on wine, but the increase on beer and whisky is worrying. The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee recently published a report about problems in the brewing industry. Although it did not advocate a reduction in duty, it warned of the serious problems caused by imports from abroad. The Chancellor's tax gift to smugglers could have been avoided. Even if he felt that there was no margin for error in the Budget, he could at least have recognised that the increase in the tax on beer and whisky would cost jobs and increase smuggling crimes.

There was some leeway, and the damage that the Chancellor has caused to an important sector of the economy and the effect of his measures on law and order could be considerable. To say that we will be more effective against smugglers while cutting Customs and Excise staff beggars belief. If those people were not made redundant but were employed in intelligence gathering, the Government's policy would be much more credible. The one Tory who got it right was the vice-chairman of the party, John Maples, who said:

> "The Conservatives have let voters down, they have been in government too long, are complacent and have lost a sense of direction. They fail to fulfil promises, are clumsy at implementing policy and 'shoot themselves in the foot'."

Shooting himself in the foot was precisely what the Chancellor did in his Budget. The Budget and the mini-Budget are not about Britain's future, but about attempting to salvage the Chancellor's reputation and the election prospects of the Conservative party. The price of that salvage operation will be paid by families who will have to meet the extra taxes that the Government will impose in the next year and by home owners who, because of restrictions in benefit, not only feel insecure about losing their jobs but fear that they will lose their homes as well. A price will also be paid by industry, which has been ignored for much too long by the Government.

Although they do not yet realise it, the real victims of the Budget, the mini-Budget and the Budget that preceded them are Conservative Members who will for ever be tagged with promising no tax rises and then voting for them, who promised prosperity but were prepared cynically to undermine it, and who hope to win the next election, but will lose it.

7.19 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to take part in this evening's important debate. We all know the reasons for the second Budget. Sequels never measure up to original movies and the same applies to the second Budget, but one has to appreciate the fact that we never wanted a second Budget.

I found it peculiar to listen to Opposition Members saying how dreadful it was that the Government were raising taxes on fuel to 17.5 per cent. They condemned us for doing so and said that the compensation package was simply not enough. I looked through some old newspapers going back to May 1974, which reported shocking rises in electricity prices. On one occasion there was a 30 per cent. rise and an article in the business section of *The Observer* of 5 May 1974 stated that a 30 per cent. increase announced in the Budget speech by Mr. Denis Healey took account only of fuel price increases of 300 per cent. on oil and 45 per cent. on coal and ignored the uncomfortable fact that the industry was already heavily in the red even before the oil crisis and the miners' strike.

During the period 1974-79, electricity prices rose on average by 2 per cent. every six weeks. Electricity prices rose by 30 per cent. above the rate of inflation, which averaged 15.5 per cent. I tried to recollect what compensation package was in place for pensioners and those on fixed incomes during those bleak days. Of course there was none. Exactly the same applied to gas bills and other prices that pensioners and people on fixed incomes had to meet because of runaway inflation.

The position is very different today. I received a letter from NORWEB dated 9 December that mentions standing charges being reduced by £1.50 each quarter—or £6 a year—from 1 January 1995. It says that that decrease, on top of the decrease already announced earlier this year, was more than enough to offset the rise in VAT. People—certainly those in the north-west—have been more than compensated for VAT increases and there is additional compensation for many people on fixed and low incomes.

The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) spoke about discounts for British Gas consumers who have standing orders, but not for those who pay their bills diligently. I agree with him, and I hope that British Gas moves quickly to ensure that many consumers who pay their bills on time are not penalised simply because they do not pay by direct debit. I hope that British Gas will soon announce that it will heed the voices of many hon. Members on both sides of the House on this issue.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for endorsing my view, which is shared by many hon. Members. Has he made representations to Ministers to ensure that they put as much pressure as possible on British Gas to make those changes? Will Ministers make public statements condemning these practices? It would weigh heavily with the shareholders and directors of British Gas if the Minister said exactly what the hon. Gentleman has just said.

Mr. Evans: I have already made representations to British Gas. It is not a party political matter; I am sure that all hon. Members have made representations on behalf of their constituents. I have received many letters, particularly from pensioners who are extremely keen to pay their bills as soon as they get them. They are not used to having reminders sent, as they pay their bills on time. I hope that will be recognised quickly by British Gas.

The Chancellor talked about the various alternatives for making up the shortfall because the second tranche of VAT on fuel would not be applied. He dismissed them one by one for various reasons. He then considered the three areas where the Chancellor decided the extra revenue was to be raised: tobacco, petrol and alcohol, which are targeted in every Budget.

I must declare an interest, as I have a retail business in Swansea that sells tobacco products. I am also an executive member of the all-party beer group. I have no interest to declare on petrol.

I understand that there is a hand-rolling tobacco product called Drum, which is the third best selling hand-rolling tobacco in the country. It is not sold legally anywhere in Britain for copyright reasons, as it would conflict with another brand called Duma, but it is coming into the country in large quantities. The Chancellor was quite right to recognise that specific problem, and no extra funds were sought from hand-rolling tobacco.

I also accept that the Chancellor has decided to raise extra revenue from tobacco products because of the health reasons, which have been listed time and again in the House. That is one reason why in the past I have raised the problem of the European Community subsidising tobacco production and I hope that sooner rather than later we can eradicate the subsidy to growing tobacco in the European Community. It seems quite absurd to pay people to grow tobacco products in other parts of the European Community and at the same time to impose taxes on British consumers to deter them from smoking it. I hope that we can do something about tobacco subsidies.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): The story that my hon. Friend tells about tobacco growing in the European Community at the European taxpayers' expense is worse than he describes, because the tobacco we subsidise is of such low quality that nobody in the European Community smokes it; it is exported to third-world countries, where it poisons the lungs of much poorer people. We buy in much higher quality tobacco from elsewhere, which adds to the lunacy of the situation.

Mr. Evans: I can only agree with my hon. Friend. I do not believe that European taxpayers' funds should support social services in Greece and other countries that are in receipt of such funds to grow tobacco. Surely we should be looking to trying to get them away from growing tobacco if it is such a low grade as my hon. Friend says and get them doing something else.

The 2½p rise in petrol imposed in the first Budget was quite substantial and will hit many motorists, particularly in rural areas such as my constituency. I do not particularly welcome the extra penny imposed by the second Budget. I have already received my first letter from a constituent who has a transportation company, who writes that the Budget measures are causing increases

> "of over 2½p for every mile a truck moves".

It is not good news, not only for businesses but for people who live in rural areas who will have to find that extra money.

I shall make the bulk of my comments about alcohol. In an Adjournment debate on 11 May 1994, I raised the problem of alcohol being smuggled into Britain from the rest of the European Community. It was a problem then and it is a greater problem now, but the duties imposed on alcohol in the second Budget are neither here nor there. A penny on a pint of beer will not greatly exacerbate a problem that already exists.

The Chancellor commented on the existing problems of which he is aware. Obviously, the penny increase is not a move in the right direction. I believe that we must direct our attention to how we can eradicate smuggling, which costs the Exchequer money and, I believe, costs jobs in the brewing industry and in the retailing of alcohol in pubs.

The indicative level that is now set on various items of alcohol and tobacco and the single European market have presented Customs and Excise with a bit of a problem. Many people return to the country with very large amounts of alcohol—not so much tobacco, but certainly alcohol—and say that they are having parties, that Christmas is coming or that there is yet another wedding in the family. Customs and Excise is hard-pushed in many instances to say that those excuses are not real, so the problem will increase if we do not address it.

The industry proposed its own solution—a massive cut in the duty on beer. The Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association produced a document called "A Real Alternative", which I found quite compelling reading. It suggests that extra revenue would come from increases in food sales and from people using amusement machines in pubs and that extra employment in pubs would lead to people being taken off the dole, as a result of which the Exchequer would not be paying out money in social services and would, over three years, raise extra funds rather than lose revenue. I hope that the Exchequer will look at those proposals again.

I heard what my right hon. and learned Friend had to say about the harmonisation of duties, but I believe in subsidiarity and wish him well in trying to encourage the French to raise their duties on beer. If they do not wish

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to go down that route, it will be extremely difficult to push them. The differential on duty is so large—it is seven times higher here than in France—that it will take the French a long time to reach our level. If we do not address the problem of smuggling in the short term, we may find that, because so many jobs have been lost in the brewing industry, by the time we get to harmonisation it will be extremely difficult to make up those jobs again.

David Kay, a director of one of my own brewers, Thwaites, wrote to me the other day to express his fears about job losses in the north-west. I know that everybody thinks that the problem of smuggling means that beer just comes in and stays in the Kent area. That is not so. He suggested to me that as much as 18 per cent. of the beer that is coming in finds its way to the north-west. It is not just a problem for Kent.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we need to deal with the problem of smuggling, but not by adopting the brewers' proposal of a 50 per cent. cut in excise duty on alcohol. The brewers suggested that there might be a greater return to the Exchequer if that were allowed, but that would come from an increased consumption of alcohol. That would put a greater burden, perhaps, on the health service—from people with health problems as a result of the increased consumption—and on the forces of law and order. Although I am not averse to some reduction, York university suggested that one of the main causes of beer price rises has been problems within the industry itself rather than simply excise duties. A lot can still be done within the industry and a lot can be done by the Government to deal with smuggling.

Mr. Evans: I understand fully what the hon. Gentleman is saying, but the industry is not simply trying to increase beer consumption in this country, which is already high. It is saying that 1 million pints of beer a day is being imported from France and that if we could only reclaim that share for the British market it would be a substantial boost to our brewing industry. If it means that people have to make more visits to the pub instead of drinking at home the beer that they brought back from Calais, and if they drank the same amount of alcohol, they would still be spending more money. Extra people would still be employed in the pubs and, instead of being closed, pubs would remain open. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will look at the proposals again.

Many other measures could help pubs. I was involved in the Committee that considered the Deregulation and Contracting Out Bill, as were many other hon. Members present. We tried to save the head on a pint of beer, and to prevent extra costs from being imposed on pubs. I am delighted that the Bill was enacted, but I hope that we shall look at licensing hours generally. That is one area on which I hope that we can harmonise further with the European Community, as it is quite absurd in this day and age that some pubs, particularly where they do not affect people around them, have to close at 11 o'clock, forcing people to go out to clubs where they have to pay an entry fee. It is absurd that we have such archaic and antique licensing laws. I hope that we can look at those matters to support some of our hard-pressed pubs.

Earlier this year I went on a trip to Calais to have a look at the problem that currently exists there. I visited some of the cash-and-carries to see for myself the scale of business for people who buy alcohol and bring it back. I went to a few of the well-known ones—EastEnders, Beers R Us—which display signs all over the place showing where they are. Even Sainsbury's has opened within one of the hypermarkets in Calais, trying to encourage the British shopper to buy beer and alcohol from it.

What disturbed me most was not the consumers going around with their trolleys buying beer and alcohol, but the heavy goods vehicles inside some of those cash-and-carries, which were being loaded up with beer by the pallet load. They had offloaded their various goods in France, Spain or wherever, and were loading pallets of beer before coming back to Dover. That beer was destined not only for Kent but, as the tarpaulin suggested, Scotland, north Wales, Yorkshire and the north-west. It is finding its way all over the country. I was quite shocked to see that such a business is going on.

Yesterday's papers reported what they called "Victory for the Bootlegger". They mentioned a big surge this weekend in illicit trading, with more than 100,000 Britons flooding across the channel to Calais to buy supplies from supermarkets and cash-and-carries. They say:

> "Since European trade barriers came down two years ago, anyone can buy limitless amounts of cheap alcohol".

Ian Brading, a senior purser on P and O's Pride of Burgundy, estimates that 80 per cent. of the 4,000 people he ferried to Calais on Saturday were travelling there only for the beer. He said:

> "On some return trips we have 50 vans, all heavily loaded."

That shows the extent of the problem, which will get worse. Many of those ferry companies are putting on cheap trips to Calais to try to encourage people to use them. As part of the enticement they spell out to people the gains that can be had from taking a visit across to Calais, buying some beer and bringing it back.

A few weeks ago I went to Dover and chatted with some Customs and Excise officers. I was able to see one of their warehouses. It was packed full of drugs that they had seized and tobacco and alcohol. I talked about the problem of HGVs and of Transit vans. I understand that it is difficult to hire a Transit for the weekend in Kent because they have already been taken for that business. If people are stopped and the vehicle is seized, they think that it is far better to have a hire vehicle seized rather than one's own vehicle. Smugglers are already learning that trick. Others are bringing their Transits across, driving some way out of Dover, loading the alcohol on to a larger van and then getting straight back on to the next ferry, thus ensuring that the larger vehicle is full before driving off to another part of the United Kingdom.

Only last week we witnessed the success of a Customs and Excise operation: 28 former Yorkshire miners were arrested for smuggling alcohol and then selling it on. I believe that that is just the tip of the iceberg. In the newspaper article from which I quoted, officers suggest that for every £1 worth of alcohol that they stop at ports of entry another £9 worth is getting through. As last week's case showed, organised groups are involved, but many individuals are giving it a go, having read in the newspapers about the amount of alcohol that can be brought back to this country.

Sometimes Customs and Excise officers come across the vehicles involved after police have stopped them just outside Dover because they are overloaded. People are so greedy that they fill the vans that they have hired, or their own Transits, with as much alcohol as possible.

I saw one boat arrive at Dover and watched the passengers disembark. Customs officers stopped two Transits, both of which were packed with alcohol. One driver trotted out the old excuse that it was "for Christmas", but all the alcohol was taken out of the van. I thought that I was generous and that my family liked to drink, but either that man's family consisted of about 200 people or he was very generous indeed, and his family would remain inebriated throughout the Christmas period and probably into March.

I did not accept that excuse, and neither did the Customs officers, but they did not have anything to go on until they found a shopping list in the van. It would otherwise have been difficult for them to prove that that person had not imported the alcohol for his own consumption. I think that they are doing a superb job, and would be loth to think that their numbers will be reduced at ports of entry.

Harmonisation of alcohol duties is a possible solution to the problem: it might remove the incentive to load up in France. I also support the idea—mentioned by the Chancellor—of initiating more high-tech methods of detection, such as profiling. As the authorities know what sort of people are smuggling alcohol, it should be possible to build up a dossier and subsequently to stop them from doing so.

We should, however, ensure that customs officers remain at the ports of entry. The channel tunnel now provides an extra route for those who wish to bring in alcohol, and officers will be switched to the tunnel to deal with that problem. More people than ever will travel to France—especially now that Christmas is coming—and I hate to hazard a guess at what may happen. If 1 million pints a day are coming in now, the amount will be that much more in 12 months' time unless we ensure that enough Customs officers are provided to prevent the current widespread smuggling.

We should also support the officers who are working in the United Kingdom, visiting pubs, clubs and car boot sales where they believe that trading is taking place. Some people have an image of an Arthur Daley type who nips across to Calais, brings back a bit of booze and sells it to his neighbours. There is nothing wrong with that, they think. But the problem is much larger.

Our Customs and Excise officers should liaise more with their French counterparts, sharing information, so that they can exercise more intelligence in stopping heavy goods vehicles that they see loading with pallets of alcohol. Obviously they cannot stop every vehicle, as I saw when I watched the flood of vehicles coming off that ferry, but I think that more should be stopped. If people thought that they had more chance of being stopped, they would be deterred.

Much has been said this evening about the Budget, and the second Budget. Some hon. Members believe that we are storing up tax cuts for the next Budget and the one after that. I hope that that is true, because in 1992 I was elected as a member of a Conservative party that supported low tax rates. I hope that, as the economy grows and we have the capacity to cut taxes, we shall do so. I shall look carefully to see which Lobby Opposition Members enter tonight, for that is the clear blue water that exists between the Labour party—and the Liberal Democrats—and the Conservatives: the Conservatives believe in lower taxes.

I hope that the Chancellor will consider the specific problem of Customs and Excise. We must say no to the bootlegger's charter and the stripping of Christmas beer money from British tills—indeed, to the stripping of that money at all times of the year. We must say no to the loss of brewing jobs. We must tackle the problem head on: we cannot allow it to continue for another 12 months.

7.46 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): Following the speech of the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), I am tempted to say, "The case for the prosecution rests." I have never heard such a frank confession of what the Conservative party is up to. The hon. Gentleman made it absolutely plain that the Conservatives were taking money out of people's pockets in this year's Budget in order to give it back in next year's, in tax cuts. Let me say, with all respect to the hon. Gentleman, that as we approach Christmas I would not like to be a member of his family: I can imagine his children having their pocket money stopped in October or November, so that it could be given back to them on Christmas day in the guise of a generous gift.

I have come to treasure occasions such as this. Although the Chancellor shows the normal lack of substance and clarity, there are always one or two little jewels from Conservative Members for us to preserve in our memories for future reference. We heard two such gems today from the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway), who unfortunately is not present: I assume that he has gone to rest after his efforts to explain the Government's economic and fiscal strategy.

The hon. Gentleman said, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." That was his comprehensive analytical explanation of the Government's failure to do anything in the Budget. I must say, again with all respect, that anyone who can look at the British economy—at the scattered ruins of our manufacturing industry, the piles of bodies on the unemployment register, the death of investment in all industry and the manufacturing deficit that has piled up for the first time in our industrial history—anyone who can look at those 15 years and say, "It ain't broke" will certainly not win first prize as observer of the year.

The second little gem from the hon. Gentleman took the form of advice. He quoted not the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary or the Prime Minister, but Oscar Wilde. He said, "As sure as eggs is eggs, only two things are certain under a Conservative Government." As predicted by Mr. Wilde, one was death and the other was taxation. Out of the mouths of the sucklings on the Conservative Benches comes the truth, dripped down to us in, perhaps, a moment of weakness or a sudden surge of honesty. Conservative Members are telling the British people that, as the next election approaches, if they want a prediction about taxation they should look not to a Prime Minister under pressure or the promises of a Chancellor, especially if it is raining and they are within 100 miles of Dudley, but to Oscar Wilde.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has managed to combine fiscal ineptitude with political crisis. He has also led the Government into the worst political defeat over three decades of any Chancellor. In the face of that defeat,

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and against the background of the political mire through which he has dragged his already beleaguered leader, there was no hint of an apology this afternoon. There was no remorse. There was not even the cynical recognition that one would expect of a politician of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's depth of the political damage that he has done to himself and to his Prime Minister. Perhaps he does not regret the damage that he has done to the Prime Minister, but no doubt he regrets the political damage that he has done to himself.

The Chancellor seems not to understand how far he is distancing himself and the Conservative party from the majority of those outside the House. Even I am astonished at how the right hon. and learned Gentleman can turn a fiscal crisis into a political drama. Equally, I am astonished at how far he has separated himself from the British people, including his constituents.

I was surprised to receive a copy of last week's edition of the local newspaper in the Chancellor's constituency. With the indulgence of the House—the article is pertinent—I shall read the paragraph which is headed:

> "No sign of boom for Rushcliffe's dressmakers."

It will become obvious why dressmakers are the small traders who have been selected. The article reads:

> "The owner of a dressmaking shop which faces closure after 20 years has accused Chancellor and Rushcliffe MP Kenneth Clarke of being out of touch with his own constituency."

Even the dressmakers of Rushcliffe—not generally regarded as the most revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat—are apparently being forced towards protest in the local press by their own beloved Member, the Chancellor.

I am not sure of the relationship that the Chancellor has with dressmakers in Rushcliffe or why he has lost their confidence in particular, but it is a sign of how detached the right hon. and learned Gentleman is when his local newspaper is lambasting him on behalf of small business men and women and entrepreneurs, not industrial workers. I am talking of people who produce quality goods and artistic goods that the Chancellor deems to be a part of the centre of the dynamic new economy that he is creating.

I shall explain to the Chancellor why such a reaction comes from the dressmakers of Rushcliffe and from all thoughtful people throughout Britain to his political mistake over value added tax. Rejection was led by the Labour party, but it was fuelled, supported and sustained by people throughout the country of all political persuasions or of none because the Chancellor's proposals were unjust, because they did nothing to assist economic recovery and because they went entirely against the grain of the fair-mindedness of the British people.

The Budget and the appendix before us will do nothing to resolve the fundamental problems of the economy. That brings me again to the comment of the hon. Member for Croydon, South, that the economy "ain't broke".

What are the problems to which the Chancellor should have had regard in the Budget? They can be neatly summarised as the problem of the lack growth over the past 15 years—this year's growth will bring problems in its own wake—along with trade, tax, unemployment and investment problems over the same period.

It must be remembered that the Conservative party formed a Government 15 years ago, but the Chancellor speaks as if he had only recently inherited power. He suggests that all the problems of taxation that he has inherited were written in the Book of Revelations and had nothing to do with him or his predecessors. The Government came to power promising that they would lighten the burden of taxation on the British people. They claimed that it has been levied on the backs of the people by interfering socialists and that they would sort it.

What is the result? This year, we are facing a tax burden on the typical family in Britain in 1995-96 of 36.1 per cent. of gross income. Last year it was 35 per cent. When the Government came to power it was 32.1 per cent. under the dreadful high-taxing Labour Government. The gross proportion of tax taken from the average family has increased by 4 per cent., and 4 per cent. of the original 32 per cent. is, in absolute terms, a 12.5 per cent. increase. That is the burden that has been placed on the average family. That is the result of the Government's efforts.

What was set out in the Budget to deal with the increasing burden of taxation? The Chancellor retained VAT on fuel. He was forced under pressure from the Labour party, from people throughout the country and even from his fifth column—perhaps we should call it the eighth column—to abandon the proposed increase. As I have said, he retained the rate of VAT on fuel which was imposed last year. He pressed ahead with the seven new taxes that were introduced in last year's Budget. In addition to the already record levels and proportions of income that are taken in taxation—last year it was 35 per cent.—seven individual taxes were introduced, to increase the burden on the average family by £360 a year or about £7 a week. The VAT proposals in last year's Budget will add another £80 a year to the average tax burden.

When Conservatives take the advice of the hon. Member for Ribble Valley and steal this year from Peter to give back next year to Peter, they had better take things back to where they were. They will have to return the equivalent of 7p in the pound in direct taxation. The British people would still ask, "Has it all been worth it?" A financial system cannot be worked by mirrors, but that is what the Chancellor is trying to do.

A reallocation of taxation is taking place. The Chancellor is hooked on VAT; he is a VAT addict. He stood at the Dispatch Box agonising about the decisions that he had to take to increase taxation on the purchase of goods. We were deeply moved. The right hon. and learned Gentleman would have brought a tear to a glass eye. He told us how agonised he was. If, however, he were given the choice of taking agonising decisions on VAT increases or increasing indirect taxation by 1p, he would certainly take the first course. The right hon. and learned Gentleman's strategy is to build up a war chest of direct tax cuts, the contents of which will be funded by the moneys that he has taken from the British people in indirect taxation.

The Chancellor derided some of the suggestions that have been made by Opposition Members, yet he constantly asks us for suggestions. He constantly demands that my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) produces solutions, only to deride them. He derided the suggestion that the Government should impose a windfall tax only this afternoon. I recall that two Budgets ago he derided my hon. Friend for talking about loopholes. It emerged implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, during his Budget statement this year that the closing of loopholes has saved the Exchequer over £3,000 million. The loopholes that he claimed did not exist or could not be closed when they were talked about by Labour Members have now been closed, with a saving of £3,000 million. He claims that that is a measure of his financial prudence. The Chancellor has done nothing about taxation.

What about unemployment, the second problem? Unemployment is not only a social blight but an economic problem. By referring to unemployment's economic effects, I do not mean to undermine in any way its social consequences. Unemployment cannot be described by a graph on an economist's wall or by a chart in a bureaucrat's office. It is a living tragedy. Many of us have lived among it for a decade or more and Conservative Members are seeing the problem among their constituents and in their constituencies. In addition, however, unemployment is an economic waste.

When the Government took office, there were about 1 million unemployed people. There are now more than 2 million, despite more than 30 changes in the way in which unemployment is calculated. Even more important, when the Conservatives came to power in 1979, there were 340,000 long-term unemployed people; there are now more than 1 million.

The Government tell us that they have created more than 400,000 jobs but if we consider the number of people in employment—this shows how the statistics have been fiddled—we find that, since the bottom of the recession four years ago, employment has not increased by 400,000 but decreased by 440,000. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's genius has created a large hole somewhere in the Treasury with the disappearance of 800,000 jobs—the Government say that 400,000 jobs have been created but employment has decreased by about 400,000 according to the figures.

The Government's response to that in the Budget was a national insurance rebate of less than £10 a week. That will not begin to tackle the sort of problems faced by the long-term unemployed. We suggested a rebate of about £75 for employers who were willing to take on the long-term unemployed. The Government therefore offered nothing on employment growth, which has not increased.

What about housing and homelessness, which are not only social problems but the dynamo of the economy, especially in relation to the construction industry? No other sector of the economy would have a more catalytic effect on the rest of the economy than the construction industry.

The Chancellor's main concern during the Budget was not the fact that people were homeless and that we were not building houses but that housing benefit was out of control. Let us assume that his supposition is correct. Does not the fact that the Chancellor and his Treasury team should be surprised that housing benefit has increased because rents have gone up illustrate their naivety? Does not the fact that rents have gone up as a direct consequence of Government action explain how out of touch they are with the real world?

First, the Government withdrew subsidies on social housing, as a result of which social housing rents, especially council housing rents, went up by two, three and four times the rate of inflation. Secondly, the Government deregulated the private housing market. Thirdly, they created the economic conditions whereby the building industry was decimated. The Government prevented either private sector building or social building by refusing to release the receipts of council house sales.

Surely the Government, who are full of Adam Smith fans—the intellectuals who have studied the market and who festoon the Conservative Treasury team—should be able to work out that, if one reduces the number of houses, withdraws the social housing rent subsidy and deregulates private sector rents, the excess of demand over supply would probably lead to an increase in rents and, therefore, housing benefits. The Labour party recognised and predicted it. Its much maligned non-marketeers predicted exactly would happen.

The Government's solution in the Budget is not to build more houses, to reduce the imbalance between supply and demand or to create a catalyst in the economy by allowing local authorities to build more houses, but to penalise the victims of high rents who are suffering from deregulation of the private sector and the dearth of housing in the first place. Those people are the homeless, the about-to-be homeless and those who depend on Government benefit in the first place. It is a scandal of the first order.

Today, we had yet another budget opportunity and yet another opportunity was lost. Today, the Chancellor could and should have introduced a system of fair taxation. He should have ended tax abuse. The Government told us that there is no public interest in that or any flagrant abuse of the system on the same day as one member of Saatchi and Saatchi stands to benefit by £5 million from a share option system. The Government have a great deal of work to do to convince the British public. We should remember that Saatchi and Saatchi has presumably been paid £5 million for its tremendous foresight in declaring that, if any party other than the Conservative party were elected, we could expect tax rises. That failure of foresight while reaping the benefits of a £5 million share option only adds insult to injury.

The Government should have diminished tax privilege, abolished the tax on fuel, introduced measures to tackle unemployment and encouraged local authorities to build homes with capital receipts by phasing them in. The Government should have reformed the benefit system to encourage employers to take on long-term unemployed people and introduced a meaningful national insurance rebate. They should have changed the 21-hour rule for the long-term unemployed. They should have offered incentives for that.

The Government should have followed the policy of incentives for action and investment proposed by Labour. They should have discussed, proposed and thought about new, improved initiatives for public-private partnership. They should have tackled the real challenges and opportunities for the Post Office by developing commercial freedom in public ownership. I think that the hon. Member for Ribble Valley said that he received a letter from Norway.

Mr. Nigel Evans: NORWEB.

Dr. Reid: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. At least we all have the satisfaction of knowing that we paid for the postage on the letter. Presumably he received it yesterday, but he said that it was dated 9 December. Even at the peak Christmas season, the Post Office—that efficient, publicly owned service—is delivering letters to Conservative Members within three days. If "it ain't broke", why did the Government want to fix it? Why

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could they not develop commercial freedoms and allow the Post Office to live in balanced public ownership but with private investment?

The Government should have introduced proposals to help small businesses, to promote innovation and to improve regional investment. There was none of that in the Chancellor's speech and he has had not one but two goes at it this year alone. There is nothing constructive in the proposals. I return to the quotation to which I referred earlier—that jewel from the hon. Member for Croydon, South, who said, "If it ain't broke, why fix it?" That little gem was an attempt to justify what effectively has been a do-nothing Budget or, certainly, a do-nothing-good Budget.

In my previous speech, I mentioned that this was, in a sense, a Government in waiting. I said that the Foreign Secretary was waiting for his blessed retirement, that the President of the Board of Trade was waiting for the call and that the Secretary of State for Employment was waiting for his opportunity. That is how they have appeared throughout the whole economic shambles, paralysed by inaction and inventing a new ideology based not on Oscar Wilde, who was mentioned earlier, but probably on Dickens—a Majorism-Micawberism based on the principle that something will turn up. However, nothing has turned up or is likely to turn up. If the Government continue to wait, they will become the only Government in history to have stayed a Government-in-waiting after they have been elected.

The Government may wait but they will not suffer the effects of their inability to act and their lack of strategy and economic foresight. Nor is it Conservative Members who will suffer because they are guaranteed an income for as long as the Government continue in power—but no longer. The people who really suffer are those outside, not only the unemployed, the homeless and the socially deprived but the business men and women who are prepared to play their part by risking and investing their labour and their time if the Government were prepared to do the same.

Those people are being let down by the Government more than the House has been let down. For as long as the Government continue on that path, those people will ultimately be the judges, and I very much doubt that their judgment will be other than the harshest when the time comes.

8.10 pm

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I listened to much of the debate on the Budget last week and the week before and to most of the debate this evening. The dominant impression that I received is that our public finances are in apple-pie order, so we can spend every ha'penny that we can get our hands on, a notion exemplified by many of the Opposition's contributions tonight. The Liberal party's spokesman, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), seemed to think that we had plenty of money and he was planning to spend it on a range of usually woolly Liberal ideas. In fact, we have heard a list of ways to spend money that we do not have.

Only when we can make it clear to the Opposition parties that the whole purpose of the austerity that we have had to inflict in the past couple of years was to ensure that our economy grows and becomes a good solid basis for expansion will we be able to achieve what we happily admit is our goal—to cut taxes so that people have more choice as to how they spend their income. That is what we are all working very hard to achieve.

It was interesting to learn that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) clearly cannot differentiate between the increased income that is derived from income tax and value added tax in an expanding economy and increased rates of tax. That would disturb me greatly if he had any pretensions to becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The hon. Gentleman set out to describe the perfect entrepreneur to be rewarded through our economic system. He said that it should be a man of vision, someone who creates jobs, is successful and who exports. He described perfectly Maurice Saatchi who, with his brother, set up and for many years ran the most successful advertising agency in the world. It went through a bad patch but has now recovered and that man should be rewarded and be able to reap the benefits of his own skills. That the Opposition are still censorious about such achievements gives me great cause for concern and reminds me of the famous saying about the Bourbons to the effect that they have forgotten nothing and learnt nothing.

One of the great strengths of the Budget this year and last year was the determination to ensure that inflation should never again ruin our economy. It has paid off. We have very low inflation and, consequently, an expanding export market and a recovery that many of us could only have dreamed of. The conditions are now parallel to those which allowed the German economy to become one of the strongest in the world after the second world war and the deutschmark to take over the dominant role in world trade once occupied by the pound. We have managed to create those conditions in the United Kingdom.

It was interesting to learn that at Essen at the weekend one of the Commission's officials said that, should we ever wish to adopt a single currency, on current projections only two countries would make it—one was Germany and the other was the United Kingdom, and our finances are in better nick than the Germans'. We have created the right conditions and we must hang on to them.

We must encourage our manufacturing and export sector. Many of our services also make a great deal of money from exports and should not be deprived of the opportunity to do so. We must ensure that that sector drives our economy and continues to keep it on course.

In the past, any expansion in our economy has come through the housing market. We have driven up housing prices and the demand for consumer durables, which have had to be imported. We have thereby drained any strength from our economic recovery. Sad and difficult though it might be, the housing market remains depressed. There are many reasons for that, but one that is rarely dealt with is the fundamental change in demography, which will in the long term ensure that house prices remain steady.

We have an aging population and most of us own our own homes. There is no longer such a demand for housing to buy. When parents die, the family house is no longer occupied and owned by the children, but goes on the market for sale and resale, thereby meeting the existing demand. That demand matches supply, so there will not be a significant increase in house prices for a long time. That may be difficult, but it is as it should be. It is another factor in the effectiveness of the German economy.

I am conscious of the fact that this is the second time that I shall have detained the House on the same topic, but smuggling concerns me greatly. I shall try not to repeat what I said in the Budget debate or what some colleagues and Opposition Members have said about it. I understand entirely why the Chancellor had to do what he has done but, as someone said on the radio, we have given smugglers a pay rise. I shall consider the issue under three headings.

First, I clearly have a constituency interest in smuggling. Any Member of Parliament with a constituency on the south coast who denies that there is a problem with smuggling is not in touch with his constituents. As hon. Members have said, smuggling extends beyond the south coast, but it is having an adverse effect on many small businesses there, some of which have been struggling to keep going.

The second reason why I am so concerned about smuggling is that it undermines the rule of law, and the third is related to health. Let me cite some examples, other than those that we have already heard, of the extent of smuggling.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) gave a very elegant exposition of the problem as he sees it, and I cannot disagree with him. In one sense, I have some sympathy with the private enterprise shown by smugglers. There is a well-known character in my constituency who lives on social security benefits. Once a week he takes his backpack, gets on the ferry from Ramsgate to Belgium, goes to a tobacconist where his order is waiting for him, puts it in his rucksack, gets the same ferry home and makes a profit of £150 a week.

I do not blame him. We are handing people profits. In my heart, I find it very difficult to say that that man should not commit such an act. Indeed, there are many other cases where one has tremendous sympathy with the opportunity being presented. We wish to create a nation of entrepreneurs. We are doing it. Unfortunately, we are doing it through them having to break the law.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I do not wish to take up much of the hon. Lady's time, but is she aware that, in Scotland, we have a big coastline and, not long ago, smugglers trying to smuggle in cocaine and marijuana were found? Does she also realise that the Customs and Excise service is being cut, and we shall not have the same number of people trying to defend our coast from the smuggling of cocaine and other drugs?

Mrs. Lait: If the hon. Gentleman cares to listen to the rest of my speech, he will hear that I have reached the conclusion that, fundamentally, prevention of smuggling is not the answer.

When it comes to alcohol, many people have talked about the beer smuggling that goes on. In fact, Shepherd Neame, one of the Kent brewers, has told me that it is brewing an extra 1 million pints a year, which it sends to Calais—99 per cent. of which catches the next boat back. However sensible a commercial decision that is, there is something faintly ludicrous in Shepherd Neame doing that. The brewer, however, makes the sensible commercial point that, of course, its beer no longer stays in Kent. It is getting better known throughout the United Kingdom. So, commercially, Shepherd Neame is making a much bigger impact than it would if it remained a small regional brewer in Kent. However, is that the way in which we wish to go?

I am not aware that any hon. Member has mentioned that in the UK, especially in the south, there is an increasing number—there was an increasing number—of English vineyards making increasingly better wine, which is quite drinkable and very drinkable in many cases. Those vineyards were some of the very first businesses to be hit after the creation of the single market.

One of the areas in which they specialised was vineyard-gate sales. Those disappeared because people were going across to France. I accept that the making of English wine will never be a dominant industry as it is in France and Germany, but I applaud the English vineyards and I drink their wine. It is very hard for them to have to cope with the increased amount of wine that comes into the country and hits their market quite directly. In fact, I know that they, too, have tried to set up their own wine-selling operation in France to bring wine back.

We need to look at the practicality of what is happening in the smuggling world in a legal context. One of my fundamental worries, quite apart from my parochial concern, is about the undermining of the rule of law. We find that there is not a tobacconist, a newsagent, a pub owner, a restaurateur, or a café owner who has not had somebody knocking at the back door asking whether he or she wanted cheap tobacco and cheap alcohol. I admire those who have the guts to say no, because they are facing commercial death. However, I have great sympathy with those who say, "Yes, I'll take it." If one is offered alcohol and tobacco at prices that one cannot match anywhere else in a recession, it is a very great temptation. We all know that human nature is fallible.

The issue goes further than that. It is easy, very easy, for honest traders to fall into temptation as well. The more available cheap tobacco and alcohol is, the easier it is to fall. I know that some of the tobacco companies are trying to make their cigarette packs smuggle-proof.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Will the hon. Lady tell the House just what the solution to that problem is? The Government have had 16 years to do something about it, and they created the problem.

Mrs. Lait: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman clearly has not been following the advent of the single market. The problem has arisen only in the past two years. If the hon. Gentleman bears with me, I shall get to the solution.

I do not think that hon. Members have yet appreciated the damage that smuggling is doing to the body politic and to the health of the nation. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) defended the high taxation of tobacco. I have every sympathy with that, as I pointed out to him at the time. I am a non-smoker. I loathe smoking and I find it exceedingly difficult when I address the problem.

I also find it very difficult when I deal with people in the health industry—I use that term in its wider sense—because I do not think that they have yet realised the nature of the problem. General practitioners have not yet seen the increase in the number of patients with respiratory diseases. It is too soon. They have not seen the increase in the number of patients with alcohol-related problems. Also, we are not yet finding schools picking up on youngsters who have access to cheap tobacco.

[Mrs. Lait]

Research needs to be conducted in those areas. We need also to change the mindset, to take into account availability and the damage that, in the long run, could be done by the excessive provision of cheap tobacco and alcohol.

So one of the things that the Department for Education and the Department of Health should do is institute research plans to check where the effects of that excessive provision are evident. I am sure that it will not be long before we start to pick up through GP surgeries signs of greater access to cheap tobacco and alcohol. We need to work closely with the medical profession to ensure that its mind-set is changed to take into account the damage that is being done, because there is no point in having a policy of high taxation on tobacco if it is being undermined by easy access to much cheaper stuff.

Opposition Members have been encouraging me to come up with the answer. I have already told them that prevention does not work. I come from the historic smuggling area of the Romney marsh, and the figures from the 18th century that I have discovered so far showed that the cost of prevention far outweighed the cost of any of the goods captured. We are seeing precisely the same happening today, even with the recent successes in Eastbourne and with the South Yorkshire miners. Prevention is not the most cost-effective way in which to deal with the problem and, while every little helps, it does not answer the problem.

I also endorse the remarks about the European Union tobacco subsidies. I take issue—slightly—with my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin). We had a debate in the House about whether Community tobacco was even used. I have to tell him that 100,000 tonnes of tobacco produced in the Community is being smoked in the Community. As we are all agreed that it is pretty poor stuff, think of the lungs of the people who are smoking it. We cannot glibly say that we do not use that tobacco. We do use it and we are spending about £1 billion a year on subsidising its production. I was glad that, in Essen, it was agreed that the entire common agricultural policy should be looked at. I hope that the first thing that is done is to get rid of that tobacco subsidy.

We also must take into account the point made so effectively by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) about the clash of cultures between ourselves and the other members of the European Union. We have always had a policy of high taxation on tobacco and alcohol and low taxation on food. The opposite has been the case on the continent. It is too easy to say that we must harmonise. Those of us who believe in subsidiarity would never suggest that harmonisation is the answer. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor used the term "approximation". I would say, "Take the profit out of smuggling." That is the way forward.

I accept that that is a long-term business because we must persuade countries that cheap tobacco and alcohol are bad for their populations. The medical profession in this country must work much more closely with its colleagues on the continent to make them recognise the damage that is being caused to the lungs and livers of the populations of those countries. That is a long-term proposal because we all know how resistant the medical profession is to change. However, I believe that the medical profession has a real responsibility to work with its colleagues on the other side of the channel.

Will the Treasury please stop considering excise duty as the milch cow from which it can solve any problem? For the reasons that I have cited, for my constituents and anyone on the south coast, for the rule of law and the continuing good health of our population, I urge the Treasury to take its responsibilities seriously and to stop using excise duty as a way of solving all its problems as that wrecks the health of more people than I, and many hon. Members, would wish to take responsibility for.

Mr. Graham *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I call the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross).

8.31 pm

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I apologise for speaking ahead of the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), as I always like to listen to him. I promise to try to be around to hear what he has to say.

We are not constricted in this debate as we were in the last Budget debate when speeches were restricted to 10 minutes. For much of this afternoon, when I looked around the Chamber, I was reminded of the hymn which states:

"The tumult and the shouting dies;
The Captains and the Kings depart".

There is not the pressure to be present today to make our case. The bite has gone out of the debate. As a result, we have ventured into some very interesting highways and byways.

I listened to most folk this evening with a fair degree of interest. I was particularly interested in the Chancellor's comments. At one stage, he told us that the Government had taken the necessary steps to restore the nation's finances. When I think back to the absolute essential, which was September 1992, I recall that the Government were dragged kicking and screaming to the point where the necessary step was forced on them. Without that, we would still be in the dreadful situation that had pertained for a year or two before then.

I also listened with interest to the comments of Opposition Members. It appeared to me that, on occasion, there was a germ of convergence on the view that public debt had to be kept under control. When I think back to the debates to which I listened when I first became a Member, I believe that that convergence of view is very welcome.

This is a particularly interesting debate on the economy of the entire nation in view of what is happening in Belfast today and what is going to happen tomorrow with regard to the investment forum for Northern Ireland. I hope that that will have considerable effects down the years for my constituents.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), who kindly let me have a copy of the Labour party's views on what should be done in Northern Ireland. I assure her and her colleagues that we will read that document with great care. Whether or not we agree with it is a different matter, but we will read it with great care. The mere fact that we can think about such things is a sign that, even in Northern Ireland, we are approaching what passes for normal politics in the rest of the United Kingdom. That is a welcome change from that which normally gives us cause for concern.

With regard to the Northern Ireland economy, we are promised money from many sources in the coming months. My view is simple: those who call for that money to be spent on good works, community relations, training and all the rest of it should be told very quietly, "No, this is one off." When the money is spent, we want to see something on the ground. Whether that is a bridge, a new school or a new road is immaterial to me; we want something permanent in the infrastructure, or possibly in education in Northern Ireland, even at the level of primary or secondary schools, where much rebuilding is needed.

That money will not last. It is not normal government expenditure which will roll on for many years into the future. It is a short-term, one, two or three-year process and the money will then be gone. We want something permanent when the money is spent. We do not want it to be frittered away on projects which, no matter how worthy in themselves, should be met from normal government expenditure over a longer period. My party will give the Government its views on how those extra sums should be spent on very worthy things which should be done and which we believe should be carried into effect as speedily as possible.

In the first Budget debate, I referred to the consequences for rural dwellers of the rising cost of motoring. I suppose that I could do worse than repeat what I said then. However, I must add to what I said by saying that, as so many people have no real alternative and are absolutely stuck in their homes from morning to night if they do not have a vehicle and as the social and economic life of the countryside depends totally on the ownership of a car, and the more remote one is from a large conurbation the more essential that vehicle becomes, the further increase in the cost of transport fuel in this mini-Budget is most unwelcome.

Under the Rio convention, the Government have already committed themselves to steadily raising the cost of fuel for transport. That cannot be allowed to pass unchallenged and it cannot go on. If we allow it to continue, we will so damage the social fabric of our rural areas that social life as we know it will simply cease to exist. There is no alternative, whether we like it or not, to personal transport for much of the United Kingdom and for many millions of people who live here.

Where alternatives exist, such as the transport systems in large cities and suburban areas, let us by all means promote them and use them. Let us make them attractive to the people who use them and try to cut the number of personal vehicles that enter towns and cities every day. However, we must not forget the very real problems and concerns of rural dwellers in that respect.

The hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) and others referred to some of the problems that have arisen as a result of the increase in duty on alcohol and tobacco. Our experience in Northern Ireland, especially with regard to the tobacco and cigarette manufacturing industry there, is that increases in taxation on tobacco have the unwelcome effect of sucking in legal imports, never mind the illegal imports which are exercising the minds of hon. Members who represent the south-east of England and further afield.

A balance must be struck in the new borderless Europe. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) drew attention to the underlying reasons for some of the problems. However, we simply cannot go on allowing important sectors of the economy to be undermined or destroyed because we are so out of step with other countries. We need to exercise control over those matters to protect government revenue and the income and jobs of our constituents throughout the kingdom.

Much has been said about the smuggling of alcohol. I am one of those who believe that far too much alcohol is consumed in the western world, anyway, not least in the United Kingdom. Those of us who have encountered the effects of the excess consumption of alcohol and the utter misery that it has caused for many people would normally welcome the fact that it had become so pricey that most people could not afford it. I used to have a very simple view of pubs. I thought that they should be nationalised and then they would be bound to go broke and fail. Unfortunately, no Government have had the guts to go down that road, so a lot of people drink a lot of alcohol.

Mr. Graham: Hear, hear.

Mr. Ross: Scotland is infamous in that respect, but it is not the only place in the United Kingdom where alcohol is used to excess.

The subject of alcohol and tobacco smuggling draws my mind back a few years. I am sure that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will recall the immense problem from which people in the car retail business in Northern Ireland have suffered for many years. I refer to the enormous problem of huge numbers of vehicles being imported from the Irish Republic on such a scale and for such a period as to wreck many legitimate businesses in Northern Ireland. The problem arose because of the manufacturers' pricing policy. They changed their prices to sell cars in each nation state. Different prices were paid for the same car in each nation state. Once one was able to import a car, one was able to reap the benefits. Manufacturers' pricing arrangements arose largely because of the different taxation arrangements.

The Government should explore whether they can persuade the manufacturers of beer and other alcoholic drinks to alter their prices in order to bring the matter under control. However, I suspect that, like the efforts to control the importation of cars and the resultant damage in Northern Ireland—they were quite ineffectual, and whatever the Government did was soon circumvented—anything that the Government do in respect of the importation and smuggling of alcohol and tobacco will be a waste of time.

The money is available, but, unless the Government are prepared to close the borders and to control them, they simply cannot control or destroy the trade which has been built up. The hon. Member for Hastings and Rye has told us the reason for that trade—there is money in it. Therefore, a lot of people will do it if there is a lot of money in it. Some of them must think that they have drawn six lottery numbers every Saturday, judging by the way that they are behaving.

The other matter to which I draw the attention of the Treasury team yet again is the tax on heavy fuel which is used for electricity generation. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury will recall that I mentioned previously that, until the Budget, Northern Ireland was paying 30 per cent. of the total tax on heavy fuel for electricity generation in the

[Mr. Ross]

United Kingdom—£11.67 million last year. The increase in the Budget brought about an increase of £4.82 million, so we are now up to £17 million.

That is an extremely heavy burden on the small generation capacity in Northern Ireland. It must be dealt with, if not in the short term, certainly in the long term. I understand that that burden alone amounts to roughly 1p a unit on electricity in Northern Ireland. That is only one of two or three such measures in the pipeline.

Bearing in mind that there is a forum and various efforts to increase investment in Northern Ireland, when we tell people that electricity there is the dearest in the United Kingdom, it is a bit off-putting. The best interests of the United Kingdom are not served by such a burden on generation costs. Although I welcome the two interconnectors—one has been constructed and another is being constructed—they are only a help. In the long run, we must bring down our generation costs, and there is no short-term way of doing that other than by doing something about the tax on heavy oil.

The main matter is the amount of money that is raised by indirect taxation in the United Kingdom. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North drew attention to the difference between our view and that of the rest of Europe. He said that there was a limit beyond which people simply would not go. I must tell the Treasury team that we have reached the limit of the money that we can extract from the population by means of indirect taxation. Indirect taxation is much beloved by the Conservatives, and one can understand why.

It is like a banker's order; once it is in place, it is very hard to remove, and one never thinks about it while paying it every day of one's life. But it is an onerous tax, because it applies to everyone. Of course, people on low incomes pay a larger proportion of their income in indirect taxation than do those on higher incomes. The Government have had to resort to increased benefits for those people, thereby increasing the social security bill.

I should have thought that it was self-evident that, whenever taxation reached the point at which the Government had to compensate from tax, something was going far wrong and it was time to go back to basics and take a long, hard look at how they were trying to raise tax. Therefore, we need to reconsider the relationship of high taxation to the social security benefit entitlement system; we might then discover that lowering such taxes will lead to a lower bill for social security benefits. That would always be a help.

In the previous debate on such matters, I drew attention to my party's view that, although we should be absolutely adamant that we will not tax essentials that people need every day—fuel is clearly regarded by the population as one of them—that is not the whole story. We have a high public sector borrowing requirement. It is coming down again. Much of the drop in the requirement this year is as a result of more people being back at work, the fall in inflation and the fall in interest rates. That is very welcome, because it lays a long-term, sound foundation. However, if there is a sudden large rise in the public deficit for a year or two, surely the only honest way to deal with that is to put up income tax. It is the most flexible tax of all.

If, instead of trying to put 17.5 per cent. VAT on fuel, the Government had stuck 3p on income tax, that would have been mighty unpopular, but it would have been honest. The Government would have received the revenue immediately, and that would have been welcome. The pain would have been felt immediately, and people would have said, "You are the lot who did it, and you promised not to do it." Perhaps that is a good reason for not doing it, but the alternative has turned out to be even worse. Furthermore, there would have been no recycling of the complaint; the matter would have been over and done with.

Surely one of the great lessons of VAT on domestic fuel is that, if the Government are going to tax, they should get it over and done with, instead of having six or seven bites at the bitter lemon. It does not get any nicer; it just allows people more time to think about how they will beat the Government, as they will eventually do. An increase in income tax is over and done with in one fell swoop and can be easily reversed when conditions allow.

I wonder whether the Government have pondered in the last week or two what the situation would have been if, instead of putting 3p on income tax to raise the £5 billion they need, they had put on 4p or 5p. They would have been in a wonderful position come next December. They could have taken 4p from income tax without being any worse off and they would have received the plaudits of the entire country for fulfilling their election promises by reversing unfortunate taxation measures.

The Government could have been in a much happier position in the run-up to the next general election. As a result of the decision taken in the House on VAT on fuel, the Chancellor was freed from that massive millstone. I suspect that, when he looks back in three months or six months, he will realise how fortunate the Government were to have been defeated. The matter will not return to haunt them.

Tax that is imposed to meet an immediate need should be able to be reversed easily and quickly. That leads me to question why the Government tried to increase VAT on fuel. It can only mean that they believe that they will need considerable revenue for a long time. They opted for a tax with long-term consequences which is difficult to reverse. For that reason, I fear that the Government do not expect to be out of the woods for some time; therefore, they are laying the foundations for sound public finances at the time of the next election. When that time comes, I hope that we will have seen a huge reduction in the PSBR, and that we will be close to repaying public sector debt.

8.51 pm

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): The test for this Budget is the extent to which it equips the British economy to cope with the dramatic and turbulent changes being experienced not just by the United Kingdom but by the entire industrialised world. The pressures on our economic policy making derive from two immensely powerful forces: technological change and international competition.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) began his speech by quoting from Kipling's "Recessional". If my memory serves me correctly, a later verse reads:

> "Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
> Is one with Nineveh and Tyre."

Western nations have become used to material prosperity, high personal living standards and a standard of public services of which our grandparents would scarcely have dared to dream. In the face of competition from the far east and Latin America, if we are not careful we shall find the expectations with which we have grown up undercut by a very harsh economic reality.

The second great force for change is technology, which affects not only the manufacturing sector but also service provision. There are constant reports of redundancies in banks and building societies. Big employers in my constituency, such as Equitable Life, grapple daily with the fact that machines can do jobs more efficiently and with fewer mistakes than people can.

Those pressures will not go away. The test of our economic policy must be whether, in the face of that turbulence, the policies announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer will help British companies to sell their goods and services to customers in this nation and throughout the world. In the end, that is the only way to ensure sustained growth and secure jobs. It is the only way to provide high personal living standards and the wealth to spend on the schools, hospitals and railways that hon. Members on both sides of the House and thousands of our constituents want.

The Government must look wider than the Budget in addressing those problems. We do not have to accept entirely the analysis of an historian like Correlli Barnett to appreciate that the British economy has deep-rooted problems which must be tackled through a range of policies, and not solely by the economic levers available to a Chancellor of the Exchequer. I am convinced that our hopes of creating wealth and increasing living standards critically depend upon policies of sound money, low inflation and controls on Government borrowing and spending. Those economic measures alone will not be sufficient to achieve our aims, but they are necessary elements of our continued future prosperity.

That is why, whatever quibble I may have with the particulars of the Chancellor's package, he has my wholehearted backing for his top priority of getting public finances in order and keeping them in order—even if my colleagues and I must accept the necessity of following policies which in more propitious circumstances we would have preferred not to see enacted.

What I find depressing about Labour Members' speeches is that they fail to grasp the scale of the present problems confronting our country and to advocate persuasive, economically literate solutions to those problems. Unemployment in my constituency is still far too high, but it is falling. Manufacturing industry, particularly exporting businesses, has done well. In a depressed domestic market, the Hoselock company has thrived in overseas markets, winning new customers and bringing profits to this country.

Retailers, particularly small independent retailers, and construction businesses are also finding life very tough. The alternative strategies advocated by our critics produce specious, attractive-sounding measures which in practice would damage those sectors of the economy that they say they wish to assist. That can be seen most of all in their demands for spending. Usually, those demands are hidden because of the Labour Front-Bench team's efforts to keep them under some sort of control at least for a couple of years.

The pressures for additional spending and borrowing are there all the time, as we heard from the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), who mentioned the need to allow local authorities to spend more than their capital receipts. During the last general election campaign, even Labour party Treasury spokesmen admitted that such a policy change would inevitably bring about an increase in public borrowing. In today's circumstances, that would increase the present upward pressure on interest rates. Such pressure is potentially damaging for the retail and construction sectors, which are already the slowest to benefit from the economic recovery.

Despite the advocacy of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), I am not persuaded of the need for further—

Mr. Wray: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, under the Public Health Act 1897, local authorities have a responsibility to bring their houses up to a tolerable standard so that they can house people? How are we to clear the homeless queues if the Government will not allow those authorities to spend their capital receipts?

Mr. Lidington: The hon. Gentleman would benefit from studying the Conservative manifesto commitment on housing and the record. During the past two years, through our grants to housing associations, we have secured a greater increase in social rented housing provision than we thought possible at the last general election. That is the practical policy for securing better housing standards that the Conservative Government are pursuing.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East said that an increase in income tax would be preferable to increases in direct taxation. I am not persuaded by his argument, for two reasons. First, the disincentives are obvious—especially for people with earnings around the tax thresholds—and we want to encourage people to take on work rather than rely on benefits. Secondly, in the longer term the labour market is moving towards more self-employment. More people will have a portfolio of occupations, rather than one job with one employer for 30 years. In those circumstances, it is even possible that income tax will become a less predictable and reliable source of revenue for the Treasury and Government spending. For those reasons, the Chancellor was right to avoid further increases in direct taxation last week.

On tobacco and petrol, I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans). It would be desirable for the European Union to phase out the indefensible subsidies for tobacco growing in southern Europe as quickly as possible.

I was less persuaded by the arguments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait). As a non-smoker with 800 constituents who depend on the tobacco industry for their jobs, I take the view that smoking, to which I have never been attracted, is an activity that should be allowed to consenting adults in the privacy of their own homes. I therefore find myself unable to agree with my hon. Friend's ideas.

On road transport, I must mention to my hon. Friend the Chief Secretary the representations that I have received about excise duty and the changes in classification. I have received strong representations from farmers and the owners of small breakdown and road recovery businesses, saying that the way in which the changes have been framed bites hard on their businesses.

[Mr. Lidington]

I hope that Ministers will be prepared to consider that matter again when the Finance Bill comes before Parliament.

On the principle that the increase in petrol duty forms part of a sensible strategy to restrain car use, I have no quarrel with the Government. It causes difficulty to individuals, but if we are honest about the need to restrain private car use and if we are in adult politics, that is surely one of the measures that we must employ.

9.3 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I have listened to a number of speeches tonight, and it is sad that none of them has touched on a real aspect of local government which the people of Scotland need desperately. For the past three days, I have spent my time in the turmoil of flooded homes. Nothing has come from the Chancellor today, except further cuts in public expenditure—the public expenditure that the people of Scotland so desperately need.

I was in an elderly woman's home today. It was a beautiful home, but it had been absolutely wrecked and ruined by flood damage. The raging torrent of a river had burst through into her house and devastated her lifelong possessions. She was devastated, and she asked me what I could do to help her. I said that I would raise the matter in Parliament tonight and ask the Government to release money so that the Chancellor of the Exchequer could take the decision to allocate funds to that desperate emergency situation.

I have mentioned many occasions when certain things have hurt me, and have made me feel sorry for my constituents. There are hundreds upon hundreds of people in Scotland tonight—some 800 families—who do not know what Christmas will bring to them. They will not get Santa Claus coming through the door with a big bag of presents, because they saw their presents floating out of the door the other night. Yet the Government stand idly by and say that they can do nothing. They say that there are emergency powers, and that the Bellwin formula states that the Government pay 85 per cent. while the district council pays the other 15 per cent.

If the Government are to make further cuts in public expenditure, how will local government deal with an emergency such as the flooding? I plead with the Chancellor to release money tonight to deal with the flood disaster in Scotland and to assure my people—the people of Scotland—that they can live in comfort and face the new year with the same decency that Ministers will enjoy. Ministers know that they can go back to a warm home. They are well provided for, because Ministers have plenty of money. My constituents tonight do not know what will happen to them. They expect the Government to govern, and to look after the people, but the present Government abandon them.

I had a go at the Chancellor for reducing the price of champagne by 19p—that is literally mind-boggling—and increasing the price of whisky by 26p. A lot of the people affected by the flood work in the whisky industry, so they might be facing not just flood damage but further unemployment as a result of the measures that the Chancellor has taken. In France, of course, people will be over the moon, because they will be getting the jobs.

I am quite sure that the Champagne Charlies in London will be well looked after. The Chancellor looks after his friends in the City and makes sure that they can bevvy champagne until it bubbles out of their earholes. But they keep punishing the workers and they create huge unemployment in Scotland and the rest of Britain.

I know Scotland well, but I also know England well. The rural communities in both countries are now to be punished by the increase in the price of petrol and diesel. The Government do not seem to think about that, despite the fact that they have destroyed rural bus services and are now destroying rural train services.

After nearly 16 years in power—the Chief Secretary should hang his head in shame—the Government have made the country nearly bankrupt, and they have destroyed businesses by the million.

Mr. Wray: The Government are bankrupt.

Mr. Graham: My hon. Friend is right. We are now approaching Christmas, but what a bleak Christmas it will be for millions of our people and for the pensioners facing the 8 per cent. VAT on fuel.

The other night—after pressure from Opposition Members and one or two abstentions—the Government had to drop the proposal to increase the VAT to 17.5 per cent. I was delighted that Members of the House combined to achieve that, but many hon. Members seem not to realise that the people we look after and represent—the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed and the low paid—demand that the 8 per cent. VAT on fuel should also be dropped. They want a sensible Budget which does not hurt the poor and which starts to take something off the immensely rich whom the Tory Government have created.

The Government have created a division so enormous that it is like the man in the moon. One individual has won £17.5 million in the lottery while hundreds of my constituents face a bleak and horrifying Christmas because the Prime Minister does not know whether to be Mr. Scrooge or Mr. Misery. He should take the opportunity to support the Opposition today and to become Santa Claus and give folk some hope for the future.

The best hope that we have is to burn 16 candles to mark the 16 years and ensure that there is a general election. I should be happy to burn all those candles and to see the end of the Government. I hope that 1995 will indeed see the end of this miserable—aye, very, very, miserable—Government.

9.10 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): My hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) could, unfortunately, speak but briefly, but he more than compensated for that with the passion with which he pleaded for the sake of his constituents. Those constituents must be extremely proud of him for the way in which he has spoken up for Scotland, which has been affected so awfully by floods. Let us hope that his pleas have been heard by the Government.

The debate started with an extraordinary admission—perhaps it should not be surprising—from the Chancellor, who refused to give any guarantee to my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) that he would not extend VAT further. He was pressed on that several times, but he absolutely refused to give that guarantee. All hon. Members will have heard his refusal.

He then offered us the assurance that VAT would not be extended without primary legislation. That promise lasted all of four minutes, because we were then confronted with the resolution on VAT on transport, now before the House, in which the right hon. and learned Gentleman proposes to do just that. The Opposition were unconvinced by the Chancellor's assurance, and we will press our amendment to a vote. That amendment would greatly improve the House's control over the Government's addiction to extending VAT.

One simple question has not been answered by the Government. If the measures before us are right, why were they not included in the original Budget? The Chancellor and the Prime Minister could have spared us a lot of bother by getting it right the first time. We could put that question round the other way. Before the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) predicted a massive Conservative defeat at the Dudley, West by-election—his prediction is certainly accurate—he said that he believed that his hon. Friends preferred the original version of the Budget. Judging from the way in which they voted on Tuesday, it is clear that that majority preferred the original version—something that we will have cause to remind their electorate of between now and the next general election.

We must ask why the Prime Minister did not force the original Budget through, as he could have done, by making it a vote of confidence. Three possible explanations can be offered, each of which is profoundly damaging for the Government. The first is the cock-up theory, according to which those on the Government Treasury Bench were so incompetent that they thought all along that they had the vote on VAT in the bag. They did not believe that they had to use the confidence threat even when defeat stared them in the face.

They saw the danger too late and put the Chancellor up to the tawdry and ultimately self-defeating farce of Tuesday's winding-up speech when he brandished £100 million worth of baubles at his Back Benchers 10 minutes before the vote like some second-rate department store Santa Claus. That is no way to carry on with the nation's finances or to run a Government. The House will not forget the pathetic spectacle of the Chancellor casting around for prearranged interventions. He tried to appear clever, but it made him look all the more foolish when his cobbled-together last minute deal came thoroughly unstuck.

The second theory is that the Prime Minister feared that to make VAT a vote of confidence would not be enough to secure victory. If that is correct, his confidence in the Conservative party's will and ability to govern is beginning to match that of the country. I suppose one could say that, unlike the Chancellor, the Prime Minister did not underestimate the vindictiveness of some of his Back Benchers.

The third plausible and interesting theory is that, when the Prime Minister said that the vote on VAT would not be a vote of confidence, he was signalling that he could live with defeat on that. Having been turned over on it in Cabinet, he would let the House turn over the Chancellor. In view of all the talk about the Chancellor being strong and taking the lead over Europe, perhaps the Prime Minister thought that it was high time he had his come-uppance.

Whatever the reason, that was a humiliating defeat for the Government in general and for the Chancellor in particular. He was unable to deliver his side on what he had described only a week before as essential to the strategy of achieving economic recovery. The Government got into the mess because they simply did not listen. They thought that they could break their promises with impunity and that what people outside said did not matter.

The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) said that the Chancellor's policy was defensible but poorly presented. I half agree with him: it was an indefensible policy poorly presented. One of the lessons of the past couple of weeks is that we must listen to what constituents say. I trust that Conservative Members will have heard at Christmas bazaars and senior citizens' dos what we have heard, but only a handful of them take any notice.

In his opening speech the Chancellor said that we are having a few too many Budget debates. I wonder whether he has had a bit more exposure over the past couple of weeks than is good for him and the Government. I was given a charming child's eye view of the Budget by a Conservative councillor who shall remain nameless. His small daughter came into the kitchen and said, "Mummy, mummy, there is something wrong with the television. The same man is on all the channels and I can't get rid of him." I think that the answer was, "Don't worry dear, we are working on it."

People say that it is great news that the 17.5 per cent. VAT on fuel was defeated. However, it is typical of the Government that when they are forced to stop hitting the average punter with one tax increase they hit him with six others. I shall deal with some of those increases. The Chancellor speaks of an extra 1p on a pint of beer, but that is not what the customer will have to pay. By the time profit, VAT and higher transport costs resulting from the increase in diesel fuel are added, it is more likely to be 3p per pint of bitter. For higher strength beers and lagers, the increase may be as high as 5p.

Others have quoted what the Chancellor said in the first of his Budget speeches in the autumn, but it bears repetition. He said:

> "one of the most widely publicised other effects of the single market has been the increase in legitimate cross-border shopping in alcohol and tobacco, and in smuggling. Both of these have inevitably meant some loss of duty to Exchequer, pressures on the British drinks industry and some damage to British business. No Chancellor can remain unmoved in the face of this".—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1095-96.]

He listened to the concerns of the industries, but, true to form for the present Government, it did not last. His listening was truly a nine-day wonder. Now he is back to putting up tax on beer. Let us make no mistake about it—it will be a jobs killer.

While there is room for argument over the magnitude of the effects, no one disputes that the present and growing extent of cross-channel shopping—both legal and illegal—is having a serious impact on the British drinks industry and in particular on distribution, off-licences, supermarkets and pubs where, in total, thousands of jobs may be at risk.

[Mr. Andrew Smith]

Let me repeat the challenge put earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East. Will the Chief Secretary in his reply say how many jobs will be lost as a consequence of the Chancellor putting up the duty on beer? Faced with that threat, Opposition Members believe—as the Chancellor said he did two weeks ago—that now is not the time to be putting up duty on beer and widening the differential with France, and we shall vote against that increase tonight.

Many of the same arguments that have been spelt out by my hon. Friends apply to spirits, particularly to whisky, which is so important to jobs in Scotland. We shall also vote against that increase. The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) argued against the increases as being damaging to jobs and undermining Britain's negotiating position within the European Union. Although he is not in his place, perhaps he will consider voting in line with the arguments he put forward.

With the further increases in petrol duty, the Chancellor is hitting many individuals and families of modest means harder than they reasonably could have expected. Presumably, the whole point of indicating last year that road fuel duties would increase on average by 5 per cent. in real terms was to give people some warning, but on top of the 2½p per litre in his main Budget two weeks ago, the further 1p will increase petrol costs by 10 per cent., which will hit many people very hard—the Automobile Association estimates, by £51 a year.

The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) spoke with feeling about the effects of that on his rural constituents and about the particular effects of the increase in duty on heavy fuel, which is used for electricity generation in Northern Ireland.

I shall say something about tobacco. The Chancellor's proposed increase of 6p on a packet of cigarettes on top of the 10p he announced in the Budget is not a change we intend to vote against this evening, recognising the importance of tobacco taxation in helping to cut smoking and the consequent benefits to health, but there are limits to how far the Chancellor can go in hitting smokers.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) spelt out, smuggling is increasing at an alarming rate. The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), drawing on his own commercial experience, protested at the possible loss of front-line customs officers. With smuggling increasing at such a rate, what are the Government doing cutting 500 front-line customs officers? It is absolutely disgraceful.

The hon. Member for Ribble Valley must have been as pained as we were to hear the hon. Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) praising the entrepreneurial instincts of smugglers. Her approach to solving the problem seemed to be to condemn a little less, research as little as possible and do nothing at all. It was a very unpersuasive argument. We are debating a serious issue which the Chancellor recognised, to the extent that he did not increase the duty on hand rolling tobacco, which is particularly prone to smuggling.

I shall now touch on the important issue of equity in relation to tobacco taxation. Given the social distribution of smokers, banging tax on cigarettes is one of the most regressive forms of taxation. A study was carried out earlier this year—we would all do well to take note of it—for the Policy Studies Institute, by Alan Marsh and Stephen McKay, funded by the Health Education Authority. It showed just how severe the effects now are. Looking at low-income families with children, it found that nearly three quarters, for example, of council tenants receiving means-tested benefits smoke, spending, on average, more than 14 per cent. of their net disposable income, or £1 in every £7 on tobacco.

We must remember when we vote these increases in the House that giving up smoking, laudable, important and good for us though it is, is certainly not easy. We must remember, too, the particular difficulties for the people who are addicted to tobacco and who are under all the pressures that struggling along in poverty brings. The effect of the Budget will be to take an extra £2 a week out of the already meagre budget of the poorest families. There will come a point at which the poverty effect on children of such families will begin to exceed even the ill health effect of their parents' smoking.

Mr. Graham: My hon. Friend will realise that there are people in my constituency tonight who, because of poverty, because of their very low income, cannot afford to insure their houses, and their houses are now damaged. We will have to pay a fortune to try to put these folk on the right path. That is what poverty inflicts.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend speaks with deep knowledge of his constituency. As well as their insurance premiums, which are likely to go up, those people will also have to pay the insurance premium tax as well.

I hope that the Chief Secretary will agree that, with such a big tax increase and with such seriously regressive effects, the Government should act to ensure that help is given to people on low incomes to give up smoking and that the Government should act now to ban tobacco advertising.

Although some hon. Members argued that the mini-Budget measures might be less unfair than the original Budget measures, they are, as my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) pointed out, still unfair.

As the Government's political credibility was on the line and, indeed, was so very fragile, we can understand why the £1 billion had to be found. But there were fairer and better alternative ways in which to raise the money, which the Labour party spelt out—for example, tightening up on executive share options, not going ahead with the venture capital trusts, ending the enterprise investment scheme, ending tax relief on private medical insurance and raising a levy on the windfall profits of the privatised utilities, as spelt out by my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East earlier. Those measures would have been much fairer and would have added next to nothing to the retail prices index, whereas the Chancellor's measures in both the mini-budget and the original Budget put it up.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) said in his effective contribution, the Labour party would put in place employment measures now to get people back to work and to cut the cost of keeping people unemployed, whereas the national insurance rebate comes comes into effect for the long-term unemployed only in April 1996, when they will have been unemployed for so very much longer.

What of the Chief Secretary? Opening the Budget debate, he dismissed our VAT amendment as an "opportunistic wheeze."

"True Conservatives,"

he said,

"will not, I believe, cast their votes in the House to support Labour's procedural dirty tricks"—[*Official Report*, 30 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1238.]

It is a fine irony, is it not, that our victory and the victory of the people of this country has forced him to eat those words and come back to the House to lay in front of us measures to put in place the very proposals about which he was so dismissive just a week ago? We must ask him whether he agrees with the Chancellor's refusal to give any guarantee not to extend VAT in future to food, children's clothes, transport and books. Will he give a guarantee not to extend VAT?

The fact is that Labour spoke for Britain in defeating the VAT increase last week. What is more, together with everyone in the House and the country who supported us, we struck a blow for fairness in taxation. However much it can be argued that the measures we are now discussing improve on the Chancellor's original Budget, they still hit middle and lower-income Britain.

It should be remembered that people are still experiencing the biggest tax increase in British history. At a time when living standards are already falling and real personal disposable incomes are lower than they were, on average, at the last general election, taxes are rising by an average of £800 this year. Conservative Members' constituents will not forget that, however much the Chancellor attempts to bribe them next year.

Mortgage payments are rising; rents are rising; car tax and insurance are rising; holiday insurance, holiday flights, petrol, beer and spirits are all rising. Only the price of champagne is coming down. What an indictment of the Government: they are hitting people with taxes left, right and centre, but cutting the cost of champagne.

One way or another, ordinary families are being hit, while at the same time the Chancellor is unveiling new tax avoidance devices for the super-rich. It is all part of the price that people are being forced to pay for Conservative broken promises—for the Government's unerring instinct for unfairness, and their economic incompetence. With this Budget, people have further proof of why they can never trust the Government on tax again. Labour's message to the people is clear and unequivocal: "We are on your side." As with the whole VAT campaign, we do not just talk about it; we act to change things.

The Government are wrong to underestimate the British people's instinct for fairness and their longing for competence. The people know that they will get neither fairness or competence from this Government, with their "wet night in Dudley" broken promises. It is to the Labour party that the people look for good government; to the Labour party that they look for fairness; to the Labour party that they look for economic policies that work.

This week, the people of Dudley, West will have an opportunity to show the way forward for Britain with Labour. They will show the way forward for Britain with Labour, and they will show the way out for this failed and unfair Conservative Government.

9.32 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): Far from eating any words, as the shadow Chief Secretary hopes, I am proud to stand by what I said last week. It is clear that the Opposition are still in a mood of opportunism and wheezing. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and I both regret the necessity for today's debate and are sorry that the package of measures introduced to remedy the hole that was blown in the public finances—

Mr. Andrew Smith *rose—*

Mr. Aitken: No, I shall not give way. Opportunistic wheeze No. 1 will not succeed.

This is very much a package of second choices, but just as the Government have accepted the will of the House—

Mr. Smith *rose—*

Mr. Aitken: Very well, I shall give way.

Mr. Smith: Is the Chief Secretary confirming that his first choice is still to impose VAT on fuel at 17.5 per cent?

Mr. Aitken: No; the Government have accepted the will of the House. Opposition Members would be wise to understand, however, that there is no such thing as a free rebellion on a Budget measure. That is the fundamental reason why the package contains second-choice measures that the Government would have preferred not to introduce, and it is why we have considerable sympathy with hon. Members on both sides of the House who have advanced arguments about aspects of the package. Other Ministers also originally sympathised with some of those arguments.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Talking of sympathy, will my right hon. Friend confirm that he and I—as Members of Parliament representing port constituencies—are very concerned about the impact of the rises in alcohol and tobacco duties? Will he also confirm that he and his colleagues will instruct Customs and Excise to ensure that, at every opportunity, anyone who seeks to evade alcohol or tobacco duty is prosecuted and that prosecutions are pursued fully in the courts?

Mr. Aitken: I certainly confirm that vigorous measures are being taken by Her Majesty's Customs, about which I shall say something a little later.

As I have said, we have accepted the will of the House. I am, however, slightly in the mood of the Irishman who in the famous story was giving directions to a stranger. He ends by saying, "But if I were you, I would not have started from here." Perhaps it would have been best if we had not started from where we now find ourselves, but we have—*[Interruption.]*—and so I shall respond to the various remarks of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

It has been a curiously muted debate, but one would not think so with the sudden chorus of noise that has suddenly manifested itself. The Opposition Benches were until recently notable for the absence of Opposition Members, and consequently their silence. The hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) got it right when he quoted Kipling's "Recessional", saying

[Mr. Aitken]

that it had been a question of whether the "tumult and the shouting" had died away and the "Captains and the Kings" had departed.

Most Labour Back-Bench Members departed for most of the afternoon, and it was a pretty soporific debate. The first soporific note was made in an intervention—not even a speech—by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who seemed not to want the £1 billion or £1.5 billion replaced. He seemed to think that it was not necessary to do so.

The right hon. Gentleman's intervention reminded me of the story of an American senator who—

Mr. Sheldon: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Aitken: Very well.

Mr. Sheldon: I was making the point that the Chancellor seems to be addicted to fine tuning. As soon as he sees £800 million, he wants to correct it. He could have done it in February. He could have done it in February after he had received further information during the passage of the Finance Bill. He could have done it at his leisure with a greater understanding of what was happening in the economy.

Mr. Aitken: I understood the point the first time round. The right hon. Gentleman's solution would have been to do nothing for a while, to be patient, to wait and to snooze. That would have meant that the uncertainty created by the hole that was blown in the Budget arithmetic would not have been replaced by the certainty of the markets and by the sound and sensible measures that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor introduced.

A great deal of concentration during the debate was focused on the drinks industry. The topic was introduced first by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who made an eloquent plea for the Scotch whisky industry, and it was echoed by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims). I was somewhat underwhelmed by the hon. Gentleman's plea. He had written to my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor on 7 December suggesting various ways in which he could put back the lost revenue following the defeat on the levying of additional VAT on fuel. He did not suggest letting off the Scotch whisky industry. In the eighth paragraph he suggested cuts in the drinking duty, or that they should be put back. He wrote one thing on 7 December and reversed it on the 15th. It is typical Liberal policy to say one thing on one pavement and another thing on another pavement.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: The Chief Secretary is misreading and misrepresenting my letter. I was saying that he should have reversed the cut in champagne duty, which was introduced in the first Budget. That the Chancellor has chosen not to do.

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman is quoting from a letter that he has not written. I have his letter. There is no mention of champagne and no mention of Scotch whisky. It reads:

"The Chancellor should review the cuts"—

that is what the hon. Gentleman called them—

"in the drinking industry."

Several of my hon. Friends have referred in some detail to the problems that are faced by the drinks industry, not only as a result of added taxes but because of cross-border shopping and smuggling.

I represent a constituency that includes many people who work in and around the two large channel ports of Dover and Ramsgate. I am under no illusion—nor are my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait)—about the severity of the effects of legal cross-border shopping and illegal smuggling rackets. The effects bear severely on many shops, pubs, wine markets and other businesses where livelihoods depend on alcohol and tobacco sales.

It is no great consolation for a small business man to be told that the loss of revenue to the taxpayer is lower than expected, but that happens to be true. The latest available figures to December 1993 suggest that a full year revenue loss estimated to be £250 million was running at only £200 million. There was a split of £130 million in taxes on alcohol and £70 million on tobacco. A loss of £65 million is estimated to be due to smuggling.

I do not underestimate the severity of the problem. I subscribe to the anecdotal evidence, but I have to deal with the factual and numerate evidence. Let us view the national picture. Revenue receipts from tobacco and alcohol sales—£6.5 billion for tobacco and £5 billion for alcohol—are up significantly, despite the losses from smuggling and cross-border shopping. The paradox is that the local publican, wine merchant and tobacconist are being hurt by the smugglers and cross-border shoppers—as are the vineyards to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye referred—even though national revenues are not so adversely affected.

Mr. John Townend: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Aitken: No. I am sorry, but I have to press on because of the time.

The Government sympathise very much with those traders and that is why my right hon. and learned Friend's original Budget contained no proposals to increase duties on alcohol and provided for only small increases in duties on tobacco. We were forced, however, with great reluctance to impose the measures. I regret it, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor regrets it. We hope that perhaps one or two Opposition Members will start to regret it, too. We hope that all their scaremongering speeches about hypothermia deaths are recognised as falsehoods that cost jobs and cause business closures in the drinks and tobacconist sectors.

I should pick up on the point about solutions to the problem which were mentioned at various stages of the debate.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan) *rose*—

Mr. Aitken: On the whole, I do not give way to hon. Members who have not been present in the debate.

The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) came up with a bright scheme for harmonisation of tax regimes. The trouble is that the cost in revenue of harmonisation with, say, French rates will amount to between £3 billion and £4 billion, which needs to be set against estimated bootlegging costs of some £65 million. Revenue loss of that magnitude would have to be made up elsewhere, with massive increases in other taxation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) made some good points on the need to be responsible in increasing interest rates. He said that it was right to increase them by 0.5 per cent., because the warning signs of inflation were there. There have been rises in the cost of raw materials and in commodity prices. My hon. Friend's view was that of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and that of the Governor of the Bank of England.

I deplored the speech of the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien), who said that the Chancellor had taken a complete panic measure, and that it was all due to Steady Eddie. The decision to raise interest rates on 7 December was taken on the basis of an assessment of the inflation outlook which had been considered carefully for some time. It reflected economic and political considerations. The Government are determined to take no risks with inflation. It was wrong for the hon. Gentleman to say what he did.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: I am grateful to the Chief Secretary for giving way. Is he trying to tell the House that the panic telephone calls just after the vote, whereby the meeting was brought forward by 45 minutes, had nothing to do with that vote? That beggars credibility. It was, of course, a panic measure and people are paying higher interest rates because the Chancellor made a bad judgment about being able to persuade the House to accept the proposal.

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman is talking ignorant nonsense. First, he should consider that, throughout the night after the vote, the international markets, including the Tokyo market, remained calm and steady because they were assured by my right hon. and learned Friend's statement at the Dispatch Box that evening. Secondly, the meeting was brought forward by some three quarters of an hour, but it was to do with an auction of gilts that was to take place at 10 o'clock. We wanted to make the announcement at the earliest possible time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) concentrated on cross-channel smuggling and emphasised the need for a stronger and greater intelligence effort. I assure him that we shall increase the intelligence effort because, nowadays, the detection of smuggling is a game not of numbers of uniformed officers at ports but of impressive intelligence effort. That effort is already showing some good results and has achieved some considerable coups in catching smugglers. A major announcement was made only the other day.

I shall also respond to some points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye, who produced a great deal of anecdotal evidence on smuggling. I was especially impressed by the story of her constituent who makes a regular £150 a week in that way. She said that she wished that the Government would not use excise duties as the milch cow. I assure her that we would much rather not have gone to those particular cows or those particular dairies, but there is no such thing as a free rebellion on a Budget vote and that is what we have to cope with.

I deal briefly with the speech of the hon. Member for Londonderry, East. I am glad that a voice from Northern Ireland was heard and that the hon. Gentleman mentioned the investment seminar on Northern Ireland, which was opened by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The peace process grows steadily and quietly and, as it does so, the prosperity of Northern Ireland will grow with it. The inward investment record in Northern Ireland has already been good for many years. In the past five years, total inward investment from the United States has been £536 million. Some 10 per cent. of all employment in Northern Ireland is provided by American-owned companies, which shows that there is a good chance that the momentum will grow.

My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) made an excellent speech, in which he was right to warn us that international competition in technology could cause a revolution of falling expectations. He is right to alert us to the magnitude of these challenges but also to point out that we have record-breaking exports and inward investment and that we are a world trading nation and a world financial centre. These successes depend on sound financial judgment, our excellent supply side reforms and the growing success of Britain's economy, all of which are underpinned by the excellent Budget.

I deal now, as I have been longing to all evening, with the extraordinary speeches of the Opposition's spokesmen. As usual, at least half the speech made by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) was taken up with completely phoney proposals for taxes to fill the gap which he thinks could have been filled in a better way. We have already demolished his windfalls and his loopholes and I now want to do a demolition job on his share options proposal. He went on about tax avoidance and he attacked Lord Young, Sir John Nott and some poor man from PowerGen who had bought some share options in his company. I shall deal with Labour's continuous attack on share options, and the party might learn a thing or two.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East worked himself into a lather of indignation during his denunciation of share options. His thesis is that they are a scandal and a wicked windfall for the undeserving rich. He intends to raise £200 million in new taxation by abolishing them. I have three serious criticisms of the hon. Gentleman for his stance on share options.

The first criticism is the familiar one that the hon. Gentleman has got his sums completely wrong. He claims that £200 million could be saved by abolishing share options, which is a typical exaggeration. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor told the House on Thursday and today, the actual cost of such an abolition—even if one includes the spouses whom the hon. Gentleman invented—would be around £50 million, so he got his sums wrong by a multiplier of four, which is about par for the course for him and his voodoo mathematics.

My second criticism is that the hon. Gentleman has completely misunderstood his target. In any sensibly run company, share options are offered to and usually taken

[Mr. Aitken]

up by key employees at all levels, including clerical staff, secretaries and junior and middle executives as well as company directors.

Mr. Gordon Brown: I was talking about executive share options.

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman is going to learn a thing or two tonight. I am glad that he is encouraging me.

The fundamental point is that it is a good practice, because share options give employees the chance to have a stake in the business in which they work. If their company does well, perhaps a few years later they can make a profit on their options. They have to pay capital gains tax, and in some circumstances they might have to pay income tax on them, but it is a way for them to receive a reward for their contribution to making the company in which they work a success. The Conservatives fully support fair share options schemes of the type that I have described. It is typical of the politics of envy of the Labour party that so many of its Front-Bench spokesmen denounce them as a scandal.

That brings me to my third criticism of Labour's attack on share options, which is its barefaced hypocrisy and humbug. I am now going to reveal something to the House, something about some prominent Labour supporters, close friends and advisers to the Leader of the Opposition, who have done extremely nicely out of a certain share option scheme and who have used their profits from those options in an extremely nice political way for the benefit of the leader of the Labour party. I stress that I am talking here about extremely nice people. They appear in columns with headlines such as, "Who's who on the new Socialist social list?" More recently, they have been appearing under headlines such as, "Blair challenged to reveal source of his £79,000 leadership campaign," or as *The Independent on Sunday* headlined it, "How London Weekend Television men funded Tony."

Those reports, which I see are making Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen uneasy—

Mr. Gordon Brown *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Aitken:—are all about three London Weekend Television men and their share options. First, there is Mr. Barry Cox, who is described in the press as "running the Blair show" and the "mastermind of fundraising". Secondly, there is the well-known broadcaster, Mr. Melvyn Bragg, who was quoted as saying, "It is quite flattering at my age to be called a Labour luvvie." Then there was Mr. Greg Dyke, who was last month's guest speaker at the annual dinner of Labour's Fabian Society.

Those three friends and advisers of the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), the leader of the Labour party, forked out most of the cash or fund-raised it to finance his £79,000 leadership election campaign. There is nothing wrong in that, although I can probably see somewhere a sour face being pulled by the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who had to run her leadership campaign on a shoestring budget of merely £17,000. The deputy leader had to run his campaign on an even shorter shoestring of £13,000. The one thing that those three former London Weekend Television executives have in common, besides, of course, being good, down-to-earth socialists and good Blair men, is that they made millions out of share option schemes.

Mr. Barry Cox, who, as I was saying, runs the Blair show, made a profit of £1.2 million on his share options. Mr. Melvyn Bragg, the "Labour luvvie", made a profit of £2.2 million on his share options. That Fabian socialist, Mr. Greg Dyke, made £5.3 million profit on his share options. No doubt the shadow Chancellor had such instant media millionaires in mind when he ranted at the Labour party conference in Blackpool and said:

> "I am serving notice on executive share option scrounging, on the something-for-nothing elite . . . the undeserving rich, who in pursuit of short-term gain, largely for themselves, have starved the country".

He may have added the words, if he had been truthful, "and they have fattened up the coffers of the Labour party".

But we Conservatives are not the party of the politics of envy, so we say, well, good luck to those instant media millionaires, even if their share option schemes seem to bear more than a passing resemblance to the national lottery. It brought them bigger and faster bucks than almost any other share option scheme in Britain because of some rather strange devices called golden handcuffs. Perhaps those golden handcuffs were the sort of thing—

Mr. Graham: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Aitken: No.

Perhaps they were the sort of thing that the Leader of the Opposition had in mind when he replied—

Mr. Graham: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Aitken: I hope someone will put some handcuffs on the hon. Gentleman. That would be helpful. Anyway, I am looking forward to seeing Labour's—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The House must settle down a little. I know that it is—

Mr. Aitken *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman must obey the orders of the House as much as anybody and pay attention to the Chair.

Mr. Aitken: I can quite understand why the—

Mr. Salmond: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am having—*[Interruption.]* I am having extreme difficulty in hearing. I could not make out whether the Minister was referring to the undeserving rich or the undeserving Ritz.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair at all.

Mr. Aitken: I can see what the Labour party cannot stand about the interesting story that I have been telling about everyday Labour folk. It is what I think the House and the country cannot stand, either—the bare-faced humbug of a shadow Chancellor who has been trying to make a sanctimonious scandal out of share options. Fair and legal share option schemes that are acceptable to the friends of the Leader of the Opposition should also be acceptable to the working business people of Britain. So let us have no more double-talk and double standards on taxation gimmicks such as windfalls and loopholes and share option schemes. They will not work. Taxing them will not raise serious revenue.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Chief Secretary simply confirm that it will not be Government policy at any time to tax executive share options as income?

Mr. Aitken: In certain circumstances, share options are already taxed under income tax. That just shows how little the hon. Gentleman knows about it.

Mr. Brown: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Aitken: No, I shall not give way a second time.

Being thoughtful for a moment, these exchanges show that there are perhaps two fault lines running through British politics at the moment: the unity gap on the Conservative Benches and the credibility gap in the Labour party. Both gaps are bad for the country.

Mr. Graham: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Aitken: In the long run, when the general election comes around in two years' time, it will be Labour's credibility gap that will prove to be the greater and more enduring liability. The greatest and most depressing feature of our six days of debates on the Budget resolutions has been the complete absence of answers, let alone serious alternatives and policies, from the Opposition Front Bench.

As *The Sunday Times* said in its editorial last Sunday, in words which must have chilled the Opposition:

> "A 39.5 Labour opinion poll lead will not last long if it rests on a policy vacuum."

What an incredible vacuum it is, and how cruelly Labour has been exposed in these debates. So much so that the national society for the prevention of cruelty to shadow Chancellors almost had to rush in the stretcher bearers last Thursday when my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor attacked the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East.

As everyone knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor made mincemeat of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East. He chopped him up into little pieces and finally held aloft to public ridicule the one and only remaining portion of his anatomy, which he called the hon. Gentleman's brass neck.

However, my right hon. and learned Friend understated his case. What we have on the Opposition Front Bench is not one brass neck, but a brass band of brass necks. They cannot play a tune. They do not understand the instruments of economic policy. Even their negative noises of discord fall into embarrassed silence whenever they are asked serious questions about the economy.

For example, we can ask the following questions: do the Opposition think that the present and planned levels of borrowing are too high or too low? Would they put taxes up or down? Do they think that public spending is too high or too low? Will they give a figure to define the full employment that they so glibly promise—

Mr. Graham: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Mr. Aitken: No, I shall not give way.

Mr. Graham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) has been leaping up and down for the past 12 minutes. It is clear that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury does not intend to give way.

Mr. Aitken: I have a couple more embarrassing questions. At what figure will the Opposition set the minimum weekly wage which they have undertaken to introduce? Will it be more or less than the £60 price of the Leader of the Opposition's haircut? What is their estimate of the number of jobs that will be lost as a result of what the deputy Leader of the Opposition euphemistically calls the "shake-out" in employment that the minimum wage policy will create?

We hear no answer to those questions. When we ask the shadow Chancellor those questions—he is not just soundbite man, he is soundbiteosaurus rex of the air waves—he becomes Dumbstruck of Dunfermline. That is why today's credibility gap in Labour's economic policy will become tomorrow's vote-losing chasm.

By contrast, this Government and this party are united in support for the commitment to sound finances of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor. We are united in our determination to continue the reduction in public borrowing so that we can get back to our core belief of reducing taxation as soon as it is prudent to do so.

We are united in our determination to back a Budget that will sustain and strengthen Britain's growing recovery. That recovery is showing some of the most impressive signs and statistics seen in Britain for many years—inflation at 2 per cent.; unemployment coming down for the past 20 months, month after month; and 450,000 people have come off the register since December 1992.

What the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East said at the beginning of the debate on the 1993 Budget resolutions bears repeating:

> "I make one Budget forecast—that, after the Budget, unemployment will rise this month, next month and for months afterwards."—[*Official Report*, 17 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 289.]

He was wrong that month, next month, the month after and the month afterwards. The unemployment figures fell by 45,000 in the month of October, they fell by 28,000 in

[Mr. Aitken]

the month of September, and they are coming down by 1,000 a day.

The feel-good factor might not be here yet, but the feel-safe factor is here. People feel safer because of my right hon. and learned Friend's excellent Budget, which will stand the test of time and sustain the recovery. I commend my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 274, Noes 317.

Division No. 20] **[22.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Aineworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Mon)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew

Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Clarke and
Mr. Joe Benton.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow West)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*

Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question agreed to.
Resolved,

1. VALUE ADDED TAX (FUEL AND POWER)

That—

(1) The Value Added Tax Act 1994 shall be amended as follows.

(2) In section 2 (rate of VAT) in subsection (1) the words "and paragraph 7 of Schedule 13" shall be omitted, and the following subsections shall be inserted after that subsection—

"(1A) VAT charged on—

(a) any supply for the time being falling within paragraph 1 of Schedule A1; or

(b) any equivalent acquisition or importation,

shall be charged at the rate of 8 per cent.

(1B) The reference in subsection (1A) above to an equivalent acquisition or importation, in relation to any supply for the time being falling within paragraph 1 of Schedule A1, is a reference (as the case may be) to—

(a) any acquisition from another member State of goods the supply of which would be such a supply; or

(b) any importation from a place outside the member States of any such goods.

(1C) The Treasury may by order vary Schedule A1 by adding to or deleting from it any description of supply for the time being specified in it or by varying any other provision for the time being contained in it."

(3) The following Schedule shall be inserted immediately before Schedule 1—

"SCHEDULE A1

Charge at Reduced Rate

The supplies

1.—(1) The supplies falling within this paragraph are supplies for qualifying use of—

(a) coal, coke or other solid substances held out for sale solely as fuel;

(b) coal gas, water gas, producer gases or similar gases;

(c) petroleum gases, or other gaseous hydrocarbons, whether in a gaseous or liquid state;

(d) fuel oil, gas oil or kerosene; or

(e) electricity, heat or air-conditioning.

(2) In this paragraph "qualifying use" means—

(a) domestic use; or

(b) use by a charity otherwise than in the course or furtherance of a business.

(3) Where there is a supply of goods partly for qualifying use and partly not—

(a) if at least 60 per cent. of the goods are supplied for qualifying use, the whole supply shall be treated as a supply for qualifying use; and

(b) in any other case, an apportionment shall be made to determine the extent to which the supply is a supply for qualifying use.

Interpretation

2. For the purposes of this Schedule the following supplies are always for domestic use—

(a) a supply of not more than one tonne of coal or coke held out for sale as domestic fuel;

(b) a supply of wood, peat or charcoal not intended for sale by the recipient;

(c) a supply to a person at any premises of piped gas (that is, gas within paragraph 1(1)(b) above, or petroleum gas in a gaseous state, provided through pipes) where the gas (together with any other piped gas provided to him at the premises by the same supplier) was not provided at a rate exceeding 150 therms a month or, if the supplier charges for the gas by reference to the number of kilowatt hours supplied, 4397 kilowatt hours a month;

(d) a supply of petroleum gas in a liquid state where the gas is supplied in cylinders the net weight of each of which is less than 50 kilogrammes and either the number of cylinders supplied is 20 or fewer or the gas is not intended for sale by the recipient;

(e) a supply of petroleum gas in a liquid state, otherwise than in cylinders, to a person at any premises at which he is not able to store more than two tonnes of such gas;

(f) a supply of not more than 2,300 litres of fuel oil, gas oil or kerosene;

(g) a supply of electricity to a person at any premises where the electricity (together with any other electricity provided to him at the premises by the same supplier) was not provided at a rate exceeding 1000 kilowatt hours a month.

3.—(1) For the purposes of this Schedule supplies not within paragraph 2 above are for domestic use if and only if the goods supplied are for use in—

(a) a building, or part of a building, which consists of a dwelling or number of dwellings;

(b) a building, or part of a building, used for a relevant residential purpose;

(c) self-catering holiday accommodation;

(d) a caravan; or

(e) a houseboat.

(2) For the purposes of this Schedule use for a relevant residential purpose means use as—

(a) a home or other institution providing residential accommodation for children;

(b) a home or other institution providing residential accommodation with personal care for persons in need of personal care by reason of old age, disablement, past or present dependence on alcohol or drugs or past or present mental disorder;

(c) a hospice;

(d) residential accommodation for students or school pupils;

(e) residential accommodation for members of any of the armed forces;

(f) a monastery, nunnery or similar establishment; or

(g) an institution which is the sole or main residence of at least 90 per cent. of its residents,

except use as a hospital, a prison or similar institution or an hotel or inn or similar establishment.

(3) For the purposes of this Schedule self-catering holiday accommodation includes any accommodation advertised or held out as such.

(4) In this Schedule "houseboat" means a boat or other floating decked structure designed or adapted for use solely as a place of permanent habitation and not having means of, or capable of being readily adapted for, self-propulsion.

4.—(1) Paragraph 1(1)(a) above shall be deemed to include combustible materials put up for sale for kindling fires but shall not include matches.

(2) Paragraph 1(1)(b) and (c) above shall not include any road fuel gas (within the meaning of the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979) on which a duty of excise has been charged or is chargeable.

(3) Paragraph 1(1)(d) above shall not include hydrocarbon oil on which a duty of excise has been or is to be charged without relief from, or rebate of, such duty by virtue of the provisions of the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979.

(4) In this Schedule "fuel oil" means heavy oil which contains in solution an amount of asphaltenes of not less than 0.5 per cent. or which contains less than 0.5 per cent. but not less than 0.1 per cent. of asphaltenes and has a closed flash point not exceeding 150 degreesC.

(5) In this Schedule "gas oil" means heavy oil of which not more than 50 per cent. by volume distils at a temperature not exceeding 240 degreesC and of which more than 50 per cent. by volume distils at a temperature not exceeding 340 degreesC.

(6) In this Schedule "kerosene" means heavy oil of which more than 50 per cent. by volume distils at a temperature not exceeding 240 degreesC.

(7) In this Schedule "heavy oil" shall have the same meaning as in the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979."

(4) In section 97 (orders etc.) in subsection (4) (orders requiring approval) the following paragraph shall be inserted immediately before paragraph (a)—

"(aa) an order under section 2(1C);".

(5) In Schedule 13 (transitional provisions and savings) paragraph 7 (fuel and power) shall be omitted.

(6) This Resolution shall apply in relation to any supply made on or after 1st April 1995 and any acquisition or importation taking place on or after that date.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then, pursuant to order [9 December], put the Questions necessary to dispose of the further motions.*

2. SPIRITS (RATE)

Motion made, and Question put,

That—

(1) In section 5 of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 for "£19.81" there shall be substituted "£20.60".

(2) This Resolution shall come into force on 1st January 1995.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 317, Noes 275.

Division No. 21] **[22.16 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter

Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow West)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip

Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard

Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann

Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. David Lightbown.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*

Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, Jo
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*

Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George

Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*

Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Clarke and
Mr. Joe Benton.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put,

3. BEER (RATE)

That—

(1) In section 36(1) of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 for "£10.45" there shall be substituted "£10.82".

(2) This Resolution shall come into force on 1st January 1995.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 314, Noes 270.

Division No. 22] **[22.30 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William

Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*

Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle Charles *(Bexhill & Battle)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'd)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Michael Bates.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek

Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester South)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Is'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Clarke and
Mr. Joe Benton.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

4. CIDER (RATE)

That—

(1) In section 62(1) of the Alcoholic Liquor Duties Act 1979 for "£22.82" there shall be substituted "£23.78".

(2) This Resolution shall come into force on 1st January 1995.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

5. WINE AND MADE-WINE (RATES) (No. 2)

Resolved,

That the Resolution of the House (wine and made-wine (rates)) of 6th December shall have effect—

(a) with the substitution for 22.46, 40.44, 134.77 and 19.81 of 23.41, 42.14, 140.44 and 20.60 respectively;

(b) with the substitution for 192.53 (in each place) of 200.64.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

6. TOBACCO PRODUCTS (RATES) (No. 2)

Resolved,

That as respects any time after 31st December 1994 the Resolution of the House (tobacco products (rates)) of 6th December shall have effect with the substitution for £55.58, £82.56 and £36.30 of £57.64, £85.61 and £37.64 respectively.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

7. HYDROCARBON OIL (RATES) (No. 2)

Motion made, and Question put,

That as respects any time after 31st December 1994 the Resolution of the House (hydrocarbon oil (rates)) of 6th December shall have effect with the substitution for £0.3526 and £0.3044 of £0.3614 and £0.3132 respectively.

And it is hereby declared that it is expedient in the public interest that this Resolution should have statutory effect under the provisions of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968.

The House divided: Ayes 302, Noes 37.

Division No. 23] **[22.43 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow West)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray

Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Michael Bates.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Chidgey, David
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Galloway, George
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Harvey, Nick
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Maclennan, Robert
Maddock, Diana
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Pike, Peter L
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Margaret Ewing and
Mr. Andrew Welsh.

Question accordingly agreed to.

SUPREME COURT OF ENGLAND AND WALES

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5),

That the draft Maximum Number of Judges Order 1994, which was laid before this House on 16th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

PRIVILEGES

Ordered,

That Mr. Stanley Orme be added to the Committee of Privileges.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Child Witnesses

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

10.56 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise for the second time the important issue of child witnesses in child abuse cases.

It is a subject that we are often reluctant to think about because it involves some very sad cases. However, thanks to Government action and a great deal of hard work by the voluntary sector, progress has been made, especially in the past three or four years. I am thinking especially of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which allows prerecorded videos, the package introduced jointly by the Government and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children for best practice for courts and child witnesses and the provisions of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which have also assisted child witnesses. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), will be familiar with those provisions and I am delighted that he is to reply to the debate.

The fact remains that court is still a deeply harrowing experience for children who have often already been very seriously damaged. Of course, I am not suggesting—no reasonable person would—that children's testimony should not be tested in a proper legal process. It is inconceivable that we could start to convict people on the basis of allegations alone, but I am saying that, far from promoting justice, many features of our legal system in fact undermine it and do two things in the process. First, they further damage children who have already undergone extremely traumatic experiences and, secondly, they still often discourage the police and social services from pressing charges for the straightforward reason that they do not want to put a child through the horrendous experience that court all too often is.

I want to focus on four particular aspects. The first is delay. I know that the Government are trying to get such cases fast-tracked, as the Royal Commission on criminal justice recommended, but I have seen two surveys in the past week. One was carried out in Surrey by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the other, which is still in the process of compilation, is being conducted in Kent by the National Children's Home. They both suggest that, typically, child cases are still taking 10 to 12 months to come to court. That is a area in which I suggest that justice delayed is all too often justice denied. For a child to have to remember the exact details that long, very often to be denied therapy because of the danger of that causing the case to collapse and, worse still, frequently seeing the listings postponed and postponed, is prejudicial to justice.

The second issue, which seems to be imperative, is the training of judges and barristers. For divorce cases, when child custody issues are involved, we have specialist family courts, in which the judges and the lawyers concerned have had specialist training in how to deal with children. For criminal cases, of course, we cannot have such specialisation because it would further worsen the listings problems and we would have more delays rather than fewer. But we could have a sensible level of training for judges and barristers.

[Mr. Julian Brazier]

Very often, judges will allow barristers to ask children completely unintelligible questions. In a recent case—I am indebted to the NSPCC for the cases—a prosecution lawyer, supposed to be on the side of the child, asked him the following question:

> "My learned friend has suggested that the incident you described earlier was in fact inaccurate. Was it accurate or not?"

That was asked of a mentally retarded 12-year-old. I am not even sure whether I would have known what it meant myself.

Worse still, often, judges allow defence barristers to bully people. Another case from the NSPCC survey said:

> "Lucy had been questioned through the CCTV link by prosecution and had just begun cross-examination by the defence when the defendant was heard crying and wailing in the courtroom."

The defendant was a male adult. The case continued:

> "As the defendant was distressed, the judge agreed to a 15 minute break to allow him to compose himself. The child waited for 15 minutes. Then, just after the questioning began again, the court decided to break for lunch. She returned to be confronted by repeated accusations of lying from the defence counsel until, eventually, the young child broke down and cried."

The judge allowed no adjournment in that case. A male adult was allowed an adjournment because he had burst into tears, yet a young girl was not.

That brings me to my third point, which is what I call the last-minute syndrome. All too often, the child is told only on or just before the day whether his or her recorded evidence will be allowed to be shown, whether a video link will be used for cross-examination, and whether the ridiculous paraphernalia—for a children's case—of wigs and gowns are to be used.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I am sure that the whole House is very grateful to my hon. Friend for raising these important and difficult issues. He is describing some intensely unsatisfactory aspects of court procedure. Does he agree that we need to assemble a model of best practice and to guide the courts in very clear terms that they should adhere to it?

Mr. Brazier: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I should note at this point that I am very impressed by the number of hon. Members on the Government and Opposition Benches who have chosen to support this debate. It shows the degree of interest in the subject. My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) is here, and the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) are also present, as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims).

Another aspect of the last-minute syndrome is whether a child will be allowed to review his or her evidence before taking the witness stand. Indeed, recently, an entire case collapsed after months of work and preparation, because when the child was finally confronted with the interview notes and requested to read them out on the witness stand, he could not read the original interviewer's handwriting. Of course, we need best practice. I suggest that we need a straightforward pro forma in which the bulk of those items are identified. The Lord Chancellor's office should send out a requirement for judges to notify the prosecution in advance so that the child can be told what is going to happen in respect of each of those items.

That brings me to my fourth and final point. The most important point for a child is that it should have a supporting adult throughout the trial. If the child is to be placed in a cubicle for a video recording, it is unfair that the child should go in only with a court usher who is a complete stranger and who often wears a rather strange-looking gown.

However, the present guidelines state that in such cases, there should be another adult apart from a court usher only "under exceptional circumstances" and with the permission of the defence. Sadly, with our adversarial system, that permission is unlikely to be granted because, alas, with the declining ethics of the Bar today, the defence is very seldom willing to concede anything to help the child, as that would promote the chances of a conviction.

Surely we should be striking a balance. Surely it is intolerable that a judge should give better treatment to a male adult suspect than to a young child victim. Surely, even within our antiquated legal system, there must be room for judges to make decisions at least a few days in advance and formally notify the prosecution so that the child can be told what to expect and be prepared for it. Is it really right that children should not know until the day whether they will have an adult with them throughout the trial? Those questions are important and fundamental to British justice.

I end with this thought: there is a great deal of concern in this country today, which is being registered in several cases, one of which is sub judice but which was very widely reported, and another of which involved a child molester who was released on a technicality at the very beginning of a trial. All that concern comes down to the fact that the people are worried that, today, the victim is treated in a grossly inferior manner in comparison with the rights of the suspect. Surely we should be starting to restore the balance in the case of children.

I commend the Government on the progress that they have already made over the past few years and I hope that the points that I have raised will be examined to restore the balance still further.

11.7 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I intervene briefly to commend my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on securing this opportunity to ventilate this very important matter, and to express my support for my hon. Friend.

Like the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding), I was involved in the early stages in efforts to gain acceptance by the courts of video evidence by children. I recall particularly seeing some of the pioneering work carried out in Bexley before the general principle was accepted. I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury is maintaining a watching brief on the way in which the changes are being implemented.

One of the arguments in favour of allowing video evidence to be shown to the courts was that, when the video was shown privately to a defendant who might be minded to plead guilty, he would change his plea to guilty and avoid the ordeal of the child having to appear before the court.

I am aware that the Home Office has commissioned research into how the legislation is operating, and I wonder whether the Minister can make an assessment of the extent to which the hopes that I have expressed have been fulfilled.

Whatever the situation, the fact is that—alas—there are still many contested cases. A child has been through a terrifying experience at the time of the alleged offence. It is then asked to recount what happened before a video camera, and many months later the child may be asked to appear and relive the incident again, either in court or perhaps in an adjacent room, in an unusual setting with a video camera pointing at him or her. That would be a considerable ordeal for an adult. It is not difficult to imagine how overwhelming or terrifying that must be for a small child.

Judges, barristers and court officials must apply sensitivity and flexibility when dealing with child witnesses, particularly in child abuse cases—for example, in allowing the child's memory to be refreshed on incidents that might have happened some time ago, and asking the child a few informal, friendly questions to ease the tension before starting cross-examination. Of course the defendant is entitled to a fair trial and justice must be done, but that principle applies as much to the child witness as it does to the defendant.

11.10 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) for bringing this important issue before the House. He has been a forceful campaigner for child witnesses in cases of child abuse for some years. I am grateful also for the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and for the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). Indeed, when the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill was being considered in Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) was lobbying me hard on this point, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold). Several amendments were successfully moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), so he and others should take some of the credit for the changes that have been made in recent years.

I cannot underestimate the importance of having the right laws and procedures in place to ensure that the perpetrators of child abuse can be brought to justice. Child abusers can be convicted and punished only if it is possible for the children who have been their victims to give evidence effectively.

Until a few years ago, child witnesses seemed almost to be misfits in a criminal justice system which was designed by adults, for adults. They were even presumed to be incompetent as witnesses. But, as my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury will know, the Government have done much to bring about change, to remove the old and outdated prejudices against children as witnesses, and to adapt the system to accommodate the needs of children, particularly those who have suffered a traumatic experience.

The Criminal Justice Act 1988 abolished the presumption that children were incompetent as witnesses. It also introduced the system which allows children to give their evidence at court by means of a closed-circuit television link. Building on that, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 extended the closed-circuit television link provisions, forbade the cross-examination of the child directly by the accused, and provided for a video-recorded interview with the child, conducted by police or social workers soon after the incident, to serve as the child's evidence-in-chief at the trial. The Act also provided for committal proceedings to be bypassed in cases involving children.

My hon. Friend was kind enough to acknowledge those reforms in his previous Adjournment debate on this subject nearly three years ago. Since then the Government have produced an important set of guidelines, the 1992 memorandum of good practice, for those involved in preparing for and making the video-recorded interview with child witnesses which may then serve as their evidence at trial. I believe that the memorandum has performed a useful function in enabling the police and social workers to interview a child soon after the alleged offence, and to do so in a way which increases the chances of the video being declared admissible in court.

We have also made legislative improvements to the provisions in the 1991 Act. The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 cleared up any remaining doubts about the abolition of the competence test for children by requiring judges to admit their testimony, unless the child is incapable of giving intelligible testimony. It is only fair to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor for being instrumental in having that amendment accepted.

We also accepted an amendment in another place during the passage of the Bill to enable the prosecution to examine the child witness on any matter not adequately dealt with in the video recording. That ensures that the prosecution is able to bring what may be important and relevant points to the attention of the court when an issue is mentioned but not fully explored in the video recording. Also in the Act, we abolished the requirement that the jury in sexual offence cases must be warned of the danger of convicting on the uncorroborated evidence of the complainant.

I believe that this level of activity and response to the needs of children demonstrates the Government's commitment to making it easier for them to give evidence in court. But we are always open-minded about possible legislative and administrative improvements which can be made, and we are prepared to consider any proposals which will help to ensure that the current provisions can be made to operate to maximum effect.

At present, we are not convinced that it would be right to make further radical structural changes to the system for taking children's evidence, but I do not rule these out, if, in the light of experience, they seem to be justified.

Mr. Brazier: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children asked me specifically to thank my hon. Friend for the very flexible and positive approach which he has brought to his office in building on moves which were already in train. However, I suggest that almost all the points that I listed in my speech come back to the need for judges to change their attitudes and to change the way in which they run their courts—and, of course, training and a memorandum from the Lord

[Mr. Brazier]

Chancellor are part of the solution. But we have identified very little that needs changing in the law—we need to change the climate in which judges operate.

Mr. Maclean: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out that he thinks that the law is adequate. Some people would disagree and would like to see legal changes. At present, I do not think that it would be wise to make substantial legal changes. We need some experience of how the current system is working and we need to receive the results of research in this area. Nevertheless, I take on board my hon. Friend's point: I think that the Lord Chancellor is very much aware of the need for training and sensitivity in dealing with those cases.

It was clear when the provisions allowing the video-recorded testimony of children to be submitted as their evidence-in-chief were introduced through the 1991 Act that it would be necessary to keep a close eye on how the provisions were working in practice. Accordingly, we commissioned a major independent research project by Professor Graham Davies of Leicester university into the effectiveness of the current provisions, and I can tell the hon. Member for Chislehurst that we hope to receive the results very shortly.

The research team aimed to obtain the views of a number of practitioners—police and social workers, barristers and judges—on the provisions of the 1991 Act at an early stage in its implementation, and also after they had had more experience of its operation. They have also been studying a number of video-recorded interviews and tracing their progress through the criminal justice system.

We shall be considering the findings of the project very carefully in deciding what further changes need to be made. If we had rushed into changes without commissioning the research or when the research was halfway through, we would rightly be subject to severe criticism if the research came to conclusions contrary to the hasty ones that we had arrived at.

I may be criticised and accused—unfairly—of wishing to hang people before giving them a fair trial, but I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that even I agree that we must consider the balance between the interests of the child and the interests of justice. In an ideal world, the two would be one and the same. In the past, the stress of criminal proceedings for children has resulted in cases being abandoned—or not even begun—because the child's evidence was not heard.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclean: I want to cover the subject and crack on.

Too often the interests of justice have been frustrated, and the child further harmed, because it has not been possible for the child to cope with the full court process. But children have a right to justice, and their evidence is essential if society is to protect their interests and deal effectively with those who would harm them. Putting the child's interests first is our priority—but not to the extent of removing the defendant's right to a fair trial and to have the case against him properly tested.

Getting the balance right will always be a difficult and delicate task. Many people will be convinced that in individual cases the balance is not right—if they were the judge and the jury. Nevertheless, I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that the Government have been able to improve the lot of child witnesses since his previous Adjournment debate and that we remain open to the possibility of further changes, where they can be justified.

I turn now to the points that my hon. Friend raised tonight. As he pointed out, there is some evidence that it is taking too long for child abuse cases to reach court. The criminal justice agencies are well aware of the adverse effect on the child of any unnecessary delay in bringing the ordeal to an end, and considerable efforts are being made to ensure that that delay is kept to an absolute minimum.

In the Crown court, cases involving child witnesses are given high priority for hearing dates. Guidelines have been issued to listing officers, recommending that such cases be given a fixed date for trial, to ensure that expert and other witnesses have sufficient notice to make themselves available and so reduce the risk of late changes to the hearing dates. They also recommend that cases involving child witnesses should be given the earliest available date and that trial dates in such cases must be changed only in exceptional circumstances.

Child liaison officers are also charged with ensuring, as far as it is within the ability of the court to do so, that there is no unnecessary delay in bringing the cases to trial. Again, we are helping to fund research into the main reasons for delay.

The Crown Prosecution Service recently issued guidance about cases involving child witnesses, which reminds prosecutors to use the procedures that are in force to help expedite cases involving child witnesses through the court and provides practical guidance about how those procedures can be used.

The Home Office-chaired steering group on child evidence has been looking into the issue and each of the agencies involved in the process has looked both at how delays arise at present and how the process can be streamlined in future. There are a number of positive initiatives in different parts of the country, including some fast tracking projects.

So we are tackling the problem of delays in a number of ways, but like my hon. Friend I hope that further improvements can be made to speed up the process of bringing child abuse cases to court.

My hon. Friend raised the issue of therapy for children who have been abused. When a child receives certain types of counselling and therapy, the defence is liable to allege that the child has been coached, thus undermining the weight of his or her evidence. There is no absolute ban on children receiving therapy while investigations are taking place, but it is important that therapists operate within certain guidelines, so as not to prejudice a fair trial.

The Crown Prosecution Service has set up a seminar group to consider that issue. The group brings together legal practitioners and clinical experts. They are working on proposed guidance for therapists involved in treating child witnesses before trial. I very much hope that that guidance will make it easier for children who need therapy to receive it before trial, without in any way tainting their evidence in the eyes of the court.

My hon. Friend referred to judicial training and the need for training for the judiciary on conduct towards children in court. That is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor, but I can tell my hon.

Friend and the House that the training of judges includes lectures on child evidence, child abuse and rape. Sessions have also been held on techniques for interviewing children.

The subject of judicial training is also on the agenda for the next meeting of the Home Office-chaired steering group on child evidence, when it hopes to discuss the issue with a representative of the Judicial Studies Board.

My hon. Friend also referred to the number of important decisions made at the last minute by the judge, such as whether to allow evidence to be given by a video link. I hope that the introduction of plea and direction hearings—in stages from the new year—in cases committed or transferred to the Crown court will make a significant difference to the problem.

At the plea and direction hearing, ail parties will be required to identify whether any witnesses need special attention, including child witnesses. The judge can then ensure that all the necessary steps, including applications for the use of video-recorded evidence, television links or screens, have been taken in good time. That should reduce the number of cases in which a decision about granting such an application is delayed.

My hon. Friend referred to guidelines preventing an adult from being present in the room when a child is giving evidence by closed circuit television link. Under the Crown court rules, the child witness

> "shall be accompanied by a person acceptable to a judge of the Crown Court, and unless the judge otherwise directs, by no other person".

The prescribed form for making applications includes a section in which the applicant may propose a named individual to accompany the witness, and give his or her reasons for doing so, for the judge to consider.

In October 1991, the deputy chief justice, Lord Justice Watkins, gave a direction that a court usher would be the most appropriate person to accompany a child witness. That person would fulfil a number of important functions—ensuring that the equipment is used properly in the first place, alerting the judge to any needs that the child might have, preventing unauthorised access to the room, and ensuring that the child is not prompted in any way when giving evidence. The court usher has the independence that a child's relative or friend might not have and would be sufficiently knowledgeable about the procedures and equipment to be able to discharge the responsibility completely.

However, nothing would preclude an independent adult from accompanying the child, as long as the person was named on the application form. Of course, the final decision on who accompanies the child in the witness room is for the judge who considers the application.

My hon. Friend referred to the issue of cross-examination before trial. While the 1991 Act provided for children to give their evidence-in-chief in a video-recorded interview, it is still possible for a child to be cross-examined during the trial.

Quite often there will be a considerable delay between the giving of evidence on video and cross-examination upon that evidence. This could be seen to prolong the trauma for the child, and also to create an opportunity for defence counsel to exploit inconsistencies between the video recording and the answers to questions given on cross-examination. Being cross-examined can be a harrowing experience for adults, let alone children who have suffered abuse.

That underlies the suggestion that both the examination-in-chief and cross-examination of children should take place before trial. This could be done in a number of ways. One possibility, which was debated in the House as a proposed amendment to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, would be to allow the evidence of children to be taken "on commission". The court could appoint an independent commissioner who would oversee the questioning of the child by both the prosecution and defence counsel, and that would be recorded on video.

A similar system has just begun to operate in Scotland. My hon. Friend may detect—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 14 December 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House a Return for Session 1993-94 of—

(1) the total number of Questions to Ministers or other Members which stood on the Order Paper, distinguishing those set down for oral, written Answer on a named day and written answer respectively, the number of days upon which replies to Questions for oral answers were given in the House; and the total number of Questions for oral answer to which such answers were given in the House;

(2) the total number of Notices of Motions given for an early day;

(3) the number of Members ordered to withdraw from the House under Standing Order No. 42 (Disorderly conduct), showing separately the orders given in the House and those given in Committee; and the Members suspended from the service of the House under Standing Order No. 43 (Order in debate) or otherwise, distinguishing whether the offence was committed in the House or in Committee, the period of such suspension, the number of occasions on which more than one Member was so suspended having jointly disregarded the authority of the Chair, and the number of occasions on which the attention of the House was called to the need for recourse to force to compel obedience to the Speaker's direction; and

(4) the number of public petitions presented to the House distinguishing separately those: brought to the Table at the times specified by Standing Order No. 133 (Time and manner of presenting petitions).—[*The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.*]

CLOSURE OF DEBATE AND ALLOCATION OF TIME

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House a Return for Session 1992–93 of—

(A) applications of Standing Order No. 35 (Closure of debate)—

(1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before House or Committee when claimed	Whether in House or Committee	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(2) in the Standing Committees under the following heads:

1	2	3	4
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Question before Committee when claimed	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Result of Motion and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

(B) applications of Standing Order No. 28 (Powers of Chair to propose question)—

(1) in the House and in Committee of the whole House, under the following heads:

1	2	3	4	5
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Whether in House or Committee	Whether claimed in respect of Motion or Amendment	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(2) in the Standing Committees under the following heads:

1	2	3	4
Date when Closure claimed, and by whom	Whether claimed in respect of Motion or Amendment	Whether assent given to Motion or withheld by the Chair	Result of Motion, and, if a Division, Numbers for and against

and

(C) the number of Bills in respect of which allocation of time orders (distinguishing where appropriate orders supplementary to a previous order) were made under Standing Order No. 81 (Allocation of time to Bills), showing in respect of each Bill—

(i) the number of sittings allotted to the consideration of the Bill in Standing Committee by any report of a Business Sub-Committee under Standing Order No. 103 (Business sub-committees) agreed to by the Standing Committee, and the number of sittings of the Standing Committee pursuant thereto; and

(ii) the number of days or portions of days allotted by the allocation of time order and any supplementary order to the consideration of the Bill at any stage in the House or in committee, together with the number of days upon which proceedings were so taken in the House or in committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

◆

Delegated Legislation

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House a Return for Session 1993-94 of—

(A) the numbers of Instruments subject to the different forms of parliamentary procedure and those for which no parliamentary procedure is prescribed by statute (1) laid before the House; and (2) considered by the Joint Committee and Select Committee on Statutory Instruments respectively pursuant to their orders of reference, setting out the grounds on which Instruments may be drawn to the special attention of the House under Standing Order No. 124 (Statutory Instruments (Joint Committee)) and specifying the number of Instruments so reported under each of these grounds; and

(B) the numbers of Instruments considered by a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c., and by the House respectively, showing the number where the Question on the proceedings relating thereto was put forthwith under paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).— *[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Private Bills and Private Business

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House a Return for Session 1993-94 of—

(1) the number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills, Bills for the confirmation of Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders introduced into this House, and brought from the House of Lords, and of Acts passed, specifying also the dates of the House's consideration of the several stages of such Bills;

(2) all Private Bills, Hybrid Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which were reported on by Committees on Opposed Bills or by Committees nominated by the House or partly by the House and partly by the Committee of Selection, together with the names of the selected Members who served on each Committee; the first and also the last day of the sitting of each Committee; the number of days on which each Committee sat; the number of days on which each selected Member served; the number of days occupied by each Bill in Committee; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been proved; the Bills of which the Preambles were reported to have been not proved; and in the case of Bills for confirming Provisional Orders, whether the Provisional Order ought or ought not to be confirmed;

(3) all Private Bills and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders which were referred by the Committee of Selection to the Committee on Unopposed Bills, together with the names of the Members who served on the Committee; the number of days on which the Committee sat; and the number of days on which each Member attended;

(4) the number of Bills to confirm Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, distinguishing those proceeded with under section 7 and under section 9 respectively; specifying, in the case of Bills proceeded with under section 9 against which petitions were deposited, whether a motion was made to refer the Bill to a joint committee, and if so whether such motion was agreed to, withdrawn, negatived or otherwise disposed of; and stating for each joint committee to which a Bill was referred the names of the Members of this House nominated thereto, the first and last day of the committee's sitting, the number of days on which each joint committee sat for the consideration of the Bill referred to it, the number of days on which each Member of the committee served, and whether the committee reported that the order ought or ought not be confirmed;

(5) the number of Private Bills, Hybrid Bills, Bills for the confirmation of Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936, and Bills for confirming Provisional Orders withdrawn or not proceeded with by the parties, those Bills being specified which were referred to Committees and dropped during the sittings of the committee; and

(6) the membership, work, costs and staff of the Court of Referees and the Standing Orders Committee.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Public Bills

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House a Return for Session 1993-94 of the number of Public Bills (other than Bills to confirm Provisional Orders and Bills to confirm Orders under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936) distinguishing Government from other Bills, introduced into this House, or brought from the House of Lords, showing—

(1) the number which received the Royal Assent, and

(2) the number which did not receive the Royal Assent, indicating those which were introduced into but not passed by this House, those passed by this House but not by the House of Lords, those passed by the House of Lords but not by this House, those passed by both Houses but Amendments not agreed to; and distinguishing the stages at which such Bills were dropped, postponed or rejected in either House of Parliament, or the stages which such Bills had reached by the time of Prorogation.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Sittings of the House

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House a Return for Session 1993-94 of the days on which the House sat; stating for each day the day of the month and day of the week, the hour of the meeting, and the hour of the adjournment; the total numbers of hours occupied in the sittings of the House; and the average time; showing the number of hours on which the House sat each day and the number of hours after the time appointed for the interruption of business; and specifying, for each principal type of business before the House, how much time was spent thereon, distinguishing from the total the time spent after the hour appointed for the interruption of business.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Special Procedure Orders

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House a Return for Session 1993-94 of—

(1) the number of Special Procedure Orders presented; the number withdrawn; the number annulled; the number against which Petitions or copies of Petitions were deposited; the number of Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively considered by the Chairmen; the number of such petitions certified by the Chairmen as proper to be received and the number certified by them as being Petitions of General Objection and for Amendment respectively; the number referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses; the number reported with Amendments by a Joint Committee, and the number in relation to which a Joint Committee

reported that the Order be not approved and be amended respectively; and the number of Bills introduced for the confirmation of Special Procedure Orders; and

(2) special Procedure Orders which were referred to a Joint Committee, together with the names of the Commons Members who served on each Committee; the number of days on which each committee sat; and the number of days on which each such Member attended.—[*The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.*]

STANDING COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House a Return for Session 1993-94 of—

(1) the total number and the names of all Members (including and distinguishing Chairmen) who have been appointed to serve on one or more Standing Committees showing, with regard to each of such Members, the number of sittings to which he was summoned and at which he was present;

(2) the number of Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items referred to Standing Committees pursuant to Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.), or Standing Order No. 102 (European Standing Committees) considered by all and by each of the Standing Committees, the number of sittings of each Committee and the titles of all Bills, Estimates, Matters and other items as above considered by a Committee, distinguishing where a Bill was a Government Bill or was brought from the House of Lord, and showing in the case of each Bill, Estimate, Matter and other item, the particular Committee by which it was considered, the number of sittings at which it was considered (including, in the case of the Scottish Grand Committee, the number of Meetings held in Edinburgh, pursuant to a motion made under paragraph 3 of Standing Order No. 94 (Scottish Grand Committee)) and the number of Members present at each of those sittings; and

(3) the membership, work, costs and staff of the Chairmen's Panel.—[*The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.*]

SELECT COMMITTEES

Ordered,

That there be laid before this House a Return for Session 1993-94 of information and statistics relating to the membership, work, costs and staff of Select Committees (other than the Standing Orders Committee).—[*The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.*]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Land Mines

1. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the export of land mines.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis): The United Kingdom has not produced or exported anti-personnel land mines for some years.

Mr. Harris: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Can he say precisely for how many years the Government have not exported land mines? Does he agree that it is important to get over to the public at large and to those organisations that have a proper interest in and concern about land mines exactly what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend asked for how long we have not exported anti-personnel mines. It is certainly a decade. The policy of Her Majesty's Government was best described by my own announcement on 27 July this year, when I announced an indefinite moratorium on anti-personnel land mines without self-destruction or self-neutralising capacity. That is important because, as my hon. Friend will be aware, a large number of civilian deaths are caused each year by improperly used land mines and the aim of our policy is to reduce and eliminate that as much as possible.

Ms Quin: Does not the Government's decision to exclude self-destructing land mines from their ban actually mean that we are now lagging behind other countries rather than taking a lead? Is the Minister aware that the problem of land mines is so great that new killing fields are being established throughout the world because of land mines, and that at the present rate of clearance it will take 5,000 years to clear the land mines in countries such as Afghanistan? Is it not more important for the Government to announce a complete ban on the export of land mines and to intensify international efforts to deal with the problem effectively so that a real start can be made?

Mr. Davis: On the contrary. For example, the American proposals on land mines are close to our code of conduct and we are actively seeking to ensure that the international community adopts a regime that gets the most adherence possible. The problem with land mines is not just their type but how they are used. The UK armed forces adhere to the UN weapons convention and the principles thereof to ensure that no civilian risks arise from land mines, and that is one of the major routes to improving the position. However, in my judgment, self-destructing and self-neutralising land mines are the best possible route for our policy.

Mr. Robathan: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his response and on the Government's policy. Will he confirm that, to the best of his knowledge, the British Government have never sold any land mines to the Soviet Union—which laid millions in Afghanistan—that no civilian in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Angola or Mozambique has been injured by a British anti-personnel mine, that other countries are responsible for this awful tragedy in all those countries and that we should be congratulated on our excellent policy in this matter?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. What is more, the British Government have contributed some £7 million in the past three years, together with personnel and funds, to try to clear up the problems created by other people.

Nuclear Non-proliferation

2. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to secure an indefinite and unconditional extension of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. David Davis: We are working hard for the indefinite and unconditional extension in unamended form of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in 1995. We are aiming to obtain a sizeable majority in favour.

As a first step, we are trying to persuade non-member states to accede to the treaty, which is already the most widely adhered to arms control treaty in history.

In addition to an on-going European Union joint action, we are lobbying moderate non-aligned movement states to convince them that indefinite and unconditional extension of the treaty is in the security interest of all states and that such an extension would send a clear message to would-be proliferators of the international community's resolve to prevent any proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chisholm: How can the Government seriously argue for an indefinite and unconditional extension of the non-proliferation treaty at next year's conference when they intend to break their obligations under article 6 of the treaty by doubling their deployment of strategic nuclear warheads? Is it not an insult to the intelligence of the non-nuclear weapon states to expect them to accept that blatant hypocrisy?

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman is consistent with his party in one thing: the continuing defiance of the facts. It is worth noting that the most significant reduction in nuclear weapons has taken place under the non-proliferation treaty as it now stands. This country has done away with maritime tactical nuclear weapons. It has reduced the number of nuclear bombs carried by aircraft, and the nuclear power of the Trident programme is broadly similar to that of its predecessor, the Polaris programme. The net effect of all that is a 25 per cent. reduction in the nuclear power that this country wields.

Mr. Cousins: The Minister has recognised the dangers of proliferation and the spread of tactical ballistic missile systems throughout much of the world. Can he give the House an assurance that there will be no undue cavilling about the text of the treaty and that there will be a single strong European Union position towards it with which the Government will totally identify themselves?

Mr. Davis: The Government will set out to get the best possible nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and will do so in a way that is constructive and seeks to get the maximum possible adherence of countries to that treaty. That is the only way in which it can be made to work.

East Timor

3. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Indonesia concerning their occupation of East Timor.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): We have not recognised Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. We continue to encourage Indonesia and Portugal to work together under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General to find a solution to this problem. We welcome recent talks between East Timorese representatives and the Foreign Ministers of Portugal and Indonesia, and among East Timorese representatives themselves.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Foreign Secretary think that Britain's representations concerning East Timor would have just a tinge of credibility if we were not at the same time supplying to the Indonesian regime arms and aircraft, which, supposedly, are for training but have been used to bomb East Timorese people and their positions, and if we did not maintain normal trade, diplomatic and aid relationships with the Indonesian Government, whose army has murdered 200,000 East Timorese people over the past 15 years and continues a genocide against those people? Does the right hon. Gentleman think that Britain's position is just one of rank hypocrisy?

Mr. Hurd: Certainly not. We do maintain normal, indeed friendly, relations with Indonesia. Because we do that, we are able to make known to the Indonesians our views, whether on East Timor or human rights generally, and we do so. I do so myself. The hon. Gentleman cannot, and has not, produced evidence to support allegations that Hawks, already supplied to Indonesia under the contract authorised by the previous Labour Government, have been used for oppressive purposes in East Timor. We think not.

Mr. Nicholls: In case the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who spoke a moment ago, cares to disown the previous Labour Government, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he read in the *New Statesman* of November 1993 that the then Labour party spokesman on defence matters positively approved the sale of Hawk aircraft? Does he agree that it does not take forward the cause of human rights in Indonesia, a cause which even the Indonesian Government admit needs improving, for the Opposition, instead of acknowledging the improvements that have taken place—even dissidents in Indonesia admit that they have—to make ill-informed criticism, when, if they were asked to find Indonesia on a map, let alone East Timor, they would know nothing apart from the fact that it is somewhere east of Islington?

Mr. Hurd: I sympathise with what my hon. Friend says and am well aware of the *New Statesman* article to which he refers. I had it almost by heart on a previous occasion.

As regards human rights, there has been some improvement in Indonesia over the past two decades, but not yet enough, and we take all the steps that we can to point out to it where we think the shortcomings still are and to suggest ways in which they can be remedied. For example, we encouraged the Indonesian Government to invite a delegation of Amnesty International to see the situation on the ground. I hope that that will happen.

Mr. Worthington: Does the Foreign Secretary not think that the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) should have declared his visit to Indonesia? He has been a guest of the Indonesian Government and that may have affected his approach to the question.

Mr. Hurd: I do not think that there is any secret about my hon. Friend's knowledge of Indonesia and his friendship with that country. I do not think that there is any harm in that at all.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Hawk training aircraft is the finest aircraft of its type anywhere in the world and that is why it sells to Indonesia and other countries? This is just humbug from the Labour party in much the same way as there was humbug over Argentina when it sold warships to that country.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I can help the Opposition Front Bench out of its difficulty by providing some ammunition against its Back Benchers.

The Hawks in Indonesia are two-seater trainers and we have no evidence that they have been reconfigured to carry live bombs since they were supplied.

Angola

4. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the Angolan Foreign Secretary to discuss the situation in that country.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has no immediate plans to do so. However, my noble Friend the Lord Inglewood met President dos Santos in Lusaka on 20 November at the signing ceremony of the Lusaka protocol.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Minister agree that one of the principal reasons why the tragic war in Angola resumed after the United Nations-sponsored elections two years ago was the failure of the international community to give immediate and unequivocal support to the newly elected democratic Government? In the light of that, is there now a special responsibility on the UN and the international community not only to support the ceasefire but to do everything possible to see that UNITA hands in its weapons? Should they not also provide an aid programme that helps to rebuild that country which has suffered so tragically when, all too often, the world's media and Governments have focused their attention on situations elsewhere that are less tragic?

Mr. Baldry: The United Kingdom has allocated more than £24 million for emergency assistance since the United Nations appeal in June 1993 and we have established a new Angola development fund. Clearly, the rehabilitation of Angola will be a long and difficult process. As a member of the Security Council and of the European Union, Britain is willing to help with that rehabilitation. However, it cannot do so unless both parties commit themselves to lasting peace and reconciliation.

Bosnia

5. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further discussions he has had with representatives of the US Congress and Senate on Bosnia.

7. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Bosnia.

Mr. Hurd: I had a meeting with Senator Dole when he visited London on 1 December. We had a thorough discussion on Bosnia. Senator Dole's views differ on some points from those of the United States Administration, with whom we are co-operating closely. We and the other members of the contact group are united in pursuing peaceful settlements in former Yugoslavia.

On Bosnia, we all agree that the way forward is to achieve a ceasefire around Bihac, a Bosnia-wide cessation of hostilities and a resumption of political negotiations on the basis of the contact group plan. We welcome the recent statement by some members of the Bosnian Serb assembly in support of that.

On Croatia, as I told the House last week, we welcome the recent economic agreement between the Croatian Government and the Croatian Serbs, brokered by Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg, and we hope that it will be quickly and fully implemented.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Foreign Secretary share the American concern that the Bosnian Serbs rejected the Vance-Owen plan and were appeased, rejected the Owen-Stoltenberg plan and were appeased and rejected the contact group plan and are still being appeased? The stench of Munich is in the air here and in Bosnia. Has not the Foreign Secretary learned any lessons from appeasing the Hitlers of this world?

Mr. Hurd: As I pointed out last week, that is a ludicrous analogy. The hon. Gentleman is completely out of date with his views on the United States Administration. The United States Administration is one of the authors of the contact group plan. They fully support and are working with us on the policy that I outlined a moment ago.

Mr. Raynsford: The Foreign Secretary has frequently emphasised the importance of a settlement that preserves the territorial integrity of Bosnia, but he will be aware that Lord Owen, in a recent interview with Brian Walden, expressed the view that the Serbs could reasonably expect to achieve

> "autonomy of such a degree that in most people's minds it would be independence".

Does the Foreign Secretary agree with Lord Owen? If not, what steps is he taking to ensure that the European Union's peace envoy does not undermine the prospect of maintaining Bosnia's integrity?

Mr. Hurd: The contact group plan is clear and we reaffirmed it when contact group Ministers met in Brussels the week before last. It is based on two main principles: the need for the Bosnian Serbs to withdraw from 72 per cent. to 49 per cent. of the land that they occupy in Bosnia and the need to preserve the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina within its present frontier. Once those two principles are accepted, talks can take place between the parties about territorial swaps and constitutional relationships, including those between different entities in Bosnia-Herzegovina and their neighbours.

Mr. Cormack: In view of the increasing gravity of the situation and the importance of ensuring that the United Nations' authority and credibility are not damaged beyond repair, will my right hon. Friend talk urgently with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister about a British initiative to summon a summit meeting of the Presidents of the United States of America, Russia and France and the Prime Minister?

Mr. Hurd: Such a meeting would not be complete unless it also contained the parties. I am not especially keen at the moment to give Mr. Karadzic, the leader of the only group that has rejected the contact group plan, a world platform. I do not exclude my hon. Friend's idea and the possibility of a summit in order either to avert a disaster or to consolidate a success. In either case, that might be possible.

Mr. David Howell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever silly things may have been said in the Senate, in Congress or a few minutes ago in the House about the Bosnian position, the American Defence Secretary's offer of at least 18,000 or more American troops—should there be a need for reconfiguration of UN troops, including our own, on the ground, or should there be a need for withdrawal—is thoroughly constructive and very much in the spirit of maintaining the Atlantic alliance and of not allowing it to be undermined by differences of emphasis over Bosnia? Would my right hon. Friend welcome that?

Mr. Hurd: I would, indeed. My right hon. Friend is right. President Clinton's decision, which he described, substantially helps forward what NATO is doing to prepare to help withdrawal, if that should be needed. However, as Secretary Perry and my right hon. and learned Friend agreed again today in Brussels, we believe that UNPROFOR is doing a good job, and that its withdrawal would be complicated and difficult. It is necessary to plan for withdrawal in case UNPROFOR's task becomes impossible. We hope that that will not happen, and so do the Americans.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Secretary of State agree that the history of the conflict in former Yugoslavia suggests that the Bosnian Serbs have been adept at taking advantage of any signs of disunity in the international community and, in particular, in the contact group? There have been substantial signs of that disunity since the congressional elections, to which he referred. What efforts are Her Majesty's Government taking to ensure that public disagreements of the sort that have occurred in the past two or three weeks will be eliminated?

Mr. Hurd: There are no public disagreements between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Administration on the right policy towards Bosnia. We are working together to further the policy that I outlined to the House today.

Sir Anthony Grant: Although I appreciate the splendid humanitarian work carried out by the British Army, will my right hon. Friend tell our United States allies that, from a military point of view, we shall heed the sound maxim, "Never reinforce a failure"?

Mr. Hurd: If my hon. Friend had been with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on his visit to British troops in Bosnia last week, he would have agreed with my right hon. and learned Friend's conclusion that they continue to do, as he said, a thoroughly worthwhile job. We hope that they can continue to do that. If it becomes impossible, we have to plan to withdraw. The American decision to help that withdrawal is a considerable comfort.

Mr. Robin Cook: May I press the Foreign Secretary on a question to which he did not respond in his statement last week? Is anything being done to make the remaining safe havens safe? Is there any prospect of the UN forces there being strengthened, or of the safe havens being demilitarised? Will air power be used the next time any of them come under threat? Does the Foreign Secretary appreciate that if we do none of those things, there is a real risk that we will be held responsible on the next occasion when one of the safe havens suffers the same fate as Bihac?

Mr. Hurd: We should always look for ways in which what the UN is accomplishing in Bosnia through UNPROFOR and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees can be strengthened. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is doing precisely that at today's NATO meeting in Brussels.

We must constantly seek realistic ways of strengthening the role of UNPROFOR. We should not exaggerate; there is a role for air power, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but, as he himself said on the radio last week, it could not solve the problems and might make them worse. There is also a role for reinforcement and demilitarisation of the safe areas. We need to examine all those aspects constantly if we are to improve the situation on the ground.

Australia

6. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British relations with Australia.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): British relations with Australia are excellent. We continue to develop close co-operation in all areas. We intend to organise a series of cultural, scientific and commercial events in Australia throughout 1997 as a showcase for this partnership.

Mr. Brown: Is my right hon. Friend aware that I had the opportunity and privilege of trying to further British-Australian relations in my own way when I was a member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association delegation that visited Australia two months ago? Will he take it from me that our relations with Australia in regard to the debate about the monarchy can best be strengthened if we allow Australia freely, in its own way, to make up its own mind in a responsible way about what it wants to do about the Head of State in the future? Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Australians are more concerned with opportunities to enter the European Community trade market? That, ultimately, is the way in which to improve our relations with Australia.

Mr. Goodlad: I recognise the contribution made by my hon. Friend. He is right: the Australian constitution lays down procedures for change in that constitution, and Her Majesty's Government have no role in the debate. The identity of the Australian Head of State is a matter for the Australian people to decide.

We are working hard to enhance our current very good trade relations. Our exports rose by 16 per cent. last year, and growth has been sustained since then. We have had extremely successful relations, and we shall build on them.

Mr. William O'Brien: When the Minister discusses trade with Australia, will he ensure that coal imported to the United Kingdom is economically priced, and that no subsidies undermine the United Kingdom's deep-mined coal? Will he assure us that he will investigate the position?

Mr. Goodlad: I will certainly do so.

Cuba

8. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the state of the United Kingdom's relations with Cuba.

Mr. David Davis: We have long had normal relations with Cuba, and are now building on them.

Mr. Arnold: May I commend my hon. Friend's work, and that of our hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor), the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology, during his recent visit to Havana, when much was done to develop British exports and investment?

Should Cuba not realise, however, that Fidel Castro is now well past his sell-by date? Cuba should take a leaf out of the book of Hastings Banda or Kenneth Kaunda, and hold all-party elections in Cuba. If it did so, it would join every other Latin American republic in becoming a true multi-party democracy.

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is right. There is a healthy two-way exchange of Ministers between Cuba and the United Kingdom. As my hon. Friend pointed out, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology went to Cuba earlier this year, and I believe that Isabel Allende visited London earlier this year as well. We enjoy normal relations with Cuba, and they continue to develop; but it is certainly true that progress in those relations would be enhanced by improvements in civil and democratic rights in Cuba. Earlier this year, it received the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner, and I hope that that will lead to co-operation with the UN special rapporteur, which would also be helpful.

Mr. MacShane: On a more serious point concerning Cuba—*[Interruption]*—is there any way in which the British Government can simply ask our friends in Washington, the American Administration, to lift the unnecessary and self-defeating boycott? The quickest way to bring Cuba to democracy would be to allow hundreds and thousands of Americans to go there as tourists and business men, to travel and to trade. That would undermine Fidel far more quickly than the absurd boycott that Washington insists on maintaining.

Mr. Davis: The subject of human rights is rather a serious point, and I hope that the first phrase in the hon. Gentleman's question was simply a slip of the tongue. We take the view that the relationship between America and Cuba is a bilateral issue. What we do is aimed at improving our relationship with Cuba, which we have done in a number of ways and which has been marked by an increase of about 140 per cent. in our trade with that country, from £8.8 million in the first nine months of last year to £21 million this year. We shall continue that process in a way that will encourage democracy and economic reform in Cuba. We think that that is the best policy both for ourselves and for Cuba.

Vietnam

9. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British relations, including trade relations, with Vietnam.

Mr. Goodlad: British relations, including trade relations, with Vietnam are now better than they have ever been. Our exports to Vietnam in the first three quarters of 1994 were up by 380 per cent. on last year.

Mr. Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that Vietnam is a rapidly growing economy offering great potential to British industry? As English is one of the main languages of international trade, what are the Government doing to try to satisfy the thirst of the Vietnamese to learn English?

Mr. Goodlad: As my hon. Friend says, there is a great appetite in Vietnam for English language training. When my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary visited that country in September, he promised to provide English language training for officials in key ministries. That has been delivered, and the British Council and the Voluntary Service Overseas have received much acclaim for their English language training programmes. We are considering how we can do more. English is extremely important to Vietnam as it develops international commercial relations.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the Minister accept that the desperate problem of the 26,000 Vietnamese boat people still in camps in Hong Kong has to be sorted out—and not, as in recent months, by riot squads, tear gas and water cannon? I urge him to visit the camps, as I have, and to see for himself the awful circumstances in which those people live. Will he then, with the three Governments involved, urgently work out a practical formula to repatriate people in a humane and dignified way, instead of in straitjackets, as happened a few days ago?

Mr. Goodlad: The hon. Lady is right to raise the problem of the remaining migrants in Hong Kong camps. I have visited the camps myself a number of times over the past 15 years, and we are working closely with the Vietnamese Government and the Hong Kong authorities to ensure that Vietnamese migrants leave Hong Kong well before China takes over in 1997.

Syria

10. **Sir David Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Syria in 1995 to discuss the middle east peace process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We attach great importance to our relations with Syria. I was in Damascus several weeks ago, but neither the Foreign Secretary nor I have any plans to visit in 1995.

Sir David Madel: In view of the lifting of the arms embargo on Syria by the European Union, and other efforts to improve relations with that country, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Syria should now do much more to control the terrorist groups that want to wreck the middle east peace process? Should not Syria now spell out in detail what it means by normalisation of relations with Israel?

Mr. Hogg: The second part of my hon. Friend's question is important. It is quite plain that we will not see a permanent agreement between Israel and Syria unless Israel makes it plain that she will withdraw from the entirety of the Golan Heights and unless Syria makes it plain that she will establish with Israel the kind of relationships that are properly to be established between one friendly state and another. It is important that in negotiations both parties make their provisions plain as speedily as they can.

Mr. Ernie Ross: The Minister will know that the Syrians have offered full peace for full withdrawal and that the Israelis have responded by saying that the depth of peace will be based on the depth of the withdrawal. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will also know that everyone in the area is concerned about the military machine that still exists in Iraq and that any depth of withdrawal or scaling down of Syrian forces is bound to be based on the potential that Iraq has to cause trouble, as it recently tried to against Kuwait. What steps are the Government taking to ensure that the war machine in Iraq is taken into account to help along the peace process in the middle east?

Mr. Hogg: I think that both parties to the negotiations between Israel and Syria are primarily concerned with the position of Israel on the Golan Heights, the need for Israel to withdraw and the nature of the relationship that thereafter will be established between Israel and Syria. I do not think that the wider question to which the hon. Gentleman referred is playing a very large part in the Israeli-Syrian negotiations.

Mr. Hicks: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the involvement of Syria is not only crucial but central to a long-term middle east settlement and, indeed, to reaching an accommodation with Israel? Do not the Government have an obligation, given our history in the region, to take initiatives with our partners to achieve those objectives?

Mr. Hogg: It is obviously important that we should see a permanent agreement between Israel and Syria as soon as it can be achieved. The Americans have an important intermediary role to play, and are playing it. The parties must hold face-to-face bilateral discussions if we are to secure an agreement soon. The British and, indeed, other Governments in the European Union have a supportive role to play, but a permanent agreement will come not from outside pressure but from bilateral face-to-face discussions between Israel and Syria.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister accept that the next, and perhaps most urgent, step that has to be taken in pursuit of the peace process is to ensure elections for Palestinians at an early stage? Will he ensure that Britain and the rest of western Europe send sufficient support and monitoring personnel to ensure that those elections proceed satisfactorily?

Mr. Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. It is obviously important that elections should be held as soon as possible. It is rather unlikely that they will take place before next spring or summer, but I wish it were sooner. I do not think that they will take place unless Israeli forces are redeployed quite soon. I am sure that, if elections are fixed and there is a request for assistance, as I suspect there will be, the British Government, in common with other western countries and others, will wish to play a part and respond.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Will my hon. Friend try to get the partners in the peace process back to some pretty basic United Nation principles: that territory should not be conquered and occupied by force of arms, in Syria or elsewhere, that, where territory is occupied, the Geneva convention should apply—it certainly does not apply in southern Lebanon today—and that the local population should have the right to self-determination?

Mr. Hogg: Where territory is occupied, the Geneva convention most certainly should apply. Security Council resolutions 425, 242 and 338 apply and should be the basis of discussions and ultimate settlement.

Saudi Arabia

13. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last had discussions with his Saudi Arabian counterparts on the state of British-Saudi relations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I last had discussions with my Saudi counterparts when I visited Saudi Arabia on 13 October. Our relations are excellent.

Mr. Galloway: The Foreign Secretary will have noted the threat to this country by the brother of King Fahed, which was reported in *The Independent* on Monday, and he will know of the second consecutive 20 per cent. cut in the national budget of Saudi Arabia as its economy heads deeper and deeper into slump, with the unrest that that inevitably generates. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, as the Al-Saud royal dictatorship is so unstable, it is rather foolish to place all our eggs in her basket? In the light of the threats to the lives of Saudi Arabian dissidents here in London, which were confirmed by Scotland Yard in a report that appeared in *The Mail on Sunday* a couple of weeks ago, would not it be extremely unwise to proceed with the deportation of the leaders of the Saudi opposition movement here in London, on the principle that today's dissidents and opposition might be tomorrow's Government in Saudi Arabia?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman puts together a mass of misinformation in one question. I do not agree at all with his premise about the stability of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia simply because it is dealing with its budget deficit. That seems to be way beyond the mark. He referred to the decision taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary that Mr. Al-Massari should be returned to Yemen, the country from which he reached us. Mr. Massari has appealed against that decision and it would be wrong to comment further while the process is under way.

"Maltese Double Cross"

14. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make an assessment of a film, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Decisions about whether to prosecute are matters for the police and the prosecution authorities. They are indeed considering the film to which the hon. Gentleman has referred.

Mr. Dalyell: May I, first, thank the Foreign Secretary for seeing me in his room on Monday night about Allan Francovich's film entitled "The Maltese Double Cross". Could the Crown Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office—the lead Departments—be persuaded to question the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), who was Secretary of State for Transport in March 1989, and who, I believe, said in good faith to reputable members of the Lobby, that the bombers were about to be identified? Should not the investigation ask him what prompted him to say that, and why he was subsequently removed by Mrs. Thatcher from her Cabinet? Could not it also be asked whether any serious investigation into the truth of Lockerbie can take place without asking Mrs. Thatcher how, in 800 self-serving pages, she did not mention Lockerbie once, but she did say, in justifying the 1986 raid, that never again, after the raid on the working-class tenements of Benghazi and Tripoli, would there be any kind of Libyan terrorism. If, with her access to intelligence, she believed that, how could she possibly think that the Libyan state was responsible for Lockerbie?

Mr. Hogg: Truth to tell, I am awfully fond of the hon. Gentleman, but he sometimes behaves in a rather dotty manner.

Hon. Members: Answer.

Madam Speaker: Order. Has the Minister responded to the question?

Mr. Hogg: I have indeed responded to the question from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Bosnia

15. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has already given the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford). *[Interruption.]* With respect, I have already answered Question 15. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I understood that the Minister was responding to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr.Dalyell) on Question 14.

Mr. Hogg: I understood that Question 15 had been called and, in response to that, I was referring to the answer that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has already given to the question posed by the hon. Member for Greenwich.

Mr. Galloway: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I take points of order at the end of Question Time and after statements.

Mr. Bayley: I, too, should like to refer to my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford). He asked the Foreign Secretary about the statement made by Lord Owen on the "Walden" programme last weekend that the contact group plan would mean virtual independence for the Bosnian Serbs. I ask two very direct, brief questions: do the Government agree with Lord Owen's statement; and, if not, will they appoint a peace mediator who understands the Contact group plan?

Mr. Hogg: The position, which was reaffirmed in the Essen declaration, is that the Bosnian Serbs have to accept the Contact group plan—the map—and that must be the basis of the settlement.

The question that then arises is what should be the relationship between the federation—the Bosnian Croats and the Bosnian Muslims on the one hand, and the Bosnian Serbs on the other? There must be a relationship between the two within the external frontiers of Bosnia. That is a matter for discussion and negotiation between the parties. I believe that there will be a very loose association between the two.

The question remains as to the relationship between the Bosnian Croats and Croatia, and the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the federation has already agreed that there should be confederal rights—whatever that means—between Bosnian Croats and Croatia, and parallel rights between Bosnian Serbs and Serbia.

Sir Michael Marshall: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take the opportunity of explaining the position on crimes against humanity in Bosnia and former Yugoslavia? Does he believe that what is happening in the United Nations represents useful progress and will the process have a deterrent effect?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend will know that proceedings are currently afoot in Germany against one named alleged war criminal. Evidence is being gathered against other named criminals, but the problem is that they are not within the easy reach of the tribunal.

Mr. Robin Cook: Before putting my question, I must say that the Minister would command more respect in the House if he replied to the questions that are put to him by all hon. Members.

In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley), the Minister said something different from the Foreign Secretary's statement last week. The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred specifically to a confederal arrangement between the Bosnian Croats and Croatia and implied that in the current peace plan equal, parallel arrangements are available for Bosnian Serbs.

Is the Minister saying that the proposal in the current peace plan offers confederal rights to the Bosnian Serbs with Serbia? If so, where does that leave the future of the Muslim community in Bosnia?

Mr. Hogg: I used the words that I intended to use. The federation has agreed to confederal rights between the Bosnian Croats and Croatia. That phrase has not been used in respect of the relationship between the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia. There must be some relationship between the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia, and that has been agreed by the Bosnian Government.

The phrases "special rights" or "parallel rights" have been used to describe the relationship between Bosnian Serbs and Serbia, which is clearly different from "confederal rights". But it indicates a kind of relationship between Bosnian Serbs and Serbia that falls short of confederal rights. All of that must be negotiated within the external frontiers of Bosnia, as I have said already. The purpose of the negotiations is to preserve one entity— Bosnia.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, if Secretary of State Perry's offer of American troops being committed to ground duties in Bosnia is taken up, it would be appropriate for members of UNPROFOR that have provided generously to the defence of that country to review their commitments? Would not that allow us to withdraw some of our troops?

Mr. Hogg: We are extremely grateful to the United States Government for what has been offered, but it is important to remind the House that what has been offered is the provision of troops within the context of NATO to assist the withdrawal of UNPROFOR troops, should that become necessary. I very much hope that it will be possible to keep UNPROFOR troops in Bosnia through the winter, because what they have been doing has been of enormous value and deserves the utmost praise.

Mr. Macdonald: Will the Minister address himself to the remarks made by Lord Owen last week, which he and the Foreign Secretary have refused to address up to now? Will he correct his reference to the confederal links between Croatia and Bosnia, because the link is not with the Bosnian Croats but with the whole of the Bosnian republic and all the peoples of Bosnia and Croatia? That is an important distinction to make.

Mr. Hogg: The second part of the hon. Gentleman's question is right and I am grateful for his clarification. On the former part of his question, the nature of the relationship between the federation—if I may use that word for these purposes—and the Bosnian Serbs within the external frontiers of Bosnia will inevitably be a matter for negotiation. I suspect that the relationship between the federation and the Bosnian Serbs will be very loose, but it is impossible at this stage—after all, negotiations have not even begun—to determine what the outcome of negotiations will be. That being so, it seems to be idle to speculate about the outcome.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that President Milosevic in Belgrade is the key to peace in Bosnia? Does he accept that Milosevic has aided and abetted Karadzic in the gruesome war, but that only Milosevic can influence the Bosnian Serbs into accepting the peace plan?

Mr. Hogg: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend that the role of President Milosevic is central, and he is better placed than anybody to induce the Pale Serbs to accept the Contact group plan—the map—and to enter into the negotiations to which I have referred. It is because of that that the Security Council has been willing to relax the effect of some of the sanctions.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Since Bosnia is clearly a failed entity that should never have been recognised as an independent sovereign united state, when will the Government extend to the Serbs who live there the right of self-determination?

Mr. Hogg: But that is to argue that existing frontiers can be disregarded and that international law can be flouted by armed aggression. If one were to follow what the right hon. Gentleman has suggested, one would begin to see the entirety of the former Soviet Union, and probably much of central and eastern Europe, dissolve into conflict. That is not something that he or I want, and it is important to go on asserting that existing frontiers must be respected unless altered with the genuine consent of all relevant parties.

Cyprus

16. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last consulted the United States Secretary of State about the situation in Cyprus.

Mr. Hurd: I last discussed Cyprus with the United States Secretary of State when I was in Washington on 22 June, but we have had many exchanges at official level since then, most recently with Mr. Williams, the United States special co-ordinator on Cyprus, here in London yesterday.

Mr. Clarke: As Britain and the United States are members of the Security Council, why are they not making the reunification of Cyprus a top priority in every sense? Cyprus has been divided for far too long, and many of the interested parties are dragging their feet. Why are the Government not pressurising Turkey, for instance, to make efforts to try to make the negotiators in the north come together in a meaningful and peaceful way to reunite Cyprus?

Mr. Hurd: We are, indeed, pressing constantly on behalf of the Secretary General in that direction. We believe that he is best placed to carry forward those discussions. I have encouraged him to persevere with them despite the disappointment last year, when it looked as though the parties concerned were close to an agreement on confidence-building measures, which could have led to an agreement on the substantive issue. It is disappointing that that agreement dissolved at the last minute.

The latest effort by the Secretary General is to call together Mr. Denktas and President Klerides. They have had meetings and I hope that they will have more meetings. We follow the discussions with great care and offer support and apply pressure wherever we believe that it is needed to reach an agreement.

Mr. Waterson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that in the face of the continued intransigence of the regime in the north of Cyprus, the only solution now is to press forward as fast as possible with processing the application from the Republic of Cyprus to join the European Union?

Mr. Hurd: We certainly do not believe that anyone has a veto on the application of the Republic of Cyprus. We were party to the decision of the Corfu summit earlier this year that the next phase of enlargement of the European Union will involve Cyprus.

Bosnia

18. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest developments in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Lady to the answers that my right hon. Friend and I have already given.

Ms Hoey: As the Minister obviously does not want to answer a question about Dr. David Owen, I will not press him on that. Did he see a report in *The Times* last week that British soldiers had not just been held by Serbs, but taken out of their tanks and beaten up? What did the British Government do about that? Would they have reacted differently if British troops had been taken out of tanks by Saddam Hussein's troops?

Mr. Hogg: It is important to keep in mind the limited mandate that UNPROFOR has in Bosnia. We did not go into Bosnia to wage war, but to reinforce the humanitarian effort and to maintain peace and tranquillity where we could. We have achieved considerable success in both of those objects of policy. For example, we have been able to achieve a great degree of peace and tranquillity in central Bosnia. The consequences of the limited mandate is that British troops and UNPROFOR forces in general are not equipped in the way that they were equipped to go to war against Iraq in Kuwait.

Commonwealth (Human Rights)

19. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department is doing to discourage human rights abuses in the Commonwealth.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We stand by and we encourage others to implement those provisions of the Harare declaration that deal with human rights.

Mr. Miller: Will the Minister make human rights a cornerstone of his policies towards Commonwealth countries? Will he, in particular, make it clear that the death penalty is repugnant? In his discussions with Commonwealth countries will he ensure that the view of the House—that the death penalty is primitive and should not be used—is expressed to them? Will he look in particular at cases in which children are under threat of the death penalty in one particular country?

Mr. Hogg: I would not restore the death penalty to the United Kingdom, but, that said, I do not think that it is repugnant. It is a matter for the Parliament of any country to determine its own criminal code and that includes the penalties that it might deem to be appropriate. As to the generality of the hon. Gentleman's question, human rights are a cornerstone of our policy within the Commonwealth, as elsewhere. That is why we did so much to encourage the part of the Harare declaration which emphasised the importance of the respect for human rights.

Mr. Forman: To what extent is that part of the Harare declaration enforceable? What measures can be taken to see that members of the Commonwealth follow it to the letter? Are there some particular instances to which my right hon. and learned Friend can point where we have had some success with that policy?

Mr. Hogg: The Harare declaration is not a legal document but a political declaration. Therefore, and to that extent, it is not enforceable in the sense that my hon. Friend means. By political pressure, however, one can influence the policies of countries within the Commonwealth and we seek assiduously to do that.

Somalia

20. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards establishing normal international links with (a) Somaliland and (b) southern Somalia.

Mr. Baldry: It has not proved possible to make progress towards establishing normal links with Somalia due to the failure of the Somalis to reach agreement on the formation of a national Government. The future of north-west Somalia must be for Somalia as a whole to determine.

Mr. Michael: Does the Minister recognise that there is no Somalia as a whole now? The warring factions in the south cannot determine who represents the south but the north has functioned comparatively—I stress the word "comparatively"—as an operational entity for a couple of years now. Does not the Minister recognise that the links between Britain and Somalia are with the north-west—with the Republic of Somaliland—which is where Britain should be providing support, help and encouragement? To wait for some magic date when everything will come right in the south is to wait for a date that will never come.

Mr. Baldry: I know that the hon. Gentleman takes a close interest in north-west Somalia, but it is clear that a return to peace in Somalia as a whole and the establishment of viable national institutions with which the international community can deal can be achieved only by the Somalis themselves. We hope that they will work with renewed vigour to achieve those goals.

Public Expenditure (Wales)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement on public expenditure in Wales.

Copies of my statement, details of provisional standard spending assessments and provisional capping principles for counties and districts will be available in the Vote Office when I sit down.

I am presenting a budget for Wales, full details of which will be published in my departmental report early next year. This is a good settlement for Wales: £6,770 million will be available for 1995-96, an increase of 2.9 per cent. over this year, which is £190 million extra. Because inflation is down, it will buy more than the plans for 1995-96, which I announced last year—£40 million more.

The success of the Welsh economy is well advertised. Industrial output is up by almost 10 per cent. over the past year. The Celtic dragon now rivals the Asian tigers. This budget, with its emphasis on public services and regeneration, will keep Wales roaring ahead. The largely untold success story has been the growth of small and medium-sized businesses, the increase in self-employment and the restoration of entrepreneurship—*[Interruption.]* I see that the Opposition welcome good news with all the enthusiasm of an undertaker at a baptism.

Self-employment is up from 136,000 in June 1988 to 175,000 in September 1994 and VAT-registered production companies are up from 3,600 at the end of 1979 to nearly 6,000 at the end of 1991. That is great progress. Between them, those firms have created more jobs than the inward investors. That is a well-known success story. The two are mutually reinforcing.

Today's news on unemployment brings the rate in Wales back down to the United Kingdom average. That is welcome news indeed, and I hope that Opposition Members will join in the chorus of support.

Independent forecasts are positive for Wales. They expect growth in 1995 and 1996 to be faster than a strongly performing United Kingdom. From Queen street in Cardiff to the business park in north Wales; from Imperial park to Fishguard harbour, investors are busy building and rebuilding, creating new jobs and prosperity for the 1990s.

Yesterday I launched a drive for £1 billion of private investment for the valleys' 20 prime sites. Good locations for new homes, new shops, new factories and new offices are on offer. This budget provides the money for the new roads and public investments that those schemes require. It provides local authorities with cash under the strategic development scheme and through capital programmes.

Better health and safer streets are the overriding priorities for the public services. There is an additional £114 million for the national health service in Wales—a cash increase of 5.5 per cent., or a 2.2 per cent. real increase. It will increase NHS spending by more than £39 for every man, woman and child in Wales, bringing expenditure up to £754 per person next year or more than £3,000 for an average family. It is more than it costs to run the family car or to go on the family holiday.

With that money, we aim to cut junior doctors' hours, recruit more medical staff, treat many more patients and fulfil patients charter guarantees. There will be fewer forms, fewer administrators in health authorities and many more satisfied patients. A further £6.6 million is available for disabled people. I look to local government to come forward with good schemes to help people in need.

I propose to set total standard spending for local authorities at £2,767 million, an increase of 2.7 per cent. on 1994-95. TSS will be made up of £2,466.3 million for county and district councils and £300.7 million for the four new police authorities. Police TSS represents an increase of about 6 per cent. on 1994-95 police authority budgets. That substantial increase demonstrates the Government's commitment to providing a decent amount of cash for police services.

I am sure that some opponents will complain that those new arrangements take responsibility away from local authorities; but the people of Wales will welcome that additional money for law and order. Local authority members continue to have the majority on the new police authorities. I am sorry that local government in south Wales was unable to find sufficient money when it had control of the decisions, as I and most people in Wales would have liked it to do. I want that money to buy more detective work and more patrols and reduce the number of criminals on the loose.

Final standard spending assessments will be announced in the new year. Aggregate external finance will be £2,450.8 million, comprising revenue support grant of £1,705.5 million, business rates of £520 million and other grants of £225.3 million. I am consulting on my proposals for RSG. Both TSS and AEF include £124.4 million for care in the community—another large increase.

On capping, I propose that any increase of more than 0.5 per cent. on a county or district council's 1994-95 budget requirement will be considered an excessive increase if it gives rise to a budget requirement above the authority's SSA. Any budget requirement that is more than 12.5 per cent. above the SSA will be considered excessive, subject to certain conditions. My capping principles are provisional. I shall make my final decisions in the light of authorities' budget decisions and all appropriate considerations.

There have been suggestions from the Opposition Benches that I would not meet the costs of local government reorganisation and that local authority services would suffer as a result. I am pleased to be able to confound those expectations. The local authority associations asked me to provide £19.5 million to the shadow authorities for their running costs. I propose to meet that bid in full.

The associations asked me to provide £20 million for changes to information technology. I propose to meet that bid in full in the present financial year and next year, by supplementary credit approvals. The associations asked for £10 million for compensation costs. I have concluded that I should provide £3.5 million of supplementary credit approvals in 1995-96.

I have consistently made it clear that I expect that virtually all existing local government staff will find jobs in the new authorities, or will go through the normal process of natural wastage. I expect the new authorities to make the fullest possible use of existing staff—if necessary, by redeploying and retraining them—rather than spending large sums of public money on redundancies and recruitment. The provision that I have made for compensation reflects that. However, if some authorities decide that they want to make major administrative savings at the point of reorganisation, I shall make more money available to facilitate that.

In addition to the £43 million that I have made available for local government reorganisation, I have decided to issue £525.6 million of capital grants and credit approvals for 1995-96 for local authority capital investment. That represents a 4.5 per cent. increase on the current year, a real increase, giving local authorities more scope to make their own decisions. That will enable local authorities to play their full part in the regeneration initiatives at the heart of the budget.

I have increased provision for local government investment in environmental and economic development by 15 per cent., to a total of £43.2 million. That includes £4.5 million of additional support to rural areas in place of grant schemes formerly provided by the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales. A further £49.4 million goes to capital projects under the strategic development scheme. I shall be announcing the results tomorrow. It is a very generous settlement, taking into account the special needs of Welsh local government.

Planned expenditure on agriculture for 1995-96 will be £267.5 million—more than £33 million above planned expenditure for this year; an increase of 14 per cent. It means that farmers will continue to receive high and fast-growing public support.

Following the change in the assisted areas map announced to the House, there will be reductions in regional assistance. I shall continue to meet demand in full under the rules of the scheme.

The Welsh Development Agency will be able to spend more than £153 million next year. I am reducing the grant substantially in both 1995-96 and 1996-97 as a result of an accelerated property disposal programme. I have indicated a substantial increase in the agency's grant in aid for 1997-98. The WDA this year has received as much money as it can sensibly spend from grants and asset sales and next year will see a further substantial programme of work. Indeed, this year the WDA has returned £10 million that it was unable to spend. The WDA is not held up by a lack of cash.

I am determined to cut out unnecessary bureaucracy in favour of services. The running costs of my Department for 1995-96 will be below £75.5 million, which is less in cash and real terms than in 1993-94 or 1994-95. They will fall further in cash and real terms in 1996-97 and 1997-98.

I am reducing the total running costs of Welsh executive non-departmental public bodies from £66.7 million this year to £65.3 million next year—a cut of 2.2 per cent. or 5.4 per cent. in real terms. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) is making fatuous comments from a sedentary position. The figures speak for themselves; they show that we are reducing the overheads and putting the money into services. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. We cannot have continual barracking from sedentary positions. Hon. Members will have the opportunity to question the statement in a moment.

Mr. Redwood: I shall also be requiring some NDPBs to make considerable savings on consultancy fees and advertising and shall be slimming down the operations of a few. In some bodies, such as the Countryside Council for Wales, there is scope for that. I am maintaining the provision for arts and leisure in full for next year.

Housing associations have seen substantial increases to their stock in recent years, running well ahead of 10,000 new homes over three years—the target set in 1991 by the Agenda for Action. In 1995-96, more than £100 million should enable Housing for Wales to achieve a target of more than 3,500 additional homes. I have taken into account the 628 empty properties owned by associations and am asking them to bring more of those into use.

I have increased local authority housing provision to £267.6 million, including more than £150 million for mandatory home renovation grants. I am making an additional £3 million available for local authorities to develop low-cost home ownership schemes, which will help 300 more families into home ownership next year. That is in addition to 450 families who will be helped through Housing for Wales. A recent survey shows that many in rented accommodation want to own. I intend to help them do so.

I propose to spend £188 million on central Government roads and transport in 1995-96. The A465 heads of the valleys improvement between Abergavenny and Hirwaun will help development in Merthyr and I remain committed to bringing it forward as quickly as possible. I opened the long-missing link on the M4 motorway over the River Neath on Monday. I plan to start the M4 Magor-Coldra widening, the A550 Deeside Park interchange and the A40 Fishguard western bypass. Work will continue preparing the A55 improvements across Anglesey.

I propose to make £109 million available for capital expenditure on local authority roads. I have discussed with the south Wales valleys councils their priorities for regeneration. This budget meets their main needs.

In Gwent I have decided that work can start next year on the £20 million A472 mid-valleys strategic route improvement. Work continues on the Tredegar bypass, which should open next year, and there is preparation work on the Aberbeeg-Cwm improvement.

In Mid Glamorgan, work can start on the £7 million Merthyr western relief road and on the Bridgend inner relief road. Work is well under way on the Pontypridd inner relief road, which will improve access to the A470 and M4. Preparation work should continue on the Porth and Lower Rhondda Fach relief road.

In West Glamorgan, I am supporting a start to the third phase of the Swansea valley dualling. That will provide access to the important Tawe vale development—

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Tory vale?

Mr. Redwood: I thank the hon. Gentleman for renaming it.

I continue to support preparation work on the Port Talbot peripheral distributor road and I have confirmed that work can start soon on the Rhuddlan bypass. I should like to make progress with more schemes, but I am disturbed by significant cost increases on some important local road schemes. I have asked South Glamorgan to look again at the design and costs of the final links in the Cardiff peripheral distributor road. The costs have increased by £35 million—or 50 per cent.—in the past year. I have agreed to provide money to prepare an improved link to Cardiff-Wales airport. That, too, needs to be realistically designed and costed.

[Mr. Redwood]

There is a large amount of freight on Welsh roads that could be taken by rail. I have asked the WDA to include a rail option on its industrial parks wherever possible, and to see how freight facilities can be improved.

Further and higher education will receive grants totalling £411 million in 1995-96. That will enable the higher education institutions to provide full-time places for more than 30 per cent. of young people each year. It also provides for the number of part-time students in higher education to increase. Student enrolments on those plans increase by more than 30 per cent. between 1992-93 and 1996-97. Some £40 million for capital expenditure in that area in 1995-96 will help in renovation and development. In addition, I am giving the colleges greater flexibility in the way in which they can use their capital. From next year, they will be free to use it to service loans from the private sector if suitable schemes are designed.

I have increased the money for the Curriculum Council for Wales next year by 18 per cent. The aim is to oversee the tests in schools and allow external marking.

I shall introduce a major new initiative for popular schools. I am committed to promoting parental choice and diversity and to raising standards in our schools. [HON. MEMBERS: "What is a popular school?"] Opposition Members ask what a popular school is. It is one to which parents wish to send their children. I should have thought that that was elementary. If Opposition Members do not understand that, they really do have problems with education policy.

Popular and successful schools are having to deny places to large numbers of children—some of them are constituents of Opposition Members—seeking to enjoy the first-rate education that they offer. My popular schools initiative will provide the money for additional facilities at those schools and will be a major investment in the future education of children in Wales. It will be very welcome to parents, even if Opposition Members do not speak for them.

Results in Welsh schools are still too varied. The best are good, the worst are bad. The bad schools are not starved of money and cannot always shelter behind the notion that their pupils are bound to fail because of their backgrounds. It is not the income of one's parents that matters to do well at school—the daughter of an out-of-work plumber can do better than the son of a stockbroker if she is encouraged to do so.

This budget for Wales means a stronger health service, more resources for the police to improve the safety of our streets and homes, more investment in urban and rural regeneration, better education in our schools and opportunities for more students in our colleges. It pays the costs of local government reorganisation, gives local authorities more capital for their communities and tackles the high overheads of government.

This is a budget for a Wales recovering from recession, a budget to reinforce the growth of new jobs, a budget for a more modern and prosperous Wales. I commend it to the House.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement, which has taken nearly 20 minutes. I should like to draw your attention, Madam Speaker, to what I regard as a flagrant abuse of the proceedings of the House. Over the past 11 years, certainly for as long as I have been a Member, at this time of year we have had a statement on local government finance. I was not notified that the Secretary of State intended to make a 20-minute speech on what is, in effect, a budget for Wales. I do not think that any hon. Member was aware of that and no notification was given of the fact that we were to have an extended debate. If it is the Secretary of State's intention to adopt that procedure in the future, I ask you to reflect, Madam Speaker, on whether you should discuss it with the appropriate authorities to ensure that hon. Members' rights are protected.

I want to make it absolutely clear that I and my colleagues have been pressing for some time for a debate on all these matters in the Welsh Grand Committee in Cardiff. It is of great concern to me that the Secretary of State has apparently been conspiring through the usual channels to frustrate our requests for a meeting of the Welsh Grand Committee, where we would have an opportunity to question the Secretary of State about the very matters that he has put before us now. It appears that the new style adopted by the Secretary of State is to deny us the opportunity for a full debate in Cardiff on all these matters and to come here at the shortest possible notice, without the courtesy of notification to any hon. Member, with the intention of smuggling through the House without debate or question what he refers to as a budget for Wales. It is a flagrant abuse of our proceedings and I hope that the House will register the strongest possible dissatisfaction with what the Secretary of State has done.

During the earlier part of his comments, the Secretary of State referred to the fact that he was producing a budget for Wales. I want to refer to the Budget produced a fortnight ago by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who I understand carries more authority in the Cabinet than the Secretary of State for Wales, certainly when financial matters are discussed. The Chancellor's Red Book records the fact that total expenditure for Wales in the current financial year is £6.5 billion and that the forecast for next year is £6.4 billion. By any standard, that is a cut in real terms of £100 million. It ill becomes the Secretary of State to try to confuse matters by arguing that there has been a real-terms increase in expenditure for Wales. It is a completely unsatisfactory way of dealing with those matters and I hope that we shall not see any repetition of that disgraceful behaviour by the Secretary of State.

The fact that the right hon. Gentleman's Department is today releasing 12 separate press releases shows that he is embarking on what he expects to be a major series of announcements. If there has been any increase at all during the past 12 months, it has been an increase not in the expenditure available to Wales, but in the number of press releases, which is apparently the result of frenetic outpourings from the Secretary of State's private office as he hopes to restore his battered reputation.

The Secretary of State does not represent one person in Wales and his decision not to consult any of the 32 Opposition Members out of 38 Welsh Members about this new system is a deliberate insult to the House of Commons, a deliberate discourtesy to 32 out of 38 Members and a clear sign of the contempt that the Secretary of State has for the people of Wales.

Now that the right hon. Gentleman has embarked on that new process, will he give two specific guarantees? First, will he ensure that there is a full day's debate on the Floor of the House on the local government settlement, so that we can have a full and proper discussion? Secondly, will he give a clear undertaking that there will be no further obstruction in the operation of the usual channels, so that Labour's long-standing request for a meeting of the Welsh Grand Committee in Cardiff to debate the whole of the Government's programme in Wales can now be met?

On the matter of local government, which should have been the subject of the statement, does the Secretary of State acknowledge that his analysis of the settlement is different from the analysis provided by those in local government? Will he confirm, particularly, that his claimed increase of 2.7 per cent. on total standard spending represents a cut of 5 per cent. in real terms if the basis of comparison is what local authorities budgeted for in the current financial year? In addition, the proportion of the settlement that the Secretary of State has funded this year is 1 per cent. less than last year. Does he accept, therefore, that the budget's net result is that the average council tax payer in Wales faces a 10 per cent. increase in household bills in the next financial year?

We all know that the Secretary of State has a secret agenda to cut public expenditure in Wales—it is a matter of common knowledge. Why, therefore, must he resort to the sort of subterfuge that he showed this afternoon? If he wants to cut public expenditure and if he is proud of his public expenditure cuts, why does not he have the courage of his convictions and stand up and say that that is what he wants to do?

In his statement, the Secretary of State referred to the costs of local government reorganisation. Now that the changes have collapsed in chaos in England, why should we in Wales have to suffer injury added to insult, with the average Welsh income tax payer paying an extra £1 per week for changes that we did not approve? As with the Severn bridge tolls, is not that yet another Tory tax on Wales?

The Secretary of State referred to £19.5 million being made available to shadow authorities in the current financial year. Will he tell us whether that money is a grant to shadow authorities, or whether it will be made available on the basis of supplementary credit approvals? If the latter is the case, he is not paying for the changes; Welsh council tax payers will pay for them.

The Secretary of State has made available a small sum for staff compensation arrangements arising from the reorganisation. Will he now make it clear whether all staff who do not agree to redundancy should transfer to the new authorities and whether it will be the responsibility of the new authorities to bear the cost of subsequent redundancies? That is a direct question. I hope that we shall have a direct answer from the Secretary of State.

Without exception, Welsh local government is doing a good job efficiently and it is providing vital public services under democratic control. Does not the Secretary of State appreciate the irony of his undermining those local councils when his own regime at the Welsh Office represents one of the most centralised, least efficient and least accountable of all Departments? Does he understand the serious reservations across Wales about his decision to take control of the police?

Having effectively nationalised the police, why is the Secretary of State still underfunding police authorities to the extent that police authorities such as Dyfed-Powys and North Wales are openly critical of his budget? That decision alone will divert resources from services, such as education and social services, which are playing a vital crime prevention role. As a result of this budget, the social services' budget in Wales is £38 million short of the amount that they require to meet their statutory obligations under care in the community. Will the Secretary of State, therefore, concede that his Government clearly have no coherent partnership strategy for dealing with crime?

What value does the Secretary of State place on local government now that he has reorganised it, stripped it of its functions, undermined its resources and placed the tightest-ever regime of rate capping on it? On the other programmes that he has announced today, does he understand the widespread dismay that will arise in Wales because of the impact of the cuts? Is he surprised at the lack of confidence in him as Secretary of State when it emerges that even the Cabinet had to restrain him from his zeal for further cuts in public expenditure?

The cuts in the grant to the Welsh Development Agency will be especially deplored. Given the way in which the Secretary of State's predecessors have played politics with the agency, does not he recognise that he has a responsibility to restore some long-term stability to it and to restore credibility and security to its operations?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that, if he cuts the Tai Cymru budget by the 20 per cent. that the budget suggests, the number of homes built in Wales will be reduced next year by between 700 and 800? Given that last year he referred to the increase of 150 new homes as a "welcome increase", what words does he now use to describe the reduction, particularly given the fact that Shelter Cymru has reported a record figure of 60,000 homeless people registered in Wales this year?

The Secretary of State's treatment of quangos demonstrates that he wishes to interfere with their executive functions, but he will do nothing to restore or extend democracy at board level.

Is the Secretary of State planning—as his statement seemed to suggest—a savage cut in funds for the Countryside Council for Wales? Does he recognise that such action would be regarded as a particularly sinister development, given the council's role as environmental watchdog for Wales? Is it now being victimised because it will not bend the knee to Government diktat—although it is headed by Michael Griffith, who has described himself as "a crusty old Tory"?

During our debates on the Budget, the Secretary of State announced cuts of £180 million in Welsh Office expenditure. We are now seeing what that actually means,

[Mr. Ron Davies]

Department by Department. Does the Secretary of State understand why Wales has turned against him and his party?

Mr. Redwood: I am surprised at the hon. Gentleman's objections to the statement. It was clearly flagged on the monitors as a statement on public expenditure for Wales, and that is exactly what I spoke about. I should have expected Opposition Members to welcome an opportunity to cross-examine me on all matters concerning spending in Wales, not just on the local authority settlement. I shall, of course, do my best to answer the questions that are asked.

I believe that my offer of a Welsh Grand Committee in London this side of Christmas, to debate the budget and spending arrangements for Wales, was passed on through the usual channels—as was my offer of another Welsh Grand Committee in Cardiff, probably to debate a subject of the Opposition's choosing. I believe that it was the Opposition who turned down the offer of a sitting in London before Christmas, which I should have welcomed as an opportunity to debate those matters at greater length.

I have no worries about democracy and proper argument; I believe that I presented a good budget, and I shall be happy to debate it at length as well as answering questions about it.

As for the objection that I am issuing press releases today, I plead guilty. I believe that issuing press releases is a well-known ministerial practice, and I do not think that I am issuing more press releases about spending in Wales this year than has been traditional in past years. This time, however, I am providing an opportunity for cross-examination in the House. [HON. MEMBERS: "Get on with it."] I am going on about that point, because the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) made it the main feature of his objections to my statement.

I hope that agreement will be reached through the usual channels in regard to the debate on local government spending; I am sure that it is a worthy subject for further discussion.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the local authority settlement was a 5 per cent. cut in real terms. It clearly is not, as the figures that I gave illustrate only too well. The hon. Gentleman should bear it in mind that I am recommending a higher proportion of grant through aggregate external finance than is being provided for either England or Scotland. He will know that the level of council tax is in the hands of local authorities, many of them under Labour control, which will determine spending levels.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of cuts in public expenditure. He had clearly prepared the wrong speech ahead of my statement. As the statement made clear, there is to be a cash increase of £190 million—a very large increase. I have identified ways in which that will mean a real gain for Wales in the main areas of spending.

As for coming clean on cuts, I have come clean. I confess that cuts are being made in one or two areas, but I spelt them out in detail. That is how I have managed to secure real growth in the budgets that matter. I have cut the grant to the Welsh Development Agency, but it does not need the money; as I said, it can raise it from asset sales.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the £19.5 million would be grant or supplementary credit approval. I am currently considering representations on that, and I shall make an announcement later. I am also consulting on the standard spending assessments for the police and other bodies, and will inform the House as soon as I have completed my calculations.

Sir Wyn Roberts (Conwy): I welcome my right hon. Friend's extensive and novel budget for Wales. It sounded to me rather like a very fulsome Christmas stocking: there was a great deal in it for many people in Wales. There was some excellent economic news, followed by the announcement of an increase of 2.2 per cent. in real terms in money for the health service. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that that will mean more patients being treated better in NHS hospitals in Wales?

I also welcome the increased spending on further and higher education, and the fact that there will be more students. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that support for those students will be maintained in real terms, as either loan or grant?

Mr. Redwood: I am delighted that my right hon. Friend has understood the message; my statement is indeed a Christmas stocking packed with goodies. More patients will be treated, and there will be more students.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Will the Secretary of State assure the House that he will never again abuse parliamentary procedure as he has done today by delivering a budget virtually without notice, under the guise of a statement? He cut out of that statement a joke from the published version, comparing the Welsh Grand Committee with a cartoon character. Does he recognise that if he wants to present a budget, it will be a Mickey Mouse budget unless it is given to the Welsh Grand Committee and is debated and amendable?

Does the Secretary of State further accept that his "budget" will be a great disappointment to everyone in Dyfed and Powys because the settlement for the Dyfed-Powys police is equivalent to a cut of no fewer than 100 police constables? Does he also accept that there will be a great sense of disappointment at his failure to quash the rumour that passenger railways in Wales are under severe threat, in that not one extra penny will be available to sustain them?

Will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that his reference to "popular schools" does not mean that money over and above the norm will be given to grant-maintained schools in an effort to bribe governors and parents into going for grant-maintained status? Finally, will he confirm that, although it has been claimed that extra money is being given for community care, the real effect of the settlement is that there will not be a single new penny piece to ensure that people who cannot obtain community care now will be able to do so in the coming year?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. and learned Gentleman is wrong on those points. An extra £38.5 million will be provided for community care; of course we wish the elderly and the disabled to be taken care of. I notice that the hon. and learned Gentleman did at least listen to what

I said as well as reading my speech, and I am glad that he tried to adjust his question when I disappointed him by not reading out the bit on which he wished to play.

Mr. Carlile: It was published—here it is.

Mr. Redwood: I have published the speech that I delivered, and it is up to people to check the text against my delivery in the House.

I shall receive representations on the police, and I take what the hon. and learned Gentleman said as an early representation. Passenger railway grants are in the main financed through Department of Transport programmes, and I shall pass his comments on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I can reassure the hon. and learned Gentleman on popular schools; the plans that I have in mind relate to local education authority schools, not only grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): I thank my right hon. Friend for his positive statement. It is especially welcome that, against a background of falling unemployment and of growth in the Welsh economy, nothing done today will jeopardise that growth or the continued recovery. I especially welcome what my right hon. Friend said about the funding of the police. In south Wales, we have suffered as a result of the police authority's choosing to leave the police force short of resources, so I warmly welcome the fact that the money will go directly to where it matters. If one message has come across loud and clear from my constituents, it is resentment that the South Wales police authority and the three county councils from which its membership is largely drawn have chosen to stifle and limit the resources of the police in south Wales in general and in the Vale of Glamorgan in particular. I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement and wish his plans every success.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Within the generalised claptrap that the Secretary of State has given us, he has forgotten that there are many areas in Wales, such as the Cynon valley, Merthyr and the Rhondda, which by any socio-economic indicator are among the most deprived in the United Kingdom. Yet no special treatment is being given to those valley communities. It is incredible that the Secretary of State should allow the Cardiff bay barrage road scheme to overrun by £35 million, and simply announce it in the Chamber today, and that he should tell us that the WDA is to hand back £10 million to the Welsh Office, when schemes submitted for the valleys have been turned down, seemingly because of lack of resources. This is not a fair budget for Wales. I decry the fact that we do not have the opportunity to discuss its vital elements, which are so important for our deprived communities.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. The deprived communities of Wales, as he calls them, get favourable treatment in the proposals. I have listened carefully to what valleys local authorities want. I have met their demands for a big road-building programme. I am putting a lot of money into regeneration through the strategic development scheme, the Welsh Development Agency budget and directly through Welsh Office budgets. The hon. Gentleman misunderstood the point about the Cardiff peripheral road. I am querying the cost overrun and saying that I do not accept that cost overrun. I have, indeed, said today that my priorities go to the valleys where I have approved the schemes.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): If the Secretary of State is so generous, why in the name of heaven did the WDA manage to hand back £10 million, when in all our communities we could use that money in the productive regeneration of infrastructure and other developments? What is going on in the WDA that leads us to that? Given that the right hon. Gentleman is to make such a huge cut in the WDA's budget, what assumptions is he making about rent increases for businesses and companies run by the WDA? Will it, in fact, mean a significant increase in rents this year to cover the cuts in grants and budgets that he is proposing?

Mr. Redwood: No, rents will be determined by the marketplace and I do not think that the marketplace will permit very big, if any, increases in rents. The problem for the WDA was that schemes were not ready. That often involves the local authorities, which are also strongly involved in those developments. I have not cut the WDA's spending budget. I have cut its grant substantially because I intend to finance that budget from sales of assets.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): The Secretary of State said that he was not afraid of democracy. Are not today's totally unsatisfactory proceedings a classic example of why we need a Parliament in Wales where we can discuss and debate those issues and take our own decisions on a budget for Wales? How can he call it a budget for Wales when there is nothing in it on the income side? It is all very well pretending to play Santa Claus to the electorate of Wales, yet he plays Scrooge to his friends on the Tory right wing.

The reality is that the money that the Secretary of State is giving back to the people of Wales is money paid by the taxpayers in Wales—some £13 billion to £14 billion in the year in question, compared with the £6.7 billion that he announced for the Welsh Office. Is not it the case that if we had proper scrutiny of public expenditure in Wales, quangos such as the WDA would have to answer for what they were doing or not doing to the people in Wales, rather than this totally unsatisfactory arrangement? Surely we need a Treasury for Wales, answerable to an elected all-Wales body, so that we may have proper control and scrutiny over what is happening.

If the economy of Wales is as strong as the Secretary of State says, why is the income per head in Wales 17 per cent. below the UK average and a further 2 per cent. below the average for Europe? That shows the failure of Government policies.

Mr. Redwood: The statement includes items on the income side through the asset sale lines about which I have been talking and it implies matters on council tax, which will, of course, be determined by local government, but which are a matter for discussion today. The hon. Gentleman and his party scored an own goal with their attempt to prove that more money was sent from Wales to London than was sent from London to Wales, because their own figures showed that there

[Mr. Redwood]

was a £2 billion gap in favour of Wales, which they made up through some notional transfer. Their own figures made that very clear.

Mr. Wigley: The Government borrow from Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman says that the Government borrow from Wales, but he has to prove how much they borrow from Wales. The point remains that the income collected is less than the money spent, and rightly so. It is misleading of him to imply otherwise.

In some parts of Wales, income per head is still too low. That is the purpose of the regeneration and industrial schemes that I identified today.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Will the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge the constant underfunding of the schools budget? It is reduction after reduction. Does he know that my local education authority is desperately anxious to avoid sacking teachers and cutting special needs provision? Is not it the case that the Secretary of State has now cut into the bone and there is no more flesh to cut away? He has left the teachers in the lurch and parents in despair. This is not a Christmas-stocking budget; it is a very miserly budget.

Mr. Redwood: The schools budget is an item for decision by local councils, and I welcome that. I hope that they use their discretion wisely. Like the hon. Gentleman, I think that spending good amounts of money on schools is important for the future of our children.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): The Secretary of State's statement was carefully camouflaged, but is not his essential message, "Cut, cut, cut"? Is not that a deplorable policy, bearing in mind the fact that we are about to inaugurate our local authorities in Wales? Is it any wonder that the Government have become widely known as the enemy of local government?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman has been listening to a different statement from the one that I delivered. Does he not see the large increase in capital approvals that I am offering local government, which give it real discretion? Does he not see that the total Welsh budget is up £190 million? That is no cut.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): May we say that there is a welcome for the announcement that the Government have decided not to privatise the Patent Office or to contractorise jobs there? Is that a sign that the Government's privatisation madness has run its course? Although there is a welcome for the announcement that the work of the Patent Office will be extended within its statutory role, does the Secretary of State see a future for the Patent Office, the Passport Office, Companies House in Cardiff, and the statistical office? Should not they be modernised for the next century, within the public sector, by extending their statutory roles?

Mr. Redwood: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman welcomes an announcement by the Government. I shall pass on the question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State who is responsible for such matters. This is not the end of privatisation, however. The hon. Gentleman should remember the very successful privatisation of coal, which was most welcome to the miners of Tower who bought their own pit.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): May I say that I found the Secretary of State's comments on care in the community remarkably complacent? As everybody in the Cynon Valley and throughout Wales knows, care in the community simply does not work. People who cannot cope are walking the streets. People are relying on their neighbours because there are no acute or secure beds available to cope with the crisis. Can the Secretary of State guarantee that the settlement will deal with the crisis in community care?

Mr. Redwood: The big increases in the budget go into just those sensitive areas: £114 million extra for health and £38.5 million extra for care in the community. Of course I want high-quality services for the people whom the hon. Lady mentions. I trust that a good job will be done in her area as elsewhere in delivering that care.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): The Secretary of State told us that his settlement is a good deal for law and order in Wales, and in particular that more policemen will be on the beat and more criminals locked up. Will he therefore explain why the chief constables of North Wales and of Dyfed-Powys police are saying that it will mean a cut in the number of police officers available? Who is telling the truth: the Secretary of State or the two chief constables?

Mr. Redwood: I referred to the overall position in Wales. The hon. Gentleman is quite right that the big increases go to the South Wales police force, where the majority of people live and where the underfunding has been very pronounced in recent years. Of course, I shall listen to representations from north and west Wales about the settlement, but I am right about the average experience; it will mean a big increase in the resources to fight crime.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Will the Secretary of State look again at the funding of Dyfed-Powys police? Based on a standstill budget for the work that they did last year, they needed an extra £2 million. Instead, they have a cut of £200,000, and they might have to sack or get rid of up to 100 constables. Will the Secretary of State look again at the underfunding of Britain's most successful police force?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), who is responsible for local government in Wales, will be meeting a delegation tomorrow to discuss the matter, and of course I shall receive a full report on the points that are made at that meeting. There is a common formula for England and Wales, and we shall look very carefully at the points that are made.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Does the Secretary of State accept that my constituents in Clwyd awaited the settlement with great trepidation and nothing that the Secretary said today will allay their fears? Will he meet Clwyd county council to hear at first hand the cuts that will have to be made following the settlement announcement?

Will the Secretary of State also define what he means by "good schools", as many of my constituents attend perfectly good schools which are not grant-maintained and which face dramatic funding cuts in the forthcoming year? Will he inform the House what he plans to do with the WDA once he has finally sold all the family silver?

Mr. Redwood: The budget proposals make it clear: the grant in aid will increase again in order to maintain the work that we think still needs to be done. We shall make a final judgment nearer the time, in light of the requirements of Wales and the amount of money available.

"Good schools" are schools in the grant-maintained or local education authority sectors which achieve good results and which are liked by parents and pupils. I wish to reinforce all schools that are achieving good results, whether they are under local authority control or whether they run themselves through grant-maintained status.

There will be the usual consultation arrangements during the period of consultation on my proposals.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Taking into account next year's 2.3 per cent. pay increase for local authority workers and the additional cost pressures imposed on local authorities by Government legislative requirements, why does not the Secretary of State come clean and admit that the settlement will mean real expenditure cuts for all local authorities in Wales?

For example, West Glamorgan county estimates funding cuts totalling £9 million. Coming on top of expenditure cuts of £5 million in each of the past two years, that will mean savagely reducing front-line services, such as care for the frail elderly and school budgets, or adopting a scorched earth policy and raiding the reserves and crippling the new unitary authorities. Why does not the Secretary of State admit that cuts have been made instead of surrounding his statement with warm words?

Mr. Redwood: I will not admit anything because I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's points. Large amounts of money are offered to Wales through the statement—particularly for care in the community, which looks after the frail elderly whom the hon. Gentleman mentioned in his question.

I believe that there is considerable scope for efficiency improvements in local and national government. I am not asking local government to do anything that I will not do myself in the Welsh Office.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): What we have heard this afternoon confirms that the Maples memorandum has not been very effective in guiding the Secretary of State for Wales. Plainly, Walter Mitty is alive and well and running around the Welsh Office. This afternoon's statement on expenditure in Wales gives the impression that Welsh local authorities—the police and everyone involved in the provision of public services—will be wondering how on earth they will spend the money, there is so much available.

The truth is that there will be expenditure cuts in education, which come on top of the cuts detailed in last year's settlement. It is calculated that expenditure increases of between 5 per cent. and 6 per cent. will be needed next year to maintain the service at the same level as this year. The Secretary of State has not taken into account the increased demands of the introduction of the code of practice for special educational needs. Class sizes in Wales are rising and an increasing number of teachers are taking early retirement because of illness. Yet all the Secretary talks about is a popular schools initiative.

Has the Secretary of State asked any of the heads of oversubscribed schools whether they want money to attract more pupils, or to provide better facilities for their existing pupils? If the Secretary of State wants to spend more money on schools in Wales, he ought to concentrate on the schools that provide education in the most difficult circumstances in our inner cities and deprived valleys. That is where he needs to spend money.

In any case, where is the money? The Secretary of State did not tell us this afternoon where it will come from. What does he intend to do about his grant-maintained school initiative? Will he now dump that initiative, given the second ballot at West Mon school and given today's announcement that Bishopston school has voted 2:1 against becoming grant-maintained? Is it true that the 18.8 per cent. that has been given as extra money to the Curriculum Council for Wales for external marking will come out of the budget that schools would normally have had?

On further education, can the Secretary of State confirm that while current spending will go up by less than 4 per cent., he expects student numbers to go up by over 11 per cent.? Why does not he fund the further education sector so that it can take full account of the increased number of students?

On housing, the right hon. Gentleman mentioned that he wanted to encourage home ownership, but no money was attached to that. Finally, on local government reorganisation, he said that he did not expect there to be any staff cuts, but that he expected savings to be made. Where does he expect savings to be made in the immediate future?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman with the elephant tie went on a stampede of a question, and ran out of control as a result. He cannot stand the good news. South Wales police is very pleased with my announcement today, and the health service will be pleased with the substantial sums of extra money.

The popular schools initiative will of course apply in the valleys and in communities such as the hon. Gentleman's own, as well as elsewhere in Wales. I am now consulting schools before I finalise the details of the scheme. I thought it best to tell the House first, although I see that the hon. Gentleman wishes that I had not. I wonder whether he cleared his remarks on grant-maintained schools with the Leader of the Opposition, who takes a rather different view from him on the subject.

The money for the further and higher education sectors will take account of the growth in student numbers, and the hon. Gentleman should remember that there are some economies of scale as one increases the number of pupils or students going to an organisation.

The hon. Gentleman is simply wrong to say that there is no money for home ownership, as I announced money for that subject in my statement.

Points of Order

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm to the House that statements by Ministers are made by your indulgence and that there are at present no Standing Orders that regulate the making of statements? Would you consider the production of a Standing Order that ensured that Ministers knew the scope within which statements may be made? Would you say that if a Minister wishes in effect to make a speech on a matter that is more effectively dealt with by debate, he should do so under Standing Order No. 22 on a motion for the Adjournment of the House, or—he would be better placed in this instance—by bringing the matter to the Welsh Grand Committee, where we could have a proper debate on what has been described, for the first time as I can recall, as a Welsh budget?

Madam Speaker: Statements made by Ministers are not made by my indulgence. I have no authority whatsoever in relation to statements. I am simply told by the Department concerned when a Minister wishes to make a statement.

The other two matters raised by the hon. and learned Gentleman are matters of procedure. There may be a great deal in them, and perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman might like to put the points to the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, as they relate very much to Standing Orders.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. You heard the Secretary of State say that he wanted this Welsh budget to be compared with the Budget. At the time of the Budget, the Vote Office normally has all the press releases associated with it. We have heard that there are about a dozen press releases emanating from the statement, but not one press release is available in the Vote Office. Through you, Madam Speaker, may I ask the Secretary of State whether he intends to issue press releases, as the Chancellor does?

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for me. The hon. Gentleman is trying to use me as Speaker to put questions to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State heard what the hon. Gentleman said, and I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will let the House or individual Members know his response.

I ask hon. Members not to use me as Speaker to put questions to Ministers, as that should be done during questions.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My point of order relates to Foreign Office questions. As a result of his legendary arrogance and unpleasantness, the Minister of State—the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg)—had an uncomfortable time during Foreign Office questions, and I must ask you on a point of order to make the right hon. and learned Gentleman's time more uncomfortable still.

You will recall that a few months ago, I had cause to write to you about a question that I asked the Minister of State, to which he replied that he found my views odious, and sat down. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members evidently find that proper parliamentary procedure. That says much about them—indeed, we know the record of the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) in the matter.

This afternoon, my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), a widely respected Member of Parliament, asked a very long and detailed question of the Minister of State, who stood up and said words to the effect that my hon. Friend was a loony and sat down. I ask you, Madam Speaker, on a point of order, as I did on the occasion when the same thing happened to me, to assert again that Ministers of the Crown have a responsibility to answer parliamentary questions raised by all Members of Parliament at Question Time. I hope that you will take a dim view and the gravest exception to that pattern of behaviour from the Minister of State.

Madam Speaker: I do take considerable exception to the manner in which that question was answered. For my part, I should not have used the word that the Minister did to describe the manner in which the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) pursues issues in the House.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow pursues any issue he takes up truly at great length, truly in great detail and with great determination, but certainly with the greatest courtesy. I believe that not only does he have the right to a proper response, but he has the right to have that response given to him in a most courteous manner.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. May I add that this is not, of course, a blanket criticism of all Ministers? I must say that, on Monday night, the Foreign Secretary thought it proper to give me 25 minutes of his time on the very issue in his room. The courtesy of the Foreign Secretary is in contrast to the discourtesy of the Minister of State.

Madam Speaker: That suitably ends the matter.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. There is one pleasing aspect to my point of order, because it gives me the opportunity to repeat, yet again, my thanks to you for the admonishment that you directed at those on the Treasury Bench on Monday and for the efficacy of the advice that you offered me yesterday.

Following your advice, Madam Speaker, I contacted the private office of the Secretary of State and I reminded that office of the commitments made by two Ministers on three occasions in March and April this year. Those promises were two-pronged. First, Ministers promised to place summaries of the representations on the Cleveland order in the Library. Of course you saw the paucity of their response—just a paltry five paragraphs on a scrap of paper, supplied two days ago and four days late.

The second half of the commitment was that individual representations would be made available, if requested. I must be honest and say that the Minister for Local Government and Planning followed that up by saying:

> "unless the writers intended their views to be treated in confidence."—[*Official Report*, 20 April 1994; Vol. 241, c. *532*.]

This afternoon, I received a reply from the Secretary of State, who said:

> "I am bound to regard representations as not intended for publication unless there is a clear indication to the contrary."

The Government have already said that they have received more than 300 representations and I do not believe that those 300 writers would not want us to know about them. The Secretary of State has agreed to contact the local authorities to ask their permission to allow me to see their submissions—copies of which I have in profusion. Surely it is not unreasonable to ask the Secretary of State to contact those who made the other 300 representations, which the Government claim they have received, so that I am allowed to see them.

As a pupil of the Jesuits, and with all due respect to my teachers, I think that that twisting of words adopted by the Government is unacceptably Jesuitical in the House.

Since you, Madam Speaker, supported my appeal on the first half of the commitment and pointed out that those on the Treasury Bench were being unacceptably lethargic, I ask you to support my request that those Ministers honour the second half of that commitment to make individual representations available to the House.

Madam Speaker: This is the third successive day on which the hon. Gentleman has raised this matter with me on a point of order. I recognise his frustration over the issue, but it is not a matter on which I can help him any further. I know that he was promised a summary of the representations received. He has had that, although he does not consider the response adequate. He was also told that individual representations would be made available, unless the writers intended their views to be treated in confidence. I understand that the Minister's view is that that proviso applies to the representations to which the hon. Gentleman wishes to have access. That cannot be a matter for me.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. May I suggest that that matter raises an important issue which is relevant to all hon. Members? If we are to believe answers that we receive from Ministers and answers printed in *Hansard*, we need to pursue the matter slightly further. If it is not possible for the Minister to fulfil the commitment that he made not just to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook), but to a Conservative Member, the Minister should not have made those promises in the first place. Either Ministers were wrong when they gave their answers in March and April this year or they have gone back on promises, which are clearly recorded in *Hansard*, to Members on both sides of the House.

Madam Speaker: Ministers are responsible for the remarks that they make in the House, but I am glad that the hon. Lady has placed her comments on record, where all members of the Government can see them.

BILLS PRESENTED

Home Energy Conservation

Mrs. Diana Maddock, supported by Mr. Tim Yeo, Mr. John McAllion, Mr. David Rendel, Mr. Cynog Dafis, Mr. A. Cecil Walker, Sir Richard Body, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mr. Alan Simpson, Mr. Peter Temple-Morris, Mr. Malcolm Wicks and Mr. Gary Waller, presented a Bill to make provision for the drawing up of energy conservation plans and priorities for residential properties in their areas by local authorities in the United Kingdom in order to secure more efficient and effective use of natural resources; to give the Secretary of State powers to set timetables for such plans and for works arising from them; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 20 January, and to be printed. [Bill 8.]

Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety)

Mr. David Jamieson, supported by Mr. Win Griffiths, Mr. Nigel Griffiths, Ms Glenda Jackson, Ms Harriet Harman, Sir Malcolm Thornton, Mr. Andrew Miller, Ms Tessa Jowell, Mr. Nick Harvey, Mr. David Porter, Mr. Robert Hicks and Mr. Peter Kilfoyle, presented a Bill to provide for the regulation of centres and providers of facilities where children and young persons under the age of 18 engage in adventure activities and for the establishment of prescribed minimum standards of safety in the provision of such activities and the maintenance and use of equipment and premises for the purpose of such activities: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 27 January, and to be printed. [Bill 9.]

Proceeds of Crime

Sir John Hannam, supported by Sir Ivan Lawrence, Ms Ann Coffey, Mr. Oliver Heald, Mr. Menzies Campbell, Mrs. Anne Campbell, Mr. Michael Shersby, Mr. James Clappison, Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mr. Anthony Steen and Mr. Michael Stern, presented a Bill to make further provision for and in relation to the recovery of the proceeds of criminal conduct; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 3 February, and to be printed. [Bill 10.]

Tobacco Products Labelling

Mr. Terry Lewis, supported by Mr. Kevin Barron, Sir Peter Emery, Mr. Hugh Bayley, Rev. Martin Smyth, Ms Liz Lynne, Mr. Roger Gale, Mr. Gerald Kaufman, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. Eric Illsley, Mrs. Edwina Currie and Ms Tessa Jowell, presented a Bill to require warnings and information carried on packets containing tobacco products to be displayed more prominently: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 17 February, and to be printed. [Bill 11.]

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons)

Mr. Harry Barnes, supported by Mr. Alfred Morris, Mr. Roger Berry, Mr. David Alton, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Rev. Martin Smyth, Mr. Seamus Mallon, Rev. Ian Paisley, Sir James Kilfedder, Sir Richard Body and Mr. Gordon McMaster, presented a Bill to make it unlawful to discriminate against disabled persons in respect of employment and in other circumstances, and to establish a Disability Rights Commission; to make provision for access to polling stations and voting by disabled persons; to place certain duties on local authorities, education authorities and other bodies in relation to disabled persons; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 10 February, and to be printed. [Bill 12.]

Referendum

Mrs. Teresa Gorman, supported by Sir Richard Body, Mr. Nicholas Budgen, Mr. Christopher Gill, Mr. Tony Marlow, Mr. Richard Shepherd, Sir Teddy Taylor and Mr. John Wilkinson, presented a Bill to provide for the holding of a referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 24 February, and to be printed. [Bill 13.]

[Madam Speaker]

Wild Mammals (Protection)

Mr. John McFall, supported by Sir Andrew Bowden, Mr. Ron Davies, Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. Simon Hughes, Sir Teddy Taylor, Mr. Edward O'Hara, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Kevin McNamara, Mr. Roger Gale, Mrs. Margaret Ewing and Mrs. Helen Liddell, presented a Bill to make provision for the protection of wild mammals from being taken, killed or injured by the use of dogs and snares and from certain other cruel acts; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 3 March, and to be printed. [Bill 14.]

Referendum (Single Currency)

Mr. Nicholas Budgen presented a Bill to provide for the holding of a referendum on whether the United Kingdom Government should continue to work towards a single currency within the European Union: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 24 February, and to be printed. [Bill 15.]

Insurance Companies (Reserves)

Mr. Oliver Heald, supported by Mr. A. J. Beith, Mr. John Butterfill, Mr. John Greenway, Mr. James Clappison, Mr. Peter Ainsworth, Mr. Peter Butler, Mr. Nigel Evans and Mr. Edward Garnier, presented a Bill to provide for the maintenance by insurance companies of reserves in respect of certain classes of business; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 27 January, and to be printed. [Bill 16.]

Carers (Recognition and Services)

Mr. Malcolm Wicks, supported by Mr. Hugh Bayley, Mr. Roger Berry, Mr. Tom Clarke, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Alan Howarth, Ms Tessa Jowell, Mr. Archy Kirkwood, Rev. Martin Smyth, Ms Rachel Squire and Mr. Dafydd Wigley, presented a Bill to provide for the assessment of the needs of carers and for the provision of services to them by social services authorities; and to amend the law relating to the definition of the term "private carer": And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 3 March, and to be printed. [Bill 17.]

Road Traffic (New Drivers)

Dr. Michael Clark, supported by Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, Mr. Richard Page, Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, Mr. Michael Lord, Mr. Robert Key, Mr. Doug Henderson, Mr. Nick Hawkins, Sir Anthony Grant, Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. Malcolm Bruce and Mr. Stuart Bell, presented a Bill to make provision about newly qualified drivers who commit certain offences, including provision with respect to tests of competence to drive: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 3 February, and to be printed. [Bill 18.]

Natural Disasters (Scotland)

Mr. Gordon McMaster, supported by Mrs. Irene Adams, Mr. Thomas Graham, Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie, Mr. Brian Donohoe, Mr. Thomas McAvoy, Mr. Sam Galbraith, Mr. Tom Clarke, Mr. Norman Hogg, Mr. Charles Kennedy, Mrs. Margaret Ewing and Mr. Bill Walker, presented a Bill to make further provision in respect of emergencies or disasters occurring in Scotland as a result of accidents or natural causes and involving destruction of or danger to life and property: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 10 February, and to be printed. [Bill 19.]

Olympic Symbol Etc. (Protection)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton, supported by Sir Terence Higgins, Mr. Gerald Kaufman, Mr. Sebastian Coe, Mr. Tom Pendry, Mr. Menzies Campbell, Mr. Joe Ashton, Mr. Anthony Coombs, Mr. John Maxton, Mr. Toby Jessel, Ms Kate Hoey and Rev. Martin Smyth, presented a Bill to make provision about the use for commercial purposes of the Olympic symbol and certain words associated with the Olympic Games; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 3 February, and to be printed. [Bill 20.]

Tobacco Smoking (Public Places)

Ms Tessa Jowell, supported by Rev. Martin Smyth, Mr. Geoffrey Hoon, Mrs. Alice Mahon, Mr. George Foulkes, Mr. Kevin Barron, Dr. Tony Wright, Mr. Peter Luff, Ms Janet Anderson, Mr. Roger Sims, Mr. Terry Lewis and Mr. Simon Hughes, presented a Bill to control smoking in public places and to make provision with regard to smoking and employment; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 17 February, and to be printed. [Bill 21.]

Protection of Animals

Mr. Paul Flynn, on behalf of Mr. Tony Banks, supported by Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. David Amess, Mr. Alan Meale, Sir Teddy Taylor, Mrs. Diana Maddock, Mr. Harry Cohen, Ms Diane Abbott, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mr. John McFall, Mr. Paul Flynn and Sir Andrew Bowden, presented a Bill to make further provision for the protection of animals; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 3 March, and to be printed. [Bill 22.]

Transport of Animals for Slaughter

Mr. Bill Olner, supported by Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. David Jamieson, Mr. Roger Gale, Mr. Harry Greenway, Sir Andrew Bowden, Mr. Michael Stephen, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Nigel Jones and Ms Ann Coffey, presented a Bill to prohibit the export of live animals for slaughter and in certain other circumstances; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 10 February, and to be printed. [Bill 23.]

Prisoners (Return to Custody)

Lady Olga Maitland, supported by Sir Ivan Lawrence, Sir David Mitchell, Mr. Michael Shersby, Mr. Michael Stephen, Mr. David Amess, Mr. Hartley Booth, Mr. Oliver Heald, Mr. Edward Garnier, Mr. Nick Hawkins, Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva and Dr. Robert Spink, presented a Bill to make provision, by the creation of an offence and the conferring of powers of entry, for the punishment and return to lawful custody of persons unlawfully at large: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 17 February, and to be printed. [Bill 24.]

CHARITIES (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Ray Whitney, supported by Sir Peter Hordern, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Jerry Hayes, Sir David Knox, Mr. Peter Luff, Mrs. Marion Roe, Mr. Andrew Rowe, Mr. Roger Sims and Dame Jill Knight, presented a Bill to make provision for the treatment of two or more charities as a single charity for all or any of the purposes of the Charities Act 1993: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 27 January, and to be printed. [Bill 25.]

DOGS (FOULING OF LAND)

Mr. Harold Elletson, supported by Mr. Michael Fabricant, Mr. John Sykes, Mr. Andrew Robathan, Mr. Keith Mans, Mr. Nigel Evans, Mr. David Porter and Mr. Gyles Brandreth, presented a Bill to make provision with respect to the fouling of land by dogs: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 10 February, and to be printed. [Bill 26.]

PROTECTION OF CALVES (EXPORT)

Mr. Eric Martlew, supported by Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, Mr. Elliot Morley, Mr. Gerry Steinberg and Mr. Keith Bradley, presented a Bill to prohibit the export of calves where, after such export, they are to be housed or fed in a manner which would be unlawful in Great Britain: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 3 February, and to be printed. [Bill 27.]

Rating and Valuation

4.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert B. Jones): I beg to move,

That the draft Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 12th December, be approved.

Madam Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss motions 2 to 7 on the Order Paper.

Mr. Jones: These seven orders and regulations make important provisions for the implementation of the 1995 revaluation of non-domestic property, which takes effect next April. Five of the orders prescribe the rateable values of the large network industries—the railways, electricity and water industries, British Gas and certain docks and harbours. Without those, the industries concerned would not have up-to-date values next year. A sixth order revokes the 1989 rateable values orders for the telecommunications industry and British Waterways. Those industries will have their rateable values for next year determined in the same way as most other businesses.

Probably the most important instrument for the majority of businesses, however, is the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) Regulations. Those regulations contain measures to phase in the effects of the revaluation for those ratepayers who would otherwise be confronted by significant changes in their rate bills next year.

As announced by my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales on 29 November, the effect of those regulations will be to limit rate increases for small businesses next year to no more than 17.5 per cent. after allowing for inflation. For property with a new rateable value of £10,000 or more—or £15,000 or more in London—increases will be limited to a maximum of 10 per cent. after allowing for inflation. For small properties consisting of both business and living accommodation, the corresponding limit will be 5 per cent. Those limits will continue to apply throughout the period until the next revaluation in the year 2000.

Regular revaluations are essential to ensure that businesses pay their fair share of the cost of local government. Revaluations do not affect the overall yield from business rates. Even if the national total of rateable value increases, we are required under the statutes to set the poundage—that is the amount per pound of rateable value that ratepayers must pay—so as to keep total rate bills broadly constant after allowing for inflation and the possible effects of successful appeals.

As it happens, the 1995 revaluation will hardly change total rateable values in England, and we have announced a poundage of 43.2p for this country for next year—the same as for this year after allowing for inflation. In Wales, total rateable value is set to increase, so we have proposed a reduction in the poundage from 44.8p to 39p next year to compensate.

However, it is inevitable that the revaluation will change the rateable values of individual properties in line with changes in the property market during the five years since the previous revaluation. The rates bill of many individual businesses will therefore alter, with some businesses confronted by rate increases, some benefiting from reductions and others experiencing little or no change.

[Mr. Jones]

For the 1995 revaluation, the swings in bills are likely to be more marked than might have been expected, for two reasons. First, the 1990 revaluation was based on market rental values for property as at April 1988. In most parts of the country, rentals were still on the rise then, and they continued to increase for a while. In some regions, especially the north and the midlands, values then levelled off; in others, they fell back as recession started to bite. By April 1993—the base date for the 1995 revaluation—property values had hit rock bottom in central London but were barely past their peak in other areas. As a result, and as a broad generalisation, there has been a reversal of fortunes between ratepayers in the north and south: ratepayers who benefited from the 1990 revaluation are likely to do less well next year, and those who found themselves worse off in 1990 are likely to do much better.

The second reason for large potential changes in bills is that some ratepayers continue to benefit from the transitional arrangements introduced to cushion the effects of the 1990 revaluation, so their bills this year continue to be somewhat less than what they would have been, had the 1990 changes come through in full. Without a further transitional scheme, some of those ratepayers would be confronted by a stiff increase next year, irrespective of the revaluation. Although the revaluation will mitigate the increase for some ratepayers, for others it may add to it.

The Government do not think it right that businesses should have to absorb large increases in their costs overnight—they need time to adjust. That is why we have put before the House the regulations to phase in the changes. We estimate that nearly 1 million smaller properties and nearly 350,000 larger properties in England and Wales will benefit from relief. More than one third of the beneficiaries will be shops, and 156,000 offices and 320,000 warehouses and factories will also benefit.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): How many of the businesses that will benefit from transitional arrangements will be ones that were already enjoying some transitional relief following the 1990 revaluation?

Mr. Jones: If I may, I shall come to that when I sum up, because I do not have the figure immediately available. I undertake to inquire into that and I hope to reply to my hon. Friend later.

The cost of protecting businesses against large rate increases must fall somewhere. About 170,000 properties will have reduced bills as a result of revaluation, and many of those will have benefited from relief under the 1990 transitional arrangements. We feel it right, therefore, that they should meet much of the cost of funding the new arrangements. The regulations therefore include provision to limit rate reductions so that, as under the 1990 transitional scheme, a contribution towards the cost of the relief will be required only from those who will make savings from the revaluation.

For next year, rate reduction will be limited to a maximum of 10 per cent. for small businesses and 5 per cent. for larger ones, after allowing for inflation. We envisage that similar limits will be required in the following year. Reductions should then start to come through much faster, as many ratepayers who have been phased upwards will have then reached their full new bills and will no longer require relief. The regulations make provision for reductions of 20 per cent. for small businesses and 15 per cent. for large businesses for 1997-98, and 35 per cent. for small businesses and 30 per cent. for large businesses for 1998-99 and 1999-2000. As the revaluation is not yet complete and the effect of appeals cannot be known with accuracy, those estimates are inevitably provisional, which is another reason why I cannot answer my hon. Friend's question at the moment. We therefore propose to review the estimates before the start of each year.

For the next year, the 5 per cent. and 10 per cent. limits on reductions will not meet the full cost of the relief for business facing increases. That is why, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Budget statement on 29 November, the Government have also pledged a generous Exchequer contribution towards the cost. In England and Wales, the contribution will total £525 million for next year. As we promised in debates on the Non-Domestic Rating Act 1994 earlier this year, that contribution will be added to the non-domestic rating pool so that no billing authority is any worse off as a result of the shortfall in rates yield.

Right hon. and hon. Members may have seen some recent press reports, as I have, notably in the London *Evening Standard*, suggesting that, notwithstanding the Exchequer support that we have announced, London will be robbed of hundreds of millions of pounds as a result of those measures.

It is perfectly true that inner-London ratepayers, taken together, will make a substantial net contribution to the cost of the scheme, but I fear that memories are short. In 1990, the boot was on the other foot; many businesses in central London received transitional protection, which was paid for by ratepayers elsewhere. Besides, this is not a simple issue of London versus the rest, because every region will have a mixture of losers and gainers. About half the ratepayers in inner London, most of which will be small businesses, will actually receive help from the scheme. A good many fewer inner-London ratepayers will be required to pay an additional contribution, and two thirds of the contributors will not be in inner London at all.

I must also emphasise that local authorities in London will not receive a penny less out of rates as a result of our scheme, because rate revenue is pooled nationally, and every authority area receives the same amount per head of population.

The regulations governing the transition are complex. That is the result of the need to deal fairly with a number of different types of case that can arise. In essence, however, the arrangements will work similarly in all cases.

The new rates bill, known in the regulations as the notional chargeable amount, will be compared with a notional bill—the base liability—for the current year, taking account of the existing transitional arrangements where necessary. If the change from one year to the next is more than the limit—known as the "appropriate fraction"—allows, ratepayers will pay the limited amount, subject to any other reliefs that may be available.

Properties newly constructed after 1 April 1995 will not attract the phasing arrangements, but properties created by division or merger of existing properties will do so. In addition, we have made special provision to apply the downward phasing provisions to properties wholly or mainly reconstructed from existing properties. We do not think it right that ratepayers who are helping to meet the cost of the phasing arrangements should be able to escape their obligations simply by undertaking refurbishment or other reconstruction works.

The phasing provisions will apply to the large network industries in broadly the same way as for most other businesses. That brings me to the six rateable value orders before the House. Prescription of rateable values for those industries is necessary because assessment by local valuation officers in England and Wales is impractical. In some cases, it is because the property is of a highly specialised kind which presents complex valuation problems. In others, it is because the property is so extensive that the time and other resources needed to value it conventionally have simply not been available.

Rateable values in Great Britain for conventionally assessed property have changed little as a result of the revaluation. We have, therefore, based the new values for most of the centrally assessed industries on their 1994-95 values, adjusted for any changes in the property they occupy. There are exceptions, such as the railway networks, where the industry has undergone profound changes since the last revaluation and we have undertaken a fresh valuation.

The orders also contain provisions to recalculate rateable values for those industries annually, to take account of changes in the amount of property they occupy. They appear as formulae in each of the orders and provide a proxy for the changes which ratepayers who occupy conventionally assessed property would expect to see reflected in changes to their rating assessment. In addition, the water undertakers order contains a method for determining rateable values when water companies merge.

It is less than satisfactory that we still have to set rateable values for certain industries in this way and I am therefore pleased to announce that, from next April, some industries whose rateable values were previously prescribed by order will have their values assessed by the Valuation office agency in the normal way. They include British Waterways, British Telecommunications and Mercury Communications, for which there is a separate order repealing the earlier provision. The Tyne and Wear metro and the docklands light railway will also be conventionally assessed and will no longer appear in the railways order and the amendments to the 1989 docks and harbours order ensure that ports with relevant incomes of between £50,000 and £1 million will also be conventionally assessed next year.

It is our intention that the prescription of values for most of the remaining industries will end in the year 2000. We have already drawn up timetables for gathering the information we need to determine the values for some industries and discussions on others are to start early in the new year.

I commend these somewhat technical orders to the House.

4.51 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): The Minister may have read the orders as he reads routine technical orders that pass through the House on a regular basis at 1 o'clock in the morning, but if he considers them to be trivial matters, he has no understanding whatsoever of the anger of business men and women which will be expressed and will find its way to his desk.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, he should at least let me get into my speech. I understand where he comes from, however, and I will certainly give way to him in a moment.

In the north of England and the west midlands, where the business rate revaluation means that people will pay much higher rates this year, there will a colossal amount of anger. The same frustration will emerge from people in London, who thought that the revaluation would offer some relief.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I certainly did not say that it was a trivial matter; it is a technical matter and I described it as such. I was referring to orders other than the one relating to industry and commerce. It is precisely because it is such a sensitive matter for property owners throughout the country that we have given great thought to the protection scheme which we have introduced. I hope that we have produced a scheme that, if it is not totally welcomed by people facing increases and decreases, will at least seem to them to have recognised their real fears.

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister had better look again at precisely what the schemes offer. They do not provide the same protection that existed in the past or that industry and business are seeking. The Minister needs to understand how desperately affected some businesses will be and how deeply they will resent what is happening.

Mr. Streeter: In view of what the hon. Gentleman said about anger, I wonder why, with the exception of one hon. Member, the Labour Benches are completely empty. Is that how Labour Members represent their constituents when big issues are involved?

Mr. Lloyd: That point is too trivial for comment. I am happen to debate the issues, but I should point out that only three or four Conservative Back Benchers are representing the party that claims to represent small businesses. No doubt they are present to support a Minister who is sticking the knife into small and large businesses. The hon. Gentleman can do a little better than that and I look forward to hearing his remarks.

Let us examine the background to the business rates system. I refer the House to a speech by the then Secretary of State for the Environment, Nicholas Ridley, on 16 December 1987. He told the House:

> "The . . . function of the unified business rate is to remove the arbitrary variations in the amounts businesses pay at present."

What can be more arbitrary than the position in Yorkshire and Humberside, for example, where the business rates, which on average went down in the last revaluation by 21 per cent. on 1988 prices, will now increase office costs by 56 per cent? If that is not arbitrary, I am not quite sure what the word means. Even by the then Secretary of State's definition, the scheme simply has not delivered the goods to business.

Mr. Tim Smith: Is it not a fact that, before the unified business rate was introduced, local authorities fixed the business rate and there were arbitrary variations, whereas

[Mr. Tim Smith]

now the Government fix the maximum increase in the UBR by the retail prices index? Is that not a considerable improvement?

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman does not understand the scheme. Although in normal circumstances the Government fix the maximum up to the level of the RPI, next year the bills that come thudding on to businesses in my constituency will include a massive increase way over the RPI.

Let us look at different regions as that appears to be the nitty-gritty of the debate. The worst affected region is the west midlands, where there were decreases in rateable values in 1990 of about 25 per cent. That was very welcome at the time, but the then Secretary of State, Nicholas Ridley, said:

> "Together with the effect of the revaluation . . . these proposals will reduce rates by some £700 million in the north and midlands. The unified business rate alone will reduce rate by £380 million in inner city programme areas. Those reductions will give a major boost to employment in the areas of greatest unemployment and, at the same time, reduce the pressure for development in the south-east."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 1121.]

If, at that time, the reductions were designed by the then Secretary of State to provide relief to hard-pressed businesses in the north and the west midlands on the ground that they would create employment, let me tell Conservative Members that businesses in my constituency and in the west midlands are not so robust that they can calculate their costs on the basis of arbitrary rate increases that they will face next year. If the measures were introduced some seven years ago to create employment, let me tell the Minister and his hon. Friends, who seem to like the present scheme, that the Government had better take on board the destruction of jobs and businesses that will be caused by these rate increases.

We moved from a system of local control, where local businesses were consulted in order to assist. The new system is massively more arbitrary; the swings and variations are much greater than anything seen on a year-by-year basis, when local government had control of the local business rate in negotiation with local businesses.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he is against the revaluation? That is what happened under Labour before. The Labour Government refused to revalue year after year and we reached the point where rateable values bore no relationship to market values. The difficulties that we experienced with the introduction of the UBR were a direct result of that. Is he saying that he would cop out, as the previous Labour Government did year after year?

Mr. Lloyd: Once again, the hon. Gentleman has a fairly deficient memory and a poor understanding of the situation. The 1988 revaluation was some nine years into the 10 years of a Conservative Government. The charge of holding back on this matter must be applied to that Conservative Government.

What it is more important—if the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald), muttering away as he does, would have the courtesy to listen for a moment—is that we recognise that when we are talking about a locally determined system, variations within rateable values are nothing like as serious as those in a national system.

The introduction of the national non-domestic rating system—the unified national business rate—caused the major problems with the variation in valuation. That was why at the time there were colossal swings and so much pain and anger in inner London, for example, which saw its non-domestic rates bill shoot up by some 39 per cent. In the capital, some 45 per cent. of businesses are still waiting to see the full impact of the revaluation of 1990. Because of the present revaluation, that full impact will never occur. Businesses will be grateful for that small mercy, but they will not be grateful for the fact that the Minister is limiting their capacity to benefit from a revaluation.

One of the concerns expressed by businesses, particularly in inner London, is that the present revaluation, having lurched from a 40 per cent. upgrading last time around to a 40 per cent. downgrading of business costs in London, means that the charge of arbitrariness cannot be avoided by the Minister. What is much more important is that it means that any idea that businesses in London can plan long term for the vagaries of this system is simply ridiculous. Businesses like stability. That is the point that most business people make to Members of Parliament. They like to be able to predict what will take place. There is no ability to predict when there are such wild variations.

I hope that the Minister will take my next point seriously. The whole basis of the revaluation that took place in 1990 has been called into question. Those who represent businesses in inner London have put the point to me that they detect a pattern whereby, increasingly, appeals against valuation have not been successfully challenged by the Valuation Office. That in itself shows that the whole valuation process was wrong in the first place; that is borne out by the wild swing in the national revaluation this time around.

The Minister must accept that, if there is no confidence in the basis of the system, businesses will not be confident that the system is either fair or reasonable. The House must recognise that, since the introduction of the scheme, the Government have been caught in an almighty mess. They are caught in a situation in which their initial commitments and promises have regularly been broken.

Let us remember, for example, the promises that were made by various Secretaries of State. We were told in 1987, when the system was first introduced, that the system would be self-financing. We were told that there would be no cost to the Exchequer. From 1987 to 1992, the Government's official line was that the winners would have to pay for the losers, to allow for transition—that the pain would be spread among different businesses. That applied until 1992, when the Government were under such tremendous pressure. It could be a coincidence that a general election was on the way at that time. Businesses complained mightily in parts of the country like the south-east, where the pressure was enormous.

We were told that the transitional arrangements were set in stone when they were introduced in 1990, when the Minister's predecessors stood before Parliament, as he has done today, and said that this would carry through over the next five years; yet, only a couple of years into the scheme, Ministers were coming back to the House grovelling with an apology. That is a bit of an illusion, as it is rare for Ministers to come into the House with anything other than their usual arrogance and insulting ways. They should have grovelled with an apology to the industries and companies that suffered so badly when the Government recognised that it was necessary to limit the increase in business rates to the zero per cent. which then applied, in the middle of the recession that they had brought about.

Instead of a no-cost self-financing scheme being introduced, the Government spent £1.4 billion of taxpayers' money propping up their scheme between 1992 and the present financial year. Although the Minister did not quote the figure, we know that, next year, £505 million will be used to effect the transition over that time. Let me say, just in case Conservative Members think that I am going to argue against that move, that I welcome the fact that the Government recognised the stupidity of their scheme and had to do something practical to ensure that we did not see the demise of businesses throughout the country, particularly in the south-east and in inner London.

The whole point is that, now we have come to the present revaluation, once again the Minister is in an almighty mess. We know that the kind of promises that were made—that the rate increases would be kept down—have not been effective. When the then Chancellor said in his Budget statement in 1992 that, throughout the 1980s, business rates had increased in real terms on a nationwide basis by some 37 per cent.—and used that as justification for the present scheme—he was not aware that this year alone there would be increases that would swamp that 37 per cent. and that, over the period of the present revaluation, many of the small businesses which the Minister said he would protect would be protected only to the extent of 7.5 per cent. over the next two years. That in itself is a guaranteed increase of 15 per cent. over and above the RPI increase. Then the lid will begin to come off.

As we go around the different parts of the country, we will see that the real increase—not a notional increase, not one protected by inflation—for business and commerce, whether for small or large firms, will be significantly greater. Once the protection is off, the full impact will be felt.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The hon. Gentleman seems to have confused the particular with the general, because the fact is that the income being raised from the non-domestic rate will go up in line with inflation. Of course, some individual businesses will face increases, which, in turn, will reflect the valuations put on properties, which are largely based on current rental evidence. That has been the principle of a rating system ever since it was introduced. I cannot see why the hon. Gentleman thinks that, just because some individuals will face increases, and some will face decreases, industry and commerce in general will be penalised. As I have said, they will simply face increases in line with inflation.

Mr. Lloyd: That is probably the most ludicrous retort that I have ever had to answer in the House. It is the Minister who is confusing the general with the particular. Does he want to come with me and visit a business—for example, a company in the north-west of England that owns an office whose rateable value has gone up by 51 per cent., which is the average figure for the north-west—and say, "Don't worry about it. You'll be happy to know that, on average, the business rate for industry and commerce is zero. The fact that you will have to find half as much again should not detain you at all"?

If the Minister really wants to come and talk to people like that, he may find that in general he is right but in particular those business people will be extremely angry with a Minister who is stupid enough to give that kind of excuse. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to intervene again to argue that point, as it is very important?

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman's argument now seems to be that nobody should face any change in rateable value when revaluations take place and that, somehow or other, we should go on as before. That, in effect, was what the previous Labour Government said by not updating valuations. Businesses in areas where the desirability of property goes down will never take advantage of that, and businesses in areas where property is more sought after and where, therefore, rental values are on the increase, will in effect pay less than their fair share. That is not a fair system. The hon. Gentleman could argue for a totally different approach to the contribution that business makes to local government—I should be interested to hear his views on that—but, as long as we have a rateable value system, there must be revaluations to make it fair.

Mr. Lloyd: I have already told the Minister that if he were to tell the businesses that will face the incredibly arbitrary changes that this is all okay because, on average there is no increase or because it is simply a technical fix which is in the nature of the rating system, he would find that they are angry.

I was talking to a small shopkeeper the other day who was telling me how difficult it is nowadays for somebody trying to run a general shop. If the figures that apply in my region are typical, he will face a real-terms rate increase of 31 per cent. over the next five years. He will be cushioned next year so that the increase is only 7.5 per cent. in real terms and he will be cushioned the following year so that it is only another 7.5 per cent. in real terms. Thereafter, he will be less cushioned and he will reach the full 31 per cent. increase.

If the Minister knows anything about small businesses, he will know that they always complain about the disproportionate impact of rates, relative to other costs. I can assure the Minister that my small shopkeeper friend will be extremely angry about the position in which he finds himself because his is already a marginal business. It is beset on all sides. The landlord wants to put up the rent, the suppliers want to put up costs and the recession is still having an effect on the incomes of people in the area in which he trades. For a small business an increase of 30 per cent. plus is not a small cost. That business man will be entitled to say that the Government are extremely unfair to him as an individual trader and, more generally, to small businesses.

The Federation of Small Businesses has said that it is disappointed that the revaluation winners are required to contribute to the payment of relief to the losers. It also said—the Minister should take this on board—that the transitional relief scheme, which is now operating for a second five-year period, totally undermines the credibility of the uniform business rate. The Minister must address that. The original transitional system had not worked its way through before we moved on to the next revaluation and the next transitional scheme. Such a system is neither stable nor credible. The Forum of Private Business, which

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writes to hon. Members regularly, makes a similar point. It is concerned about the impact of the business rate on small firms in particular. It says that it is a proportionately higher cost than that borne by large businesses. It advocates a profit-based scheme, which has its demerits. The Minister seems to be oblivious to the doubts and concerns about the present system. He must accept the real concerns that businesses are expressing.

Mr. Tim Smith: The implication of what the hon. Gentleman is saying is that either he is against having a revaluation next year or he is in favour of never having a revaluation. What is the Labour party's policy on that?

Mr. Lloyd: As is sometimes said, all will be revealed shortly. I believe that the hon. Gentleman supported the legislation that introduced this system. It is important to examine the defects of the system adequately. We must recognise the frustration and anger felt by business people about a Government whose language seems to be friendly to business while demonstrating the most peculiar form of embrace—a poisoned cuddle. Some businesses that find themselves moving towards the bank manager, or even the bankruptcy courts, may feel that the Government have given them rather more than a cuddle.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I used to be the chairman of the finance committee of Nottinghamshire county council and we were responsible for setting the business rate for our local community. I can remember that there was less anger when we were in charge than when the Labour party was in charge and the anger in those days was a jolly sight stronger. If the hon. Gentleman looks back at the debates on rates in the House between 1974 and 1979, he will see that there was a great deal more anger and concern than are expressed today.

Mr. Lloyd: It would be churlish of me to remind the hon. Gentleman that, during that period of the Labour Government, a great deal of local government was controlled by the Conservative party. If the hon. Gentleman feels that Conservative local authorities did a bad job, he may have an interesting point that I shall try to absorb.

The simple truth is that there is a great deal of anger. The present system lurches from five-year period to five-year period and not from year to year. In the east midlands, in which the constituency of the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) is located, businesses saw a 15 per cent. reduction in rateable values in 1990 with the introduction of the 1988 revaluation. Those businesses will be less than enamoured of the support of the hon. Member for Broxtowe for this measure when they find that their bills are increasing by 20 per cent. That will be the real-terms effect of the revaluation on the east midlands.

I am sure that there will be winners and losers. The Minister has tried to explain that, on average, everybody will be happy. I can assure the hon. Member for Broxtowe that the losers in his constituency will be less than enamoured of him or the Minister if he really believes that a 20 per cent. plus rates increase will do their businesses any good.

Let us look round the country at the different valuations. I hope that the Minister will accept the figures, because they have been drawn from parliamentary answers provided by his colleagues. The west midlands is the worst affected region. Across all businesses, the revaluation will increase rateable values by 34 per cent. That is a large increase, but even that manages to disguise the impact on some businesses. For example, office rateable values in the west midlands will increase by 54 per cent. Commercial activity such as that is necessary in areas such as Birmingham, which, like many cities outside the south-east, is trying to move from the traditional manufacturing base to a much stronger commercial base. Such a revaluation will do great damage.

Warehousing has become a feature in traditional manufacturing areas where, sadly, it has replaced traditional manufacturing industries. Warehousing revaluation has meant that there will be a 49 per cent. increase in rateable values. That is a massive increase for an industry that is labour non-intensive and relatively property intensive. It will increase warehousing costs disproportionately.

The same thing will happen with factories. The west midlands is still famous, even now, for its manufacturing base, but the revaluation will mean a 40 per cent. increase in the cost for factories.

As I have already said, the overall increase in the east midlands will be about 20 per cent. Ironically, at 20 per cent., businesses there get off relatively lightly. The hon. Member for Broxtowe will be able to tell businesses in his constituency that things are not so bad because they are worse a few miles down the road in the west midlands. I am sure that those who will be paying an extra 20 per cent. will say that they are truly grateful.

The northern region is still suffering heavily from de-industrialisation. The overall increase there will be about 24 per cent. That will not be welcome. In my region, the north-west, the increase will be 32 per cent. That disguises individual variations. A city such as Manchester is increasingly seeing investment in office-based activity and that has become important to the local economy. However, office rateable values will increase by 51 per cent.

In Yorkshire and Humberside—I say this for your benefit, Mr. Deputy Speaker—there will be an overall increase of 26 per cent., which disguises some of the sectoral increases which are much greater. The Minister talked about transitional relief, but every one of those regions faces serious and real increases in industrial costs.

In inner London, the position is reversed. Office valuations there have shot down by 59 per cent. With that decrease in industrial costs, one would have thought that, in considering the massive unemployment in London, the possibility existed of more employment of that sort being located in the capital city. That will not take place for some years because of the transitional relief package, which gives transitional relief only in one direction. It will bring transitional misery for people in inner London, who will not receive the benefit of the revaluation that they thought might give them relief.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The hon. Gentleman has ruled out increases for anyone that is angry and has problems. He wants people who will benefit from revaluation to gain immediately. The logic of his position, therefore, is that there must be a substantially greater contribution from the Exchequer. I ask him to put on record precisely how he would find the extra contribution. Would he raise VAT or income tax to cover it? Since the matter relates to business, would he raise corporation tax or something like that? Might we even return to that hoary old Labour chestnut—a selective employment tax? If the hon. Gentleman is moving down that road, it is up to him to tell us where he would get the money from.

Mr. Lloyd: It is not up to me and I shall explain why. It may have escaped the Minister's attention that my party is not the party of government. The Government faced the same problem in relation to revaluation in the early 1990s. It is up to them to tell us why, having told us that there was no more money, all of a sudden they produced £1.5 billion out of a hat to pay for the scheme. It is not up to the Opposition to find the money in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's bag. It is up to the Government to set out a scheme that is affordable and consistent. They did not do so from 1990 until now and they will not do so in the future. That is the reality of the position.

Mr. Jones: Since the hon. Gentleman is being transparently dishonest in failing to deal with the question of where the money would come from, will I at least receive an answer to the question whether the Labour party would fund any such scheme out of Exchequer money—wherever it may come from—and whether Labour would not fund it in the way in which the Government propose in the orders?

Mr. Lloyd: That is a good try on the Minister's part, but unfortunately it is not good enough. This is the Government's scheme. The present unified business rate system was introduced by the Government. The problems have been brought about because of the Government's incompetence. The Minister must deal with that incompetence. He cannot get away with asking other people to drag his chestnuts out of the fire. His Government are loading the costs on to industry. They are not able to tell businesses in inner London why they will not benefit from a revaluation that works in their favour. That view is not unique to me. I think that it is the position, for example, of the Confederation of British Industry, which says that protection should go to the losers and that the winners should not pay for the whole thing.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): This is a filibuster.

Mr. Lloyd: In time-honoured Tory Whip fashion, the hon. Gentleman said that my speech was a filibuster. He plays little role in the Chamber nowadays and I understand that he is out of practice in such matters, but Conservative Members have been engaged, unusually for hon. Members, in something of a dialogue on an issue that obviously concerns them. I should not want him to dismiss their comments in the way that he does and as if they have no value, because they have played an important part in a debate that is of concern, perhaps not to him as a Member of Parliament but certainly to businesses in his constituency. When their rates go up next year, they will be worried that he thinks that this is such a trivial matter. He might want to write to his local chamber of commerce to explain his view on the matter.

Conservative Members asked, "What is wrong with the present system?" I shall tell them what is fundamentally wrong with it. When the Government chose to nationalise the business rate, they made a fundamental mistake. They broke the link for local business. When the scheme was introduced, Mr. Nicholas Ridley, a former hon. Friend of the Minister, said:

> "Under the present system half of local revenue is raised from businesses which are defenceless against exploitation by authorities".—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. 1115.]

The problem is that the scheme does not defend businesses from exploitation by central Government. That is the nub of the matter. Central Government have been a much worse custodian of the business rate than local authorities were before. That is why we must have a return to some sort of local control of business rates, so that local businesses can negotiate with local authorities, which are served by people who are closer to them and who will listen to them. That at least is what we must begin to do.

As of now, it is up to the Government to recognise the real misery that will be imposed on individual businesses and to begin to deal with the problems that will be the subject of Conservative Members' letters in their postbags from about next February, when the bills begin to go out. The Government must recognise that the transitional scheme is inadequate and will not deal with the problems that will be caused.

I have concentrated the bulk of my remarks on the transitional relief scheme because, in many ways, it is the subject of the most important of the measures that lie before the House. The Minister referred, however, to the six other orders and I want to press him on the formula funding system. Will he tell us what the likely rates of increase in valuation will be in practice for industries in forthcoming years? We have a good idea of what the increase rate will be for companies that operate outside formula funding and in the ordinary rating valuation system.

We need to have a comparison with industries that find themselves in this slightly anomalous situation. Although I welcome the fact that the Minister has repeated the Government's assurance that they intend to move to a rating valuation system for the bulk of those industries, I should like to press him on why it is necessary to let that process run through to the year 2000, which is a long way off. Given that negotiations have been under way for some time, I should have thought that it would be possible to consider ways of speeding up that process. It is in everyone's interest to ensure that there is no discrepancy or favouritism and that industries are not disfavoured by the system. I should be grateful if he would spell out the reasons why it has to take until the year 2000.

The Minister did not mention railways as one of the candidates to be brought within the rating valuation family. Full privatisation is still the Government's policy. With the break-up of railway companies, why will the railways still operate under a formula funding mechanism after the year 2000? Why cannot we begin to move the railway system on to the same basis as other industries?

At every point, the Government have established principles by which business rates would operate. At every point, those principles have been rendered null and void when circumstances have changed and when the Government have come under pressure. The Government will come under tremendous pressure next spring and thereafter when businesses realise the full consequences of what is taking place. I warn the Minister that, unless he can give answers that are better than those that he has

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given today, businesses up and down this land will believe that the Government have done serious damage both to the employment base and to the industrial and commercial base.

5.28 pm

Mr. Peter Brooke (City of London and Westminster, South): I do not share many things with the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) apart from possession of an MBA degree. On the principle that we MBAs must stick together, I hung on his lips and did not intervene, even during his most controversial propositions. I shall content myself by saying that even if his speech was not meant to be a filibuster— perhaps to cover the emptiness of the Opposition Benches behind him— I look forward greatly to the occasion when he is really trying and is speaking to produce a filibuster.

My constituency interest lies primarily in the Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) Regulations 1994, which my hon. Friend the Minister identified as the main pabulum for the debate. The working population of my constituency exceeds the national average per constituency by a factor of 17. In the W1 postal district, there are as many businesses as residential households. Therefore, in my constituency we have had a disproportionate interest in the Government's consultation on transitional arrangements.

The draft order is an inspissated rather than a pellucid document. In the intellectual challenge that it sets the reader, it has an echo of those Christmas puzzles of one's youth, which used to start, "Mr. Black, Mr. Brown, Mr. Green and Mr. White live in houses that are, but not necessarily respectively, black, brown, green and white." Of course, their interest was domestic rather than non-domestic. I do not complain about the inspissation. It is in the nature of the proposed legislation and not a function of perverseness or mischief by the Department of the Environment.

Nor am I here to register a complaint that London has been ruthlessly robbed, pillaged or despoiled. I appreciate that the Government have consistency on their side in pursuing the transitional arrangements of 1990, especially in the form improved by amendment in the past five years in respect of properties that have changed hands.

Where the result of consistency on the one hand and inspissation on the other cross over is in whether the modest relief granted in London is the most generous that could have been achieved, especially when fuelled in 1995 by a direct Treasury subvention, which was not mirrored in the 1990 arrangements, even though one occurred willy-nilly in later years because of changes to the scheme.

The argument for transitional arrangements is that they should soften extremities of change, and notably increases. What should not be lost sight of, however, was that in 1990 we were coming to our first revaluation for 17 years and to a new system of calculating non-domestic rates. The effect was therefore likely to be sharp in significant areas—I use "areas" geographically. In London, we were unlucky that the process coincided precisely with a recession. There were, however, other concomitants to the change in procedure.

If I temporarily disregard the City of London element in my constituency as being sui generis, as indeed the legislation has itself allowed, though my later remarks apply to it as elsewhere, prior to 1990, under borough determination, the rates in Westminster were lower than in Camden, an authority to which I choose to refer for its adjacence and because I once served within it as a councillor. As a result, rents were lower in Camden because Camden had to compete with Westminster for office or retail accommodation. Therefore, the combination of rents and rates needed to be the same, or about the same.

The logic of 1990—I use the date as a proxy for the change—was that, if rates were harmonised on a national basis, rents would follow the new level of rates. As Westminster's rates rose, its rents would fall, and vice versa in Camden. That prospect, in the recession, offered some comfort and relief in Westminster, but the very effect of transitional arrangements in smoothing the sharpnesses was also necessarily to delay the rearrangement of the market to reflect what I have just described. There is an equal hazard that the repetition of the transitional arrangements now will likewise delay the return of recovery in London, which is widely acknowledged to have been very hard hit during the period of recession. That is the more serious as the otherwise admirable absence of inflation in the housing market still leaves the south-east's consumer enthusiasm much tempered by the continuance of negative equity in domestic properties.

Moreover, just as the climate in the Chamber determines the political argument throughout the country, so the feelgood factor in the nation will remain diluted as long as London's prosperity is muted. My right hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench have an interest in not delaying the feelgood factor spreading for too long. My hon. Friend the Minister will know that currently in London we have properties where rates exceed rents; that cannot make even medium-term economic sense.

Although, as I have made clear, I do not quarrel with the concept of transitional arrangements, I have queries about their application. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment was good enough to write us all a letter in which he sought to set our minds at rest on a problem that I had not posed. I do not blame him for concentrating on his own agenda and setting it out and not making his letter comprehensive, but at the end of the exercise I am left with no clear arithmetical picture of how the calculations were prepared to produce the particular conclusions that they did.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will know, not least because he has some departmental responsibility for the property industry, of the dire economic and employment straits of great swathes of the industry today. He may disclaim their calculations on the grounds of bias or self-interest, though I imagine he would be pleased to see the infrastructure of the industry returning to health. He will know, however, of the scale of the research that the industry undertook during the autumn and early winter on the subject that we are now discussing. Its postulated calculations are that the Government could have gone to a 15 per cent. rate reduction in real terms rather than one of 5 per cent.—admittedly, for larger properties—in the improvement in London next year.

All that I am asking of my hon. Friend the Minister—it is too complicated a subject to be dealt with on the Floor of the House—is that in correspondence and in measured time he might lift the veil a little on the calculations of the Department of the Environment to let us know why they have been significantly more pessimistic than those of the industry, which has the advantage—I acknowledge self-interest—of being closer to the real market than some of those who advise the Government.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We shall be happy to share our thinking and knowledge. In so doing, I hope that I can convince my right hon. Friend of the rightness of the conclusion at which we arrived.

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful for that harbinger of correspondence.

The changes that had to be made after 1990—I am referring to changes of detail, not to the results of the beneficence of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer—revealed that even in the best ordered of Governments the market can still teach some lessons. That is what I am seeking to say this evening.

As we are a thin House and I am not likely to rob any hon. Member of the opportunity of a speech by adding one further thought, I shall allow myself the self-indulgence of a general remark about the legislation under which the orders apply. When the Government, by introducing legislation, cut the link between businesses and their immediate local authorities, they seemed to rob local authorities, too, of their interest in those businesses. In my constituency, the Corporation of the City of London has long taken a profound interest in the welfare of its business constituents, for understandable reasons. I am delighted that, despite the direct link being cut, Westminster city council has within the past five years recognised the holistic nature of a community and is deliberately renewing its links with the business community in a most constructive way, which in turn has been welcomed by the business community.

Given the exceptional constituency employment figures that I quoted at the beginning of my speech, the dual thrust by the two local authorities within my constituency is good news for the economy at the heart of the nation. I hope that in subsequent debate, which my hon. Friend has promised me, he can reinforce the progress that has been made by the instruments at his disposal.

One of the incidental contributions that the Government can make in these matters is to speed up the pace of dealing with valuation appeals. I know that the valuation service is not the responsibility of the Department of the Environment, but I know too how much frustration has been caused in my constituency—admittedly it is densely populated in business terms—by the historic delay in hearing appeals over the past five years.

5.38 pm

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): It is good to have the chance to follow what was in some respects an apt demolition job on the way in which transitional relief will be used next year. I was delighted to hear that demolition from a Conservative Member.

Interestingly, some of the Minister's remarks and some of those made by the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) have some merit. If we are to have a uniform business rate system, there must be the chance for revaluation, and for revaluation to have a real effect on the level of rate payments by individual businesses. The management of the UBR system so far, however, has meant large—in some cases unbearable—rate increases for some businesses.

When the system was introduced, I understood—as I think most business men did—that the whole idea was to introduce fairness: a level playing field for businesses throughout the country. I thought that the intention was not to allow individual councils to place burdens on businesses in their areas. Sadly, however, that level playing field has not been created, and we are now seeing the farce that the UBR has brought about.

The Government were forced to introduce a transitional relief system to overcome the burden of extra rate increases in parts of the country where valuations themselves showed large increases. That has caused the whole system to break down: far from being given a level playing field, businesses that have been the beneficiaries of transitional relief for the entire initial five-year period can be said to have been playing downhill all that time, with a following wind.

Those businesses received the amount of transitional relief that they received because they had suffered the biggest—in many cases, quite unrealistic—valuation increases towards the end of the 1980s. As I said earlier this year in a debate on the Non-Domestic Rating Bill, that has led to an absurdity: some businesses have experienced real-terms rate increases this year, only to find that, because of a lower valuation, the rates will return to a more reasonable level next year.

Mr. Tim Smith: I understand why the hon. Gentleman describes that position as absurd, but is it not an automatic consequence of regular revaluations? If he does not like regular revaluations, what alternative would he suggest?

Mr. Rendel: The alternative is clearly some sort of site value system, which we have proposed all along.

Mr. Heald: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rendel: May I answer the previous question first? Obviously, revaluations must take place; the problem is caused by the big and rapid jumps in value caused by the extended intervals between revaluations.

Mr. Heald: The problem with the site value system is that it makes no distinction between premises such as office blocks, which have a high usage rate in terms of occupation of the land, and "low-occupation" enterprises such as garages. It is thus grossly inequitable.

Mr. Rendel: That is not true. It depends what planning agreement has been made. Whatever agreement has been made, however, the site value system will lead to the best and most efficient use of the site: that is why it is a good system for business.

Mr. Streeter: Would transitional arrangements operate under the site value system?

Mr. Rendel: If a move from the system that the Government now run happened all in one go, such arrangements would clearly have to operate—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is now speaking from a sedentary position. Does he want me to give way again?

[Mr. Rendel]

Mr. Streeter: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way to me, following my sedentary intervention. He has spent the first few minutes of his speech criticising transitional arrangements; what would be different about his proposed transitional arrangements?

Mr. Rendel: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has not been listening very carefully. I have not been criticising transitional arrangements as such; I have been disputing the need to make the amounts so large and to continue the arrangements for so long. The original point of the UBR was to introduce a level playing field across the country, but it has not worked. It is the UBR system, rather than the transitional arrangements, that I am criticising.

Unfortunately, the Government have now chosen to introduce a phasing system for businesses whose valuations have decreased. I consider that totally unfair. I understand the need to introduce a transitional system where there have been large increases; there would otherwise be a serious risk that many businesses would go under. They cannot be expected to take account of very large increases all in one year. It does not seem fair, however, that the system should be paid for by businesses whose valuations have decreased.

The original understanding, five years ago, was that the system would be self-financing—that, as far as possible, the phasing in of the decreases should pay for the phasing in of the increases. This year, no such suggestion is being made. Because of the £505 million that the Government are putting in, no real attempt is being made to make the entire system pay for itself. If no such excuse is left to the Government, it seems extraordinarily unfair that businesses whose rates happened to be high last year should be forced to pay for transitional relief for those that would otherwise pay high rates this year. Just to help themselves balance their budget, the Government are in effect fining businesses next year because they had large rate bills last year. That cannot be fair, and the Government should not be proposing it.

5.45 pm

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I want to make two points. First, the revaluation and transitional measures are good for British business and amount to a fair contribution to local government expenditure. Secondly, they will be good for local business men in north Hertfordshire, particularly over the medium term. Some 170,000 businesses will experience benefits nationally and I hope that a considerable number will be in north Hertfordshire.

Before I develop those points, however, let me refer to what other hon. Members have said. The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) began by saying that there was anger in the north of England—not just because of the revaluation and the increase in business rates, but because of the link with local councils that had been lost, and the loss of the special way in which they had been able to set business rates.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: It would have been better if the hon. Gentleman had listened to my speech. What I said was that there would be anger next year, when the business rate bills begin to drop through the letter boxes of businesses—not just in the north but in London.

Mr. Heald: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for clarifying that. He should have explained, but failed to do so, why there would be anger in the north when the change is being made following a revaluation that reflects property values, when transitional relief is available to help the businesses that are most in need and when the system is generally recognised to be fairer than the previous one.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of the link with local councils. He should recall what the position was like previously. Local authorities were not accountable to businesses for the way in which they spent the money that they had raised; many authorities used non-domestic rates to support increased spending at no political cost to themselves; and there were dramatic year-on-year increases at a couple of weeks' notice.

In the 1970s and 1980s, I campaigned in inner-city areas where business after business would say, "This is ludicrous: look at the rate that we are having to pay, compared with the rate paid in the suburbs." Those businesses would then move out. There was genuine anger, because the system was unjust. No one could say that of the present system, which is based on a proper valuation of premises, regularly updated, and on a poundage that is the same throughout the country.

The hon. Gentleman may recall that the average poundage was 258p. Labour councils in certain inner-city areas, however, had far higher poundages, and businesses in those areas suffered badly. There has been a huge improvement since the introduction of the uniform business rate.

It was a breath of fresh air to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), whose constituency is the home of the Bramley apple. Unfortunately, he is not in the Chamber now. He, too, experienced those days back in the 1970s and early 1980s, when local authorities were able to make such decisions. He spoke of the large increases that took place under a Labour authority, and the far better position that existed when it was Conservative controlled.

What the hon. Gentleman cannot explain away is the fact that if we do not have a system of regular revaluations and we allow what happened between 1973 and 1988 to continue we shall end up with a hopelessly distorted system, with very low rateable values. It is a cop-out to say that one would not tackle the problem of revaluing year on year.

I shall deal in a moment with what Labour suggests in place of that, but burying one's head in the sand, as happened in 1978—and, I confess, in the early years of the Conservative Government—is no solution. If one says, as the hon. Gentleman does, that the transitional relief should be phased in such a way that people could have the benefit of a revaluation immediately if there were a cut, but that an increase should be phased over a long period, one has to explain where the money would come from.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I can put a figure on what would be required if there were no contribution from those who stand to benefit. Instead of the £500 million that comes from the Exchequer now, the contribution would have to be £1.8 billion.

Mr. Heald: That is a colossal sum, and we have not had a clear exposition from the Labour Front-Bench spokesman of that party's pledge. If there is a spending pledge of £1.8 billion it is incumbent on the Labour party to explain where the money would come from.

Mr. Rendel: Can the hon. Gentleman or any of his colleagues tell us why it is fair that the £1.8 billion—or at least, the £1.3 billion that businesses are presumably putting in—should be paid only by businesses that happen to have suffered from high rates last year?

Mr. Heald: That is obvious when we consider what happened in 1990. Clearly at that stage there had to be a valuation that dealt with property values as they were, but during the recession it was right to have transitional arrangements that took into account the fact that business was in difficulty.

The hon. Gentleman will recall that in the 1992 Budget the package was £1.25 billion, and in 1993 it was £550 million; there will be further help this year. That was all necessary because the fact that businesses were in the middle of a recession and were having difficulties had to be reflected. However, if we compare that with what is happening now, with growth of 4 per cent. and unemployment falling, the picture is transformed. The Government must take account of that fact, as has been outlined.

Mr. Rendel: The hon. Gentleman has not answered my question. I asked why the particular businesses that happen to have suffered high rates last year must suffer this year, too. If the Government want there to be some transitional relief for those with increases, why do they not ask all businesses rather than only those that suffered last year?

Mr. Heald: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was not listening to the earlier part of my speech in which I said that a sudden dramatic change in the level of business rates was to be avoided. Business finds that desperately difficult to deal with; that is why the uniform business rate was introduced in the first place.

If there is to be a system that smooths the transition year on year—the Government are committed to that, and it is right—we cannot say that we shall smooth upwards but not downwards. If we did we should have to explain where the £1.8 billion will come from—something that the Liberal party can never do.

Mr. Rendel: The hon. Gentleman has not answered my question.

Mr. Heald: It all reminds me of a former Labour Minister who last week, from the Back Benches, said, "£1.3 billion? Let's just wait and see if we need it." That is typical of the approach during the 1970s, and it is why this country got into the state—

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman was not in the House at the time, but he must know that when the Government found themselves in massive difficulties with the relief scheme in 1992 they had no difficulty finding £1.5 billion to bail themselves out following their incompetence over the scheme.

Mr. Heald: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for saying that, because my argument is that the Government explained where the money was coming from—something that Opposition Members cannot do. We have heard an example of exactly that.

When we consider the transitional relief it is important to remember that without the proposed scheme there would be difficulties in smoothing and effecting a proper transition. The hon. Member for Stretford said earlier that the scheme had not been helpful to business. But businesses in my constituency have been helped. About 350,000 larger properties have had help, and the new transitional arrangements will cover 156,000 offices and 320,000 warehouses. It is important to have such a scheme to help business over the period in question.

Now I shall start on my main argument. I had intended to start by dealing with the background, but perhaps I have already done so. In 1990 it was necessary to examine rateable values because they had fallen so low, and there was no real relationship between rateable values and market values. During the 1980s property values had risen in the south, and the year that was used, 1988—this was especially true of April 1988—was when rental levels were at their highest both in my constituency and across the rest of the south of England.

That was not true in the north, where many businesses gained as a result of the revaluation. When we revalue this year there should be a proper reflection of the changes, because since April 1988 commercial property values have fallen sharply. Business men in the south have adapted to the changed conditions, and in my constituency there are 1,000 small nursery companies that are beginning to see growth and are taking on labour; unemployment has fallen by 1,000 there in the past year.

The help that such businesses will receive from the revaluation is much needed. Opposition Members have not mentioned the effects in the south of England, not just in the inner cities but in other areas that are important and should also be considered, especially—as the Minister, who is also a Hertfordshire Member, says—Hertfordshire.

Hertfordshire has suffered defence cuts, which have been difficult for our industries. They have adapted, but now that there is a rising trend it is right that they should see the benefits of changing property values, and I am glad that they will. I have no objection to the fact that the changes are to be phased in, because the transition should be smooth.

In north Hertfordshire, as well as the 1,000 nursery companies other small businesses have had a lot of help. There is business link, the Hertfordshire Development Organisation and the KONVER funds from Europe; there are simplified arrangements and less bureaucracy; finally, there are Investors in People and BS5750. That combination of help from the Government, built on this year by a further package of £1.7 billion in the Budget, is helping those businesses out of recession.

The larger businesses in north Hertfordshire—such as Fermark, a most successful company; Irvin, the manufacturer of parachutes for the British Army; Victaulic, which had the first management buy-out; and Johnson Matthey, which has moved from precious metals into new operations, such as those involving catalytic

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converters and diesel catalytic converters, and which is at the forefront of technology—have all had to adapt to the high rateable values that resulted from the 1990 revaluation.

As those businesses have adapted to the new conditions so well, I can say that businesses in any area where property values have increased and where it is difficult to cope with that at first—although there are, of course, transitional arrangements—are capable of adapting, and I believe that they should. Opposition Members argue for a system that is unjust between the north and the south, and that seems wrong to me. If the Labour party has pretensions to be a party of the south of England it will have to do better than that. Businesses in Hertfordshire would expect to have a level playing field. I do not think that the hon. Member for Stretford can say that anything less than that is acceptable. So the businesses which have been expanding and exporting, when unemployment is falling and they are benefiting from the help that the Government have given them, will welcome the orders.

As I understand it, the Labour party is suggesting that we should scrap the uniform business rate and allow local councils to set their own poundages. If we did that, we would return to the situation that I witnessed in the inner cities in the 1970s and 1980s and which Labour Members, in their heart of hearts, know was wrong for business. It was all too easy to increase the business rate and then go to the local voters and pretend that that was in the interests of them and their employment, when it was completely against their interests to see their businesses forced out of the inner city and to see those jobs go. We do not want to return to that system. If we scrap the uniform business rate and return to the unlevel playing field and the scandalous way in which those matters were dealt with, we will pay a heavy price in our businesses in the inner cities. It will lay them waste as it did before and we should not be prepared to accept that.

The Liberal Democrats talk about site value rating. As I said earlier to the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel), site value rating does not take account of the fact that a small business may occupy a large and valuable site, for example, a garage, and that it would be valued in exactly the same way as a large office block, which has far more money-making potential as a building. Are we to say that small businesses on valuable sites should be forced out of such areas?

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My hon. Friend is doing a marvellous demolition job on the hon. Member for Newbury's advocacy of a site value tax. My hon. Friend should remember that the hon. Gentleman's own party has already done such a job. On 22 September, at their party conference, delegates rejected an attempt to revive the Liberal Democrats' proposal for a site value rating system. So I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was even speaking for the Liberal Democrats on this occasion.

Mr. Heald: I am grateful to my hon. Friend because I noticed particularly that the hon. Gentleman said "some sort" of site value system. That struck me as not being very specific at all. I wondered if it had anything to do with the comments of Mr. Adrian Slade, who, of course, used to be the president of the Liberal party. He recently said about the idea that it was

"not sufficiently equitable . . . not based on the ability to pay . . . discriminate against small retailers, especially in prosperous areas".

Is that really what the Liberal Democrats want to stand for?

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): Is my hon. Friend also aware that the system, according to the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation, has explicitly rejected site value rating? It also said that the system was completely unworkable.

Mr. Heald: I am not surprised. I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out that something which seemed obvious to myself and to other hon. Friends has been asserted and proved beyond doubt by such a worthy body. It is the expert. It has given its judgment; the former president of the Liberal party has given his. Really, the Liberals will have to go back to the drawing board.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Earlier this afternoon, in a public expenditure statement on Wales—

Mr. Tim Smith: It took an hour.

Mr. Griffiths: My point will become apparent. In that statement, the Secretary of State for Wales declared that he was presenting a budget for Wales. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when the Chancellor presents his Budget statement to the House, he also provides for right hon. and hon. Members a full list of accompanying documentation, including press releases issued to accompany the Budget statement. I have been to the Vote Office to try to get all that documentation, including the 14 press releases issued by the Welsh Office, but have been told that, although the Vote Office tried to secure them, the Welsh Office said that they would be put in the Library only and not made available to hon. Members in the Vote Office. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to use your good offices to ensure that what is custom and practice for the Budget should become custom and practice for the Welsh Office budget, which the Secretary of State read out to us this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): It is not for the Chair to decide what should become custom and practice between one Department of State and another. But I am quite sure that the Treasury spokesmen heard the point that the hon. Gentleman made. I am sure that there will be some reaction.

6.4 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Ministers and other Conservative Members have presented the arrangements for the business rate as being a solution to a great many perceived problems, many of them imaginary from my experience. If they came to the House and admitted that there were difficulties and problems, which they were struggling to resolve, Labour Members may have a little more sympathy with their predicament. But when they try to explain that there are no difficulties or problems, that the new system is wonderful, that it has replaced a terrible system and that all they should get is congratulations, we have a right as Opposition Members to raise one or two matters and ask them to give some answers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), the Labour party Front-Bench spokesman, highlighted a number of problems and said that he felt that when the rates bills drop on the doorsteps of businesses next year, there will be a great deal of anger, confusion and concern about why this system, which is supposed to solve the problems of business, has created so many problems. Businesses will be faced with rate bills that will have risen far higher than the rate of inflation. While the Government pretend that a recovery is going on throughout the country, businesses are still struggling, their margins are still thin, and they are still looking to retain their employees. If they are faced with large rates increases, it will create problems for them.

Revaluations are never popular. Labour Members do not pretend that they are, nor that a change of Government would make them popular. We accept that revaluations have to occur from time to time and that there have to be transitional arrangements to see them through. But we are asking Ministers to recognise that the revaluations this time have led to some very large increases. The Yorkshire and Humberside average rate increase, I am told, for all businesses is 26 per cent. Obviously, when businesses see those figures, they start to be concerned about the impact not only in the first year, but in the second and third years as transitional arrangements wear off. The increase for factories is 23 per cent.; for warehouses, it is 32 per cent. Those are very large increases.

Conservative Members tell us to consider the problems in the south and to look at the difficulties that businesses in the south are facing. They say that it is fair to have a relative readjustment between businesses in the south and in the north. Labour Members accept that because of the Government's economic policies, businesses in the south are struggling and have struggled in the past few years. Since businesses in the south are going through a far worse time than they may have done in the recession of the early 1980s, as compared with businesses in the north, let us not pretend that many businesses in the constituencies of myself and my hon. Friends here today have not also suffered considerably. Such revaluations, therefore, are worrying, alarming and concerning.

We want Ministers to recognise that they have problems with a system which is supposed to clarify and sort out all difficulties and be a new, improved system which everyone should welcome. Increases in rates, which will come out next year, will be well above inflation for many firms and those same companies will be seeing forecasts of rates above inflation for future years. The transitional scheme is complicated by the fact that it is a transitional scheme on top of a transitional scheme. In other words, it is not simple and easy to understand. I readily accept that Ministers have difficulties. They have large increases on the one hand and on the other their transitional scheme is overlapping a previous scheme, causing complications and difficulties. If Ministers would at least accept that the scheme that they set up contains problems and difficulties, it would be worth hearing from them.

I also want to respond to what Conservative Members have said about why the scheme was introduced in the first place, why we will need to retain it and what was so awful about the previous arrangements. Again, that is not my experience. Most of the perceived problems that I recall came in the early 1980s, when there were some very large increases in business rates in some authorities.

At that time, it was not that authorities under Labour control were maliciously against business in their areas and were trying to increase business rates in order to gain money to go on a spending spree. Central Government were reducing grants to those authorities by large amounts. In response, those authorities increased their rate to compensate and to maintain the services which the people in their communities put them into office to preserve. It was very simple.

I was a member of an authority in Sheffield which did precisely that. We had some large rate increases in the early 1980s. The authority went to the electorate and asked, "Do you agree that that was the right thing to do in response to the Government's actions?" The response was decisive. The Conservative party lost seats in Sheffield because of that action. Conservative Members forget that, when we had alternative arrangements and business rates that were set at local level, there was a direct connection with the electoral process because business rates were directly linked to domestic rates. We could not put up one without the other. A local authority which increased business rates at that time had to increase domestic rates, and it had to do so by a slightly higher percentage.

Mr. Tim Smith: Is not it the case that, in many areas, more than 50 per cent. of voters paid no domestic rates and had no interest in how much money was raised?

Mr. Betts: I do not think so. It certainly was not true in Sheffield. There certainly was a system of benefits on rates, but that did not mean that more than 50 per cent. of my constituents—I was a local councillor at the time—paid no rates at all and had no incentive in the rate levels in the city. They had a very strong incentive, of course, in the services that were provided. The democratic link, therefore, was absolutely clear. As I was explaining, the increase in domestic rates was higher because of the existence of domestic rate relief, which meant that for any increase in pence in rates there was a higher percentage increase in domestic rates.

Conservative Members think that we had to have the new system in the 1980s because manufacturing industry was shutting down all over the north of the country after Labour authorities had put up rates. That is nonsense. The evidence at the time showed no link between the number of firms closing or the increase in unemployment and what was happening to rates. That information was made available in the Library at that time.

The city council examined the balance sheets and accounts of some major companies in Sheffield. The rates bills of major engineering and steel companies were less than 2 per cent. of their costs, even in the most extreme cases. They were and still are suffering from high energy costs, particularly electricity costs. That was a far greater burden on those industries. It was a far greater problem for them in terms of maintaining their viability and continuing in a major recession in the early 1980s than the impact of the business rates.

We were told that we would have a new system which removed all the problems. I do not think that businesses in Sheffield believe that the convoluted orders are a better, simpler system for them. When rates were set at local level, businesses could go to the town hall to consult. We believe in consultation. In Sheffield, we certainly consulted local businesses long before the Government made it mandatory at national level. It is a two-way matter. Local business has the right to be consulted, but it has the right also to contribute to the community in which it is based. The very existence of industry creates

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costs for the local community. It is right that there should be a link between them. The business rate should not be set at national level in the way that the orders will force central Government to do.

Some of the difficulties of the early 1980s were forced upon local councils. Central Government produced the national rating system. Local authorities put up rates in response to the actions of central Government. Out of some of the difficulties that arose in my city and in many others, there were initial conflicts between business and local authorities, but, at the same time, they brought about a more harmonious working relationship between authorities and a belief that there were common interests between authorities and local businesses.

Partnership initiatives were developed in many Labour-controlled authorities. Central Government are now trying to claim credit for the development of partnership initiatives, whereas it was the Government's policy to be against them. Local authorities entered partnership initiatives, despite the fact that businesses were paying rates to the local council and sometimes having arguments about it.

Conservative Members constantly challenge Opposition Members to state what Labour policy is or will be. We made our policy absolutely clear before the previous election. I am sure that we will restate it before the next election. We believe that there should be a link between businesses and their community. We believe that businesses should pay a rate to their community. The business rate should not be set nationally by central Government and then distributed on a per capita basis.

A per capita distribution of the business rate is nonsense. It does not relate to anything. It does not relate to the number of businesses in an area, to the needs of an area or to the resources of an area. It simply relates to the number of people who happen to live there. That is not fair or equitable. It certainly has nothing to do with local businesses or how much they contribute to or cost the local community. Labour party policy is right. We should recreate the linkage between local business and its community.

The nonsense is that when everything is centralised, of course there will be complicated formulae. Many businesses—it is interesting that the Confederation of British Industry has made similar comments—would prefer a system whereby rates were set at local level and businesses could consult local authorities and relate what they do to the local community to which they make a contribution through the rates.

At present, there is no direct incentive for local authorities to encourage business in their areas. Many do that, and I commend them for it, but would not it be better if local authorities that are determined to assist business and attract business to their areas had an incentive to do so, and if the rates that were gained from the creation and development of business in their areas actually brought some benefit to local communities in terms of rates paid to local exchequers for local councils to use for the benefit of their local communities? I should have thought that Conservative Members would have preferred such incentives to be created for local authorities, rather than the arbitrary national arrangement in which local authorities are completely removed from the process.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, because he is making a rather better fist of putting forward Labour policy than did his Front-Bench colleague, the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), although I do not agree with everything that he says. Surely the hon. Gentleman must address the issue that industry and commerce are not uniformly spread over the country; there are areas in which there is relatively little and areas in which there is much successful and enterprising business. Therefore, there would have to be a redistribution system, which immediately weakens the hon. Gentleman's argument. That is why we ended up in such a position, apart from all the other points on the deterrence of business from locating in certain areas.

Mr. Betts: I thank the Minister. I recognise that point. The Labour party addressed it in its manifesto for the previous election. Of course there must be a resources element in Government grant. That is accepted; it occurred before rates were nationalised by the Government; it must exist. However, that does not mean that we must have a resources element that completely removes incentives for local authorities to help to develop business in their areas. We can have an incentive element to enable the process to be meaningful.

Another problem which Conservative Members should address, because it is the most significant problem created by setting up the national business rate system, is the small amount that local authorities now raise on their own account and which they are able to determine. Roughly speaking—it varies from authority to authority according to how much authorities receive from national Government in grant as a percentage of their budgets—about half the money comes from central Government, or perhaps slightly less than half in terms of the revenue support grant. About a third of the money comes from the rating system, and a sixth comes from the council tax.

That is very worrying because it creates a difficult gearing problem. Some authorities now collect less than 10 per cent. of the money that they spend. That creates a divorce between the democratic process of people being elected, spending decisions, and the taxation to pay for that spending. I think that the Government should be very worried because it has undermined and undervalued the local democratic process. In elections people vote for services and for taxes which have to be paid in order to finance service provision. If the average local authority decides to increase its expenditure by 1 per cent., it will face a taxation increase of 6 per cent— the figure is even higher for some authorities.

That creates a substantial imbalance, and that gearing problem can be addressed only by giving local authorities more power to raise finance at the local level. To facilitate that, we must abolish the complicated and convoluted nationalised business rate system. If the rate is returned to local authorities, the amount of money collected from business will be tied to that which is collected from the rest of the population, so local authorities cannot simply raise business rates without raising rates for local voters.

Let us kill the myth that it is wrong to return business rates to local authorities because business rate payers do not vote in local elections. At present, business rates are set nationally by central Government and business rate payers do not have an extra vote in national elections. They have the same number of votes at national and local elections as the rest of the electorate, and that is how it should be.

I do not think that the Government should bring forward orders which permit Parliament to determine local matters. If we give local matters back to local government we will have a much better system.

6.20 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) seems to have learnt nothing from recent experience. In 1975, Anthony Crosland said, "The party is over." He meant that the consensus between central and local government had broken down and something had to be done about it. It is beyond belief that we are being asked to return revenue-raising powers to irresponsible local authorities.

Businesses do not like paying taxes. The Government levy three substantial taxes on businesses: social security contributions on their employment costs, corporation tax on their profits and business rates on their properties. We should be very wary of any proposals which will lead to an increase in taxation for businesses.

Businesses create jobs and the money to spend on Government services. Businesses do not have votes and they are not able to influence local authorities. There may have been consultation between local authorities and businesses in the past, but in the end local authorities could simply ignore what businesses said. Corporation tax and social security contributions are levied at national rates— no one suggests that those rates should vary from one area to another. I think that the reforms introduced in 1990 were entirely correct, and I fully support the uniform business rate.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the Government do not recognise the difficulties in that sector. The transitional arrangements are a recognition of the problems associated with the introduction of the new system. If there had been no problems, we could have moved straight to the new system.

However, we were not able to do that because revaluations had not taken place for 17 years. As a result of that fundamental difficulty, there were large revaluations in the south and substantial devaluations in the north of England. We should have regular revaluations, but I do not think that Opposition Members can run away from the consequence of that, which is that some businesses will pay more while others will pay less.

For example, in the west midlands, manufacturers face a 40 per cent. increase in the rateable value of their properties. There is only one reason for that: rents in the area have increased by the same amount. Rents on manufacturing properties have increased in the past five years because demand for manufacturing capacity in the west midlands has risen also. That is good news for the west midlands.

Manufacturing in the west midlands is booming. British exports increased by 14 per cent. last year, and businesses are facing substantial revaluations. Many businesses will have paid rent increases of 40 per cent. over the past five years. They have coped with those increases by driving down other costs, increasing productivity and becoming more competitive. That is good news.

When we discussed these matters five or seven years ago, people talked about the north-south divide— there was then a substantial divide— but no one talks about that divide today. We have seen substantial change in the past five years. The last recession hit the south far harder than the 1981-82 recession and, as a consequence, property values in the south have fallen. It is inevitable that rateable values will fall also and that businesses will benefit as a result.

Opposition Members refuse to face up to what that means. They do not want businesses to have to pay any more rates; they do not accept any increases. Yet they tell us that those businesses which will benefit should receive the whole of the benefit in 1995. That is simply not realistic— it would cost a great deal of money.

The largest Budget item designed to help business is the £525 million which the Treasury is making available for transitional arrangements. How much would the proposals advanced by the Opposition parties cost? I am sure that it would be many hundreds of millions of pounds more. It would also mean living with a permanent distortion in the system.

In the past few years, it has been difficult to arrive at a genuinely national system with national rateable values and national rate poundage. That is what we are now moving towards, and we can achieve it only if there is some yearly movement in real terms both for those who will have to pay more and for those who will benefit. The Government's approach is an entirely sensible one.

Mr. Streeter: Did my hon. Friend notice that the speeches of Labour and Liberal Members were indistinguishable on one important aspect? They supported phasing when business rates were increasing, but, as my hon. Friend has said, they were not in favour of phasing when business rates were falling. They failed to recognise that that would leave a shortfall for the Government to pick up, and they certainly failed to say where the money would come from.

Mr. Smith: My hon. Friend is entirely correct: the Opposition parties always fail to say where the money will come from.

Mr. Rendel: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Smith: I wish to reply to my hon. Friend. I believe that a party which aspires to Government should answer some of those questions. It is totally irresponsible not to face them. Perhaps the hon. Member for Newbury will answer the question.

Mr. Rendel: I wish to reply to the previous intervention. It is not true to say that I was at one with the Labour spokesman in not knowing where the money would come from. I made a quite different point. I said that if transitional relief is to be provided to those businesses whose rates will increase, it is unfair that all the money should come only from businesses which have had high rate increases in the past. It should come from all businesses— not just from those which have paid high rates in the past.

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that obfuscation. I am not sure that I fully understood what he said; perhaps the Minister can clarify Liberal policy.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I can tell my hon. Friend precisely what the hon. Member for Newbury means. He argues that the people who will gain under the present

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system should become losers and that those who are losers should become even bigger losers, in order to ensure that the money comes from the business sector as a whole. Presumably the hon. Gentleman accepts the capping of those who are most adversely affected, as that can be the only consequence of what he is arguing.

Mr. Smith: I am sure that my hon. Friend is entirely right. The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) said that some businesses which had benefited from transitional arrangements had been playing downhill for the past five years. I think that he was talking about businesses whose rates bills have increased year in, year out.

One of the difficulties is the 17-year gap between 1973 and 1990. I understand the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) that there is a close relationship between rent levels and rate levels in a particular area, and that substantial increases or reductions in rates will have a knock-on effect on rent levels in that area. The Government are trying to reach equilibrium between the two matters. They will achieve that, although it will take place over a period of time.

I am sure that the approach which the Government are adopting is the right one. It is taking time, as it is bound to, but we cannot have a situation in which there is no movement. There must be, and there will be, some movement. We are seeing not just a simple reversal of the north-south divide, because even in the south and in London we will find—as my hon. Friends have said—that some properties will have an increase in their rateable value, while the majority will have a reduction. That is an inevitable consequence of a revaluation, and one which we must face.

We cannot simply kick all the problems under the carpet. We must face up to them in a realistic way and enable businesses to plan by letting them know exactly what their future increases will be. I very much support the orders, which I think provide a sensible balance.

6.31 pm

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) who injected a refreshing note of realism and wisdom into the debate. I am pleased to take part in a debate on what may be considered by some to be a dry measure. In fact, the issue of business rates is vital and touches real businesses, large and small, which are the life-blood of the UK. My hon. Friend said that businesses generate jobs, an idea which the Opposition fail to understand.

I wondered whether there were any businesses in which property did not play an important part. For most businesses, the places in which they do their business are an important part of their overheads. My mind wandered to a company based near my constituency called the Ugborough hot air ballooning company, whose main activity takes place off the ground. Then, it occurred to me that the balloons must take off and land somewhere, so the business rate is critical even for that company.

The crux of the orders today is that we are revaluing business properties in 1995 with a sensible transitional relief package, which means that those businesses which can afford to pay more of the burden of the business rate will share that burden. It is a tax that is closely linked to the ability to pay, and it is greatly to be welcomed.

After the introduction of the uniform business rate in 1990, there was great relief in Plymouth because the local left-wing council was no longer able to set local business rates. If it were able to do so, the council would certainly be driving many local businesses into the ground with its desire to spend and spend, irrespective of the damage caused to those who must pay the bills.

Business people in Plymouth had a narrow escape following the introduction of the UBR, which was greatly to be welcomed. The prospect of local authorities setting business rates will strike terror into the hearts of many business people. Opposition Members do not seem to understand the connection between businesses and jobs. They say that they want jobs to be created, yet they continue to clobber businesses without making the link between the two.

I want to talk about the impact the orders will have in the west country. In a number of sectors, the review which will take place in 1995 will have a significant result for local businesses. A number of local industries, such as agriculture, tourism and defence, have declined for the past five years, for a myriad different reasons. The properties from which businesses in those industries are operated should be revalued to reflect their current value and the return which businesses can make from them.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to reflect upon a number of cases in Devon and Cornwall where businesses are suffering particularly badly. The first sector to which I draw my hon. Friend's attention is residential nursing homes. I hope that the sector will greatly benefit from the revaluation which will take place in 1995. My hon. Friend may know that residential nursing homes in Devon are suffering particularly from the implementation of the care in the community proposals by the Liberal-run Devon county council. The council is failing miserably to comply with its requirement to ensure that 85 per cent. of its allocations are made in the private sector, and prefers instead to place people in local authority homes. In many cases, those local authority homes are far more expensive for the ratepayers of Devon.

There is a case in my constituency where the local authority home costs £400 per week, per person, and yet better care can be bought by the local authority in the private sector for less than £200 a week. The local authority home is more expensive for the local authority, and the policy is causing havoc and misery among residential home owners in my constituency. I hope that the issues will be taken into account when the revaluation of the business rate takes place in 1995.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can go better than that, and that he will intervene to try to stop the Liberal-run Devon county council so flagrantly flouting the Government's rules. In fact, I call for an inquiry on that important aspect. Many owners of residential nursing homes have contacted me, and I speak for them when I say that it is important that the value of their homes is reflected in the revaluation of the business rates, as a result of the iniquitous policy carried out by the Liberals on Devon county council. It is a scandal that must be stopped.

Secondly, like all retailers, retailers in the centre of Plymouth have suffered from the recession in the past few years. Retailers in Plymouth have suffered more than most, because the Labour-led Plymouth city council is conducting a parking charges policy in the centre of Plymouth which one can only describe as punitive. The charges are driving people out of town, and causing businesses in the city centre to suffer. I hope that that factor will be taken into account when the properties are revalued in 1995.

It would be greatly welcomed if the revaluation could throw a lifeline to retailers in Plymouth and reflect the reduction in the value of their property as a result of the punitive and outrageous policies being pursued by the Labour-controlled Plymouth city council. I welcome the measure as, in one sense, it gives the Government the ability to redress some of the scandalous political practices in my part of the country.

Some sectors are doing extremely well, and it is right and proper that that should be reflected in the amount of business rate which they pay. Out-of-town shopping in Devon and Cornwall is doing exceedingly well, and many of the sheds in which those activities take place are increasing in value and are now much sought after. That is the sort of property which can now afford to pay more in business rates. That is a reflection of how the new policy is placing the burden of business rates where it can be afforded.

As many of my hon. Friends have said, manufacturing industry is doing well. Plymouth has many outstanding manufacturing industries and companies, which are doing exceedingly well, particularly in exports. I visit those firms regularly and I have learnt from them that their order books have never been fuller and that they have never done as well as they have in the past 12 months. They are particularly delighted that they export a range of products to many countries throughout Europe and the Pacific rim. That is incredibly encouraging news. It is quite right that that business success, created by the Government's economic policies, should be reflected in the value of those companies' properties and factories and in their business rates.

Mr. Rendel: Does the hon. Gentleman not understand that the revaluation is based on the value of a property as at 1 April 1993, so what is currently happening has no effect?

Mr. Streeter: I am delighted to report to the hon. Gentleman that companies in Plymouth have been experiencing success since the beginning of 1993. Those companies have enjoyed sustained growth for two years. That is jolly good news for them. It is a pity that Opposition Members continue to rejoice in bad news; they just do not like good news.

I am delighted that the revaluation date will reflect the growth that has been experienced by companies in Plymouth during the past two years. It is encouraging to note that, as a result of that growth, jobs have been created and unemployment in my constituency is falling month after month. I welcome the fact that the revaluation exercise will reflect those improved circumstances.

The transitional arrangements, which are a triumph for common sense and wisdom, are also welcome. I congratulate the Minister on introducing them. It was extremely interesting to note, once again, that when Opposition Members pretended to be representing the party that wants to govern Britain, they could not explain how they would fund their spending pledges. They want to do away with phasing as it applies to those businesses where the rate is set to go down. That would undoubtedly create a shortfall which the Government would have to pick up. Can they explain where that money would come from? They cannot. Once again, we were offered pie-in-the-sky politics. The Opposition offer us spending pledges, but they have no understanding of how those pledges would be funded. That is typical of the politics that we have now come to expect from the Opposition.

Mr. Heald: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the problems with not addressing where the money would come from is that one is led into the trap into which the Labour party was led the last time it was in Government? That Government constantly buried their head in the sand and borrowed more money because they were not prepared to take the tough decisions needed in the interests of the country.

Mr. Streeter: My hon. Friend is absolutely right: all Labour Governments have borrowed themselves out of existence. Let us hope that the days of the late 1970s, when a Chancellor had to go cap in hand to the IMF for yet another loan, are for ever behind us. My hon. Friend is right to say that the answer lies in taking tough decisions.

I welcome the transitional arrangements, which are fair. It is important for all businesses to be able to plan and to know what the maximum increase in their rates bill will be in the next few years. Most financial directors will welcome that useful aid to planning.

I also welcome the fact that, under the orders, greater fairness is being shown to the south-west. We have often heard about firms in other parts of the country which have struggled greatly, but we in the south-west have taken our fair share of hits. We have borne our brunt of difficult times. I am pleased that relief will be offered to businesses in the south-west. That Government help will be welcomed by those businesses.

The revaluation orders are a triumph for fairness and common sense. I welcome the fact that they will place the burden of the business rate on those who can best afford it. That will be offer a boost to the south-west, because it will give us the opportunity to make good some of the unfairnesses that have resulted from the implementation of policies pursued by the Liberals at county hall and by the Labour party at the city council in Plymouth. For those reasons, I welcome the orders.

6.44 pm

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): I want to make two points about the orders and how they affect my constituency, but first I should like to refer to the remarks of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts).

As the House knows, the hon. Gentleman was leader of Sheffield city council. I, too, was a member of that council and for many years I worked in industry and business in the area. Today, he simply rewrote history. He said—I made a note of it—that business rates were merely perceived to be a problem in the city. They were a real problem for those who worked in companies—a real problem with which they to deal daily and weekly in their overheads. Because of the city council's involvement in setting the business rate for the community, businesses moved out of the city and went elsewhere, taking employment with them. People who lived in the city moved out to Derbyshire if they could. It was only the

[Mrs. Angela Knight]

introduction of capping that resolved the domestic problem and the introduction of the uniform business rate that resolved the industrial one.

When parts of the city were being decimated, an enterprise zone was offered to Sheffield, but the hon. Member for Attercliffe and his colleagues on the council would not accept it. The very thing that would have helped industry in the city was rejected. It was only when the urban development corporation took an interest in the city—the hon. Gentleman opposed that too—that confidence in the business community began to be restored. That development, and the knowledge that the business rate was outside local political control, meant businesses started to come back to the city. A similar success story could be told elsewhere.

The hon. Member for Attercliffe advanced another argument that staggered me—I do not know how he had the nerve to make it. He blamed central Government grant reductions for the city's financial problems. Those problems were caused by the hon. Gentleman and his party, who bid for the world student games. They budgeted to spend £30 million on capital facilities and planned to make a profit from the games. They actually spent £150 million and lost money on the games. That has left the city strapped with a debt, which is being paid by every resident and paid, indirectly, by every business. That is the truth. That is why I say that the hon. Gentleman told a tale to the House—I know, because I was there.

I should like to see indirect local government involvement in industry in the community. I should like local government to make an area attractive by offering good road networks, reclaiming derelict industrial land, processing planning applications quickly and being known as a responsible spender that offers services at a reasonable price. That is the most attractive thing that local government can offer to industries and, therefore, to the local economy. Those who heard on the radio the explanation of the policy followed by Conservative-controlled Clitheroe council will know that the policy has resulted in that area having the lowest unemployment rate in the country.

Further changes to the uniform business rate are now proposed. The midlands, which I represent, benefited from the 1990 revaluation. I accept the points made so eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) and touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) that one of the difficulties for many areas was caused by the considerable period of time between that 1990 revaluation and the previous one. Other areas, such as my own, however, benefited from the revaluation and that had a beneficial effect on companies, businesses and manufacturing and engineering industries—the very industries on which the midlands depends. In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton, my constituency has also enjoyed a continuous reduction in the unemployment rate, month after month—in the past 12 months the unemployment figure has dropped by 1,400. One of those companies' concerns is that the next revaluation will not benefit them. Clearly, just as companies in the area benefited from the last revaluation, so they could easily find that, under the revaluation for next year, they will start to see increases. That is why I welcome the transitional arrangements.

Inevitably, all transitional arrangements are complicated, but they exist precisely to buffer the differences and problems that can result when rates are increased by a huge amount. I am surprised at the concerns that have been expressed about such arrangements because they will benefit companies in areas such as mine. Not one company has complained about transitional arrangements. They are what people need, not what they do not like.

The order before us is complicated. Often, the results of such arrangements do not come home to the business community until the day when their bills land on the desk. I hope that, rather than just leave it as it stands today with a general announcement, we can talk to those involved with the business community in chambers of commerce and trade throughout the country so that they realise in advance what their rates bill will be and companies do not discover what they will be 24 hours after the bill has been sent out.

Two specific business rate problems in my constituency concern the local authority. Action taken by the local authority has badly affected small businesses and traders and resulted in a large consequential loss of business. The first concerns the building of a relief road which isolated a popular pub and cut off a popular trading street called Market street. The public house was isolated not just for a day or a week but for three months, during which time people could hardly cross the road to reach it, let alone park in its car park or anywhere near it. To help matters, somebody dug a hole and cut off its gas and electricity and broke the drains. One can imagine the pub's consequential loss of trade, which ran to several thousand pounds and was more than the landlord could manage to cover.

Although the pub received a temporary business rate reduction as a consequence of those works, it nowhere near covered the loss of business. The chip shop, sewing shop, small bicycle shop and other small shops in Market street had the same problem. The cafe was particularly affected. They all applied for and received a business rate reduction because the street had been cut off from general traffic, but it simply did not cover the amount that they had lost through lack of trade. The small shops lost trade not just during those three months but for good because the entrance to the street was closed off. I hope that we can better recognise within our business rate system the consequential loss of business to companies because of local authority activity that is out of their control.

The second problem is similar and may be partially shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton. Again, it arose in Ilkeston, where the first problem arose. This time, the local authority decided to pedestrianise the main shopping street, which is one of the steepest shopping streets in the country, so people must walk up it. The local authority has pedestrianised about half the street and work is still in progress. It is taking a long time and is extremely disruptive. In addition to the disruption, people are finding it difficult to reach the street. Having blocked off the bottom half, cars can get nowhere near it.

The local authority then decided to charge for car parking, which has resulted in a dramatic loss of business to many shops in the street. Even the bank told me that its custom was down by 20 per cent., and the last place to which one stops going is the money shop, because that is where one gets money out, not where one pays it in. Such disruption can have a dramatic effect on the turnover and business viability of many small businesses. Again, although those companies and small traders received a business rate reduction, it was massively insufficient to cover the loss in trade.

Three solutions are possible. The first is intervention by the Department of Transport in some of those local road projects. Secondly, a mandatory right of compensation could be built into the contract for such works. I know that those two matters are outside the remit of my hon. Friend the Minister, but the third solution would be to look at business rate reductions to help companies that find themselves in the position that I have described.

6.55 pm

Mr. Robert B. Jones: With the leave of the House, may I say that this has been an interesting debate? Although I thought that such a complex issue would not provoke such detailed and thoughtful speeches, hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree that we have heard some very interesting contributions, often from hon. Members with a great knowledge of local authorities or industry and commerce in their area.

First, I redeem the promise that I made to my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith). Like the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts), I believe that where there are questions, there should be answers, even if they are imperfect. My hon. Friend asked how many businesses currently in transition will benefit from relief next year. Currently, 362,000 rate payers benefit, 294,000 of whom are small businesses and 68,000 large ones. I am afraid that statistics are not held centrally which would enable us to say how many of those will benefit next year, but as those rate payers are some way from their full 1990 bills it is likely that the majority of them will benefit next year.

Many detailed points have been made, but I shall address some of the points of principle first. The fundamental point is whether we should have business rates at all. Although the Labour party seems to be broadly in accord with the Government on that matter, a difference of opinion was expressed by a Liberal Democrat Member. The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) argued for site value taxation. I hope that I was able to clear up that point by reminding him, as he evidently had not had an opportunity to study his party policy, that that policy was defeated at the Liberal Democrat party conference, no doubt for the reasons that were ably put forward by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) as well as by the professional bodies that he quoted.

The second issue of principle is whether, if we are to have business rates, there should be revaluations. Although revaluations are periodic and therefore, in a sense, a snapshot, they are also a kaleidoscopic picture. Even within sectors such as shops, or geographical areas like London or the south-west, circumstances change. The desirability of a corner shop may decrease and the desirability of an out-of-town shopping centre may increase, or at some stage the opposite may occur. It is therefore necessary to re-examine from time to time the rents in those areas and therefore the rates, which automatically follow as night follows day. So no one can reasonably argue that revaluations should not take place from time to time.

Labour Members then argued about whether those taxes should be collected entirely and spent by local authorities. The answer is that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We all know from the past that many Labour authorities simply held business rate payers to ransom using the old system. It is therefore important, if we believe in a one-nation approach, as I certainly do, to ensure that businesses are not held to ransom by their Labour-controlled local authorities. The hon. Member for Attercliffe accepted the case for a redistribution mechanism, even without a localised business rate.

The third question is, should we have a transitional system? I think that everyone has agreed with that, and I do not propose to discuss it further.

That leaves the terms. I want to discuss, in my final remarks, the proposals of the hon. Member for Attercliffe that the cost should fall on all business ratepayers, not on the beneficiaries. The consequence would be that some of those who stand to gain would be made losers and some of those who are losers would be made even greater losers. There is no sense in that. It appears to me, therefore, that the Government have got it right in expecting the biggest gainers to pay part of the cost, with the Exchequer paying more than £500 million as well.

It is because I think that we have got it right that I have pleasure in commending the orders to the House.

It being Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [9 December].*

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Non-Domestic Rating (Chargeable Amounts) Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 12th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert B. Jones.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Water Undertakers (Rateable Values) Order 1994, a copy of which was laid before this House on 5th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert B. Jones.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Railways (Rateable Values) Order 1994, a copy of which was laid before this House on 5th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert B. Jones.]*

Resolved,

That the draft British Waterways Board and Telecommunications Industry (Rateable Values) Order 1994, a copy of which was laid before this House on 5th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert B. Jones.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Electricity Supply Industry (Rateable Values) Order 1994, a copy of which was laid before this House on 12th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert B. Jones.]*

Resolved,

That the draft Docks and Harbours (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1994, a copy of which was laid before this House on 5th December, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert B. Jones.]*

Resolved,

That the draft British Gas plc (Rateable Values) Order 1994, a copy of which was laid before this House on 5th December, be approved.— *[Mr. Robert B. Jones.]*

Fisheries

[*Relevant documents: European Community Documents Nos. 10648/94 relating to guide prices for fishery products 1995, 7831/94 relating to passive gear, 8612/94 relating to the crisis in the fishing industry, 8187/94 relating to European aquaculture research, 9837/94 relating to the common organisation of the market in fishery products and aquaculture, 10082/94 and an unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum, dated 17th November 1994 relating to two amendments to the 1994 Total Allowable Catches and quotas, 9215/94 relating to the financing of health inspections, 9466/94 and 9467/94 relating to European Community and Greenland fisheries, 10991/94 relating to an amendment to the Technical Conservation Regulation, and the second Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum 9285/93 relating to fishing licences.*]

7 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the unnumbered Explanatory Memoranda submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 8th December 1994, relating to the renewal of fishing arrangements for vessels from European Community countries other than Spain and Portugal in Spanish and Portuguese waters, and for Portuguese vessels in the waters of those other countries and relating to European Community quotas for 1995 in the waters of Guyana; on 12th December 1994 relating to proposals for reciprocal access and 1995 quotas in the Baltic (with Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Russia) and with the Faroe Islands; proposals allocating European Community quotas for 1995 in the waters of Iceland and Greenland, and a proposal fixing catch possibilities in 1995 for North West Atlantic Fisheries Organisation waters; and on 13th December 1994 relating to total allowable catches for 1995 and proposals fixing 1995 opportunities and reciprocal arrangements relating to Norway; and supports the Government's intention to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities, and to protect the interests of British fishermen in these negotiations and in those providing for the integration of Spain and Portugal in the Common Fisheries Policy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

I make a plea from the Chair that there are exactly three hours and there is specific interest in the debate that follows, so I hope that we shall have short speeches from the Back Benches and not too long a speech from the Front Benches.

Mr. Jack: This is indeed an important debate on matters connected with fisheries and the common fisheries policy. However, before turning to the substance of the debate, I am sure that the House will share with me our sorrow at the tragic loss of Skipper McLeman's life at sea. Sadly, his was the most recent of those events which bring home all too clearly to us an indication of the hazards that face our fishermen as they go about their lawful vocation.

I hope that the House will indulge me for a moment on a happier note if I take the opportunity of sending my best wishes and congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on the announcement of his engagement. That was a joyous piece of news. He is destined, after the cold comfort of the debate, for warmer climes and I think that the whole House will wish him well.

This is a singularly important time for the British fishing industry. We shall be debating, among other things, the quantities of fish that we shall be able to catch next year, and the new arrangements for the full integration of Spain and Portugal into the common fisheries policy.

Among the many comments that I hear, it is sometimes said that the Government are in some way not fully committed to the future of the fishing industry. I shall rebut that line unequivocally.

There should be no doubt of the extent of the Government's commitment to the industry. We have had the challenge of bringing a better balance between, on the one hand, catching capacity of the fleet and, on the other, the quantity of fish available. To that end, we have a successful decommissioning scheme in its second of three years. We have already spent about £17 million and a further £8.3 million is available for 1995-96. In addition, we are investing nearly £3 million in grants for harbour developments to the benefit of the industry this year, and another £2 million is being spent on vessel safety grants.

It is often said that the question of enforcement and ensuring that people play by the rules is central to any policy such as the common fisheries policy. To that end, we are spending £17 million a year on air and sea surveillance to watch the activities of boats from all the members of the Community which fish in our waters. Our aim is to protect the long-term interests of the fish and our fishermen, and to ensure that the rules are observed and enforced.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): While the Minister is on the subject of enforcement, I wonder whether he may be in a position to give us a progress report on the negotiations with the Spanish Government about compensation due to Cornish boats for the acts of piracy that took place during the so-called tuna war in the summer?

Mr. Jack: May I say, in responding to the hon. Gentleman, that I shall be happy to give way, but I hope that the House will understand that that necessarily will mean that the time for other hon. Members will be affected.

To answer the right hon. Gentleman's question directly, I have personally spoken to the Spanish Minister Atienza about that, making a plea to him to discuss that matter with his industry, because obviously there may be a joint endeavour to settle matters. That point was reinforced by my right hon. Friend the Minister when he recently visited Spain, and I have subsequently had a personal discussion with the Spanish ambassador on that subject. Matters remain under consideration by the Spanish industry. They are aware of the strength of feeling on that specific matter, and I assure the hon. Gentleman that I will continue to pursue that as diplomatically as I can.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will not many of the aspects of policing and monitoring be deferred back to member states, and will we not be seeking Europe-wide monitoring and policing? The documentation that I have received says that member states will have responsibility, and Spain certainly has not been one of the countries in the European Union that has received praise for its monitoring of the position.

Mr. Jack: I am sure that later I shall mention Spain and Portugal, which are central to our considerations this evening, in relation to the question of enforcement. However, the hon. Lady will be aware that technical developments are currently being appraised. Satellite monitoring of vessels may, in the longer term, have great relevance to Europe-wide enforcement. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that the role of the coastal state is crucial in enforcement matters, and those are matters to which we attach much importance in terms of the money that we are spending.

Also in the long-term interests of the industry, we are spending £20 million a year on scientific research and assessment of our stocks, so that we can pursue policies designed to sustain the future of our industry. At the European level, we also benefit from a range of schemes, and soon many fishing communities will gain from the PESCA initiative. With a fund of about £28 million for the United Kingdom as a whole, that is designed to strengthen the onshore economy in respect of changes in the numbers of people employed in sea fishing.

In all that, the industry has also had its part to play. I place on record my appreciation of the industry's constructive contribution to the negotiations about Spain and Portugal. Its input has genuinely been much appreciated. That is a subject to which I shall return later.

I welcome the establishment of an industry task force on the difficult problem of fish marketing, which is to be led by the Sea Fish Industry Authority. That important initiative points the way forward to a means of helping the industry to increase its income. I look forward to the task force's report in the new year.

It is customary to hold fisheries debates at this time of the year, slightly before the December Council meeting of European Union Fishing Ministers. At that meeting, important decisions are generally taken on the total allowable catches, or TACs. Those deal with the situation for the forthcoming year and on the national quotas that are derived from them.

However, tonight's debate is on a wide motion, which will enable us to discuss all the common fisheries policy issues relevant to next week's Council. I recognise that many hon. Members will want to question me, and I shall be happy to give way in the terms that I have indicated.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, because he seemed about to leave the TACs to move on to other issues. Will he consider the position in the North sea coast of the Farne deeps and Fladdens nephrops fishery? If that is not separated off, many Northumbrian fishermen will not have the degree of access that they should have to a traditional fishery.

Mr. Jack: I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising that point and I understand its importance. He will be aware that, as a result of a representation that we received from north-east fishermen, we were able to intercede with the Commission to keep that nephrops fishery open—to argue effectively the case that the precautionary TAC had perhaps been set slightly too tightly—so that fishermen were able to complete their fishing. I shall certainly bear that point in mind. However, there are problems with the North sea stocks which I shall address in just a moment.

It is always the case that, unfortunately, the annual cycle of scientific assessment of stocks and the Commission's analysis of what is proposed by way of TACs and quotas gives us little time for scrutiny before the December Council.

This year, however, we face an unprecedented situation. All the TAC and quota documentation in preparation for the December Council was understandably prepared by the Commission on the assumption that Norway would be joining the European Community. Following the referendum on 27 and 28 November, all the documents had to be adjusted and that delayed the provision of definitive texts. I regret the inconvenience which that must inevitably have caused the House.

Agreement has now been reached with the Norwegians for those stocks in the North sea which are jointly managed with them. For the first three months of 1995 we shall work on the basis of the 1994 quotas.

Decisions on those stocks for the whole of 1995 will be negotiated with Norway by the end of March 1995. The available quotas for the rest of the year will then be determined taking account of the TACs decided and the provisional allocations made for the first quarter. A regulation providing a legal base for all that is one of the documents that will be before the Council.

The December Council will also be asked to settle in the usual way those TACs and quotas which are not jointly managed. I draw the House's attention to the overall trend of scientists' advice on the stocks and to the Commission's proposals for western waters.

Generally speaking, with a few exceptions, the scientists feel that stocks continue to be under considerable pressure. As a result, many of the TACs that the Commission is proposing for western waters are substantially lower than this year's levels. That affects a number of stocks of importance to our industry, including most of the important Irish sea stocks and the western hake.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Last year, the scientists said that there would be hardly any cod left in the Irish sea, yet this year there were extremely good catches. How could the scientists have been so out of touch with reality in the waters?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman puts his finger on a perennial problem in dealing with fish and science. When two or three fishermen are gathered together, the chances are that they will always say that the scientists are wrong because they are comparing their individual catches with the position last year. The scientists carry out an exacting European-wide monitoring operation to assess the take of fish on particular points on the map and compare it with the data that they received last year.

Fishing science is well informed, but no fishery scientist would argue that it is a precise activity. That is why, when we go to the Council, we listen carefully to all views, including those from the industry. Those matters are and will be fully discussed with the fishermen and I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that we will take their views into account. If he has a specific view from Northern Ireland, I shall be happy to include that in our assessment vis-à-vis our negotiations.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I have a specific view from the west of Scotland. The Clyde Fishermen's Association is particularly

[Mr. George Foulkes]

worried about the TACs for cod, haddock, whiting, saithe, hake, monkfish and megrim. The total allowable catch for some of those species is only 50 per cent. of what it was five years ago. That is decimating the fleet on the west coast. Many fishermen are decommissioning their boats. Girvan, a traditional fishing port, is now under a great deal of pressure. Will the Minister take account of all that and argue the case powerfully for an increase in the total allowable catch? I agree with the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor)—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House is most interested in who the hon. Gentleman agrees with, but he has already asked a question.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman tempts me to suggest that the solution to all fishing problems for this Minister would be to be able to re-enact the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Unfortunately, I am not endowed with those powers.

We examine all the arguments carefully. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point that when scientists suggest large cuts in particular quotas, in business terms that can be difficult for hard-pressed fishermen. I hope that he will understand that it would be folly not to take into account what the scientists say in reaching a view. It is all very well the hon. Gentleman shaking his head, but if we do not, as I shall point out in a moment, there can be disastrous results if a whole fishery collapses.

It would be folly and unwise if we did not heed what the scientists say. On the other hand, if there is good hard evidence so to do, we challenge the figures that are put forward and I shall obviously take his remarks into account at the Council next week.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Pursuant to the question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) and the reply he received, cod catches in Northern Ireland ports have been the best throughout the season of 1994, despite the 1991 prediction by scientists that they would be almost non-existent. Will the Minister take it on board that the quantity, size and all the attributes of the cod show that the scientists were wrong? When will he take cognisance of the practical experience of the fishermen against the theoretical evidence from the scientists?

Mr. Jack: Fishermen are involved in the discussion assessing the scientists' evidence. It is not done between scientists and fishery Ministers. Real fishermen are involved in assessing the calculations and I have certainly arranged for fishermen to go to our fisheries laboratory at Lowestoft to see exactly how the work is done and how the calculations are made. If the hon. Gentleman would like to go there I should be happy to arrange a day trip for him.

Mrs. Ewing: Is the evidence of the fishermen given equal weight with that of the scientists?

Mr. Jack: All measures are taken fully into account, but we are aware of the real impact that the announcement of any change in TACs and quotas have on fishermen and their livelihoods. I assure the hon. Lady that we consider those matters very carefully when we argue our case.

As I said a moment ago, it would be folly to ignore completely the advice of the scientists. A fishery off the east coast of Canada delivered something like 300,000 tonnes of cod catch a year and, because people ignored good advice on conservation of the stock, it collapsed with the loss of 20,000 jobs. It would be folly not to listen to scientists when taking these matters into account. We shall be negotiating within the hard reality of the state of the stocks to ensure the best available fishing opportunities for fishermen around our shores.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): What disturbs the industry so much are the sudden changes imposed on it. The fact that the proposed TAC for western hake is to be cut by 45 per cent. means that it is difficult for fishermen to plan. If we are constantly getting scientific advice, why do we have these sudden changes rather than perhaps a gradual change? Can the scientists not warn that there is likely to be a problem in the future so that small reductions in TACs could be implemented rather than the large cuts now being proposed?

Mr. Jack: It is fair to say that when we ask scientists—that is why it is right that politicians and others can challenge their findings—they are sometimes hard-pressed to provide a full explanation because what occurs can defy logic. They can only report their findings. They are measuring the position this year compared with what they found last year. Their work is based partly on their own observations at sea and partly on their analysis of the landings of fishermen. They also take into account the requirements and, using all that information, they calculate the right level of fishing effort to maintain a proper spawning stock biomass.

For all those reasons, including an assessment of the recruitment into a particular fishery, there can be some large fluctuations. These are the recommendations of scientists and, as I said to the hon. Lady a moment ago, we take into account other views. For example, I have received individual representations from fishermen about the hake stock. We will take them into account, and no doubt there will be quite a debate on that subject in the Fisheries Council. I understand the point made by the hon. Member for Pembroke.

The other major item on the agenda for the Fisheries Council next week is the integration of Spain and Portugal into the common fisheries policy. I hope that the House will bear with me if I explain how that matter has developed.

Spain joined the Community in 1986 with a big fleet of fishing vessels, but with strict limits imposed on where they could go and how many boats could be on the fisheries at any one time. Those rules put limits on Spain and Portugal which do not apply to other member states. They also provided that the Irish box arrangement would end on 1 January 1996 and that there would be a review of all the arrangements before that. As a result of the review in April this year, the Council agreed the sensible guidelines to be applied when Spain and Portugal are integrated into the common fisheries policy. The timetable for concluding agreement on the arrangements was established in the enlargement negotiations and was reconfirmed by the European Council in Essen last weekend. That means that future arrangements for Spanish and Portuguese integration into the common fisheries policy need to be settled by the end of this year.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Is there any truth in what is being said: that Spain wants access to western waters before it will agree to an enlargement of the European Union? If there is any truth in that, has a counter-arrangement been made so that Spain will be allowed into the western waters only when it has a better attitude towards its border with Gibraltar?

Mr. Jack: The timetabling arrangements for Spain were initially secured in the context of the EFTAn enlargement negotiations. During those negotiations, Spain secured language in the final text which indicated that the Fisheries Council should come to a conclusion on matters connected with the successor arrangement by the end of this year. I think that the remarks on the subject of Gibraltar are more appropriate for my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, and I shall certainly undertake to draw his attention to my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: I said that I would give way to the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Ewing: I am grateful to the Minister.

I am interested in the Minister's reference to the language of the text of the Spanish treaty. Perhaps we could return to that matter later. Will he, in the context of what was said at Essen, give an indication of what was meant when Mr. Gonzalez said that he had achieved everything that he wanted in the context of Spanish accession? Who said what to whom? What was the status of those exchanges and what exactly does it mean?

Mr. Jack: I was not there at the time, so I really cannot honestly answer the hon. Lady's question. I do not believe in giving unclear answers to straight questions. I would rather tell her straightforwardly that I did not have the pleasure of being at Essen. I cannot explain why the Spanish Minister went off in such a high propagandist tone when in fact what he got was simply an underpinning of the agreements within the EFTAn arrangements. I know of no deals being made at Essen, for the simple reason that, because there was no proposal to consider that particular matter, a deal could not have been made. I shall come back to the question of the Essen declaration in due course, because it is central to these matters, but I must give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Allason: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Will he at least state whether it is a fact that there was an agreement in the 1986 treaty of accession with Spain that Spain would not have full access to Community waters until 2002?

Mr. Jack: What was very clear in the treaty of accession was that the arrangements for the Irish box would end on 1 January 1992—[HON. MEMBERS: "1996."] I apologise. The question of whether matters could have been postponed until 2002 was considered and has been debated in the House, in the European scrutiny committee. Opposition Members shake their heads. I am sorry if they were not there. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) gave me a detailed quizzing on that point. She and I may still disagree, but the treaty of accession was fully debated, as she will see from columns 158 and 350 of *Hansard* of 4 December 1985. There was a question of the legal base and the timing. That was resolved by the Community's legal services. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) looks troubled. I am not surprised. This is perhaps the detail that he ignores in these matters. It was debated and the Community's legal services say that there was a proper basis for the matter to be considered in the terms now before the Council.

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): What the Minister says in relation to the Irish box is, of course, correct, but I do not believe that what he says in relation to the other waters is correct, and it is not the view of the House as a whole or, indeed, the legal advisers.

Mr. Jack: I was at the Council and the hon. Gentleman was not. I stand by what I said and what is on the record in *Hansard* in the House. I have made my views clear.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): To follow up the intervention from the hon. Member for Moray, it is no good the Minister saying that he cannot comment on what was said to whom and where at Essen because he was not there. He must have known that, given the strong statement about the Spanish getting everything that they wanted, the matter would be probed in the House. What inquiries has he made of the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary? Can he therefore categorically say that what the Spanish said was totally wrong, that there has been and that there will be no change?

Mr. Jack: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, when I give a straightforward answer that I was not present at any conversations that took place, I am not going to invent one. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, as my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) averred to earlier, was pressed on this matter in the House on Monday and made his position entirely clear. I inquired through the official channels as to what was agreed. What was agreed was the published text in the Essen statement, a copy of which is in the Library. The hon. Gentleman will have read it and understood the text that is in it. I cannot explain why Spanish politicians choose the language that they do. I suspect that the message that the hon. Gentleman has received has been more a media-based report than what actually happened. The fact of the matter is that a straightforward agreement was reached on the terms of the timetable, with some helpful language in it, which I will come on to.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: I have given way generously to the hon. Lady and would like, in deference to the House, to make a little progress.

As I said, as a result of the review, in April this year, the Council agreed the sensible guidelines to be applied when Spain and Portugal are integrated in the common fisheries policy. The timetable for concluding agreement on these matters was established in the enlargement negotiations and was reconfirmed by the Council in Essen

[Mr. Jack]

last weekend. That means that the future arrangements for Spanish and Portuguese integration into the common fisheries policy need to be settled by the end of the year.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The House will accept that, as a man of honour, the Minister knows of no conversation. Is he confident in his own mind that if an impasse is reached next week at the Fisheries Council the Spanish will not call in some deal that was done with Prime Minister Gonzalez and Chancellor Kohl last Saturday or Sunday?

Mr. Jack: I am sure that if the Fisheries Council does not come to an agreement next week, I may not be enjoying a turkey at Christmas. The Council might have to resume discussions, because, as I point out to the hon. Gentleman, it meets on 19 and 20 December and there are still a number of days left before the end of the year. He will also be aware, I am sure, that people always make contingency plans. It would not be the first time on which Europe had negotiated right down to the wire. There does seem to be a genuine effort being made to find a way forward on this matter. No deal was done. The words are there in the Essen declaration and they mean what they say. I will say more about that in a moment.

As required by the April guidelines, the Commission made proposals, but these were, in our view, enormously complex, bureaucratic and unenforceable as well as being based on dubious arithmetic and unsound assumptions. We rejected them and so did the rest of the Council. I am glad to say that the United Kingdom led the charge. Since then, no further official proposals have been made, but the presidency has been striving to find a better way forward and to reach agreement, at least on the elements of a compromise on the principles for integration. The essence of the presidency's latest thinking is that member states should draw up their own list of vessels entitled to fish in the various fisheries, work out the amount of fishing effort they need to catch fish there, and, if there is excessive effort, install a means for controlling it.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): My hon. Friend makes a great stand on behalf of Britain's fishermen under difficult circumstances. My hon. Friend may not be aware that my wife is called Rachel and that she comes from near Plymouth. He may, therefore, imagine my pleasure recently at seeing a fishing boat called the Lady Rachel from Plymouth—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, but I cannot hear what is being said by the Opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Sedentary remarks tend to put off hon. Members and they are not helpful. I hope that the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) has a short question for the Minister.

Mr. Robathan: My hon. Friend may not know that the Lady Rachel is currently tied up in Coruna because, although it is registered in Plymouth, it is a Spanish boat that fishes British quotas. My hon. Friend will know that we have previously opposed the Spanish taking our quota by registering boats in Plymouth. I hope that my hon. Friend will be fighting hard against the Spanish, because they do not have a record of good faith in fisheries policy.

Mr. Jack: On the latter point, I can well understand my hon. Friend's comments. On the former part of his remarks, he will be aware of the Factortame judgment. He will know that, sadly, despite our best endeavours, Anglo-Spanish boats have the opportunity to use British quotas to fulfil their fishing opportunities. I understand that that is still a matter of considerable concern in the industry, but it has now been settled.

Finding satisfactory arrangements is a difficult challenge. We have at all stages had extensive consultations with the industry. Even today I met industry leaders to bring them up to date with the latest developments. I have made clear to the industry and to the presidency the United Kingdom's objectives in the negotiations. We want a simple, non-bureaucratic scheme. We want one that allows our fishermen to take their quotas. It must be enforceable at reasonable cost and it must not put new constraints on our fishermen so long as their effort does not increase. We want proper protection for the Irish box. As I have said, there was never any question of its continuance. We need to find new management tools for western waters which will replace what is in the treaty. That is what I am negotiating for.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): My hon. Friend has given an admirable list of objectives. Will he go a stage further and assure me and my colleagues from the south-west that another objective is to give special protection to those areas of traditional fishing for our own fishermen? I am referring in particular to the area between Cornwall, Devon, Wales and Ireland. Will he assure me that he will fight for that and that he will vote against any proposal that does not secure it?

Mr. Jack: I have one or two words to say about the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris). My hon. Friend has raised an important point in the discussions so far. We have battled very hard in respect of the Irish box. It is worth pointing out that in the presidency's efforts so far to satisfy our requirements, it has conceded that the zones in the areas mentioned by my hon. Friend do require special protection. One of the successes is that already area VII a is indicated to be available for traditional fisheries and, therefore, closed to Spain. We seek to build on the base that we have established with area VII a and, as I have said, we wish to expand the area of protection as far as we can in respect of those very important fisheries which have long been the home of those who fish from our west coast ports. I understand my hon. Friend's point and I shall try to secure what he seeks.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives will understand that, as a negotiator, I will not at this stage tell the House or my hon. Friend—I am sorry to put it firmly—what the United Kingdom's position will be on this matter.

Mrs. Ewing: Why not?

Mr. Jack: If I go into the Council wearing a large badge that tells everybody which way I am going to vote, I will have given away my most precious negotiating position. It would be irresponsible and lunatic for me to go into the negotiation telling people my position. If the hon. Member for Moray has ever been a card player, she will know that the last thing she should do, if she is to have any chance of winning, is to show her hand to her opponents. My task is to win the game for Britain's fishermen. I am not in the business of giving our position away by declaring my negotiating hand.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): In previous statements about the Government's objectives the Minister has talked about no change in relative stability and no increase in fishing effort. He did not use those phrases in his list just now. Are they still part of the Government's objectives?

Mr. Jack: In the text that was agreed for the regulation in April, the maintenance of relative stability and the question of no increase in fishing effort were two of the underpinning principles. I did not rehearse the entire content of that regulation so I did not mention it. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman asked about that and I assure him that those fundamental principles of the common fisheries policy underpin the negotiations.

Mr. Harris: I understand my hon. Friend's point about not revealing his negotiating hand. Can he assure the House, my colleagues from the south-west and, above all, the fishermen of the south-west, that one of his objectives is to keep the Spanish out of not only area VII a but of areas VII f and VII g? Can he assure me that that is one of his objectives and that he will do his damnedest to achieve it?

Mr. Jack: I told my hon. Friend that we want to build on the concession already won about area VII a. I said that we want to extend the protection as widely as possible because those areas are within the terms of the current Irish box. I shall do my very best to include the areas mentioned by my hon. Friend. I must tell my hon. Friend very quietly that his amendment mentions area VII b. I assume that that was a typographical error. That shows that I have studied his amendment with great care.

Mr. Ainger: Is there not a fundamental contradiction in the Minister's negotiating position? If we accept that by 1 January 1996 the Irish box will disappear either in part or entirely, and that the basic list of some 200 Spanish vessels will come in to all or part of the Irish box, how can we maintain relative stability unless there is a massive reduction in fishing effort from British—that means south-western English, Welsh and Scottish—fishermen?

Mr. Jack: It is important to distinguish between the effect of relative stability and the question of fishing effort. Relative stability is the basic mechanism of calculating the key points in the allocation of stocks within the common fisheries policy. That is not the subject of these discussions, except that in the terms of the April agreement, the regulation makes it clear that relative stability must be maintained. There is no dispute about that among any of the participants in the discussion.

Fishing effort is a different matter. The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) talked about a Spanish fleet of 200 vessels. When the basic periodic list system was established, we saw a basic list of 300 Spanish vessels, of which, at any one time, 150 could fish. The Spanish have argued that the size of their fleet has diminished. It remains to be seen, however, what type of basic list or reference list system will be devised under the light-touch type regime that is being considered at the moment and under successive regimes. Clearly, that will be of particular importance in the determination of the amount of fishing effort to be applied in relation to stocks and quotas to be fished.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Will he assure me that, when he goes into the negotiations, he will bear in mind the interests of inshore fishermen? Will he take account of the fact that, if pressure is placed on the deep-sea fishing sector, by a process of osmosis that pressure will also be placed on inshore fisheries? Fishermen off Hastings have trouble from beamers that destroy their nets and whose engine sizes are far too large. We must ensure that our enforcement deals much more efficiently with engine sizes.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend is an assiduous campaigner on behalf of inshore fishermen in her constituency and I pay tribute to that. *[Interruption.]* Clearly, she has a lot of support in the House for that position.

Mr. Foulkes *rose—*

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman has had his share of my total effort. I must deal with the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait). I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman at this stage. My hon. Friend talked about the position of inshore fishermen. The 12-mile limit has been one of the benefits at least of the common fisheries policy. She will be pleased that, during the many long hours that we spent negotiating on the subject of Norway, the position of inshore fishermen was very much acknowledged. Sadly, those discussions did not lead to Norway's entry into the European Community, but I assure my hon. Friend that the position of coastal communities is important—

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): It is disgraceful.

Mr. Jack: I agree that it is disgraceful, but the point is that the question of inshore fishermen is taken fully into account. My hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye makes an important point.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Jack: In due deference to hon. Members, I feel that I should make a little progress. I shall give way a little later, so hon. Members will have to stay their hand. I think that they should listen to the rest of my speech, which is very good.

We want a simple, non-bureaucratic scheme that allows our fishermen to take their quotas. I have said that those are some of the key objectives for which I argued at the November Council.

Mrs. Ewing *rose—*

Mr. Jack: The hon. Lady will have to restrain herself for a moment.

I have personally lobbied with other Fisheries Ministers to explain the strength of the British case. I shall give way to the hon. Lady for the last time.

Mrs. Ewing: I appreciate that the Minister argued against bureaucratic controls—no one will take that away from him. In light of that, however, will he explain why the Council document refers to

"potential fishing effort . . . a reference list . . . and assessed effort"?

[Mrs. Ewing]

Has he any clear definition of exactly that what means for our fishermen?

Mr. Jack: There is a difference between talking about the elements that will have to form part of a new agreement and the way in which it will be worked out. It is clear from the Essen text, which contains the word "non-bureaucratic", that simplicity will be the order of the day. That is the stuff of the negotiation and any document that the hon. Lady may read is very much an interim document. I am not certain where she has obtained the document, but, wherever she obtained it, until the Council meeting, we will not know precisely the nature of the text that we shall discuss. I assure her, however, that we shall continue our fight against over-complex, over-bureaucratic systems that would bear down unfairly on our fishermen. As I said, that has been our negotiating stance all along and the hon. Lady has been kind enough to acknowledge that.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: I must give way to the hon. Member.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As the splendid fishermen of Southend-on-Sea have been sending me faxes all day containing the demands that I should make and how one should vote, will the Minister, to avoid any misunderstanding, make it abundantly clear to them that, although he will try hard and fight valiantly, he or any alternative Government could give no assurance that the decisions will be made by a majority vote of the Council of Ministers? Will he further appreciate that Southend fishermen have been slaughtered since the United Kingdom entered the EC and that many of them greatly sympathise and respect the good people of Norway, who voted to retain their freedom?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Member knows as well as I—*[Interruption.]* If he could contain himself for a moment, I might be able to give him an answer. He knows as well as I do that the matter will be dealt with by qualified majority voting. I am surprised that he did not advert to the singular success that we achieved in keeping the Spanish out of the North sea, which will be of particular interest to Southend fishermen. I am also disappointed that he does not advert to the fact that one of the things that we achieved in the reform of the licensing and quota management arrangements, which was of particular concern to me, was to protect the interests of small-sized boats in the Southend fleet by underpinning the non-sector. Those are important gains for his constituents and I should be happy to discuss them with him in detail.

Mr. Foulkes *rose—*

Mr. Jack: I must make a little progress.

As I have said and as hon. Members are perhaps sensing, the negotiations have been an uphill struggle. Despite our best efforts, the presidency has not been able to adopt our straightforward approach. As a result of our efforts, however, it has begun to focus on the United Kingdom's concerns and to accept that we mean business in pursuing them.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Jack: No, I want to make some progress.

Our position, however, was not helped last weekend when it became clear that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East had been putting it about that some shady deal had been done in the margins of the Essen Council and that our fishermen's interests had been scuppered. I know that because when I was waiting to be interviewed on BBC South West's parliamentary programme, I heard the hon. Gentleman telling the audience all about the matter but clearly indicating that he had no idea what was in the Essen text when he was putting that about. I was able to put him right and to tell him, as I have told the House, that no deal had been done and that the content of the Essen text is helpful to our cause.

As I have also said, the text contained the provision that future arrangements should be "non-bureaucratic". The hon. member for Edinburgh, East may have thought that he was gaining some short-term political advantage by what he was doing, but he well and truly frightened many fishermen into believing that the game was up. That was wrong.

Dr. Strang: The Minister is totally misrepresenting what I said in that programme. I suggest that he reads the transcript. I made it clear that I did not know what had been agreed at Essen, but I noted, as others had done, that the Spanish Prime Minister met Chancellor Kohl and said that he believed that he was in a position to lift his block on the new entrants because he had got what he wanted. I emphasise that I did not know what was agreed.

Mr. Jack: I should not want to be unfair to the hon. Gentleman, but I said that he told the audience that he did not have any idea of what was in the Essen text. I assume only that perhaps he and other politicians put it about in the media last weekend that some deal had been done when that was palpably not the case.

Dr. Strang: The Minister is an honourable man. I suggest that he now accepts that I did not suggest that any shady deal had been done.

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for clarifying that and obviously I accept his assurance that that was the case. All I say to him is that some of the questions that I was asked by the media showed that information had reached them that deals had been done. I had to spend my time refuting that view and making clear the contents of the Essen text.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): Does my hon. Friend agree that, as a result of many of the Opposition spokesman's comments on this matter, much concern has been expressed in the industry and unnecessarily so? Does he also agree that that has partly come about as a result of the hon. Gentleman's ignorance about these matters? Before the hon. Gentleman makes statements like that in public, he should learn a bit more of his brief.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend makes his own point. I rang fishing sector leaders at the weekend to give them a personal assurance about what had happened in relation to the Essen text to calm the position down.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: I must give way to the hon. Gentleman, or he will blow up.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to the Minister. I want to calm the position down as well. My hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) asked about the criteria for the scheme, which the Minister described. The Minister—who I am not sure is listening—said that one of the criteria was enforceability at reasonable cost. How does he envisage enforcing the scheme when an armada of 150 or 200 Spanish boats—

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): There are 220 boats.

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend corrects me. How does the Minister envisage enforcing the scheme when an armada of 220 boats comes into the Irish sea in the Firth of Clyde? How will he possibly ensure that that Spanish armada abides by the agreements that have been made by him and his colleagues?

Mr. Jack: We must keep matters in perspective. The fishing industry is valued at about £500 million a year, and we already spend in total about £50 million on the industry. Enforcement is an important part of that expenditure. We must balance expenditure against objectives. We shall examine enforcement in the light of what is ultimately agreed.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jack: No. I must make some progress.

Amendments have been tabled to the motion—

Mr. Marlow: Before my hon. Friend moves on—

Mr. Jack: No. I want to make some progress.

Mr. Marlow: I shall be brief.

Mr. Jack: Very well.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful. How will it be possible to give the Spanish and Portuguese fish from British waters without reducing the amount of fish that is available for British fishermen in British waters? How will it be possible to satisfy the Spanish and the Portuguese without causing a grave injustice to British fishermen?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman might have been right if that was what we were going to do. I said that relative stability would be maintained. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not aware that Spain already has quotas in the western waters and that there is no intention of increasing them. Portugal does not fish there.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Will my hon. Friend give way on the issue of enforcement?

Mr. Jack: No. I shall make some progress. I may be returning to enforcement.

I fully understand the problem that my hon. Friends the Members for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) and for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) have raised through their amendment. I explained only a few moments ago our attitude towards the assurances that have been sought for protection in the areas mentioned in their amendment. I hope that I have convinced my hon. Friends of the Government's negotiating endeavours and that they will be able to support us tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor)—I am glad that he is still in his place—tabled an amendment which was not selected. I merely say that the amendment is not relevant to the debate as discussions are taking place in the context of the common fisheries policy.

The substance of the Scottish Nationalists' amendment has been dealt with in earlier debates. They know the Government's views. We agree, of course, with the importance of proper policing for whatever measures are adopted.

The amendment of the Liberal Democrats is interesting. I re-read last night the report of the debate on the accession of Spain and Portugal. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) was one of only two Members to say anything in the debate about fishing. When he reviewed the position of Spain and Portugal in that context, he congratulated the Government on the negotiations and on what had been achieved and said that it was a difficult matter. He said that he recognised that a good job had been well done.

We have explained the biological sensitivity of the Irish box to the Commission and the presidency. We are already using every means to secure the interests of our fleet, and we recognise the importance of enforcement. We have been promoting the point. Liberal Democrats should not feel uncomfortable about supporting the Government's motion this evening.

Before I mention the Opposition's amendment, which has been selected, I shall remind the House of what the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said in Committee in December 1985 about Spanish and Portuguese accession. He said that the Opposition welcomed the accession of Spain and Portugal and described it as the "right move" for the Community and the applicant states. He said that the Opposition took that view because they recognised the "merits" of the two new democracies joining the rest of Europe and facing "Europe's problems with us." He added that the Opposition did not welcome accession "blindly, ignorantly or oblivious" of the difficulties and anxieties. That implicitly acknowledges that difficult issues would face us all over integrating Spain and Portugal fully into the European Community. We are facing those difficulties now and they cannot be ignored. The difficulties must be resolved.

It is clear from those remarks that the Opposition of the day knew exactly what they were signing up to and exactly what was in the list of forthcoming attractions.

[Mr. Jack]

The present Opposition, like the rest of us, must recognise that the solution lies within a European context. Much of the language in their amendment is compatible with the Government's negotiating position. But the text is not helpful in three specific ways.

First, the amendment introduces into our considerations an irrelevant point about days at sea. That is not what we are negotiating about. Secondly, on the reference to the Irish box, will the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East accept that I will do all in my power to find ways of protecting as much of the box as I can? I would say that despite the specific reference in the accession treaty to the box vanishing at the end of 1995, our firm negotiating stance has already won a concession from the presidency that area VII a can remain exclusively open to those who have traditionally fished there. I shall build on that in the negotiations. Thirdly, the amendment calls for access to be restricted to vessels with an historic record in the western waters. That would not be acceptable to our industry if, as would certainly be the case, the rule would also be applied to United Kingdom vessels.

I say quietly to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East, who takes a keen interest in these matters, that his proposal could well rule out the possibility of boats from the east coast prosecuting a fishery, in his terms, on the west coast. There is danger in what he suggests.

In the light of all that I have said and of my desire to ensure that the House sends this Minister in to bat in Brussels with a best chance of achieving a good result for our industry, I ask the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East, in the light of my remarks, whether he really wants to press his amendment.

I have made it clear that our objective is to reach agreement in the Council next week. I do not want to hold things up. We want to see whether it is possible to assist the presidency to meet the deadline and to stay within the terms of the Essen declaration.

Mr. Steen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jack: No.

The negotiations are likely to reach a conclusion next week, but it is possible that that may be on the basis of a text that leaves more to be done under the next presidency.

Mr. Steen: I am glad that my hon. Friend knows where his friends are. May I remind him that currently Spain is receiving about £6.5 million a day from the European Community and that £4.5 million goes from Britain to the Community every day. When he goes to negotiate, will he satisfy himself that cross-border enforcement is as strong as it can be? There is no point in agreeing anything if other countries do not enforce what has been agreed. The concern on Conservative Benches is that we always follow what we say we will do when other countries enact laws and do absolutely nothing to implement them.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend has put his finger on a central issue. I have made it clear to Commissioner Paleokrassas on more than one occasion that I will not tolerate any no-go areas when it comes to the Community investigating the way in which the common fisheries policy is being implemented. It is vital that once the matters before us are decided, enforcement is considered seriously and that we are convinced that the necessary measures will be properly administered. I realise that unless I can convince our fishing industry that there can be proper policing, it will, however hard I negotiate, not have confidence in the final outcome. I give the House the assurance that I shall do all in my power to pursue enforcement and adherence to the rules as vigorously and as completely as I possibly can. These are important issues.

Mr. Foulkes: How will the Minister do that?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman, who is a member of a party which espouses the cause of Europe, will understand that negotiating in a European context is one of the ways in which we must proceed. It is a question of arguing our case and of making it clear that, on the question of enforcement, we will not accept no for an answer. Obviously, we shall examine our own enforcement in the light of the agreement; I know that it is central to the issue, and I shall pursue the matter with all the strength at my disposal.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I felt that my hon. Friend was rather dismissive of the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and supported by seven of his hon. Friends. My hon. Friend the Minister said that the amendment was not relevant. How can he say that, given that it was tabled by eight Conservative Members of Parliament and is undoubtedly supported by thousands of British fishermen?

Mr. Jack: I said it was not relevant for the simple reason that it discusses a solution to the problem outside the terms of the common fisheries policy. We are discussing the problem within the terms of that policy. The amendment uses some amazing language, concluding with the words

"thereafter to negotiate, where appropriate, reciprocal arrangements with other nations in the interests of the British fishing industry."

That is rather sloppy language, which gives no indication of the way in which the trick would be pulled. What, in the circumstances posited by the amendment, would we say to Spain if it said to us, "If you are outside the common fisheries policy, it is open door, boys: in we come"? It is an open-door policy, and I cannot associate myself with such logic. That is why the amendment is not relevant; I believe that we must negotiate within the terms of the common fisheries policy.

Throughout the negotiations I have wanted to stay in the closest touch with fishermen. I have told them frankly how matters have been progressing, and I have taken their wishes into account as fully as possible. The industry has set Ministers a tough negotiating brief because, understandably, it has stuck to its preference for what it considers an ideal solution. It wants the toughest possible restrictions on Spain, no new constraints on itself and continuation of the full protection of the Irish box after its expiry date. I pursued that approach because it was sensible to do so: it enabled me to gain understanding for the United Kingdom's position and it has been valuable to me to be able to point to the unity of the industry.

The time has now come for us to negotiate—as we will next week—on a new document that the presidency will table. I have made it clear to the industry, and I repeat now, that on an issue such as this, which is subject to qualified majority voting, to fail to negotiate is to be sidelined and to lose all influence over what is ultimately decided. We will not put ourselves in that position; it would not be in the industry's interest, the fishermen's interest or the national interest. We will do all that we can to assist the Fisheries Council to reach a conclusion, but above all we will do everything possible for the interests of our fishermen from all parts of the United Kingdom. We will negotiate, to the best of our ability, a successful conclusion to these vital matters.

8.2 pm

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): I beg to move amendment (a), to leave out from "Norway" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'supports the industry in its opposition to government policy on days at sea restrictions; calls on the Government to ensure that the UK fishing industry does not lose fishing opportunities in order to accommodate Spanish and Portuguese vessels; urges that there should be no increase in Spanish and Portuguese fishing effort in UK waters and that access should be confined to vessels with a historic trade record in UK waters; recognises the importance of the Irish Box to protect threatened stocks and believes that it must be replaced with comparable measures which take into account the historic rights of established fishing communities and their traditional fishing patterns; recognises the pressure on fish stocks in UK waters and the need for a sustainable policy based on effective conservation measures; and calls on the Government to do all in its power to secure the effective enforcement by all member states of Common Fisheries Policy conservation measures.'.

As the Minister has reminded us, this is the main fisheries debate of the year; indeed, it is often the only one. It precedes the December meeting of the Fisheries Council, at which a number of important decisions are made on, in particular, total allowable catches and quotas. As the Minister pointed out, on this occasion a major decision will be made about the arrangements for Spanish and Portuguese integration into the common fisheries policy.

I wrote to the Leader of the House some time ago to point out that half a day is an unacceptable amount of time to allow for the main fisheries debate of the year, given the industry's importance to so many communities. Certain communities are particularly dependent on it. Some people will think of Hull and Aberdeen for historical reasons. Those towns are still very involved in fishing, and especially in fish processing; but we should also consider fishing communities in small towns such as Brixham, Falmouth and Newlyn on the south coast, Milford Haven in Wales, Ardglass and Kilkeel in Northern Ireland and Mallaig and Ullapool in Scotland. I could name many more communities that depend on the industry. It is vital to those communities that we make the right decisions—that we do not allow our stocks to be exhausted and long-term fishing opportunities to be diminished for them, and for future generations.

Another reason why it is important for us to have a proper debate is that no industry is more regulated than the fishing industry. Inherent in the industry is the fact that the Government determine the opportunities, and have a major impact on the industry. It is even more regulated than agriculture. There is good reason for that: technological advance has been such that our stocks could be diminished or even exhausted. Government—I use the word to apply to European institutions as well as to our domestic Government—have a responsibility to implement and enforce conservation measures to protect stocks, and a responsibility for the long-term future of the communities which I mentioned and the country as a whole.

Let me refer to some developments in conservation that have taken place over the past few years before I deal with the major issue of Spanish access. The European Union has agreed that all member states should comply with multi-annual guidance programmes. We are expected to reduce our fishing effort by 19 per cent. by the end of 1996, compared with the 1992 level. One way in which to approach that target—the most efficient way, some would argue—is to establish a substantial decommissioning scheme.

I do not want to make a meal of this, because we have been over it time and again. Towards the end of the 1980s, however, we engaged in debate after debate: hon. Members on both sides of the House who represented fishing communities urged the Government to introduce a major decommissioning scheme as other countries in the European Community—as it was then—were doing, thus securing money from the Community for decommissioning.

Many hon. Members will recall the repeated refusals of the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), now Secretary of State for the Environment. He simply would not accept the case for a decommissioning scheme. We have such a scheme now, but it is too small. That is certainly the industry's view. I appeal to the Government to think again about the possibility of an enlarged and bolder scheme, which will be necessary if we are to achieve the multi-annual guidance programme target. It is important that we achieve that target. As the Minister will understand, if we do not do so by the end of 1996 we may find that we are ineligible for European Union financial support for a range of fishing measures.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Strang: I shall do so sparingly. I am keen to let others speak.

Mr. Mans: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He mentioned a larger decommissioning scheme. How much more money does he think would be appropriate to make it effective, and what effect does he think it would have on the fishing communities that he mentioned?

Dr. Strang: The answer to that is in the *Hansard* report of last year's debate. If the hon. Gentleman takes the trouble to read it, he will get a very precise answer.

I take the hon. Gentleman's point: decommissioning is not a panacea. It has a part to play, however. We can keep the rest of the industry viable only if we take out a certain amount of capacity, so that what is left operates profitably. Decommissioning is not the only way in which we can achieve our target, but the industry is united about the case for a better decommissioning scheme. It has also been united over the years in opposing the Government's proposed compulsory tie-up scheme—the proposed days-at-sea restrictions. That is why the amendment refers to it. The reference relates not to Spanish access, but to an important issue that is still hanging over the industry.

I do not think that, in the last 10 or 20 years, any issue has aroused such anger and opposition in our fishing communities as the proposed compulsory tie-up scheme. When the current Secretary of State for Education took over as the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food with the Minister of State, they inherited the policy and

[Dr. Strang]

they announced that they would reconsider it. Indeed, they postponed the implementation of the days-at-sea restrictions, and it is worth recalling that if that postponement had not taken place and the scheme had not been challenged in court, the days-at-sea restrictions would have been in operation from 1 October this year. There was much hope in the industry that the new team of Ministers would abandon the policy of restrictions and adopt an alternative approach to reducing our fishing effort.

Ministers invited the industry to submit its own proposals, and I believe that the Minister of State congratulated the industry on the lengths to which its representative organisations had gone to produce conservation proposals, sometimes even encountering difficulty with their own members—I am glad to see that the Minister is nodding. However, the Government and the industry are now going to the European Court, still on the issue of compulsory tie-up. There has been no response yet from the Government to the proposals made by the industry, although, if my memory serves me correctly, those had to be in by the end of September 1993.

That is unsatisfactory. There is a vacuum, and the Government should be implementing conservation policies to defend our stocks throughout British waters. I appeal to the Minister and the rest of the Government to think again. How can it be right for us to continue with that hiatus? What sort of spectacle does it present for our industry and our Government to be fighting it out in the European Court of Justice?

Conservation measures work only if they have the support and co-operation of the industry, and the Government's proposals on days-at-sea restrictions did not have that support. Indeed, it is clear that in the form in which they were suggested, they will never have support, so I ask the Government to think again on that important issue.

On some things we agree, and there is no dispute. I accept without question the fact that the Minister has to take scientific advice on levels of total allowable catch, on quotas and conservation, and so on. Surely we cannot go on for another year without an agreement, still awaiting the proceedings of the European Court of Justice. I say to the hon. Gentleman, "Be bold; abandon the whole idea of days-at-sea restrictions and sit down to talk to the industry on the basis of its proposals." Let us go forward with an approach to conservation that the whole House can support.

As the Minister has rightly said, the major issue facing the Government, the House and the Council concerns the arrangements for the incorporation of Spain and Portugal into the common fisheries policy. Let us start by being clear about the importance of what is at stake. Our waters are crucial—the Irish box, the south-western approaches, right up the west coast and beyond the north-west of Scotland. Those are vital fishing grounds for our people and our communities. They must be protected.

The stocks there are already under enormous pressure. That is why Spain made the agreement on the Irish box in relation to the treaty of accession, and it is why there are limits on the Spanish vessels allowed to fish from the so-called restricted list in those waters. The Minister of State knows better than I that one has only to examine the quota figures to realise what pressure there is on the stocks. It is vital that nothing should happen next week to do long-term damage to those stocks. Of course, any system that is agreed will not come into operation until 1 January 1996, but once it is agreed it will be in place for a long time.

That is what we have to defend. I think that we agree about the threat. It is not unfair to say that the Spanish vessels operating in our waters have not demonstrated a willingness to comply effectively and rigorously with conservation measures—and that is putting it mildly. We have seen example after example. There is a lot at stake, and there is an entirely legitimate concern that any increase in the number of Spanish vessels operating in our waters would do enormous damage over a period to our stocks, and eventually would severely curtail the fishing opportunities and the economic well-being of some of the communities in the south and south-west of England, in Wales, in Northern Ireland and right up to Scotland.

Sir Teddy Taylor: What can we do about it?

Dr. Strang: That is a good question, and I shall come to the point. Where are we? We already have the treaty of accession. I do not want to get into an argument about the position in the year 2002, but it is certainly not in dispute that the Irish box had to be renegotiated, because the arrangements automatically fell at the end of 1995. What is important now is what happened at the end of last year and in the early months of this year.

As the Minister has said, those discussions were linked to the question of Norwegian entry. None the less, important decisions were taken, as a result of which we now have a timetable that demands an agreement on all the arrangements that will govern the access of Spanish vessels to our waters.

As I said to the media at the weekend, I do not know what happened at Essen. However, I know that the Spanish Prime Minister, with the support of his Parliament, wrote to President Kohl saying that Spain would block the access of the three new member states if it did not secure a satisfactory deal on fishing. I believe that the Minister will confirm that that threat has not been lifted. The nearest that Spain has come to lifting it was when its Foreign Minister said yesterday that he was 99 per cent. certain that his country would get a deal that would make it unnecessary to carry out the threat. But the threat is still on the table.

There is an agreement whereby there has to be a settlement by the end of the year, the Spaniards are threatening to block the access of new member states if they do not get an acceptable deal, and provided that the arrangements made are within the terms of the treaty—no doubt they will be—the decision can be made on a majority vote.

Given what the Government agreed in the earlier Councils this year, they seem to have boxed themselves into the necessity to reach a decision next month by majority vote. The only justification for their having done that must be that they can mobilise the support that they need in the Council to secure a satisfactory deal for the British people. It would be utterly unacceptable for the Government to be outvoted in the negotiations. Surely it would be unthinkable if we ended up by accepting a vote against us.

I shall now respond in part to the amendment to which the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) has put his name, although I am sure that he did not mean that amendment to carry such an implication, as it mentions voting. It will not be good enough for the Government to come back to the House and simply say, "We voted against the agreement." Given the way in which the Community works, the basis for what the Government have already agreed can be justified only if they are confident that they can muster the support in the Council at least to block a bad deal and, it is to be hoped, to ensure that there is an arrangement that is satisfactory for our country as a whole.

Mr. Jack: When we managed to sideline the wholly unacceptable proposal by the Commission in September, we set about mustering support to ensure that the arguments and arrangements moved closer to a United Kingdom agenda than the original position. The fact that no decision was reached on the matter last November was a sign of the success that we achieved. We shall continue to negotiate and to seek all possible support for the simple, non-bureaucratic, straightforward, light-touch regime that our industry will understand.

Dr. Strang: I accept that. No one is criticising the hon. Gentleman for his efforts to keep close to the industry. Indeed, recent decisions have been made rejecting the Commission's initial compromise—although of course, that is still on the table—and subsequently the German presidency's "mark 1" compromise. No one is faulting the Minister of State for the way in which he handled himself then. I was referring to decisions taken earlier in the year, associated with Norwegian entry, which have meant that we are almost certainly boxed in and have to settle the matter next week.

I shall make my final point now because many hon. Members want to speak in the debate. I believe that the Opposition amendment gets it right. If we accept that our stocks are already under pressure, and that fishing in our waters should not increase, and if we are to protect the interests of our own fishermen, who traditionally fish in those waters, we cannot have an increase in Spanish fishing there. Given the track record of the Spanish on conservation, the only effective way in which to achieve that is to control the number of vessels in those waters tightly. Indeed, logically, to say that there can be no additional fishing is to say that there can be no more Spanish vessels.

Surely the fairest way in which to control the Spanish vessels is to say that those vessels that will continue to be allowed to fish in those waters—obviously, I am not referring to the new arrangements in the Irish box, where we hope that the Minister will negotiate to continue to keep vessels out of that general area—are those that have a historical track record in those waters. That is not incompatible, I would argue, with Spanish integration into the common fisheries policy. Indeed, we have only to look at the latest proposal of a new list of vessels, or the Shetland box, to see that there are plenty of precedents for operating on that basis.

The Labour party has laid down the minimum conditions which have to be met. They have the support of the fishing sector throughout the United Kingdom. There has been much speculation about whether, somehow, the amendment has been drafted to undermine the Government, to embarrass the Government. That is not the issue at all in this debate. The issue is quite clear. It is about protecting a vital national interest. It is about defending our long-term future.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the hon. Gentleman explain why the British Labour Members of the European Parliament have had to invoke a conscience clause so that they would not support Spanish accession to the European Parliament?

Dr. Strang: Frankly, to come up with that in the context of this debate is a bit rich. The position, as I understand it, is that the Scottish National party is against the integration of Portugal and Spain into the common fisheries policy. I have just been explaining that we accept the principle of Spain's accession and we believe that our amendment is quite consistent with that. The hon. Lady should not be complaining because British Labour MEPs and one SNP Member of the European Parliament happen to be voting together on the issue.

Our amendment lays down the minimum required to defend the long-term interests of our fishing communities and I urge all hon. Members to support it.

8.21 pm

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I recognise that at next week's Fisheries Council, the Minister faces a very difficult task. He has not only to reconcile the British sector and regional interests with the requirements of the common fisheries policy, but on that occasion, he has to take into account the added difficulties and complications associated with the accession of Spain and Portugal. I have to admit that as a Member of this House who voted for UK membership of the European Community in 1971-72 and who still believes that it is in our national interest to be at the centre of the European decision-making process, I would not use the example of the common fisheries policy as one of Europe's success stories. I say that with genuine regret. Indeed, since it was hastily contrived, just prior to our entry, with the proposal for rights of automatic access to the beaches of member states for all fishing fleets, the common fisheries policy has lacked a strategy and a direction.

For the past 10 years or so, attempts have been made at reform and the defining of objectives. Those have usually resulted in short-term remedies that have failed to address the underlying problems and weaknesses. That means that today we have a common fisheries policy which, frankly, is a shambles because it lacks cohesion and direction. It is difficult to monitor and virtually impossible to implement and police.

Given that unsatisfactory background, one may have been forgiven for thinking that, with the accession of Spain and Portugal, an opportunity had arisen for a basic review and assessment of the fisheries policy. One has to accept, however, that that will not happen. I must say that I have—sadly—come to the conclusion that existing and proposed arrangements cannot go on indefinitely. I do not say that lightly to my hon. Friend the Minister. A crunch will come. I do not know now what specific set of circumstances will trigger it off, but the common fisheries policy as we know it today will not survive.

Meanwhile, next Monday, Fisheries Ministers will continue with the present approach of seeking to accommodate new problems and requirements within the context of the present unsatisfactory framework. Obviously, we all look to the Minister to secure and

[Mr. Robert Hicks]

confirm certain objectives for the UK fishing sector. Those include—they have been mentioned this evening—the safeguarding of fishing opportunities for our fishermen and the conservation of fish stocks backed by enforcement. This time, of course, there is the added complication of Spanish accession.

In that context, my hon. Friends the Members for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) and I have tabled an amendment which, in effect, seeks two bottom-line assurances from our hon. Friend the Minister. We call on the United Kingdom Government to reject any attempt by either the German presidency or the European Commission to impose further bureaucratic controls on United Kingdom fishing vessels. That, of course, is a direct reference to the days-at-sea restrictions, on which I, like many other hon. Members from all parties, wish that Ministers would give a definitive response and say that, as far as UK legislation is concerned, that proposal is dropped once and for all.

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): My hon. Friend will remember the night when the orders for the conservation measures—days-at-sea and tie-up—were brought before the House. We may not have been in this situation tonight, waiting on a European Court ruling, had Labour and Liberal Democrat Members—

Mr. Austin Mitchell: What about Conservative Members?

Mr. Coe:—bothered to maintain their discipline on a three-line Whip after 10 o'clock to come along and vote against the measures.

Mr. Mitchell: All the sheep are over there.

Mr. Coe: You cannot have it both ways. The majority that night was far smaller than the number of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues who did not stay behind to vote the measures down.

Mr. Mitchell: How did the hon. Gentleman vote?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): If the hon. Gentleman on the back row wishes to catch my eye at a later stage, he had better keep a little quieter now.

Mr. Hicks: I know that on the occasion to which my hon. Friend referred, he, our hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives and myself, who all represent Cornish constituencies, voted against what we thought were ill-conceived Government proposals. Nevertheless, we were certainly heartened by the Prime Minister's statement in the House on Monday when, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives, he confirmed that the summit had agreed in its conclusion that a non-bureaucratic solution would have to found to meet the fishing requirements.

The second requirement is that, given the importance of fishing to the regional economy of Devon and Cornwall, the United Kingdom must not lose fishing opportunities to accommodate Spanish vessels, especially in areas of the Irish box which are not traditional fishing grounds for Spanish vessels—indeed, to the best of my knowledge, they have never yet ventured there to fish—but which are the traditional fishing grounds of south-west fishermen.

That seems to be a reasonable requirement to ask of my hon. Friend the Minister on behalf of my hon. Friends from Cornwall and myself. We look to the Minister to persuade his Council colleagues of the validity of our arguments, which are shared by a much wider section of the House of Commons. The Council should not ignore regional requirements and the political, economic and social significance of traditional fishing patterns and methods. My hon. Friend the Minister should be very robust in his approach next Monday. If, by chance, his colleagues in the Council of Ministers should not be persuaded by the validity of his arguments, my hon. Friend should stand by not only our fishermen but the regional economies of which fishing is such an important component part.

8.31 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): It is rather good to see the comparative interest in and high attendance at this debate. It is even better that, at last, we have a three-line Whip for a fishing debate. It is about time we had such a concentration of interest.

The debate is taking place at a time when I have never seen the fishing industry in a worse state. Morale has collapsed. The industry feels that the Government have given up on it. Because the Government could not impose their will on the industry and get the days-at-sea limitation that they wanted, they now hope that the fishing industry will die and go away. The Government are using the fishing industry as a trade-off in Europe.

We have no sign of a Government strategy for the support, encouragement, development and improvement of our fishing industry. It desperately needs a testament of Government support and interest. It needs protection from intensifying competition, but it is receiving nothing. There has been no response to the industry's pleas. It is important for the Minister to listen occasionally to the debate. He might notice that we have not even had a proper response to the conservation plans that the industry put to the Government as an alternative to the days-at-sea limitation. There was a meeting four months after the plans were presented, but nothing has happened. The plans have fallen into a pool of silence. All proposals for encouraging fishing seem to fall into such a pool.

I am particularly concerned about the industry in Grimsby. Our fleet is shrinking below the critical mass that is needed to underpin facilities and, in particular, the improvements that are now taking place in landing and market facilities in Grimsby. Millions of pounds are being spent when the fleet is shrinking and is probably getting too small to underpin or support those facilities. The fleet is struggling to continue because catches are down, prices do not provide the necessary income, and there is a threat to the financial stability not only of some vessels but of some firms in Grimsby. That will cause disintegration. A failure in fishing has knock-on effects on suppliers, engineers and the rest of the industry. Everybody in fishing is in debt.

That shrinkage could cause a house-of-cards collapse in fishing. I dread that happening. That is why the Government must make a commitment and provide backing and encouragement for the fishing industry. It is a matter not just of negotiating in Europe, but of keeping a vital, active fishing industry going, and the Government do not seem to be interested. Every other European Government are doing more to support, encourage and back their fishing industries.

Grimsby will be particularly badly hit next year by the reduction in the plaice quota and the 47 per cent. reduction in catches. The scientists got it all wrong. They estimated an increase a couple of years back, but suddenly drastically cut it, taking out the consequences of their own mistake on the fishing industry. The result is that the Grimsby fishing industry, for which plaice is our second catch and which was accustomed to catching between 5,000 and 10,000 tonnes a year, will suddenly be reduced to catches of 2,000 tonnes of plaice a year. That will be the quota.

At the same time, non-sector vessels, the big-beam trawlers—they are big boats—will be upping their record, catching more plaice, and getting a better record in plaice at the expense of traditional fishing boats from Grimsby. That is an unreasonable balance between the two sectors of the industry. Grimsby is suffering because of the reduction in the plaice quota. There is a need to encourage and build not only the Grimsby industry but the national industry. We need a national plan for fishing. We need incentive, vision, encouragement and stimulus to invest in the industry.

I now refer to the wider issue of Spanish accession, about which the Minister talked at length. I must say a word of congratulation and encouragement to him—I mean it sincerely—because he is learning fast and coming out very strongly in defence of the industry. I say that because there was a bad start, which was the days-at-sea limitation, which alienated the British industry, and then the agreement in principle to allow the Spanish full access to the CFP. With such a bad start, it is difficult to recoup lost ground. In all sincerity, I must say that the Minister is working hard at recouping that ground. He started from a difficult position, but he is strenuously defending the claims and the position of the British industry in the Spanish negotiations.

Yet we are in an impossible negotiating position when it comes to Spain, because the terms of Spanish accession in 1986 were that Spain brought no great additional stocks or waters to the Common Market pool, of which we provide the great bulk. Eighty per cent. of stocks in the more valuable species are provided by Britain. Spain brought a huge fishing fleet, which doubled the fishing fleet and pressed on a pool to which it made no great contribution in terms of fish. In other words, if British and other European fishing industries have to be cut, and if our effort and the number of vessels are to be reduced, that is to make way for a Spanish fleet that is far too big.

The importance of the agreement was that there was a 16-year period of adjustment, during which it was clear that the Spanish fleet had to be massively cut. That period has effectively been shortened, as has been pointed out. That is the reason why our fleet is being cut. The overcapacity is not ours—it is theirs, yet the consequences of that overcapacity fall on us. The consequence of that overcapacity carrying on fishing is a threat to our stocks—British stocks—which we contribute to the Common Market pool.

In that situation, it is daft to agree in principle to accelerate the full accession of Spain to the CFP. Perhaps the Minister was not his own master in the negotiations. I accept that he is subject to the decisions of Cabinet and other matters and that the British Government are always interested in gains on other fronts. Fishing is small beer for the British Government; they are not particularly interested in fishing. That has been our tragedy all along. The British Government are never sufficiently interested in fishing to fight on the issue. There is always something more important. In this case, it was more important to bring the three Nordic states and Austria into the Community. To achieve that aim, the Government were prepared to make concessions to Spain. But that has now been totally vitiated. It was also hoped that Spain would receive concessions in Norwegian waters when Norway became a member of the European Union. The basis of our concession has now collapsed because Norway has decided not to join.

The Norwegians were right in voting not to join the European Union. I visited Norway to tell them not to join; it was very sensible advice. I do not claim that Norway decided against joining as a result of my persuasiveness—not entirely because of it—but the Norwegians were worried that what had happened to our fishing industry would happen to theirs if they joined the Union. That was a major argument in Norway when membership of the Union was considered.

Norway is not joining the Union, but Spain still wants its pound of flesh. It has been given, in principle, full access from 1996. I accept that the Minister is making a brave stand, but he will not get anywhere because the principle has been conceded without regard to safeguards and how it would be implemented. That is a bad negotiating position from which to start.

We have 35 documents to refer to in the debate, but they contain nothing about next week's proposal. We have not been told what will be discussed. According to the Library brief, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has a restricted document entitled "First Thoughts Towards Proposals", which we are not allowed to see. The Minister has not even told us about it. There have been three presidency compromises that we have not seen and know nothing about. How can we discuss next week's proposal sensibly if we are not allowed to see all the documents?

We know that the Spanish Prime Minister has said that he has an agreement. I have no knowledge of the Spanish, but the Spanish Prime Minister would be daft to tell his people that he had an agreement if he did not have one. It makes me wonder who is telling the truth. I fear that we shall see a Government climbdown next week. There will be some agreement that will allow the Spanish fleet to fish for stocks with no total allowable catches and for non-pressure stocks in the North sea.

If a gradual build-up of the Spanish fleet is allowed, which will be policed by the relevant coastal state, it will impose a considerable burden upon our industry. The document talks about "non-bureaucratic administration". If that means that our vessels will not be burdened with a reporting system, I welcome it. But I fear that if Spanish vessels are allowed to fish in our area, we shall see a universal reporting system for everyone.

I fear that the limit of 150 vessels will be raised. It may be a gradual increase, but it will soon reach the eligible number of 220 vessels. There will be a gradual build-up in the number in the Irish box. Everyone is being threatened with a days-at-sea limitation. The point is that the Spanish fleet will be allowed full access to our waters under the common fisheries policy.

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

Spain has a massive fishing fleet. It has a £80 million programme, probably spanning five years, to rebuild its fleet when it should be shrinking. It will mean that the Spanish will dominate the seas and decimate fishing stocks. Once they are allowed access to our waters, there is no effective way of controlling the over-large fishing fleet of a nation which we know cheats. We know that Spanish vessels have false fish holds. We know that the fleet does not observe the quotas— it catches too much and hopes to get away with it— and that it fishes when it is not entitled to do so. Once the fleet is allowed to fish in the North sea for non-pressure stocks—turbot, dogs, monks and so on—our stock will disappear.

In a sense, the Spanish are the Commission's blue-eyed boys because they have fulfilled their multi-annual guidance programme. It has come down to that: we are well behind and we have not fulfilled our programme. The Spanish have counted all their fleet as gill-netters, for which they do not have to make any reduction— there is a 20 per cent. reduction for trawlers— and have therefore fulfilled their multi-annual guidance programme. The Spanish practices that were common in Fleet street are common in the Spanish fishing fleet.

The number of Spanish boats with access to our waters cannot be policed effectively. If they are not allowed access to the North sea, they will do what so many others are doing and set themselves up as British vessels and catch our fish that way. The Government will accommodate them by removing the Aliens Act amendment of 1919. That is a limitation which requires a vessel's crew to comprise at least some British officers. Spanish boats with entirely Spanish crews will be based in Britain and they will catch British fish.

Drake repelled the Spanish armada, but now a second armada is being allowed to play ducks and drakes with our policing system. I must warn the Minister of the consequences of allowing Spanish vessels to fish in our waters. The National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and Grimsby fishermen have told me and headlines in *Fishing News* warn that there will be anarchy.

If British fishermen see Spanish vessels taking catches in our waters effectively unpoliced—because they cannot be policed—our fishermen will not want to obey the rules either. They will not recognise the restrictions, they will not be kept in dock and they will not co-operate with the Government. The Government will be unable to police our vessels, so great will be the anger of British fishermen about the way in which they have been treated. British fishermen will be forced to cheat to survive or go bankrupt. They will be driven to it by Government policy.

That brings me to the issue raised by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), with which I agree, about the common fisheries policy. It is a farce for hon. Members to pretend that the common fisheries policy is effective. It has failed and it cannot be made to work effectively. There was enthusiastic argument in favour of it on the basis that fish do not carry national flags—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. This is not the first time that I have had to tell the House that I deplore what appear to be conversations across the Chamber while formal debate is taking place.

Mr. Mitchell: The policy is unworkable for several reasons. It emerged from a political decision-making process, and there are certain things that one cannot do in such a process. We need to get rid of industrial fishing. It is decimating the fishing stock and the natural feeding cycle of fish. It is producing by-catches on an unknown scale.

However, we cannot get rid of industrial fishing because the Danes will not let us. As long as their resistance continues, there is no possibility of taking steps that are in everyone's best interests—they are certainly in the best interests of our fishing stock.

The British Government never get their way in negotiations. They never really try, because they always have another objective. The Minister responsible for fisheries is always told, "Keep quiet on this one, lad, and we'll get our way on something else." The Foreign Secretary will come along in his reasonable and avuncular fashion, and the Minister will have to climb down on an issue that is basic to fishing but not basic to the Foreign Office or to the Government, who want to give way.

Fishing is always sacrificed on the altar of Europe, and it has been consistently since we joined the Community, particularly since the derogation ended in 1982. The majority of countries in Europe are against us. It is easy for Spain to satisfy its ambitions, its fleet and its fishermen at our expense because the stocks are ours. We contribute the overwhelming majority—I calculate 80 per cent.—of the most valuable species in this so-called Common Market pool.

How easy it is for everybody else to gang up on us. They say that they are sympathetic to poor old Britain, but that their fishermen must be kept fishing. When they are kept fishing, the policy fails again because there is no adequate way of policing catches. It is not in the interests of the other nations to control the landings of fish that have been caught in our waters, or to have an effective and proper reporting system.

For all the other countries care, their fishermen can exhaust and decimate our stocks, and that is what is happening. The fish are not properly controlled or policed at the port of landing, and as long as nation states do not enforce the rules, that will go on. We enforce them properly, and we conserve stocks. They do not, and that will go on. Shall we overrule them? We effectively have no veto. The Minister has said that he will fight next week, but, in the end, he will be overruled because it is in the interests of everyone else to overrule him. The member states will solve their difficulties—a present difficulty is that of the Spanish accession—at our expense. They catch British stocks, and it does not matter to them.

The only thing central to the common fisheries policy is common access; everything else is derogation and temporary regulation. The basic principle is clear—the others get their nets into our stocks. Any restrictions are temporary, and can be swept aside. They may well be swept aside in 2002, because what will the basic principle be then? All the derogations will be up for grabs, and they will continue only if they are kept by all member states.

The principle of common access, it has been argued, should apply in full. Austria and Luxembourg—even if they do not have fishing fleets—can set up fishing companies in this country, take over British fishing vessels and catch our stocks for us. That is the trap we are in. It is a Sisyphean job to roll the stone back to where it was before it was betrayed by the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), who sold the pass to British fishing in our entry negotiations.

The CFP for us will always be a no-win game. Whoever wins, we lose. That is the principle by which the CFP works. It seems to me that the Minister has two choices. He is either intransigent on the CFP and rolls the stone back uphill—I think that that is impossible, but keeping Spain out entirely is a central part of the problem for the industry—or he gives the industry massive support, financial backing, incentives and encouragement, and develops a new plan for fishing and gives it a place in the sun. The Minister cannot abdicate his responsibility to fishing on both those fronts as that would be a double-track, no-win situation for fishing. He must do one or the other. It seems to be difficult, because the trend has always been to abdicate on both fronts.

I warn the Minister that overwhelming support is building up in the fishing industry for the Save Britain's Fish campaign. More and more fishermen are coming round to back that campaign, which wants us out of the CFP. They see the damage that the CFP has done, and they say that we should act for ourselves. The more the Minister betrays the industry, the more he gives way next week and the more he refuses to help the fishing industry, the more support he will build up and generate for that campaign and for the basic argument that I am making. We have been in the CFP too long for any good that it is doing us. It is time to go.

8.55 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): There is no doubt that the prospect of the Fisheries Council next week, and in particular the argument over Spain and Portugal, is dominating the debate, Anybody who is involved in the fishing industry cannot but deplore the way in which the common fisheries policy has been implemented. For those of us who are Euro-sceptics, the CFP illustrates the bureaucracy, inefficiency and impracticality of so much that is wrong in Brussels. The whole House must be behind the Minister in the difficult task which he faces next week in Brussels. I know that he carries with him the support of the industry, which has been encouraged by the way in which he has championed its cause this year.

I should like to refer to one or two detailed matters, including medicine chests. I was amazed to hear the suggestion that expensive medicine chests should be carried on all fishing vessels. It makes sense that there should be some provision for first aid, but expensive chests with equipment which requires a highly skilled person to operate it are wholly inappropriate, especially on smaller vessels. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to have a word with his colleagues at the Department of Transport.

I wish to refer in particular to three matters relating to the north-east coast; the first being the cost of salmon licences. I and others have warned that, as the number of licences falls, there will be a danger that the National Rivers Authority will seek to recover its costs by increasing the cost of the remaining licences. That is what is happening now, and there is a danger that, as the number of licences falls further, we shall see an even greater increase in costs. I urge my hon. Friend to look into the matter, because it is simply not on that the whole of the costs should fall on an ever-decreasing numbers of licence holders.

The second matter relating to the north-east is the prawn fishing industry. The Minister will remember that, earlier this year, large catches in the Fladden field off Scotland led to the quota being practically exhausted before the north-east coast fisheries started—as they traditionally do—in the autumn. As a result, we faced draconian cuts in the quota and the likelihood that the industry would be banned completely in a short period of time. That would have been disastrous for local fishermen, whose livelihoods depend very much on the prawn fishing at the end of the year.

With the North Shields fishermen, I went to see my hon. Friend the Minister and urged him to take the case to Brussels. We are grateful to him for the way in which he acted so speedily and effectively. He won the argument in Brussels, and there was a significant increase in the quota. My hon. Friend arranged, at my request, for the local fishermen to visit the research establishment at Lowestoft, and he referred to the establishment there in his opening remarks. That was, I believe, the first meeting of its kind, and it was described to me as being constructive and helpful. There may be a lesson there for the future.

It is clearly wrong that there should be the present system of one quota for prawns. We do not want to see the same thing occurring next year. The total quota could again be used up by earlier fishing in the Fladden field and fishermen from North Shields and other north-east ports will find that the quota has been exhausted before their season starts. I urge my hon. Friend to look at that issue in the new year to prevent the same crisis from arising in 1995.

Prawns, by their very nature, do not migrate far, so there can be no real suggestion that catching them in the Fladden field affects the prawn stocks elsewhere. It was just as our fishermen prepared for their catching season that the quota ran out this year. I urge the Minister to take up that issue in the new year. I pay tribute to the leaders of the fishing industry of the north-east coast, who have put their case sensibly. Throughout the year, they practised restraint in the interests of the long-term preservation of that vital prawn stock.

My third concern about North Shields is the future of the quay and the auction market which, under European regulations, were threatened with closure if the facilities were not revitalised. I might add that I am one of those who is sceptical about how far those regulations are enforced in some southern European countries.

North Shields was facing a serious problem, because the fish harbour and the quay which were run by the port of Tyne were losing a great deal of money. The urban development corporation has put some money on the table, however, and as a result of initiatives by the local fishing industry, a development company was formed with Jeremy Pritchard as its chief executive to plan and implement the necessary works. I pay tribute to him and

[Mr. Neville Trotter]

to his team for the success that they have had in facing up to the challenges. Money for improvements has also been provided by the port authority.

I am grateful to the Minister for his encouragement and support of the improvements in North Shields. That came to a head with the recent issue of a grant approval. We are grateful for that because it will mean an assured future for the industry, which would otherwise have faced absolute disaster.

On behalf of North Shields, I thank the Minister for what he has done to help us and I wish him well in the difficult task that he faces next week.

8.59 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I hope that the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) will forgive me if I do not discuss the details of the north-east fishery. I should like to pick up on perhaps the one bright thing that the Minister of State said, by congratulating the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland on his engagement. I wish him and his future wife every happiness.

The debate is inevitably dominated by the question of the consequences of Spanish and Portuguese accession. It has been said that it is perhaps the most important negotiation that has taken place since the common fisheries policy was originally negotiated.

Given that I shall make a short speech, I will not mention days at sea and decommissioning, but my views on that, and those of my right hon. and hon. Friends, are well known to the House.

As has already been aired in the debate, part of the reason why the Minister and the Government find themselves in such a complex negotiating position is that, arguably, the pass was sold earlier on when accelerated full access for Spain and Portugal in 1996 rather than 2002 was conceded. It is clear that the arrangements relating to the Irish box were subject to review and were in place initially only until 31 December 1995.

I took careful note when the Minister suggested—I hope he will forgive me if I do not use his precise words—that the Legal Committee's advice was that the European Union could look to full Spanish and Portuguese accession after 1996. It could equally have been said, however, that that need not happen until 2002. I do not believe that there was any compulsion in the terms of the treaty for that to happen. I understand that it was felt that different arrangements should not be offered to member states who joined before 1996, then to Norway, Sweden and Finland and, yet again, to Spain and Portugal. It would appear that the fundamental decision was taken in that committee, but as we approach next week's negotiations, all that is water under the bridge. We should not, however, lose sight of the background to those negotiations.

It would be idle to pretend that the Minister and his colleagues will have an easy time next week. It would also be unfair if the Opposition parties did not acknowledge the efforts that the Minister has made to date. He has already succeeded in rebuffing the first set of overly bureaucratic proposals. He has worked closely with the industry on that issue. I am also aware that he is engaged in a number of bilateral discussions with other member states to try to bring them around to appreciating the British point of view. He deserves our support for that.

There is no need to rehearse all the details of the case that has been put by the British fishing industry, many of which have been aired tonight. I shall pick out some of the key points. All hon. Members are concerned about the future of the Irish box, which, according to the framework regulations, was accepted as a biologically sensitive zone. That being the case, it begs the fundamental question of why in the world we want to allow extra pressure on stocks in that box.

The Minister said that he would try to ensure that any Spanish access did not impinge on those who have traditionally fished those waters. Many would agree with that sentiment, including not just those who fish area VII a but those who fish areas g and f. I think that I have got those right. If Spain is allowed greater access to the box, it will be difficult to turn that sentiment into a reality.

I accept that it would be daft if the Minister revealed his negotiating hand to the House, just before those negotiations, but I would be interested to know whether he thinks that it would be possible to allow Spanish access while safeguarding the interests of those who have traditionally fished in the box. If Spanish vessels are to enter and there is to be no overall increase in effort, the equation appears impossible to resolve. Will the Government assure us that they have some proposals that could help to resolve it?

I am informed that a proposal may be put forward for discussion about a specific number of Spanish vessels in 1996-97, without mentioning the years thereafter. Does that imply a further review of the Irish box after 1997?

My concerns about not merely area VII a but areas VII f and g, and area VI a off the west coast of Scotland, are underlined when we consider the more traditional subject matter of these Christmas debates—the forthcoming total allowable catch regulations—and the fact that some critical decisions remain to be made about next year's TACs in those areas. Those concerns include the dramatic reduction proposed for hake in the channel and western approaches, and a 41 per cent. reduction in the cod quota in the Irish sea. Successive reductions in TACs of cod, haddock, whiting and saithe off the west coast of Scotland amount to some 50 per cent. over five years. The current proposals will result in swingeing reductions in TACs of saithe.

One has only to listen to what cuts are proposed to realise how vulnerable the stocks in those areas already are. That fact forms part of the background to the subject that we are discussing—access for Spanish vessels. Even if Spanish access were not an issue, we would still ask the Government to acknowledge the serious problem of the proposed TACs in all those areas and others, and I should be interested to learn how the Government intend to deal with the specific problem of TACs.

We support the aim—which the industry has made clear and which the Government have acknowledged—that existing fishing opportunities for British vessels should be safeguarded. It would be the ultimate tragedy and, if it were not so sad, almost a farce, if any proposal so constrained British effort that we could not fish our existing quotas. I am sure that Ministers will do their upmost to avoid such an outcome.

We also believe that the negotiations should not be used as a back-door means of agreeing a European days-at-sea restriction, or the like. Above all, we emphasise the industry's deep-seated and genuine anxiety that Spanish access to our waters be contained. We may all be asking for the circle to be squared, and various proposals will doubtless be made on how that might happen.

Reference lists of vessels might be the way forward, but that solution would produce its own problems. If we allow member states to compile reference lists, can we be sure what the Spaniards would put on those lists? Equally, we might feel that it is in our interests to compile our own national reference list. I do not pretend that such a solution would be easy. Our distrust of how the Spaniards might go about drawing up such a list is an important consideration to take into account in all those negotiations. Not just historical record but, as the Labour party's amendment says, entitlement—all British vessels are entitled to fish in those waters—may be a means of legitimately limiting Spanish vessels while not straying down the path of national discrimination.

Another point which Ministers will want to recognise is that next week is not necessarily the end of the road. Some people are concerned that an overall framework is all that will be agreed next week and that the detail will be left for the Commission's management committee to fill in. That sets many alarm bells ringing. The House wants to be satisfied that the Minister will do everything possible to tie down as much as possible of the detail next week, and that he will not allow some loose ends to remain, under which many unacceptable things could crawl in or crawl out—I am not sure which—and eventually appear in a final package.

I have mentioned suspicion and mistrust; those feelings pervade the entire issue. Mistrust was generated by the statement of Prime Minister Gonzalez that he got everything that he wanted. I accept the Minister's word that, as far as he and the British Government are concerned, no deal was done at Essen to which the British Government were party. I am afraid that suspicions have been roused as a result of what Prime Minister Gonzalez said, and I sincerely hope that the British Government will not be taken off balance next week if, out of a hat, some deal is produced which was cobbled together by the presidency and the Spaniards behind our back. Perhaps, instead of urging other Prime Ministers to take guide dogs to their respective Parliaments, our Prime Minister should take sniffer dogs to European Council meetings, to ensure that nothing is being hatched behind his back.

A mistrust of Spanish fishermen is also at the heart of the issue. In one sense, that need not cause any problem, because I doubt that there would be much to worry about, with relative stability agreed as a fundamental principle, if there was effective monitoring and a policing regime that worked. However, we know that that is simply not the case, and that judgment is based on both history and experience.

In *The Herald* of Monday 12 December 1994, Mr. Murray Ritchie says:

> "A long catalogue of misdemeanours by the Spanish skippers has been built up by the Irish over the years. Some of the more obvious Spanish practices were the obvious one of catching too many fish, often the wrong ones, using illegally sized mesh and too large nets, hiding catches in ships with secret freezer compartments, overstaying time limits in the fishing grounds, and sometimes fishing the wrong grounds."

Indeed, a fisherman suggested to me earlier today that the Spaniards could make a TAC last for 100 years.

That is the depth of the mistrust that exists, and that is why we believe, and I think that the whole House believes, that policing measures are essential. We have not heard enough in the debate about the specific monitoring and policing measures that are proposed, but they must be of the highest standard and done multi-laterally if any deal, whether or not it is initially thought to be good, is to command confidence and support throughout the industry.

That is why, of all the objectives sought by the fishing industry, limitations on Spanish effort is possibly the most important goal. The Spaniards cannot argue that they have not done well out of the CFP. It has already been said by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) that they are building an £80 million investment in new boats, some of which includes European Union money. A third of the CFP budget spent on international fishing agreements is spent on that, so Spain takes the lion's share of that budget.

Our anxiety today is not so much about long-distance fleets or big business boats, but is focused on our local fisheries—on boats that represent a family's investment, on fishermen for whom the waters around their shores have been their source of a living for generations, and on communities whose vitality depends on a healthy fishing industry. Those are important considerations for the CFP to take into account. Conservation of stocks in areas such as the Irish box, the western approaches and west of Scotland is vital, because they represent the source of economic health for those communities for years to come.

To date, the Minister has shown that he understands how crucial those decisions will be for the industry. When my right hon. and hon. Friends cast their votes tonight, we shall want to send a message, not so much to the Minister but to his colleagues in the Council, so that they know that they will be dealing with a Minister who has come from, and will ultimately have to answer again to, a Parliament that is not prepared to accept that our country's fishing industry can be tossed aside like the loose change from some big deal.

9.13 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Not for the first time, it is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). He is a fair and just man and puts his case with absolute sincerity. Like everybody else who has spoken tonight, he rightly paid tribute to the efforts of my hon. Friend the Minister of State. May I add my word of praise, particularly in light of what I might say later?

I have always found my hon. Friend to have a completely open door. Only last week, I took Mr. Michael Townsend, the chief executive of the Cornish fish producers organisation, to meet him for a full discussion about these matters and many others. It was the latest in a long line of meetings and I am sure that that is the experience of many hon. Members in the Chamber tonight.

I also praise him for the way in which he has genuinely listened to the views of the industry and tried to meet them. I echo the hope, expressed by many hon. Members, that he will implement some of the proposals from the industry. Like others, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks), I hope that he will abandon the wretched days at sea regime and not go to the lengths of a European Court case. He has transformed the relationship between the Government and the fishing industry in these difficult times, but the crunch is about to come, and I suspect that it will be next week.

[Mr. David Harris]

My hon. Friends the Members for Cornwall, South-East and for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) and I have tabled an amendment. First, let me make it quite clear that there is a misprint in it. When it refers to "areas VII a, b and g" it should refer to "areas VII a, f and g". I suspect that the misprint is due to my own rotten writing in submitting this amendment.

My task in speaking to the amendment is made much easier by the splendid speech of my senior colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East who has spoken for the three Conservative Members and, I suspect, for all Members representing Cornwall, as we have an united aim in this matter. I am glad to see the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) nodding in agreement.

Our aim is same as that of hon. Members from other parts of the United Kingdom. We are doing our utmost to keep the Spanish out of the waters which our fishermen fish on a traditional basis and on which the Spanish have no great historic track record. We owe it to our fishermen to take that stand. More particularly, my hon. Friend the Minister owes it to our fishermen also to take that stand.

We are in a difficulty here tonight which, if we were honest, we would all acknowledge. We cannot determine what will happen in that vital Fisheries Council on Monday and Tuesday.

As we speak, we do not know what will be the exact terms of the German presidency compromise that will be laid on the table when the meeting starts on Monday. We all know bits of various drafts of compromises that have been floating around, but we do not know the final document that will spark off the debate in the Council. We certainly do not know how the debate and the negotiations will develop. No one here tonight can say what my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will be faced with at the end of those days of negotiations.

My hon. Friends and I understand why our amendment has not been selected. We would have loved to have had it selected so that we could vote on it—if necessary against the Government—to show where we stand. In our amendment we have tried to draw a bottom line and to say how we will judge the outcome of the negotiations. We have served clear and specific notice on my hon. Friend. No doubt he thinks that I pressed him rather hard this evening when the debate started, to try to pin him down in responding to the basic demands that we have encapsulated in the amendment.

I must tell my hon. Friend that I shall have no hesitation in speaking out if he votes for an agreement that does not deliver those demands. I have said to him—he will not mind me saying this—and to my right hon. Friend the Minister on a number of occasions, "Look, if the ultimate deal that comes out of those negotiations seriously damages the British fishing industry, particularly the fishing industry of the south-west, your clear duty is to vote against it." I am sure that that is the message that the House would want to leave with my hon. Friend as he sets out to Brussels.

I know, of course, that because the issue will be decided on the basis of qualified majority voting my hon. Friend will almost certainly be voted down, but I know that I speak for the many fishermen who contacted me, and no doubt my hon. Friends on both sides of the Chamber. They would rather see my hon. Friend voted down honourably, saying that we cannot go along with a deal that does real damage to our fishing industry. I beg of him and warn him not to go along with a compromise that seriously damages our fishing industry. I and my hon. Friends have set him very clear and specific targets, which we want to see him deliver. If he cannot deliver, he should vote against any deal that is done.

I shall now deal with the Opposition amendment. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) said with a straight face, "Well, of course, there are no party politics in this. We have at heart the genuine interests of the fishing industry." Well, looking around the Chamber, one can judge the support or otherwise that the hon. Gentleman has for that proposition. I am not judging this on his attitude, because he has a genuine interest in fishing, and the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) has a deep interest. I pay tribute to both of them.

The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon), in his remarks on the radio, made no bones about the matter, and said quite clearly that what this is about is voting the Government down, to inflict another defeat on the Government.

Mr. Coe: To ensnare the Government.

Mr. Harris: To ensnare the Government, as my hon. Friend says. It was a silly thing for the hon. Member for Ashfield to say, because it made it difficult and virtually impossible for my hon. Friends—who do not quarrel with many of the sentiments contained in it—to vote for the Opposition's amendment. Therefore, the difficult decision that I and my hon. Friends—particularly those who represent constituencies in Cornwall—have is over what to do. Do we abstain on this important matter or do we back my hon. Friend the Minister as he goes into the negotiations? No doubt I could court popularity in my constituency, as could my hon. Friends in their constituencies, by saying, "Yes, we will be big boat boys and will not support the Government tonight." Indeed, we have voted against the Government on many occasions on fishing, as my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne has said before.

I made up my mind during the course of the debate only after hearing my hon. Friend the Minister. I am going to back him, but I do so on the basis of the warning that I have clearly given him verbally tonight, and more importantly the warning that is set out, without fudge, in the amendment that stands in my name and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Falmouth and Camborne and for Cornwall, South-East. That is the basis on which I shall judge his action. I will back him and I hope that others will, too, because despite what the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland said in his concluding remarks, it is important that the House, which has paid proper tribute to my hon. Friend, backs him as he goes into the negotiations. That will be my position on the main issue.

I want to mention my concerns about the other major issues that have been virtually obscured tonight because of our quite proper concentration on the important matter of Spanish accession, and that is the total allowable catches and the quotas that will be before the Council. I echo all that has been said on that tonight. I am horrified at the proposal to reduce the plaice quota in the North sea by 47 per cent. I am grateful for the support of the hon.

Member for North Cornwall on that issue. That reduction would have a potential knock-on effect in the waters of the south-west in that it could inhibit the ability to do the swaps on which we depend to gain access to other species.

I am even more disturbed by the proposed 45 per cent. reduction in western hake. Hake features largely in these debates. Such a reduction, on top of everything else, would be devastating for the industry in the south-west, as would be the proposed reduction of 14 per cent. in the monkfish allocation. I believe that the way forward on hake would be to increase the mesh size. I believe that there is agreement about that on both sides of the House. If we did that, the biomass would increase and improve and the proposed draconian reductions would become unnecessary.

I reiterate the warning that I have given to my hon. Friend the Minister. However, I salute him for all that he has done. We are putting him on trust and he must deliver.

9.26 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the few minutes that will enable me to convey to the House the grave concerns of the Northern Ireland fishing industry. It is ironic that at a time when we want to wish people prosperity in the new year, this debate is bringing despair to the fishing industry. Time will not allow me to develop many of the real points that I want to make, but I want to add my voice to that of those who have already eloquently addressed the problems of the Spanish and Portuguese accession.

It is ironic that we can stand on the beaches of Northern Ireland and watch the fishing boats being burned when we know that in 1996 and 1997 those boats will be replaced not by boats from Northern Ireland but by new boats from Spain and Portugal. That is difficult to take.

We have heard during the debate that there is no easy answer. My Northern Ireland colleagues and I want to assure the Minister that we would strongly support him in not agreeing to the accession terms that are already on the table, particularly in terms of the numbers—23 additional vessels in 1996 and 37 additional vessels in 1997.

The Minister should go back to the opening statement made by the German presidency in respect of the fishing industry. It said quite categorically that there should be

"no increase in fishing effort."

There is a contradiction here. One cannot introduce additional fishing vessels without, at the same time, increasing the fishing endeavour. Either they take more and we get less or they do not come at all. The latter must be enforced.

I do not believe that the self-monitoring system mentioned by the Minister can be imposed on the European states. That is not acceptable. The Minister referred twice in his opening remarks to the light touch that would be involved in the control of the enforcements. I do not understand that. We have all said that that is one of the most fundamental issues facing the fishing industry, not least the fishing industry in both the north and south of Ireland. I am sure that the Minister will find a ready ally in the Republic of Ireland in this matter, at least in the Council of Ministers. It is essential to note that fishing is the sole support of these communities in Northern Ireland. No alternative employment or industrial sector exists.

If the fishing sector collapses, the community collapses—it is as serious as that. It is a matter of life and death. There is nothing else there for us. If the Minister loses in Brussels, those communities are condemned. It is as simple as that. That is the stark choice that the Minister must make. I know that the Minister has made valiant efforts in the past, as has Baroness Denton of Wakefield, who represents the Government in the other place on Northern Ireland matters. I should like to pay tribute both to him and to the noble Lady for their efforts.

On herring fishing, will the Minister renegotiate the closing date—I think that it is 21 September—for a resolution of that famous problem involving the Douglas bank? People in the fishing sector tell us clearly that the patterns of spawning and migration have changed dramatically since 1985. Will he endeavour to do something about that?

Because of the lack of time, I can refer only to cod quotas in area VII a, and only briefly. The fishing sector has demonstrated in 1994 that there is a reasonable supply of good-quality fish. The spawning is right. The number of smaller fish is right. All the 1991 predictions of the scientific voices are out of order and incorrect. The theory has been proved wrong by practice.

Will the Minister listen a wee bit more to the fishermen, who know what is happening in their sector, who see the physical evidence of their own efforts, which are better than the paper efforts of the scientists? Those fishermen take more account than scientists of reality in respect of not only cod but the other catches to which reference has been made.

Time prevents me from making further comments. My right hon. Friend the Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) referred to the Hague preference. You can take that as read, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister will have the total support of fishing organisations and fishermen in Northern Ireland if he goes in strong with all guns blazing in Brussels—figuratively speaking, of course, because we are now a peaceful society in Northern ireland—and if he does not yield in any single way to terms that will destroy our communities.

9.32 pm

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): If it were not so serious, we could regard the annual fisheries debate in December as the start of the pantomime season. It has all the good old ingredients of a familiar plot, in this case, written about a sector that is choking under more regulation than the nuclear industry. It has some old favourites such as the tie worn by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) and old certainties such as the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) is always called before me. Some things do change, however. The big names on the Front Benches change from time to time, but hon. Members in the chorus on the Back Benches have the same script.

My hon. Friend the Minister has done a good job since he took up the poisoned chalice. I agree that it is almost impossible to keep such a diverse sector totally happy, to keep Conservative Back Benchers happy, to keep moving with everything that was piled on Minister's plate when he took over and to keep negotiating in what is allegedly a European Union with so-called partners who tolerate our voices around the table so that they can get their hands into our wallets.

[Mr. David Porter]

I should like to have been able to support the amendment calling for the United Kingdom's removal from the common fisheries policy to regain the sovereignty of our sea. That amendment is tabled in the names of my hon. Friends, who are described by the Government as the "unwhipped Conservative group." My hon. Friend the Minister dismissed the amendment as irrelevant because the common fisheries policy is a sacred cow. None of us would start with that policy, however. We have a messy structure of restrictions, with more tinkerings, changes, bodges and bizarre attachment than anything Heath Robinson could have dreamed of. Instead of saying, "It has failed, let us scrap it," we just add more to it ever more desperately. The pile of papers in many languages from the Vote Office which accompanies the debate demonstrates the absurdity of it. It becomes more like Kafka every day.

Bearing in mind the scale and size of the industry, the diversity of the seas around this country and the historical, cultural and psychological importance of fishing in this still maritime-minded nation, if we could start again we surely would not start with a concept that treats the seas as a common resource open to all, regardless of how much seaboard each member state has.

My right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench receive advice from officials that the policy cannot be scrapped. They would advise that, would they not? A Member of the European Parliament once told me that if we did not have the common fisheries policy, we would have to invent it. That person is no longer an MEP.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): He is a Tory.

Mr. Porter: Indeed. There is a lesson for us all, and certainly for some of my hon. Friends.

When we talk of the CFP, we should be sure of what we are talking about. The CFP is not the 1983 agreement, which was an agreement of derogation involving mile limits, historic rights, percentages of total allowable catches and relative stability. The CFP is the basic agreement of 1972, which expires at the end of 2002. On 1 January 2003 everything reverts to the 1972 agreement, in which all Community vessels shall have free access to waters falling under the sovereignty of or within the jurisdiction of member states. Of course, some amendments have been made. The Maastricht treaty has altered the definition of sovereignty and other countries have lined up to join the Community.

There has been much debate about the Spanish and the Portuguese. We know that the Spanish fleet is more than half the size of the European Union's fleet. The former East German fleet has apparently been absorbed. How large is the Polish fleet? That is a consideration if Poland comes into the EU. How big does everything get?

There has been any amount of wringing of hands in the quarters of some Brussels apologists because the Norwegians have "failed" to vote to enter the Union. They have more sense than to do so. The Norwegian fishermen, especially, have more sense.

As there is to be delay in the introduction of the 1995 TACs, we have a golden chance to push for a new start. The proposals to reduce the plaice TAC by 47 per cent. and the sole TAC by 29 per cent. are alarming. We know that the scientists were in error over the quantity of stocks. No one doubts that scientific advice must inform quotas, but how are errors put right? Reference has rightly been made to the Ministry's laboratory at Lowestoft and the excellence of its scientific advice, but how are mistakes put right?

No one doubts the acceptance of a downturn in the plaice quota, but a reduction of the proposed magnitude defies belief. Lowestoft is the largest plaice port in England, but the quota is not always taken up. Restrictions mean that there are not enough boats to catch it. That is when swaps come in, mainly with Holland. There needs to be more flexibility within the system, more recognition of the effect of small boats and large boats and more recognition of the distorting effect of sector and non-sector differentials. There must be more recognition of the range of fishing activity from the north to the south of the North sea.

Similarly, there needs to be more recognition of the possibilities of swapping within United Kingdom areas before going outside them. Let us have more recognition of the point at which restrictions make earning a living impossible. There must be recognition of the unfairness of a policy that prohibits beam trawling in the plaice box off the Dutch coast, and of the difficulties of enforcement. One approach is to close the seas completely for certain periods for every boat, but let us compensate fishermen with a net aside to pay for it.

I am sorry that the reprieve that the court action on days-at-sea restrictions has given us has not been used to test the industry's solutions to the problem. We could have seen over the past 12 months if its ideas reduced effort, contributed to conservation and were workable, enforceable and fair. There seems sometimes to be a terrible desire on the part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to produce bureaucratic decisions from desks rather than finding practical answers from the deck of a boat or on the market floor.

9.38 pm

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): The debate is perhaps one of the most important that we have had on fishing since the common fisheries policy was agreed in 1983. The Minister has told us that he does not want to put his cards on the table before negotiations take place. That is fair and understandable because he has to obtain the best deal possible, but it is fair and understandable also that the Minister should make it clear publicly what the bottom line is when it comes to a deal. It should be that we must recognise historical track records. We must recognise also that the Minister was wrong when he said that we cannot link days at sea with the issue that is before us. The Minister well knows that that is one of the issues that has been debated in terms of effort control.

My hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) talked about the importance of fishing to his community and to many others. We heard the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. O'Grady) speak of the importance of the issue that we are debating to his community in Northern Ireland. Many fishing communities have no alternative employment. We have heard about the importance of quotas to Northern Ireland fishing communities, which was also mentioned by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace).

Let me say a little about total allowable catches. The debate has rightly been dominated by the accession issue, but there are other important issues that have an impact on the fishing industry, such as the severe cuts in North sea plaice and sole. I hope that the Minister will give careful consideration to those. Hake cuts have also been mentioned. The Spanish fish for hake in the bay of Biscay with mesh sizes of 55 mm, while in our waters we use mesh sizes of between 80 mm and 90 mm and square mesh panels of 80 mm. Many of us are disappointed that square mesh panels have not been introduced in the other European Community fishing nations.

As has been pointed out, if the Spanish and Portuguese gain access to the waters under the agreement, they can switch to non-quota stock species. The south-west has been affected by the current pressure exerted on stocks of sea bass by the French, which is causing great concern. Cornish Members will have seen an excellent letter from the Cornish branch of the National Federation of Sea Anglers, which demonstrated that the issue not only affects commercial fishermen but goes a good deal further.

There is also the issue of area VI, the west coast of Scotland, where advisory TACs have been applied. There is concern about the scale of the cuts in area VI, which other hon. Members have mentioned, and the fact that the TACs have been applied despite the comparative shortage of accurate scientific data. I hope that the Minister will consider the impact that that is having.

There have been some welcome increases in TACs, particularly the North sea nephrops quota, which has increased by 35 per cent. I raised the issue with the Minister in a written question on 24 October; it had been raised with me by Mr. Harold Musgrave of Maryport, a constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). Mr. Musgrave, who operates from South Shields, will be particularly pleased that the quota for next year has been increased. I hope that the same will apply to other quotas.

Mr. Musgrave and many other people have mentioned the need to consider a separate quota for Fladden bank. That would help quota management. They have also referred to an issue that I have raised with the Minister before—the need to ban twin prawn trawls. There is a voluntary ban on such trawls for boats operating out of South Shields, which has been very successful. I feel that it should be extended around the coast; it is supported by many fishermen.

There is also the question of conservation practice and conservation gear, which is strongly supported by the industry and has worked effectively in fisheries management, as the Norwegians have shown. When we talk of the replacement of the Irish box and reduction of effort, conservation gear should be given a bit more consideration than the Commission, certainly, has given it. I believe that, through its representatives and associations, the industry has come up with serious, workable and practicable suggestions.

Mr. Ainger: Whatever conservation measures are suggested—and, perhaps, accepted and implemented—they will be worthless unless they are properly enforced, particularly in the light of the possibility of access for Spanish vessels to the Irish box. The conservation track record of the Spanish is appalling, as my hon. Friend knows. If certain trade-offs have to be made about access to the Irish box, should not the Minister take the opportunity next week to argue for a fully effective enforcement system?

Mr. Morley: That is an excellent point. The issue is, of course, crucial to fishermen in Pembroke, whom my hon. Friend defends both doughtily and regularly. I know that the Minister will want to examine the issue of enforcement, because we know of many examples of how the Spanish, in particular, have ignored proper fishing controls. That is one reason why there is so much concern about the current access negotiations.

I now return to the principles of relative stability and historical track records, which are two key elements that should defend the interests of British fishermen in the negotiations. The Minister has conceded that relative stability will be an important part of the negotiations, but we must recognise that if we increase the number of fishing boats in the Irish sea, there will be a knock-on effect on relative stability. The idea of historical track records has been recognised within the industry and has been used, for example, in agreeing extra fishing opportunities in north Norway. I do not see the problem that the Minister suggests arising from that.

The issue to which we must return, on which my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) touched, is that of decommissioning. After two years, barely 5 per cent. of the capacity of our current United Kingdom fleet has been cut. The failure to meet multi-annual guidance programme targets will cost the industry money in grants towards marketing and also through the £28 million PESCA scheme, which the Minister has already mentioned. A little more than £6 million committed by the Government generates a scheme worth about £25 million over three years. We should contrast that with the position in Denmark, which has committed £125 million over three years. Removing boats is the only sure way to reduce effort—not letting more boats in, which is what we are discussing.

The House of Lords Select Committee recommended a scheme for this country worth about £100 million to make a meaningful impact on decommissioning, and that would need a Government contribution of about £30 million to attract the EC grant. We accept that £30 million is a large sum of money to find, and that it has to be budgeted for—but, coincidentally, £30 million was the sum given as a handout to the private hospital in Clydebank run by Health Care International. That was £30 million down the drain that could have made a significant contribution to an effective decommissioning scheme.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr) *rose—*

Mr. Morley: The Government should also examine the growth of industrial fishing, which has taken more than 50 per cent. by weight of the catch in the North sea—

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morley: The hon. Gentleman has not been here for the debate, and I am pressed for time.

The Minister will concede that the products of industrial fishing are used for substances such as fertiliser; they are even used in a power station in Denmark. The effect of such fishing on marine ecology is drastic, and the by-catches of the small-mesh nets used cannot be underestimated. The situation is not improved when the Government give grants to places such as a fish-meal

[Mr. Morley]

factory in Grangemouth run by a Danish company, and when they grant increases in the quotas for fishing capelin.

Clearly, the big issue tonight concerns the Spanish and Portuguese accession agreements. They have worried many hon. Members on both sides of the House. The Opposition amendment recognises the need to protect our industry in every part of the United Kingdom, and the importance of the agreements to our fishing communities, especially those in the south and the south-west.

The hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) had something to say about the vote on days at sea, but if he really wants to protect his local fishermen, he should support the Falmouth and Camborne Labour party, which has vociferously campaigned for his local fishing community. He should also support our amendment. There is little difference between our amendment and that tabled by the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), whose integrity I fully recognise. The hon. Gentleman identified in particular areas VII a, f and g which are important to his local community, and our amendment would protect those communities, because we have specifically recognised the need to protect historical and local fishing patterns.

Mr. Coe: The hon. Gentleman is probably unaware that the president of the Falmouth and Camborne Labour party is the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), from that famous seafaring constituency, who has not been in the Chamber at all this evening to defend their interests.

Mr. Morley: As the hon. Gentleman has not spent half as much time in the Chamber as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, the Falmouth and Camborne party has shown that it has made the correct choice.

We are calling on hon. Members to support our amendment because our amendment clearly represents the feelings of hon. Members from all parties. Voting for our amendment tonight would strengthen the Minister's case when he goes to the Council because it would demonstrate clearly the strength of feeling in the House and the need for the Minister to protect the interests of British fishing.

9.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): First, I should like to thank very much those hon. Members who made kind references to my new status; perhaps the reception in Florida will be rather warmer than it is at the moment.

The traditional fishing motion before the December Council always sparks off a robust debate, and tonight has been no exception. I am glad that a number of hon. Members with fishing interests have been able to contribute to it. I agree with the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang) about the desirability of a full day's debate, in which all hon. Members with fishing interests could take part, but that is not a matter for me.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State has worked very hard indeed over recent months to achieve our current position and to rebut the first two presidency proposals. He and I will reflect very carefully on what has been said tonight before we go to the Council on Monday and Tuesday.

I do not follow the arguments of the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley), who replied for the Opposition. I should have thought that as the fishing industry has been exceptionally helpful over recent months in forming a united front with the Government to try to obtain the very best possible results from the European Union discussion, it would have been very much better if my hon. Friend and I were to go to Brussels next week with a united House behind us and with everyone determined that we should achieve the best possible for the fishing industry, which is the object of the exercise. I feel that, for the House to be divided tonight on the Opposition amendment, or indeed on other amendments that were not selected but which convey the same impression, would be most unfortunate.

The interest in the debate shows the continued importance of the fishing industry, which makes a tremendously valuable contribution to our economic well-being. All of us who are interested in the fishing industry know how much it means to the more remote areas where there is no alternative but fishing.

There are, of course, many concerns about the future of fishing, some of which have been articulated tonight, but it is sometimes easy to get the impression that the industry is hanging over a cliff-edge. Some key issues must certainly be resolved, especially the need to balance the fishing effort of our fleet with the fishing opportunities available to it.

Decommissioning was raised by a number of hon. Members. I believe that our £25 million scheme has been a big success. The first two tranches have taken out a significant percentage of the multi-annual guidance programme and we will remove about 6 per cent. over the whole scheme. It is worth recording that the Opposition have indicated that they are prepared to spend £75 million on a decommissioning scheme without saying where that sum will come from. However, more will need to be done at Community, national and industry level to ensure the sustainability of stock and we cannot look to instant solutions. I see no reason why the long-term future of the industry should not be bright.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), who was hopping up and down but now does not seem to realise that I am speaking to him, should have confidence on the issue of area VI and the quotas. We will discuss that issue in detail next week. The 1994 TAC was 13,000 tonnes. That figure is recommended by the Commission for discussion next week, and we shall watch that very closely indeed, as we did in respect of nephrops in other parts of Scotland and the United Kingdom. We were able to obtain additional quota, which was most important, over the past month.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) pleaded for regional issues and the position of areas VII a, f and g. I assure him that we will watch those matters very closely indeed. If we can achieve all that he wants, I am sure that he will be the first to say thank you.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) was wrong on several counts. There is no question of the Spaniards coming into the North sea for any stock unless a British licence is sold to a Spanish boat. It is wrong for the hon. Gentleman to continue to raise that issue, because the Spaniards do not have a track record in that respect. There is no question of my hon. Friend the Minister climbing down. He has been right at the front, leading the charge at each Council meeting in September and November, when we were able to reverse the policies that were on the table.

Again, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby was highly critical of policing matters. I know that the issue of the Spanish boats is difficult, but the hon. Gentleman must also give tremendous credit to our fisheries protection vessels, both at sea and in the air. They have had great success. Courts in Scotland have convicted offenders, imposing large fines on the Spaniards.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) made an important point about directives. We will bring his remarks to the attention of my colleagues in the Department of Transport and discuss further the medical stores and other matters that he raised. My hon. Friend was right to highlight the issue of prawn fishing and how we were able to obtain extra quota, particularly for the Fladden grounds, which will have an important impact on North Shields.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) was right to say that we must not give away our negotiating position. We do not intend to do so, however much the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe says that we should give a bottom line. The last thing that we want to give is a bottom line. We will be way above it. There is no use in negotiating from a bottom line. I agree that we do not want to be tied down. We will see what comes out of the negotiations.

My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) is wise and experienced in this issue. It will be a tough negotiation, but we are going to try to get the very best out of it that we possibly can. My hon. Friend has confidence in our hon. Friend the Minister. We will fight a very hard battle in Brussels next week.

I advise the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) and the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) that we were helped in the negotiations by officials from the Northern Ireland Office and by my noble Friend Lady Denton. We will keep a very close watch on quotas. I have been looking at the proposed cod quotas for area VII a, which is down from 6,200 tonnes to 5,600 tonnes. We will negotiate on that issue next week, and we will do the very best that we possibly can for Northern Irish fishermen.

Opposition Members must realise that the negotiations next week will be critical. The diplomatic stakes are very high. It is no use Opposition Members expecting us to show our hand tonight. We will argue the case for the very best results for our fishermen, who deserve and are receiving the Government's support in terms of the money that we are putting into fishing, including, as I announced yesterday, large grants to three fishing ports in Scotland, which was good news for them. I should like to think that hon. Members on both sides of the House will be behind us when we go to Brussels to achieve the best result for Britain and Britain's fisherman.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 270, Noes 298.

Division No. 24] **[21.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Cartliss, Michael
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John

McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. Joe Benton.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*

Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*

Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the unnumbered Explanatory Memoranda submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 8th December 1994, relating to the renewal of fishing arrangements for vessels from European Community countries other than Spain and Portugal in Spanish and Portuguese waters, and for Portuguese vessels in the waters of those other countries and relating to European Community quotas for 1995 in the waters of Guyana; on 12th December 1994 relating to proposals for reciprocal access and 1995 quotas in the Baltic (with Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Russia) and with the Faroe Islands; proposals allocating European Community quotas for 1995 in the waters of Iceland and Greenland, and a proposal fixing catch possibilities in 1995 for North West Atlantic Fisheries Organisation waters; and on 13th December 1994 relating to total allowable catches for 1995 and proposals fixing 1995 opportunities and reciprocal arrangements relating to Norway; and supports the Government's intention to negotiate the best possible fishing opportunities, and to protect the interests of British fishermen in these negotiations and in those providing for the integration of Spain and Portugal in the Common Fisheries Policy.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102 (9) (European Standing Committees).

GENERALISED SCHEME OF PREFERENCES

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9101/94, relating to the Generalised Scheme of Preferences; and supports the Government's view that, whilst the review of the GSP is to be welcomed, the draft Regulation will require some amendments.

FOOD HYGIENE: MILK AND MILK PRODUCTS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4195/94, relating to food hygiene for milk and milk products; and endorses the line that the Government is taking in seeking a satisfactory outcome on the issues of somatic cell counts and double pasteurisation.—[*Mr. Wood.*]

Question agreed to.

AGRIMONETARY SYSTEM

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 11061/94, relating to the Common Agricultural Policy agrimonetary system; and supports the Government's intention of seeking to negotiate agrimonetary arrangements which do not impose undue costs on the European Community budget nor unnecessary burdens on traders in agricultural products.—[*Mr. Wood.*]

The House divided: Ayes 303, Noes 251.

Division No. 25] **[22.15 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*

Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael

Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Rt Hon Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy

Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N'eat W)*
O'Brien, Bill *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mr. Joe Benton.

Question accordingly agreed to.

10.27 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will note from today's Order Paper that European Standing Committee A met at 10.30 am to consider the reform of the agrimonetary system, on which there has just been a vote. You will also be aware that when the House of Commons set up European Standing Committees A and B, we were given a clear undertaking that part of the reason for moving European legislation from the Floor of the House to the Standing Committee system was that the House of Commons would have the right to examine these important matters in considerable detail. For example, the issue we were considering today not only affects the whole farming community, but involves large sums of money. We were assured that the House of Commons would not take a vote until the matter had been considered by the European Standing Committee.

This morning, the Committee met and examined the matter before us tonight. We were somewhat astonished to find that a motion to take note appeared on the Order Paper, even though the Committee had not sat and considered the matter. For your information, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Committee defeated the measure this morning.

Therefore, with the greatest respect, I want some explanation from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of why the House of Commons is being treated with such arrant contempt. It is painfully clear that there is absolutely no point in having the machinery of the European Standing Committees—with the specific undertaking that we will have the right to examine legislation before it is voted on in the Floor of the House—because the Government have pushed through a measure tonight, in the knowledge that the Committee voted against it this morning.

[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]

It is contemptuous of our procedures and it is arrogant, not of the Ministers concerned, but of the Government Chief Whip, and we want an explanation, otherwise there is no serious point in manning the European Standing Committees.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Let me deal with that point of order first.

Obviously, the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and the Opposition feel somewhat aggrieved about what has taken place, but nevertheless I must advise the hon. Lady that the Chair must abide by the Standing Orders. I must inform her that Standing Orders Nos. 102(8) and 102(9) permit a motion to be decided forthwith even if the Standing Committee came to no resolution. Further to that, the Chair must consider nothing outside the Standing Orders.

Mr. Spearing: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the same point of order? If so, I have dealt with it. I cannot say anything further to it. I have just dealt with the powers—

Mr. Spearing *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have just dealt with the powers of the Chair, and there can be nothing further to that point of order. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise a different point of order, I will deal with it, but if it is the same I will not accept it. Is it a different point of order?

Mr. Spearing: It is different. If, in your judgment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you think that it not different, I would be pleased if you would inform me. *[Laughter.]*

Sir, a few years ago, another point arose about Committee proceedings. A motion that was indeed passed on a Division by a Committee had not been printed and therefore its merits were not capable of being assessed by Members of the House before the debate took place on the Floor. I put it to you, therefore, that whatever may be said in Standing Orders, consideration perhaps should be given to give the opportunity for Members—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is very little difference, and it is the same answer. *[Laughter.]*

PETITIONS

Family Planning (China)

10.31 pm

Sir Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I beg to present an humble petition of the residents of Wellingborough and Rushden, signed by 366 of my constituents, which sheweth:

That the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) and the IPPF (International Planned Parenthood Federation) receive money from the Overseas Aid Budget and in turn support the Chinese Population Control Programme which abuses the human rights of the people of China through forced contraception, sterilization and abortion, leading to infanticide and physical damage to women.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will ensure that no further funds from the Overseas Aid Budget are disbursed to the UNFPA and the IPPF, while these organisations support, encourage or act as apologists for the Chinese Population Control Programme.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

10.32 pm

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of 570 residents of Delyn constituency, led by Mr. Norman Watson, of Wyngarth, Sunnyside estate, Bagillt, Clwyd, which reads:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled. The Humble Petition of Delyn Friends of the Earth sheweth:

That every year 200-300 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), our best wildlife sites, are damaged or destroyed.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House introduce tougher laws to protect SSSIs.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will every pray, etc.

I plead that this petition is worthy of the attention of the House.

To lie upon the Table.

Blood Transfusion Service

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

10.33 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): First, may I, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank Madam Speaker for the opportunity to raise the subject of the future of the Liverpool blood transfusion centre on the Adjournment of the House? May I also take the opportunity of thanking the Minister for being in his place to answer the points that will be made, and my colleagues the hon. Members for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) and for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter), both of whom have indicated that they will seek to catch your eye. I have informed the Chair and the Minister of my willingness to give up some time to demonstrate the all-party nature of the concerns that are being expressed tonight. I also thank the hon. Members for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) who are also in their places. I know of their concern about the question as well. The hon. Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton) has asked me to mention his support for the arguments being put to the House, although he is unable to be present because he has engagements on Merseyside.

It may help the House if I outline what has happened so far and then say why parliamentary, public and clinical opinion is so staunchly opposed to the National Blood Authority plan. The House will be aware that the proposal is to close five transfusion centres to make savings of £10 million. One of the centres is situated in my constituency, in West Derby street, Liverpool.

When the announcement was made I immediately visited the centre and was extremely impressed by the competence, dedication and professionalism of Dr. Vanessa Martlew, the medical director, and the staff. I subsequently went to see Sir Colin Walker at the NBA's headquarters in Watford and I attended and spoke, together with the hon. Members for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), who has joined us for the debate, and for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) at the amazing meeting held at St. George's hall in Liverpool on 7 November. It was attended by more than 1,000 people. The hon. Member for West Derby said that he could not recall a scene like it since Lord Wilson held his eve-of-poll election rally there back in 1964. Since then, other colleagues have met Sir Colin and John Adey, the NBA's chief executive, and I have tabled two early-day motions and several parliamentary questions on the subject. The local newspaper, the *Liverpool Echo*, has run a well-informed and strong campaign to ensure that the 2.8 million people who will be affected on Merseyside and in north Wales are well aware of the implications of the ill-conceived and ill-considered plans.

I have rarely experienced the strength of feeling that I have encountered over this issue, but that is not surprising. The service has saved countless lives over the past 50 years. It is bitterly ironic that as the national service prepares to celebrate its half century in 1996, it should be simultaneously preparing to shut one of its most efficient and well-supported centres.

The Minister has, rightly, told me and other hon. Members that we have the finest blood transfusion service in the world. If the clock is not broken, why try to fix it? The Minister could save himself and the service considerable grief by abandoning the plans that the NBA has circulated throughout the length and breadth of the land.

Regardless of the reasoned and principled arguments for not proceeding with the plan, to which I shall come later, there is a technical reason for immediately discontinuing the consultation process. When the process began, the plans were clearly different from the slimmed-down proposals now on offer. Many of the representations have therefore been on a false prospectus. The basis on which the consultation process is proceeding is extremely dubious and highly suspect.

The most recent announcements from Sir Colin Walker point to four things. First, a stock holding facility will be retained in Liverpool to supply blood and blood components to hospitals in Merseyside and north Wales. However, as Melanie Phillips pointed out in a recent article in *The Observer* , there has been some uncertainty about what the undertaking really means. Secondly, the NBA recognises the advanced development of specialist clinical services and says that it will maintain the services in the future. Thirdly, local donations will be used to treat local people and, fourthly, as Sir Colin Walker made clear to me himself, the Liverpool centre will not be amalgamated with the Manchester centre if clinical opinion is opposed to such a move.

Even against the modified version of the original suggestions there remain compelling arguments. First, the transfer of blood from the periphery of the region, from places such as Barmouth or Anglesey, will take considerably longer to get to the Manchester centre than to Liverpool. The entire major road network was recently gridlocked for several hours and anyone who has travelled over the Thelwall viaduct will know that there are often considerable delays in travelling between Liverpool and Manchester and beyond, even in good weather.

It is crucial that plasma is separated from whole blood as soon as possible after it is donated in order to provide blood components of the highest quality. The unnecessary extension of travelling time would therefore diminish the quality of the blood available. No consideration of logistics or feasibility was ever undertaken before the proposals were issued and there has been no pilot study. Thirdly, despite frequent reminders from regional transfusion directors on the national blood executive committee in 1993-94, transport considerations were not included in the final proposal. The financial savings in the consultation document, therefore, may have been overestimated since transportation costs were never included. Such a glaring omission of such magnitude places in question the thoroughness and validity of the Bain report by the management consultants who were engaged to assist the NBA in its strategic planning.

On the subject of erroneous information, the consultation paper goes on to suggest splitting administration into three zones. Perhaps someone should tell the people involved that that has already happened and that zone executive directors are already in post. The jobs were advertised in July even before the consultation paper was published.

Since the transport scheme was not included under the proposed new arrangements, no guarantee can be given as to the available remaining shelf-life of products prepared out of Liverpool at a remote site in Manchester. Since the shelf-life of platelet concentrate, which is used in the treatment of many patients with cancer and leukaemia,

[Mr. David Alton]

is only five days, the loss of one or two working days considerably reduces the shelf-life of the product. What sort of message does that send to the countless women and men who voluntarily and generously give blood, often at their own expense and inconvenience, because they care about the health of other people?

A promise of large stockholding fridges in hospital blood banks is far from reassuring. Larger stocks mean higher wastage levels and the unavailability of fresh blood in an emergency. Nine times out of 10, older blood is unsuitable for emergency clinical use. If allowed to happen, that will result in a second-class service to patients and may result in death. Perhaps people who take those sorts of decisions should follow the generous example of the donors and care less about market practice and more about the well-being of patients. Saving money is important, but saving life is infinitely more so.

The removal of a processing facility from Liverpool would reduce the quality of service that is delivered to the supra-regional foetal medical centre situated at the heart of Liverpool. Red cells for intrauterine use are prepared to order and their use is recommended as soon as possible after preparation. The removal of processing and testing from the blood centre in Liverpool effectively stops part of its activity, so specialist services palpably will suffer.

Anyone who heard the moving and eloquent appeal made at the meeting in St. George's hall by a consultant paediatrician from the region's Alder Hey children's hospital, or those people who have read the letters signed by consultants at the cardiothoracic unit and consultant anaesthetists at Royal Liverpool University hospital, representations from the regional pathologists and the objections from Sir Donald Wilson and the regional health authority will know that acute concern exists across the spectrum about the loss of specialist expertise to Merseyside and north Wales which will arise if this wrong-headed decision goes ahead. The consultant anaesthetists at the Royal propose legal action if any harm should come to their patients.

John Adey, underlining what Sir Colin Walker had already said to me, told four local hon. Members, including the right hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt) that no changes would occur

> "unless a majority of consultant haematologists and other relevant medical experts in the area agree that patient services can be maintained or improved."

I have yet to meet a single doctor in favour of that plan, so why, if that statement is to be believed and taken as the basis for proceeding, should we persist with this exercise, unless it is all a charade and a fait accompli, which is the view of many people who have been following events closely?

The views of all the regional transfusion directors were sought when the consultation process began and when the analysis and preparation of the options were conceived. Most significantly, however, those same people were not consulted about the feasibility or implications for north-west England, notwithstanding the fact that the two directors affected at Liverpool and at Lancaster had between them in excess of 30 years' experience in the practice of transfusion medicine in our region.

It is extremely revealing that in the north-west, two out of three centres are listed for closure although no amalgamation is proposed in the north-east. Only one member of staff from the north-west was closely involved in the Bain analysis and he is employed in Manchester. Is it any wonder, therefore, that there is little public confidence in the process? The gravest danger of the proposals is that donors will be alienated. Why should we undermine the effectiveness of such a superb service? Why sever its arteries? Why risk its paralysis?

The extra costs involved in storage and transportation, the wastage of freely given blood, the subsequent alienation and loss of donors, the implications for emergencies or disasters, the effects on hospitals and on training facilities such as Liverpool's school of tropical medicine and the University hospital, all amount to a damning indictment of the plans.

Blood is not a commercial commodity. In Holland, there are spot markets in blood. In America, blood is bought and sold. We have successfully avoided such a dirigiste and commercialised approach. It would be profoundly foolish and destructive to jeopardise the service by proceeding with the proposals. I hope that the debate will help to underline all-party opposition to them in the area which I represent in part.

10.45 pm

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): I shall speak only briefly because I am extremely interested in the Minister's response.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on securing the Adjournment debate. I thank him for allowing me to say a few words. All Merseyside Members have been working closely together to try to prevent consultation and proposals from being implemented. After our meeting with Mr. Adey, we have little confidence in what the National Blood Authority is telling us. It is telling people what they want to hear and then reneging on its statements.

We had a meeting at which, as the hon. Member for Mossley Hill said, we were told:

> "There will be no changes to the current arrangements unless a majority of consultant haematologists and other relevant medical experts in the area agree that patient services can be maintained or improved."

Those words were used by Mr. Adey before a television camera after the meeting. When we issued that information, we were informed by the press that Miss Sue Cunningham, who I understand works for the NBA as a public relations adviser, was briefing members of the press that we had brow-beaten Mr. Adey into making a claim that he did not mean.

We had a meeting in good faith. Miss Cunningham seemed to suggest that Mr. Adey should not be let out alone because he might make promises that he would be unable to deliver. What confidence does that give us in the way that the NBA is being run?

From the Wirral's point of view, there has been nothing but complete objection and opposition to the proposals. Dr. Spigge, who works at the Wirral health trust, states:

> "It is not clear to us that the Wirral population will benefit in any way."

The Wirral division of the British Medical Association states:

> "These plans are a cause of serious disquiet and represent a serious threat to the well-being of our patients."

Our constituents agree and are signing petitions.

The NBA has spent £1,257,000 on consultants' fees to save money. Of that, £1 million went to Bain and Co. I have seen a copy of its report, and it is not worth £1 million. I hope that the Minister will justify the use of these consultancy moneys. Will the results of the consultation that we have had be published? We know that on Merseyside there is massive and overwhelming opposition to the proposals. Will the NBA publish an analysis of the results of its consultation? Will it then confirm— I hope that the Minister will do so tonight— that the plans will not be implemented if the majority of local consultant haematologists and other experts say that they do not agree with them? If we can have that assurance from the Minister tonight, we shall be given confidence that the consultation period is genuine and not a massive sham.

10.49 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): What was said by the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) is entirely correct. I may not be quite as excited and emotional as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), but I know that the people of Merseyside, and those of the Wirral in particular, were very concerned about what they thought might have been proposals. We had a cross-party meeting with the appropriate representatives of the National Blood Authority, and were given assurances.

I ask the Minister to assure me, first, that there will be a blood bank in Liverpool; secondly, that no steps will be taken to alter the present arrangements unless a majority of the consultant haematologists and others who have appropriate professional qualifications are in favour of it; and, thirdly—I consider this the most important point— that, whatever the new arrangements may be, the people of the Wirral will not suffer in any way.

I am all in favour of efficiency, cost-consciousness and so forth, and I do not think that anything is so good that it cannot be changed for the better; but if the arrangements are to be changed, I want to be persuaded on behalf of my constituents that the change will be for the better. If it is not for the better I will not wear it, even if a vote of confidence is involved.

10.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I congratulate the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on raising an issue that clearly excites considerable emotions in his area. Let me repeat what he said at the beginning of his speech: we do indeed have the finest blood service in the world. I say that for a number of reasons. The service provides an enormous degree of quality assurance, and its high standards are well known throughout the world; I also applaud its level of testing, its safety and indeed the very fact that it is an entirely voluntary service. All those who give blood do so simply to help others: they have no other motive. There are other so-called voluntary services which offer travelling expenses, statutory days off work and other incentives that this service does not offer. It is 100 per cent. voluntary, and we intend to keep it that way.

The hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) mentioned blood being bought and sold. There is no question of that happening in this country. We mean to keep our blood service, to improve it and to build on its many qualities.

The present system results mainly from the existence of 13 regional transfusion services. The fact that there are 15 processing centres is largely due to that, rather than to any actual assessment of geographical spread. A national blood authority was recently set up for the first time, to bring together a loose federation of transfusion services that involved a good deal of duplication and fairly arbitrary organisation. It immediately set to work to find a way of streamlining the system and improving collection, quality, co-ordination and donor support.

Meanwhile, it was clear that there was excess capacity in processing and testing. The blood service is about collecting blood from voluntary donors, and making sure that that blood is then processed, tested and supplied to the hospitals that need it. If there is found to be excess capacity in those other operations, that is clearly a waste of manpower and resource that could be devoted to what the service is really about— sending out more mobile teams to collect blood from our precious core of donors.

There is no reason to suppose that the blood service should be entirely based on processing centres. Only about 5 per cent. of all donations are made at such centres, and there is no reason why collection teams that go out have to be based in them. In fact, the NBA proposal presupposes mobile teams going out from more bases that are not processing centres, and that will allow them greater flexibility to work more closely to where they are based. Such are the improvements foreseen by the NBA.

No one suggests that there is any reason to doubt the quality or the expertise at the Liverpool centre, or the commitment of those who work there. The question is whether we should have three processing and testing centres in the north-west when, for logistical and technical reasons, only one may be necessary. It is that question that we are now debating and, as the House knows, no final decision has yet been made.

I put it to the hon. Member for Mossley Hill that unless an absolute cast-iron case can be made that there is some danger—

Mr. Alton: It is not for me to make such a cast-iron case, any more than it is for the Minister to do so. All three hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have said that the views of the haematologists, clinicians, consultants and other medics should be the ones that really count. Will the Minister assure the House that if clinical opinion is united in its opposition to the proposals, yet the NBA proceeds with the plan and the decision is referred to him, he will kill the proposal stone dead at that stage?

Mr. Sackville: I certainly would not expect anyone to welcome the closure of such a centre, especially when allegations are being made about safety—the hon. Member for Mossley Hill has made several technical points about shelf life, and so on. However, if the NBA comes to the conclusion that, from a logistical point of view, it is able to continue to provide all the specialist services to Liverpool hospitals and all the support to donors, and all the other specialist activities that are performed now, and that it is not necessary to continue processing and testing in Liverpool, that is something for the authority to decide.

[Mr. Sackville]

On the other hand, if, as I was saying, a cast-iron case is made that safety is in question or that donors, hospitals or the patients who need blood will suffer from such a development, that must be carefully taken into account. I am not aware that such a cast-iron case has been made.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): We are not really discussing that, and that is not what we want guarantees about. The single point on which we seek the Minister's support arises from what happened when the four Wirral Members met representatives of the authority, when we were told that no changes would be made unless there was clear support for such changes among the medics most clearly involved. Will the Minister stand by what was said, or does he think that that undertaking should not have been given to us? Does he consider it foolish—or even worthless—that it was given?

Mr. Sackville: I have put it in another way. As I have said, if the NBA believes that it does not need processing in Liverpool, it is up to the authority to satisfy itself and us that there are no clinical dangers to patients. That is all that I can say at present.

May I answer a couple of the other questions—

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): If the Minister is to make the final decision, whose advice does he think best—that of haematologists or that of bureaucrats on the National Blood Authority, who are consulting the haematologists in Liverpool but who appear to be in danger of taking no notice of what they are told? What advice will the Minister accept? What is the best advice?

Mr. Sackville: We are in the first instance looking to the advice of the National Blood Authority. In its consultation process, it has to take the views of all the experts into account.

I shall deal with one or two other matters which were raised, such as consultancy costs. The NBA has indeed used consultants because a vast organisational change is being planned, involving, for example, the bringing together of all the disparate computer systems at the different transfusion centres, none of which can be linked with each other. Also, many logistical changes need to be made so that the current fairly arbitrary arrangements for transfer of blood around the system in cases where there are excesses and deficits and where particular blood groups are needed are worked out very carefully. The NBA does not have that sort of expertise in-house. If one visits the headquarters of the National Blood Authority at Watford, one finds that there are very few people in that office. I am glad to say that it is a very lean organisation, which has brought in expertise.

The question of consultation was also raised. I shall have to leave that matter in the form in which it was initially published. I hope that the NBA will be able to make available the maximum information.

Mr. Barry Porter: I am sorry to press the point with the Minister but I think that it is the nub of the matter. The four Wirral Members, whose intellectual capacity is clearly unparalleled, were clearly told that there would be no movement on the matter unless the medics, the professionals, agreed. Are we to understand that that was just a matter of consultation? Or were we to accept it, as I did at the time, as being a binding commitment?

Mr. Sackville: I can only say once again that it is a question of whether the case is made clinically that the closure would damage patients. That is what it is about in the end. Obviously, all the relevant advice will be taken into account. I would be very concerned if it were not.

We enormously value our voluntary donors. They are at the centre and they are what makes the blood transfusion service. Various hon. Members have mentioned that they may be alienated. They will be alienated if they are continually told, sometimes spuriously, that the blood service is being damaged by these proposals. I know well those who run the National Blood Authority. I was involved with the establishment of it. There is no way in which that authority would take actions which would damage the blood transfusion service and I would be the last person to sanction any actions which would alienate our greatly valued voluntary donors of blood in this country.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 15 December 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Order for consideration, as amended, read.
To be considered on Thursday 12 January.

Oral Answers to Questions

TREASURY

VAT (Fuel)

1. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria he used to determine the level of value added tax on fuel; and if he will make a statement.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Following last week's vote, the level of value added tax on domestic fuel and power will remain at 8 per cent.

Mr. Thompson: Given the huge embarrassment experienced by the Chancellor last week on the 7.5 per cent. increase in VAT on domestic fuel, is he aware that the introduction of 8 per cent. VAT on domestic fuel was equally unpopular? Is he further aware that, despite the criterion set down for the annual mean temperature over the country as a whole, the temperature in the north of England and Scotland is well below that of the south, which makes the tax very unfair? As nothing can be done about the 8 per cent., will he reconsider the criteria that trigger the cold weather payments, in view of the difference in temperature between the north and Scotland and the south. And—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Thompson: Well, finally, is the proposed increase to 17.5 per cent. still the Chancellor's primary concern?

Mr. Clarke: I cannot congratulate the hon. Gentleman on the topicality of his question, but I appreciate that the problem is caused by our procedures, which govern when he had to table it. The financial embarrassment caused by the defeat has been closed by the revenue that I announced last week. No doubt people will be able to make some objections about some of what we did last week, but the Budget judgment remains intact and we remain on course for recovery.

I am not an expert on climate so I cannot comment in detail on the differences between north and south, but it is not the case that every part of the north of England is colder than every part of the south of England. I come from the midlands so I am fairly neutral, but I believe that, although costs vary across the country, the burden of taxation is pretty fair. As the hon. Gentleman acknowledged, the answer is the cold weather payment scheme, which was invented by this Government and had no precedent before we came into office. We acknowledge that there are periods of severe weather when some form of compensation is called for. In two Budgets I have raised that compensation from £6 a week two years ago to £8.5 a week from now on.

Mr. Kynoch: I welcome the fact that my right hon. and learned Friend left intact the increase in cold weather payments, which is of great benefit to the elderly and those on low incomes, and that he has left intact the £30 million for the home energy efficiency scheme. Will he ensure that the Opposition, who seem intent on scaremongering and frightening the most vulnerable in society, are made aware of the free phone number that such people can call for information and help?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. To close this episode, let me say that, as a result of our package, the average pensioner will be fully compensated for the average VAT bill in forthcoming years. Pensioners were not being borne down on by our proposal and a small majority of pensioner households will now be overcompensated for the 8 per cent. that will remain. In fact, by its vote, the House has relieved the rest of the population of the feared burden of VAT on fuel. I appreciate my hon. Friend taking up the positive point about the home energy efficiency scheme. We doubled it last year and have now added a further £30 million. It has been a huge success and, as well as reduced fuel bills, brings to many elderly people the added comfort of having a properly insulated home. I trust that it will be backed enthusiastically by all parties.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Given the differential impact of VAT on living standards, not least those of British Gas showroom workers, who now stand to earn less in a year than their chief executive earns in a week, will the Chancellor of the Exchequer take the chance that I gave him before to condemn the 75 per cent. pay rise for the chief executive of British Gas and even, belatedly, to outline what action he proposes to deal with excesses that are both irresponsible and unfair, and an affront to decent standards in British industry?

Mr. Clarke: I do not want to talk about the affairs of individuals across the Floor of the House, but I have no doubt that Mr. Brown lives in a house whose fuel bills make him a major beneficiary of the effect of last week's vote on VAT. I should think that he was one of the big gainers from the hon. Gentleman's brave gesture when he voted on the Budget. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman shows ever-increasing enthusiasm for expressing views and striking attitudes towards the running of private-sector companies, especially in the energy sector. The background to all this is that British Gas has been a huge success since privatisation, and customers are benefiting from improved services and lower tariffs. It would be a regression to go back to the state of affairs that existed when Governments both of his party and—for a time, unfortunately—of mine, thought that somehow they could take over the supervision of the delivery of major public services such as gas.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Government have done more than any other to help the elderly and low-income groups with energy bills, not only through the cold weather payments, which have already been mentioned, but because, under privatisation, the real cost of gas and electricity has fallen? Will he continue that trend by resisting any imposition of a carbon tax?

Mr. Clarke: It is certainly true that the effect of sticking at 8 per cent. VAT is that gas and electricity prices have fallen by 1 per cent., even allowing for VAT, compared with the rate of inflation over the past two years. It is clear that the regulation imposed on the utilities will ensure continued falls in the price of gas and electricity. We must resist the attempt by the Labour party to take the affairs of such industries back into Government hands. A carbon energy tax—an alternative favoured by the Liberal party usually and the Labour party often—would impose not only a tax on domestic fuel but extremely heavy costs on British industry, and would disadvantage us in world markets. I am glad to say that at the Essen summit President Delors acknowledged as much, saying that the Commission would continue to design the outlines of a carbon energy tax, but would accept that it was for individual member states to decide whether they wanted such a tax. We shall rescue this country from such a tax, whether the idea comes from Europe, the British Liberal party or the British Labour party.

2. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on how VAT on domestic fuel will impact on households at differing income levels.

8. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on how VAT on domestic fuel will impact on households at differing income levels.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Taking account of the generous compensation that they will be receiving, benefit recipients will be paying much less than those with higher incomes. For the majority of pensioners that compensation will more than match the VAT that they will be paying.

Mr. Battle: Is it not a fact that the poorest households spend 13 per cent. of their income on fuel, whereas richer households spend only 3 per cent. of theirs? Does the Chancellor know that the Institute of Fiscal Studies has estimated that, as a result of VAT at 8 per cent., the poorest fifth of the population will reduce their fuel consumption by 9 per cent., compared with an average of 6 per cent? The compensation package shortchanges the people who need it most, such as the elderly and the infirm. People on disability living allowance will get nothing. Those who pay the highest price can do the arithmetic; they will go cold this winter because of VAT on fuel, even at 8 per cent.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is misusing a statistic that makes the obvious point that people on lower incomes tend to spend a higher proportion of their income on fuel, just as they do on food. Many of them also tend to spend a higher proportion of their income on tobacco and alcohol than other people do. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] That just happens to be the case. *[Interruption.]* Of course it does.

The Opposition are obscuring the fact that, in cash terms, we introduced VAT in order to give cash compensation to the poorest. As I have already said, and as I restated in my reply, for the majority of pensioner households, the amount added to their pension will be greater than the amount that VAT adds to their bills. With the greatest respect—this is becoming an old campaign and I have accepted the vote of the House—I still become roused by this absurd claim that people were somehow going to die from cold and all the rest of it, when they were going to be compensated in respect of their bills. The people in the big houses will save the VAT.

Mr. Cunningham: Does the Chancellor not realise that, in the light of the statement that he has just made to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), he does not really understand the plight of old-age pensioners, the poorer families and the sick in relation to VAT? In addition, the Chancellor has been responsible for cuts in benefits.

Mr. Clarke: If VAT costs the average pensioner a certain amount, and if the compensation that we offer is equal to that amount, I cannot see how I can be accused of neglecting the interests of pensioners. The hon. Gentleman says that this is part of the fall in living standards, but fortunately I am very glad to say that the living standards of retired people have risen well ahead of inflation since the Government took office. Living standards have risen about 40 per cent. ahead of inflation in the 15 years that the Conservatives have been in power.

Mr. Allason: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that pensioners in particular study his Budget statements with great care and they do not take a great deal of notice of the Opposition parties' scare stories? However, is he also aware that there is some anxiety about the position of VAT on fuel in 1996, when it is believed that the European Union will require an end to all zero rating? Can my right hon. and learned Friend put at rest the minds of pensioners, who are concerned about future VAT rates on fuel?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend because I am aware that there are fears of that kind and I can put them at rest. Until we have a new VAT regime agreed in Europe, the present regime continues. We have always safeguarded our right to determine which goods remain zero rated. That remains the case. As we enter discussions in Europe about a possible further regime for VAT, we will ensure that we retain the right to set zero rates according to our judgment. That is one of our main negotiating aims.

With regard to pensioners in general, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason). They follow these issues with care. I am sure that many of them noticed that, when I was able to go back to indexing the tax allowances for the general population against inflation, I over-indexed the aged person's allowance for income tax. Therefore, the tax bill of pensioners who pay income tax was relieved by my Budget. The overall effect of the Budget is slightly to reduce the burden that we impose on pensioners for revenue purposes.

Mr. David Nicholson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend continue to resist the scare claims of Opposition Members which, as usual, are designed to frighten the most vulnerable in our society? Will he also continue to give attention to providing funds and incentives for home insulation and energy conservation despite past and expected future falls in the price of gas and electricity?

Mr. Clarke: I undertake to do so. The good thing about the home energy efficiency scheme, to which we have already alluded, is that we have expanded it very rapidly indeed. We doubled it last year and the people responsible for the scheme have responded and have proved capable of spending that money. Sometimes one can move so fast that it becomes difficult for the administration to keep up speed and deliver the money in terms of homes insulated. One million homes have been insulated and the level at which we are now running the scheme will produce a significant difference to the comfort and fuel bills of many elderly and poor people.

Ms Armstrong: Given that many low-income families will receive no compensation for the increase in VAT on fuel, and given that we know that the gap between the rich and the poor is getting wider, why will not the Chancellor condemn the 75 per cent. pay increase for the head of British Gas? The Prime Minister condemned it; why will the Chancellor not do that?

Mr. Clarke: Carrying on about the pay of individuals does no earthly good to pensioners. It merely distracts public attention from the fact that the Opposition have no positive proposals to put forward on taxation or on public spending, or the relationship between the two. I have repeatedly made it clear that I deeply deplore, in any major company, pay increases that are not justified by performance. Shareholders should take an interest in remuneration when there is any reason to doubt that it is matched by performance. I strongly reject the idea that it is the business of Government to go back to the business of setting salaries in major companies, something that was a hallmark of an extremely unsuccessful period in running many businesses, including the public utilities.

Public Borrowing

3. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the likely effect on the economy of a continuation of public borrowing at current rates.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): The Government have taken firm action to reduce public borrowing. That should ensure sound public finances and the strengthening of the UK's economic recovery.

Mr. Gallie: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Is he aware of the recent successes by Jetstream Aircraft of Prestwick in selling Jetstream 41s overseas? Does he consider that the reduction in our long-term borrowings will assist future exporters?

Mr. Aitken: I am indeed aware of the considerable successes in the export market of the Jetstream company in my hon. Friend's constituency. It recently sold aircraft to South Africa and to Korea, both of which are new markets for that company. It is part of the mounting success of Britain's exports, which are at the record level of a 14 per cent. increase this year.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: What is the Government's policy on future borrowing? Does the right hon. Gentleman have a view on whether, on the upturn of the cycle, the Government should eliminate borrowing, or is it his and the Chancellor's intention to ensure that Government debt continues to increase even when the cycle is on the upswing? Will he make a clear statement on the Government's plans for borrowing? Do they believe in a balanced Budget?

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman should study the Red Book, where all those matters are set out in some detail. In general terms, it continues to be our policy to reduce public borrowing in accordance with the graphs and curves set out in the Red Book, and that will remain our policy.

Mr. Congdon: Does my right hon. Friend agree that only by taking a tough approach to public spending has it been possible significantly to reduce the public sector borrowing requirement and, at the same time, to achieve an impressive 4 per cent. economic growth? Does he also agree that that is in stark contrast to the Opposition, who urge more and more spending and do not have a clue how they would reduce the PSBR?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is entirely correct. As usual, the silence from the Opposition on those subjects is absolutely deafening and embarrassing. They will not say at what level they intend to reduce public borrowing or whether they intend to reduce it at all. In more general terms, sound public finances are absolutely central to the economic recovery, which is going well, with growth rates of more that 4 per cent. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's endorsement of our successful recovery.

Mr. Andrew Smith: While the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has the graphs and curves from the Red Book in mind, will he confirm that, on debt interest alone, the Government propose to spend £35 billion extra over the next five years, compared with what they spent over the past five years? Is the projection in the Red Book for 1996-97 of a PSBR of £13 billion a firm target? If that is not a firm target, what is his target?

Mr. Aitken: All targets are intended targets, and we are aiming for them, so there is nothing different about that. I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman is at last taking a serious interest in reducing public debt. The cost to the taxpayer of gross debt interest payment is almost £1,000 a household. Therefore, at long last, after the embarrassing silences from the Opposition, we are glad to have a signal that they are interested in reducing public borrowing. That is a first for Labour.

Mr. Brazier: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the welcome reduction in borrowing will help to ensure that we continue to have one of the lowest absolute levels of borrowing as a percentage of gross domestic product of any country in the developed world? However, at a time when private sector borrowing is falling, I urge my right hon. Friend to be very chary about further rises in interest rates.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is quite right to commend Her Majesty's Government for their good record on steadily reducing public borrowing, which has halved in two years and which is exemplary compared with that of many other nations. As he knows, Treasury Ministers do not comment on rises or falls in interest rates, but I have listened carefully to his advice.

Investment

4. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the effect of his Budget on investment levels in the United Kingdom economy.

9. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what impact his Budget will have on investment levels in the United Kingdom economy.

11. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect his Budget will have on investment levels in the United Kingdom economy.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Sir George Young): The Budget reinforces our strategy of ensuring sound public finances and low inflation, providing a good climate for investment. We expect investment to grow strongly in the coming year, with whole economy investment increasing by 5¼ per cent. and business investment at nearly 11 per cent.

Mr. Miller: That strategy has resulted in Britain coming 22nd out of 24 countries in an OECD survey of investment as a function of gross domestic product, and it has resulted in a steady decline in manufacturing investment in plant and equipment since 1990. Will not that strategy continue to undermine Britain's manufacturing base?

Sir George Young: I do not see how the hon. Gentleman can claim that 11 per cent. growth in business investment next year is in any way disadvantageous. What would damage investment in this country are the Labour party's proposals to help itself to substantial sums of money from industries which were nationalised—money that it would find only by cutting investment and infrastructure and thus creating unemployment. We will listen to no lectures about investment from the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Jones: The Minister talks about business investment, but surely he is aware that even the most optimistic forecasts do not predict that it will reach the level it was before the recession. Therefore, he will not be surprised to learn that at a recent meeting with the West Midlands Engineering Employers Federation I was told that, apart from a little help that will be provided to tiny businesses, the Chancellor's Budget will do absolutely nothing to secure the long-term sustained growth in business investment that is necessary if we are to reach the investment levels of our competitors to which my hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) referred.

After 15 years of Tory Government, is the Minister not ashamed of that record? According to an answer from the Minister of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell)—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. This is a total abuse of Question Time. Both questions and answers have been extremely long, and it is totally unfair on those hon. Members who have questions listed further down the Order Paper and who can reasonably expect to be called. I want brisk questions and answers.

Sir George Young: The hon. Lady is not correct. A recent Confederation of British Industry survey, published in October, showed that the balance of firms planning to spend more on plant and machinery is at its highest level since April 1989.

Mr. Mandelson: Will the Minister congratulate those in the north-east—notably those in my constituency of Hartlepool and those in the Northern Development Company—who have worked so hard to secure the recently announced investment by Samsung Electronics in Teeside? Does that not demonstrate a very powerful case for a close partnership between the private and public sectors, as well as the importance of effective regional policies and Government incentives for investment? Will the Minister therefore repudiate the Employment Secretary's demand that such essential industrial assistance be cut?

Sir George Young: Of course I pay tribute to those who have won the orders. One reason why the north-east has done so well is that the Government have consistently supported that area through development corporations, city challenge and enterprise zones, and our policies are now paying off.

Mr. Renton: I congratulate the Financial Secretary on what he has told us. What budgetary measures does he think need to be introduced in order to maintain—let alone increase—investment levels if serious suggestions were made by serious people that Britain should leave the European Union?

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend is right. Many investors, particularly international companies, want to invest in a country that is at the heart of Europe, and that is a key part of our selling strategy. A healthy economy, sustainable recovery, low inflation and rising profitability are what matter, and we now have them.

Mr. Jenkin: Why does Britain have the most punitive rate of capital gains tax in the entire developed world? Would not it boost investment if we were to reduce or even abolish CGT? Japan has no CGT, and it works perfectly well.

Sir George Young: There will be opportunities as the Finance Bill goes through Committee to develop at length the subject of CGT. It is worth recording that 99 per cent. of taxpayers do not pay CGT, so one must put the problem in perspective.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Is not the 11 per cent. projected increase in business investment exceptionally high? Although the Labour party—for obvious reasons—does not want to acknowledge that fact, is it not irrefutable evidence of the confidence that the Government's policies have engendered in the economy?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is right. In the past few days, a decision has been taken by London Underground about the Northern line, and the go-ahead has been given to the Croydon tramlink and the midlands metro. Investment decisions are now being taken, jobs are being created and we are making progress in modernising the infrastructure.

Mr. Darling: On Tuesday, the Chancellor said that the timing of interest rate rises depended on, among other things, political events. Who will decide the timing of interest rate changes as we approach the general election—the Governor, acting in the interests of the economy, or the Chancellor, acting in the interests of the Tory party?

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman knows precisely what the regime is. Decisions are taken at the monthly meetings, and the Governor has flexibility on the timing.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the levels of investment by British Telecom, the gas industry and the water industry? Does he believe that the rise in their investment is due to the fact that they are now in the private sector and are not nationalised industries?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is quite right. It is exactly those successful investment programmes that the Opposition seek to damage with their proposal for a windfall tax, which I hope has now been abandoned.

Living Standards

5. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect which Budgets since 1992 have had on living standards.

Sir George Young: Household income after tax and inflation is expected to rise next year to be almost 50 per cent. higher per head than in 1979. Our policies of sound finance and low inflation have created the prospect of sustained growth and of further increases in living standards.

Mrs. Jackson: Do not the averages mask the differentials? Is it not true that since 1979 half the tax handouts from the Government—£16 billion—have gone to the top 10 per cent. of the population and that, since 1992, £2 billion has been taken from those in the bottom half of the household incomes table? Is the basic unfairness of that Tory tax policy an unfortunate mistake or part of a deliberate policy?

Sir George Young: What really matters is that the real incomes of vulnerable groups—pensioners, the unemployed and the low paid—have all gone up. The burdens of the 1993 and 1994 Budgets are spread fairly across all income groups.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that whenever Opposition Members quote statistics on the amount of tax that is being taken from the average householder, there is always an assumption that the living standards of that average person have gone up well ahead of the rate of inflation? Would not it be sensible for them to look at what sums people take home? Have not living standards risen year by year for the average householder?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend is quite right. Tax is an important part of the picture, but it is only part of it. What matters is the total picture, which includes earnings. As I said a few moments ago, real income per head has risen by nearly £50 per week since 1979. That is the figure that really matters.

Public Expenditure (Northern Ireland)

6. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consultations he had with the Northern Ireland Office in drawing up his public expenditure allocation to Northern Ireland for the fiscal year 1995-96.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was fully involved in the decisions about future public expenditure in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McGrady: I thank the Minister for that reply. May I draw to your attention, Madam Speaker, and that of the Minister, that the announcement regarding public expenditure in Northern Ireland was made on Monday, not to the House or to Members of Parliament who represent Northern Ireland but to the press? Notwithstanding that, I am sure that the Minister will agree that the advent of peace in Northern Ireland has created new public expenditure priorities. Expenditure on security is being reduced, increasing the need for further expenditure on other parts of the public sector and, in particular, on job creation. It is estimated that peace will mean the loss of more than 25,000 jobs in Northern Ireland, and that vacuum must be filled. Will the Minister assure me that the financial benefits gained from spending less on security will be used in the public sector on job creation and not clawed back into the Treasury? That money should be spent for the benefit of Northern Ireland to enhance its future chances.

Mr. Aitken: As today is the first anniversary of the Downing street declaration, I am glad to join the hon. Gentleman in welcoming any proposals that will strengthen the prospects for peace, prosperity and investment in Northern Ireland. It may be premature to speak about a large peace dividend, because it is too early to lower the guard on security. I emphasise, however, that prospects for investment, as highlighted by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at yesterday's meeting of the Investment Forum, are excellent.

The Government have no intention of taking money away from Northern Ireland—far from it. As we made clear in the announcement at the Essen conference, we have shown our good will by ensuring that any new investment money from the European Union or from other sources will be considered in addition to the Government's planned spending growth and investment in Northern Ireland. The prospects therefore look good for a new era of better investment in Northern Ireland.

Unemployment

7. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates his Department has made of the costs of unemployment.

Mr. Aitken: In 1993-94, the costs of benefits paid to the unemployed in Great Britain is estimated to have been £9.7 billion.

Mr. Skinner: The problem with that answer is that the Minister has not taken into account all the lost taxes and national insurance contributions, other benefits that are paid to the unemployed and the cost of redundancy payments in many cases, which bring the cost of unemployment to a total to £9,000 a year for anyone unemployed. That is why another member of the Cabinet, the Secretary of State for Education, went along to a Select Committee and used that very figure. On top of that, miners who have been thrown out of work and who receive money from the Department of Energy—there are more than 100,000 of them—are not included in the unemployment statistics. The truth is that if the Government got rid of mass unemployment in Britain, they could wipe out the public sector borrowing requirement for next year.

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman is always full of instant solutions and wrong figures; today is no exception. The figure he has quoted is wrong. Successive Governments have declined to make estimates of the kind that the hon. Gentleman has made because they require all sorts of arbitrary assumptions and guesses to be made about the potential earnings of unemployed people and their spending patterns. It is safer to say that the implied costs of an unemployed person are about £3,500. That is why the figure that I gave in my original answer stands.

Mr. Garnier: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the costs of unemployment in the constituency of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) fell last month because the unemployment rate there fell by more than 2 per cent.? Is my right hon. Friend further aware that the cost of unemployment in my constituency has fallen consistently since the general election? What lessons has he learnt from the overall unemployment figures throughout the country?

Mr. Aitken: Unemployment is falling all over the country at the extremely satisfactory rate of more than 1,000 a day. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) may not be aware of the interesting phenomenon in his constituency known as the "Bolsover diamond"—that is not a reference to the hon. Gentleman when he is in one of his rougher moods but a £35 million investment project under the single regeneration budget, £5 million of which came from the Government, the rest being raised in partnership with the private sector. That project will create nearly 3,500 jobs and train more than 1,000 people. That is the kind of employment advantage that the Government are creating through their excellent policies and the sound Budget of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor.

Skills

10. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the level of skills in the United Kingdom relative to international competitors.

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): The competitiveness White Paper made it clear that, although the United Kingdom has world-class skills in some areas, further progress is needed in others. The Government have introduced major reforms to improve outputs from education and training.

Mr. Clapham: I am rather surprised by that answer because the Minister will be aware that a great deal more needs to be done. Yesterday, the Trade and Industry Select Committee visited Glasgow, where we spoke to IBM, Stevensons and Hoover, who told us that they were having extreme difficulty in finding the skilled labour that they required. Britain obviously needs far more skilled labour if we are to compete with our main competitors. What resources will be made available, and over what period of time, to lift skills in Britain to the level of our major competitors?

Mr. Nelson: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point on behalf of the Trade and Industry Select Committee, of which he is a member. This country lags behind some others in technical and intermediary skills, which is why considerable extra resources are being made available through the advanced and apprenticeship schemes, which should provide some 70,000 extra people with national vocational qualifications over the next five years.

Miss Emma Nicholson: Does my hon. Friend agree, however, that even the most skilled workers cannot compete and get jobs in a negative industrial environment where minimum wages and social chapter restrictions are the order of the day?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. A minimum wage and social chapter would undoubtedly destroy jobs and diminish training budgets.

VAT (Zero-rated Goods)

12. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to extend the scope of VAT to goods which are currently zero-rated.

The Paymaster General (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

Ms Hoey: We shall have to wait and see on that. As a special Christmas gift to women, will the Minister consider zero rating something that is not a luxury but a necessity—sanitary towels and other sanitary apparel? Will he give the matter serious consideration because those items are a necessity and women should not have to pay VAT on them?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have no plans to reduce VAT on the items mentioned by the hon. Lady and we cannot introduce zero rates for reasons, of which she is aware, connected with rules under the European Union.

Mr. Michael Brown: Is my hon. Friend aware that I have a question for written answer on the Order Paper for answer next week asking him to clarify the position with regard to zero-rating VAT on pleasure rides? Is he aware that in Cleethorpes people are concerned about whether VAT will be put on donkey rides on Cleethorpes beach? Will he clear up that matter, as those donkey rides are an important part of the local economy?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Public transport will continue to be zero rated. Unfortunately, beach donkeys do not constitute public transport, even in Cleethorpes, but at the standard rate of 17.5 per cent. I am sure that they represent excellent value.

Living Standards

13. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on living standards.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Real household income per head has risen by an average of nearly £50 a week after tax and inflation since 1979.

Mrs. Roche: Will the Chancellor explain why, at the last general election, the Government said that they would raise the living standards of the British people yet now have the gall to expect the typical British family to find £800 a year to pay for the new taxes that he has introduced?

Mr. Clarke: What the hon. Lady calls a typical household is about 1 per cent. of households in the country. She is misusing statistics again. She will have noticed that next year we expect personal disposable incomes to rise by about 1.5 per cent. After taking account of tax and inflation, that is an average of about £5 a week. Those are the first fruits of our economic recovery and we are now set on course for a strong economic recovery, strong manufacturing base, falling unemployment and rising living standards for the people of this country, in line with what we promised at the last election and in marked contrast with the previous Labour Government's record.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the clear signs of the improvement in living standards in the United Kingdom is the substantial number of people today who hold shares in companies? Does that not perhaps alter slightly the statistic that 1 per cent. of the population pay capital gains tax?

Mr. Clarke: It does, indeed. Another of the achievements of the past 15 years is the fact that the Conservative attachment to the principle of popular capitalism and every man a shareholder has been taken a great deal further forward, and very many people now own shares in successful British companies. I agree with my hon. Friend that it puts the arguments about capital gains tax in context that such a comparatively small number of taxpayers in this country actually pay capital gains tax.

Mr. Salmond: Would the Chancellor like to take a cut in his pay of 16 per cent. this Christmas? Would he rather work in the British Gas boardroom, where one gets £500,000 a year, or in the showroom, where the £13,000 salaries are being cut by 16 per cent.? If the Chancellor will not do anything about the unacceptable face of privatisation, why does not he introduce a system of taxation that reduces the marginal tax on the poor, and ask people with their snouts in the trough to pay their fair share?

Mr. Clarke: Questions about the management of British Gas must be addressed to British Gas. The hon. Gentleman, like the Labour party, must resist the temptation to return to the days when parliamentary questions, ministerial decisions and political interference determined the commercial policy of institutions that provided the country with utilities. We now have a massive increase of investment in British Gas and falling fuel prices. An extremely strong industry has developed, and I trust that its management will continue to manage it fairly and properly in the public interest.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Roche: Given today's news that British Gas retail staff, who earn an average of £13,000 a year, will be asked to take a pay cut while the chief executive will receive a pay rise of 75 per cent., does the Prime Minister share the opinion of the deputy chairman of the Conservative party that, under the present Government, the rich are getting richer on the backs of the rest?

The Prime Minister: I am a little surprised that the hon. Lady should mention that matter, in the light of what her hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor had to say on the radio a couple of hours ago.

Q2. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hawkins: In the light of this week's welcome further fall in unemployment, has my right hon. Friend met a single business man who supports the Labour party's demand for a minimum wage, which would destroy so many jobs in constituencies such as mine in Blackpool?

The Prime Minister: I cannot be sure that there is none who would, but certainly the overwhelming opinion is to the contrary. Even the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) has in the past used the expression that there would be some jobs "shakeout", or words to that effect. That means, of course, that people will lose their jobs. The right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has said that a minimum wage would have a potential jobs impact. He can hardly believe that it would be a favourable jobs impact. I think, therefore, that hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench tend to agree that jobs would be lost by that policy.

Mr. Blair: Will the Prime Minister confirm that, by next year, the chief executive of British Gas will earn in one week what his employees, who are now confronted with job cuts and pay cuts, earn in one year? Is it not time that he took a grip on those privatised utilities and put a stop to excesses that are offensive to the British sense of justice?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman will have to decide whether he wishes to have a private sector with rigid Government controls over every aspect of it, in which case it is not a private sector, or to renationalise industries such as gas, in which case he should make his position entirely clear. He might also clear his lines with his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr.

Brown) because my answer to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) applies also to the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Blair: Since these industries are regulated, why could they not be regulated to put a stop to those excesses? Is not the point one of efficiency as well as justice because, if we want a modern motivated work force, we can have it only on the basis of investment, partnership and fairness, not on the old Tory notion of greed at the top and insecurity for the rest?

The Prime Minister: A couple of hours ago the shadow Chancellor was asked:

> "Surely there is nothing you could do, could you, about wage rates within an industry? You are surely not going to start interfering with that again, are you?"

To that, the hon. Gentleman said:

> "No, these are matters for negotiation between the unions and the employers."

They should sort their lines out themselves before they criticise us.

Mr. Blair: The issue is not the market conditions of British Gas but the contrast between the treatment of the chief executive and those ordinary staff who are facing pay cuts. I understand that the Cabinet has its own committee looking into these matters. If the Prime Minister has such a committee, why will he not accept the suggestion put forward from the Opposition Benches that where there are excessive pay increases at the top the regulator should act to stop them?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a matter for the regulator. He is being wholly inconsistent. One day he complains about the British Gas monopoly, the next day he complains when British Gas faces competition and cuts its cloth accordingly. In one sense he opposes monopoly, in another sense he opposes competition. The reality is that he just opposes the private sector. What the right hon. Gentleman is doing is what he and his colleagues have done so often—find a grievance, whatever it is, and use that grievance for partisan interest in the interests of the Labour party.

Q3. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Anthony Durant: My right hon. Friend will be aware that today is the anniversary of the Downing street declaration. I congratulate him on the progress that is being made in Northern Ireland towards a lasting peace and the announced inward investment and on the atmosphere that has improved so much in Northern Ireland, which he found in Portadown yesterday. Conservative Members believe that unless we get rid of the explosives and the firearms of the IRA, the UVF and the UFF, we will not be able to make the progress that we should.

The Prime Minister: I share that view. Firearms, explosives and detonators, whether held by the IRA or by the loyalist paramilitaries, need to be decommissioned. As I said yesterday, I am not concerned whether they are surrendered; I am concerned that they are decommissioned and destroyed so that they can no longer be used to disrupt the democratic life of Northern Ireland. That is the important matter. That does have to be discussed and it does have to be acted upon during the preliminary discussions that are taking place at the moment. If progress is not made on that, not only, in my judgment, would the other democratic parties in Northern Ireland politics not sit down with those who retain those weapons, but nor should any British Government.

Mr. Ashdown: Given the damage that has been done by indecision and division over Bosnia in the past, will the Prime Minister tell us what his response will be to the French proposal to be put to NATO on Monday to secure Sarajevo airport and to open a route to the sea in order to reinforce the UN's humanitarian operations and to make more secure the position of our troops there in the future?

The Prime Minister: Of course, we consider carefully anything that would secure the position of our troops and the right hon. Gentleman should know better than to suggest that we would do otherwise. I wish that he would not repeatedly undersell and undermine what is done there by British troops, United Nations troops and the Government. He has done nothing but grandstand on this issue from the commencement of the matter. If he really understood a little more about it, he might say a little less about it.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that employees should be encouraged to take stakes in the companies that they work for? Does not he think it odd that the Labour party attacks share options, particularly bearing in mind the extent to which its leader and various of his "luvvie" friends seem to have benefited from them?

The Prime Minister: I certainly think that it is right to extend share ownership as widely as possible. In the past 15 years, there has been a dramatic extension of share ownership. That has entrenched the private sector and private enterprise. It has done a great deal for the individual security of people owning shares. We shall certainly continue those policies. It would be welcome to have a cross-party consensus on it.

Q4. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. McGrady: I thank the Prime Minister for his reply. Will he join me in congratulating the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland, and may I thank him personally for the great contribution and excellent launch of the Investment Forum drive in Belfast this week? He and, I hope, all hon. Members will pray that it bears immediate and urgent fruit. Having launched the Investment Forum, and having begun demilitarisation talks with the republican and loyalist paramilitaries, does he agree that the most urgent and pressing need in Northern Ireland is the recommencement of political dialogue, which must perforce await completion of the framework document? Will he assure the House today that, with the creation of the new Government in the Republic of Ireland under the new Taoiseach, John Bruton, the Government will act urgently to complete the framework document so that the two Governments and the political parties can negotiate a lasting political settlement in Northern Ireland?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman had to say about the IDB, officials in the Northern Ireland Office and the investment conference held yesterday. No one who attended the conference has any doubt that it was a tremendous success not only in the new investments that were announced yesterday, but in the number of new investments that may arise as a result of the conference. The atmosphere was quite astonishing, as everyone who attended will know.

On the second half of the hon. Gentleman's question, clearly it is desirable to recontinue the political dialogue as soon as possible. I have written already to the new Taoiseach, Mr. Bruton, to say that I look forward to meeting him as soon as possible. I am confident that the new Irish Government will wish to sustain together the work that we have done over Northern Ireland. We wish to recommence discussions on the framework document and, I hope, conclude it as speedily as possible. But I would rather take a little longer over the document and get it right than deal with it too speedily and perhaps not have it right.

Mr. Dunn: What advice will the Prime Minister offer to the people of Islington who are entitled to say that, if local education is not good enough for the Leader of the Opposition, it is not good enough for them?

The Prime Minister: I suspect that it is not only the Leader of the Opposition who has not found the education system satisfactory in Islington, although the right hon. Gentleman shakes his head so perhaps he does find it satisfactory after all. We need the highest quality of education in Islington not just for the right hon. Gentleman, of course, but for every Islington resident whose children attend schools there.

"Maltese Double Cross"

Q5. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what is the outcome of the investigation, referred to in his letter to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 29 November, of the scrutiny of the film "Maltese Double Cross" by those involved in the investigation; and who were those involved to whom he referred.

The Prime Minister: The Crown Office and Dumfries and Galloway police are still considering the contents of the film.

Mr. Dalyell: Is it not a matter of record that on 19 September 1989 the then Secretary of State for Transport, Lord Parkinson—in good faith, quite certainly—offered the British relatives of the victims of Lockerbie a public inquiry on the condition that it was agreed by his colleagues? Which colleague vetoed that, and why did she do it?

The Prime Minister: My understanding of what I believe the hon. Gentleman has in mind is a little different from that implied by him. I am advised that in 1990 Lord Parkinson undertook to consider with colleagues the case for a confidential inquiry. When, subsequently, a decision was taken to hold the fatal accident inquiry, the case for a second inquiry fell away. I am advised that that was explained and accepted at the time by the relatives.

Engagements

Q6. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Michie: Is the Prime Minister aware that the London to Crianlarich and Fort William and other sleeper trains are to be axed? That is no scare story. It signals the death knell of many vital rural services in Scotland and is due entirely to the Prime Minister's chaotic and damaging privatisation scheme.

The Prime Minister: Unless the hon. Lady is talking about a different service, I understand that sleeper services from London to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness will be safeguarded for the first time. If she has other detailed questions about other services, I suggest that she addresses them to the Secretaries of State for Transport or for Scotland.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): May I ask the Leader of the House to tell us the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 19 DECEMBER—Motion for the Christmas Adjournment.

Motions on parliamentary procedure.

TUESDAY 20 DECEMBER—Debates on the Adjournment. As the House will realise, that is marginally better than my forecast last week.

The business for the first week back after the Christmas Adjournment will be as follows:

TUESDAY 10 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Jobseekers Bill.

WEDNESDAY 11 JANUARY—Motion relating to the Committee of Selection.

Motion on the Cleveland (Structural Change) Order.

Motions on the Value Added Tax (Buildings and Land) Order and the Value Added Tax (Transport) Order.

THURSDAY 12 JANUARY—Second Reading of the Town and Country Planning (Costs of Inquiries Etc.) Bill.

Debate on child care facilities for the House on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 13 JANUARY—Debate on the role of the citizens charter in improving public services on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Mrs. Taylor: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement. The House will have noticed that the recess is to start a day earlier than anticipated, presumably because the Prime Minister does not want another Question Time before Christmas—*[Interruption.]* Or perhaps it is because of the introduction of the winner of the Dudley, West by-election some time next week.

I thank the Leader of the House for finding time for a debate on child care facilities in the House of Commons. That move will be welcomed by Members and staff alike.

Will the Leader of the House look at the exchanges yesterday when the Secretary of State for Wales, ostensibly making a statement, spoke for 20 minutes and produced a so-called "Budget for Wales"? Will he take steps to ensure that time for statements is not abused in that way? Will the Leader of the House give us an indication of how we can make progress towards ensuring that future requests for meetings of the Welsh Grand Committee in Cardiff are taken seriously and that the Secretary of State for Wales does not wriggle out of appearing before that Committee by making statements such as the one he made yesterday?

Finally, in view of the widespread and genuine public concern about the future of the blood transfusion service, regarding the sale of blood abroad and the back-door privatisation of this essential service, will the Leader of the House ensure that an urgent statement is made on that vital issue?

Mr. Newton: May I take the first part of the hon. Lady's question first? The House should know, in the light of what she said, that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and, indirectly, I, received a request from the office of the Leader of the Opposition that the House should rise on Tuesday. I hope that she will agree that my right hon. Friend deserves an apology from her for the comments that she made.

If I may return to quieter territory, I am grateful to the hon. Lady for referring to the debate on child care. I, of course, note her comments about the Welsh statement and those about the Welsh Grand Committee and will bring them to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. May I add to that comment, Madam Speaker, because you know that the matter has been on my mind. I would not presume to suggest that you, Madam Speaker, have had it on your mind as well, but it is a possibility. Considering the length of all three local government statements this year, although they followed tradition, before next year it may be right to consider whether there is some way in which to abbreviate the statements and make more written material available to the House. I shall examine that, but, obviously, at this stage it has to be without commitment.

Let me make two things absolutely clear about the blood transfusion service. There is no question of turning the National Blood Authority into a commercial organisation, still less of privatising it. It does not sell blood abroad, nor does it collect any more blood than is needed to meet the needs of patients in this country.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I understand that the Finance Bill is due to be published on 4 January. Can my right hon. Friend give us any indication of when it may be debated on Second Reading?

Mr. Newton: I can certainly confirm that we hope to publish it early in the new year. I cannot at this moment give a date for Second Reading. As my hon. Friend will know, I have not included it in the week's business that I have just announced, but I expect that it will occur fairly shortly after that.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Given that the Leader of the House has announced two debates on procedures of the House, one next week and the other on the balance of party representation on Committees to be debated when we come back, does he accept that all the structures of the House should reflect the balance of political allegiance in the House as a constitutional principle? Does he accept that if the Government do not have a majority, the Government should not have a majority on Committees either; that it is Parliament and not Government who should decide things here?

Given that there is so much controversy and anger, especially at the end of this Session, can we establish an objective place from which the facts that the Government and other parties use can be produced, so that no claims can be made that there is not a widening of the gap between rich and poor, for example, when self-evidently that is the truth?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman, no doubt for his own reasons, wishes to draw me into some wide generalisations. For the moment, I shall simply confirm that there is to be a debate and confirm also that the House contains a clear majority of Members elected as Conservatives.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on tabling motions for the Jopling report to be carried through? During that debate, will he listen closely to the views that may be expressed by hon. Members, because there may be some additions or alterations in the use of Members' time which the House may like, which would probably fit in with my right hon. Friend's motions and to which it would be necessary for him to pay particular attention?

Mr. Newton: I hope that my right hon. Friend, to whom I listen as much as to anyone, will accept that I always listen to views put to me about matters affecting the House and, indeed, other matters. It sounds as if he has some ingenious ideas up his sleeve and I look forward to hearing them with interest.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Will the Leader of the House join right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House in warmly congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on the publication today of his Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill? The Leader of the House knows that the conventional wisdom was that a Government Bill dealing with discrimination against disabled people would be tabled for Second Reading on 11 January; will he take us into his confidence and tell us what has happened and when we can expect that Bill's publication?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly take the right hon. Gentleman into my confidence to the fullest possible extent. We shall publish the Bill and debate it as soon as possible, but I do not expect that to be before Christmas.

Sir Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): As my right hon. Friend will know, under the present Government the area of green belt has doubled since 1979. May we have an early debate on the antics of Sheffield city council, which insists on building on green-belt areas such as Limb lane in Dore? The council wants further to erode the green-belt area that the Government have increased. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Newton: I hear my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight)—who, no doubt, lives not too far from the area in question—indicating his assent to the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir I. Patnick). I note that concern, and hope that it will also be noted by Sheffield city council.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As the festive season is now upon us—although one would not imagine it, given the way in which the Prime Minister has just behaved—could a statement be made before the House rises for the recess? It would give tremendous joy to most people in the country if it were announced that a general election would be held early in the new year. Is it not time that we put this dying Government out of their misery?

Mr. Newton: I am more than willing to join in the festive spirit, but the notion of my giving the hon. Gentleman a general election as a Christmas present seems more far fetched than usual.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Valuable debates have taken place throughout the country during the International Year of the Family, as well as the hearings and report of the informal Select Committee chaired by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), in the process of which issues of great importance to families have been defined in the best possible way, and public appreciation of them has been heightened. In view of that, and bearing in mind the Government's important initiatives to promote the well-being of the family, will my right hon. Friend make time for a debate on the family early in the new year?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake off the cuff to provide time for such a debate, but a number of the issues involved may be the subject of various debates in which my hon. Friend may wish to participate. I am thinking, for instance, of an attempt to ease the way for people with family responsibilities who wish to engage in full-time work by improving the arrangements for family credit, and other such measures.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): May I continue the festive theme by asking the Leader of the House to arrange for an induction course in Scottish geography to be given to the Prime Minister as one of his Christmas presents, in view of his appalling response to the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie)? Will the right hon. Gentleman also ensure that arrangements are made for a report to be made on the meeting of the Fisheries Council on 19 and 20 December? We debated the subject yesterday, but it is important for those of us who represent fishing constituencies to know exactly what has been decided.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will report as early as possible in whatever way is appropriate to ensure that the hon. Lady and others are well informed in the wake of last night's debate. As for the geographical point, I heard my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister give the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) a very full reply.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): In view of the current difficulties experienced by the Irish Republic in forming a Government, will my right hon. Friend consider finding time for a debate on whether we should take that as a warning never to have anything to do with proportional representation?

Mr. Newton: I can think of a number of reasons for being sceptical—to put it mildly—about proportional representation, but, even so, I do not know that I would wish to be drawn into the current internal affairs of our neighbours.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Before the recess, will the Secretary of State for the Environment make a statement about how on earth his Department submitted an official report to the United Nations stating that there were no mountains in Scotland? During the Christmas recess, will the Leader of the House take the Prime Minister on a train journey up the west highland line so that they can see how out of touch the Department of the Environment is, so that the Leader of the House might just be able to explain to the Prime Minister where exactly Fort William is and so that they can both enjoy one of the most scenic railway lines in the world which, unfortunately, is threatened because of the Government's doctrinaire privatisation plans, which should be scrapped forthwith?

Mr. Newton: On the second half of the hon. Gentleman's question, I regret to say that I have no plans to take my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on an extended tour of the United Kingdom during the

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Christmas recess. As for his question about the Department of the Environment, the literal answer is that I am not prepared to answer it without notice.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on the heroism, skill and professionalism of the Royal Air Force crews who fly Hercules aircraft? Those aircraft are often older than some of the people who crew them and need to be replaced urgently. Does he accept that the answer lies not in ordering paper aeroplanes, which could not be available for at least eight or 10 years, but in providing replacements now so that morale and professionalism in the Royal Air Force can be maintained at their customary level?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that, like me, the House will join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to all the airmen who fly the Hercules and other aeroplanes. As for the underlying thrust of his question, I can tell him that good progress is being made towards a decision and I hope that it will be possible to give an indication of it before too long.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May we have a debate on parliamentary questions? I would not like to put the right hon. Gentleman on the spot, but can he give me a potted interpretation of what "disproportionate cost" means?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman would, of course, like nothing better than to put me on the spot, but it is kind of him to say that he would not and I shall take his comment in the Christmas spirit. As for disproportionate cost, I believe that £200 or £300 is the current figure beyond which it is open to Ministers to decline to answer. That figure is reviewed from time to time, but, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to make representations to me about it, I shall, as always when dealing with him, look at them with extreme care.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Given my right hon. Friend's answer about the Second Reading of the Finance Bill and the possible delay, will he consider an urgent debate on the economy, not least so that we can celebrate our domestic control of our money supply and our low inflation and high levels of growth, but, most of all, because I am concerned that the Leader of the Opposition will be a long time coming to the Dispatch Box to explain Labour's policies on the economy and I would hate to think of him missing an opportunity some time in the next few five months for us to examine them?

Mr. Newton: I would expect the Second Reading of the Finance Bill to take place before I could find Government time for a debate on the economy, but I shall bear in mind my hon. Friend's comments. He might like to consider the fact that, subject to the Chair, some of the observations that he wishes to make would be in order during the Second Reading of the Finance Bill.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): During last night's Adjournment debate, which was granted to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton), we discussed the National Blood Authority and the possible closure of the Liverpool transfusion centre. In response to a question from me, the Under-Secretary of State said that he thought that there would be no question of blood being bought and sold, but in today's newspapers—

Madam Speaker: Order. May I give the hon. Lady a little guidance? She should be asking the Leader of the House for a debate or a statement. She should begin with that rather than giving us the whole story and she could then tell us what the problem is and what she wants discussed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: She is doing all right.

Madam Speaker: No, she is not doing all right. I want to see that the hon. Lady does even better.

Ms Eagle: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was trying to save the best until last, but following your advice I shall mention it first. This morning there has been a contradiction of advice that we were given in the House last night, so I am trying to establish whether, in the light of those contradictory statements, we can have a debate so as to establish the true facts.

Mr. Newton: If we had to have a debate every time newspapers printed stories at variance with the position as stated—and it has been stated not only by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health last night, but by myself only a few moments ago in response to a question from the Opposition Benches—we should have many such debates. As I have already said, the National Blood Authority does not sell blood abroad, nor does it collect more blood than is necessary to meet the needs of patients in this country.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that tomorrow's debate on the popular national lottery will take place on a motion for the Adjournment, and will therefore not facilitate amending the National Lottery etc. Act 1993, if necessary, to ensure the anonymity of winners whatever the press says or does not say? Will my right hon. Friend therefore arrange for an early debate on amending the Act to that end?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is right to say that a debate on a motion for the Adjournment does not provide an opportunity for amending legislation. I understand that any information released by Camelot in the current case was approved by the winner, but, given the allegations that have been made, I welcome, as no doubt my hon. Friend does, the director general's decision to hold an inquiry.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Will the Leader of the House find time in the new year for a debate on the Department of Trade and Industry grant system? In Merseyside, and especially in St. Helens, we find an absence of grant notwithstanding our assisted area status, simply because the Government will not match European money pound for pound. Even when money is available it does not seem to benefit the people of St. Helens, in that companies seeking to start up or relocate there do not receive the necessary assistance because of a series of arbitrary rules that do not appear to apply in Wales or elsewhere.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise an early debate on that matter, but I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that Department of Trade and Industry Ministers are due to answer questions on Wednesday 11 January.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Given the questions asked earlier by the Leader of the Opposition about top people's pay, may we have a debate next week on the pay of top people in the public sector? In such a debate we could point out that the cost to public funds of the pay of the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) has increased by no less than 95.6 per cent., to a top person's pay of £62,000.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend has made his point, but for my part I must observe that it is only a matter of weeks since I undertook a debate on an order on ministerial and other salaries. I do not look to arrange another in the near future.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May we have an urgent debate on the health of the Prime Minister? If he is going to get out of his pram as he did just now in response to a question from the shadow Leader of the House, he will do himself a mischief. The Opposition would not want that to happen, because we want to do him the mischief ourselves.

Mr. Newton: I am glad to say that my right hon. Friend shows every sign of being and continuing to be in vigorous health. However, if someone is subjected, as he was, to the suggestion that the reason for the business that I announced was his desire not to answer questions on Tuesday, against the background that I described, it is perhaps not surprising that he is cross.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Notwithstanding the opportunity to catch your eye during the Adjournment debate on Tuesday, Madam Speaker, would it not have been better for the House to sit until Wednesday? We do not need the Leader of the Opposition to be here. Some of us are concerned about jobs in the railway carriage construction industry, in places such as the ABB factory in York, which is threatened with closure because of a lack of orders—

Sir Irvine Patnick: And in Derby.

Mr. Greenway: And in Derby, as my hon. Friend says. This matter greatly concerns hon. Members on both sides of the House and those who are faced with redundancy because of the threatened closure will find it hard to accept that the Leader of the Opposition wants an extra day's Christmas holiday while we cannot debate the future of the railway carriage works.

Mr. Newton: I take note of my hon. Friend's suggestion. He may have an opportunity to raise that matter on Monday if he so wishes, quite apart from the Christmas Adjournment debate, because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is due to be here on Monday to answer questions.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Leader of the House aware that, after the Prime Minister got all worked up and angry earlier about finishing on Tuesday because it was alleged that he wanted to dodge Question Time and witnessing the Labour victor from Dudley, investigations have been carried out and it is on the record that no such request was made by the Leader of the Opposition in respect of not being here on Tuesday? Rather the contrary is the case: he wanted to be here to question the Prime Minister and to welcome the Labour victor from Dudley.

Mr. Newton: I obviously note what the hon. Gentleman says and others may wish to make observations on that. However, my clear understanding from my right hon. Friend is that an approach was made from the office of the Leader of the Opposition of the kind that I have described.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Can a guarantee be given that there will be a reasonable period between the publication of the Government's Bill on disabled people and its Second Reading? There will be two Bills before the House, one of which, my private Member's Bill, has already been published. There are considerations about the two Bills rubbing up against each other which need to be resolved. It would be unfortunate if the Government introduced their measure and then bounced us straight into a debate. The problems that might arise in respect of two similar Bills being before the House might not be able to be thought through properly and resolved. My Bill is certainly a superior measure to anything that the Government will do.

Mr. Newton: I need simply say that it will be my aim, as it normally would be in respect of any Bill other than an emergency one, to observe the usual conventions in these matters.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): I refer my right hon. Friend to early-day motion 203:

[*That this House notes the resignation of Graham Leach, the journalist previously based in Brussels for BBC News and Current Affairs; and would welcome information as to the reasons for the resignation and whether they have any impact on the purse of the licence payer.*]

May we have an urgent debate to discuss the diversion of licence-payers' money from BBC programming to the paying of bogus expenses claims, in at least one case amounting to over six figures? May we discuss the rigorous—or otherwise—accounting and auditing procedures within the BBC regarding expenses claims in the news and current affairs department? At the same time, perhaps we could discuss the abrupt resignation from the BBC of Mr. Graham Leach.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will understand that that is a matter between the BBC and Mr. Leach. It is not a matter on which I can appropriately comment at the Dispatch Box. However, I am sure that others will have noted my hon. Friend's comments and will consider them.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Following the point that was very well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), will my right hon. Friend find time for an urgent debate on the right of an individual, who is not a public figure, to privacy in a free society? The House has debated that matter before and the Government have given commitments that, if self-regulation in the newspaper industry was not seen to be working, they would favour

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legislation. Clearly, it is seen not to be working. May we have a debate so that the House can express its views on that subject?

Mr. Newton: I do not wish to add this afternoon to what I have said about the director general's decision to hold an inquiry. Any decisions about how to carry the outcome of such an inquiry forward, should that be necessary, must obviously await the outcome of it.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement about the terrible and tragic flooding that has taken place all over Scotland? Will he do that with great urgency as our people are in dire straits as a result of the lack of Government action in our constituencies?

Mr. Newton: Of course, I understand the hon. Gentleman's reasons for properly raising this matter on behalf of his constituents. He will be aware that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, who is responsible for industry and local government, was able to make a statement on the problem to the Scottish Grand Committee. That indicates some of the merits of the new Scottish procedures that were put in place last summer, following much hard work by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and by Opposition Front-Bench Members.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): May I press the Leader of the House again on the need for a debate on the family, as suggested by the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth)? The right hon. Gentleman will know of the enormous effort that has been made by individuals and organisations during the International Year of the Family. There will be great disappointment throughout the country if the House and the Government do not take a lead by allowing a debate on an issue which touches every person in this country.

Mr. Newton: Of course, I note the second representation on that matter. It reinforces my willingness at least to consider the possibility of such a debate, but manifestly I cannot make a commitment this afternoon.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I am sure that the Leader of the House will want to join me in thanking you, Madam Speaker, for arranging time during tonight's Consolidated Fund debate to raise again the mutual defence agreement between Britain and America. Does the Leader of the House accept that, on 13 December, the shadow Foreign Secretary formally objected to the ratification of that agreement and its extension without full parliamentary debate? Will he guarantee that such a debate will take place in Government time, and that the extension will not be signed without the formal agreement of the House?

Mr. Newton: May I make a couple of points clear? First, in accordance with the Ponsonby rule, the 1994 amendment to the 1958 agreement was laid before Parliament on 21 October, and it remained there for the required 21 sitting days. Secondly, the Ponsonby rule does not require a debate to be held before ratification, nor, if a debate is called, does it require ratification to be delayed until the debate has been held. Nevertheless, my right hon. Friends in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and I will consider carefully the contents of the Consolidated Fund debate. Indeed, we share the gratitude of the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) to you, Madam Speaker, for having made such a debate possible.

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the future of sub-post offices? Given that 200 sub-post offices close every year, will be use the opportunity of such a debate to reassure my constituents that their sub-post office in Dulwich village, which has repeatedly been threatened with closure, is secure?

Mr. Newton: There are two points. First, as sub-post offices are private businesses, their fortunes depend on a variety of factors. No Government of whatever colour could guarantee that no sub-post office would ever close for whatever reason. Secondly, it is generally accepted that, whatever the dispute about some other aspects of the proposals of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade for the Post Office, the proposals for Post Office Counters Ltd. and, in association with that, a wider range of business for post offices, including sub-post offices, were widely and rightly held significantly to improve the prospects of sub-post offices.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the Leader of the House examine two parliamentary answers when considering the desirability of a debate on the costs of parliamentary questions? The first is one that I asked of Baroness Thatcher on the 10th anniversary of her reign, when I invited her to list the failures of her Government. The answer was disappointingly brief and probably cost about 5p. The former hon. Member for Pembroke asked her to list her successes. The answer occupied 47 columns of *Hansard* and cost £3,500. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain that "disproportionate cost" means, "We do not want to answer that awkward question"?

Mr. Newton: No, I cannot confirm that. Of course, the Government are always anxious to be as helpful to the House as they possibly can.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Bearing in mind the fact that the director general of the Prison Service has reported an alarming number of deaths and serious injuries in the newly privatised Doncaster prison, will the Leader of the House ask the Home Secretary to give time for a debate on the privatisation of the prison service, so that we can consider whether it is sensible to have a regime in which prisoners have far more experience of prison than the staff?

Mr. Newton: As on a number of other subjects, I cannot promise a debate. However, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is due to answer questions on Thursday 12 January and perhaps the hon. Gentleman could make that request to him also.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the Leader of the House find time to allow the Secretary of State for Wales to make a statement about the future of Neath and Port Talbot hospital? The Leader of the House may recall that in July this year the Secretary of State announced that the new hospital would go ahead and would be up and running by 1998-99.

It has now emerged—Madam Speaker, this partly concerns you also—in the small print of the "Budget statement" that was announced by the Secretary of State, which has not yet been placed in the Library but which has been confirmed to the local press, that the hospital will go ahead only if private finance is made available on a matching basis with the public sector contribution which the Secretary of State promised all along. That is absolutely disgraceful and I believe that it is an insult to proceedings in the House. Surely the Secretary of State should be hauled before the House to make an urgent statement.

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) began the exchanges this afternoon by suggesting in at least one of her questions that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales was in the Chamber rather too much and for too long yesterday, I am reluctant— even disregarding the hon. Gentleman's language— to seek to "haul" him here again. However, I will certainly draw his attention to the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Will the Leader of the House reconsider his decision not to hold an urgent debate on the national blood transfusion service? Contrary to his belief, I have received confirmation in a parliamentary reply that certain blood products are sold not just in Europe, but worldwide.

In an attempt to increase its level of blood stocks, the National Blood Authority sent out a letter on 16 November asking transfusion centres to increase their levels to 30,000 units, and each centre was granted £10,000 to cover advertising costs.

Unfortunately, the public's loss of confidence in the blood authority has resulted in a decrease in blood stocks to the extent that yesterday they fell to 18,000 units—which has been described as a crisis level. On Tuesday, in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), the Prime Minister said that some aspects of the national health service are best catered for in the private sector. I believe that there is an urgent need for a debate on the National Blood Authority.

Mr. Newton: I will not repeat the points that I made earlier, but I add that occasionally collecting blood stocks sufficient to meet domestic needs—which is the point that I emphasised and which is the authority's principal purpose—leads to a surplus of blood products which can be sold abroad. I am advised that the alternative would be to burn the surplus, which is to hardly anyone's advantage. I will certainly bring the hon. Gentleman' comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: In view of the exchanges earlier, will the Leader of the House accept my word that, regardless of what he has been told by the Prime Minister or anyone else, my inquiries confirm that the Leader of the Opposition made no request to cancel the business on Tuesday next week? If that is the reason why the Leader of the House proposed that the House should rise on Tuesday rather than Wednesday, now that the reason does not hold up is it his intention to restore Prime Minister's Questions on Tuesday and will he withdraw his earlier statement?

Mr. Newton: The last thing that I want to do—especially at this time—is to raise the level of acrimony in the House. It is clear that there was a misunderstanding on the account of the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), because it is manifest that the impression created in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's office was that something approaching a request had been made. I honestly do not think that we can carry that point further across the Floor of the House today.

I am not disputing the good faith of the hon. Lady. Equally, I hope that she will accept that what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have said was also in good faith. If there has been a misunderstanding, we should perhaps clear it up in other ways. Meanwhile, I am certainly not planning to announce an immediate change to the business that has already been announced for next week.

Madam Speaker: May I remind hon. Members that on the motion for the Adjournment of the House on Tuesday 20 December, up to nine Members may raise with Ministers subjects of their own choice. Applications should reach my office by 10 am on Monday next. A ballot will be held on Monday morning, and the result made known as soon as possible thereafter.

Points of Order

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I wish to refer to early-day motion 284 in the name of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), and I have given the hon. Gentleman notice of my intention to do so.

A week ago *The Cornishman* newspaper published a letter, which the editor admitted to me he knew to be a spoof, from an organisation purporting to be the Penwith Conservative research group. No such group exists. The letter was damaging to the Conservative party when taken at face value, and it made outrageous statements.

It came to my notice that the hon. Member for Devonport intended to table the early-day motion, and it duly appeared on the Order Paper. Before the hon. Gentleman did so, I met him on two occasions and put him in the picture. I told him that the letter was a spoof, that the organisation did not exist, that the writer of the letter was not a Conservative and that his outrageous views could not be attributed in any way to the Conservative party which, of course, was the impression left with the many people who rang my office. I gave the hon. Gentleman a press release issued by my association agent which made the position clear, and I also alerted the Clerks to the situation.

Subsequently, the hon. Member for Devonport saw fit to table the early-day motion which gives credence to that scandalous suggestion, despite my having told him the background to the situation. Could you say something, Madam Speaker, about an hon. Member acting in such a way in using the facilities afforded to all of us through the Order Paper? As the hon. Gentleman is in his place—I am grateful to him at least for that—will you now give him an opportunity to withdraw the early-day motion and the scandalous points which he is seeking to make?

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I tabled this early-day motion as a matter of good faith to give the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) an opportunity to refute the letter that had been put in his local newspaper. It is significant to note that the hon. Gentleman did not refute the contents of the letter, but just tried to deny that the person who wrote it was a former member of the Conservative party.

Would it be in order, Madam Speaker, for you to give an opportunity to the hon. Member for St. Ives to correct his early-motion 289, in which he has misspelt the name of a village in his own constituency?

Madam Speaker: Order. I have had enough of these exchanges. The House knows that hon. Members take responsibility for the texts of their own early-day motions—

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Just a minute. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is always on his feet asking for a point of order before I have finished talking. The fact that the hon. Member for St. Ives tabled early-day motion 289 has put the matter in context.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. We have just had a series of requests to the Leader of the House for various debates—many interesting debates and many less interesting ones, but plenty of suggestions for business. If it turns out, when inquiries are made, that there was no request from the Leader of the Opposition to the Prime Minister not to have normal business on Tuesday, and given that the Leader of the House cited that request as the reason why the House would rise somewhat earlier than expected—despite all the business that we have suggested—can you make it clear that you would place no impediment on the Leader of the House coming back to the House with another business statement? That would ensure that we can have Prime Minister's questions on Tuesday.

Madam Speaker: The business of the House is not a matter for the Speaker, but for the Leader of the House in conjunction with the usual channels.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have heard the Leader of the House say in answer to my question that normal conventions would be followed on the introduction of the Government Bill on rights for people with disabilities. I wonder whether you can inform the House of the normal conventions for Parliament—I know that you cannot rule on the normal conventions of the Government.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has a wry smile on his face because he knows that that is a hypothetical issue at the moment.

BILL PRESENTED

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (COSTS OF INQUIRIES ETC.)

Mr. Secretary Gummer, supported by Mr. Secretary Lang, Mr. Secretary Redwood, Mr. Jonathan Aitken and Sir Paul Beresford, presented a Bill to make provision authorising or requiring certain local authorities with functions under the enactments relating to Town and Country Planning to make to, or to persons appointed by, certain Ministers of the Crown, or to persons appointed by those authorities, payments in respect of the administrative cost of, or otherwise connected with, certain local inquiries or other hearings, examinations in public, or the consideration of certain objections, under those enactments; to validate the imposition by such Ministers on those authorities of requirements to make such payments, and the making by those authorities of such payments, whether before or after the passing of this Act; to make provision with respect to the remuneration and allowances payable to persons appointed to hold such local inquiries or other proceedings; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed. [Bill 28.]

ESTIMATES DAY

[1st ALLOTTED DAY]

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1994-95

Class XIII, Vote 4

Child Support Agency

[Relevant documents: Fifth Report from the Social Security Committee of Session 1993-94, on The Operation of the Child Support Act: Proposals for Change (House of Commons Paper No. 470), and the Social Security Departmental Report on the Government's Expenditure Plans 1994-95 to 1996-97 (Cm 2513.)]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a supplementary sum not exceeding £45,825,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1995 for expenditure by the Department of Social Security on administration, for agency payments, the promotion of Government policy on disability issues, and for certain other services, including grants to local authorities and voluntary organisations.—*[Mr. Burt.]*

4.15 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The debate on the supplementary estimates gives the House an opportunity to discuss the current report on the Child Support Agency laid before the House by the Select Committee on Social Security. I should like to make some general observations about the CSA and then to discuss some of the specific proposals that we made in our report, which we issued recently.

The nature of the debate allows me to begin by thanking the members of staff of the Select Committee for the work that they do. Given that our proceedings are now televised, it may surprise many taxpayers to know that Select Committees run their own establishments on a tight reign. Our own Select Committee has just four staff to cover all its functions. Although we may not live up to the expectations of American committees, we certainly give extremely good value to taxpayers in the way in which we attempt to monitor what is happening in government. I am grateful for the opportunity to put my thanks to those staff on the record.

The first and most important general observation about the CSA is that the whole atmosphere of the debate on its future has changed in the few months since we previously debated it. At one time, I seriously thought that the agency would collapse; that the difficulties of establishing it and the weight of its work load were such that before the end of this year the Secretary of State would have to come before the House, draw stumps and say that the Government were beginning again. I no longer believe that that is so. Although the Select Committee has some criticisms to make, to which I hope the Government will respond constructively, anyone who believes that the agency will collapse is either misleading himself or misleading others.

The nature of the debate now is how we reform the CSA to make it more effective and to fulfil the goals that the House thought it was voting for when it established the agency, rather than a mere moonshine debate about what will happen when the agency is replaced. It will not collapse, so the politics surrounding the CSA relate to how we should reform it. Certain reforms have been made and I hope that the House is clear about the significance of the change that it has made to that area of policy.

Since the welfare state was established, with the first reforms that Lloyd George put on the statute book in this Chamber, we have been about redrawing the boundaries of duties between state and individuals. Each of those changes has redrawn the boundary in favour of collective action as against individual responsibility. The importance of the Child Support Agency is that, in that most sensitive of areas, we have for the first time redrawn that boundary restoring duties to individuals and withdrawing state support. If any hon. Members thought that that would be a popular move, they were clearly foolish to hold such a view. Given that we have decided to redraw the boundary, it is doubly important that we listen carefully to the criticisms that have been made about the running of the agency and that Governments respond sensitively, quickly and regularly to concerns that hon. Members express on behalf of their constituents.

The most serious concern that we should all have is the fact that those of us who voted the passing of that measure, with widespread support, made it retrospective. The normal rules of the House have been hostile to passing retrospective legislation and that was not seriously considered when we debated the measure. Although we deplored the number of fathers—generally speaking—who had deserted their families and left taxpayers to pick up the bill, for a considerable period there was very little activity by the Treasury to reduce the increasing number of families who were deserted and whose household bills were met by taxpayers.

Over the past 20 or so years, but particularly the past 10 years, we have witnessed fathers disappearing from the scene and taxpayers taking on the responsibility of surrogate parents. This measure was intended to draw a line and, we hoped, to prevent that trend from continuing.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I follow what my hon. Friend says, but am concerned that in my constituency the agency is failing to do what he wants. The agency is placing in most difficulty people who have been conscientiously paying, while it seems incapable of getting a grip on those who have washed their hands of all their responsibility and disappeared. I accept the fact that the courts have failed to do anything about those people, but so has the agency. The agency is therefore causing a massive upset to people who were meeting their responsibilities in the past and is failing to do the job that I and many others wanted it to do: to get a grip on those who were genuinely dodging their responsibilities.

Mr. Field: I hoped that the agency would get a grip on everybody, not just on one group or another. If parliamentary answers are to be believed—I see no reason why they should not be—the position has changed of late, given the groups of absent parents that the agency is now targeting. If I remember the answer correctly, some 70 per cent. of those now being contacted are parents who previously had not paid their contributions.

While the House must be aware of the value of representing single-Member seats and holding surgeries in those seats, which teaches us a great deal, it must also recognise that a selective group of people comes to see us. People do not come to our surgeries to tell us that everything is going well—thank goodness. Our lives

[Mr. Field]

would be made impossible. By the very nature of such surgeries, people come to complain. No one has come to my surgery to say, "This is a wretched agency. I dumped my wife and disappeared. Thanks to you lot in the House of Commons, I have now been not only chased but traced and am being presented with bills." I do not expect people to come to my surgery and say that, although it is clear from the figures that people are being traced and money is being collected.

The point that my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) makes is valuable, in that, if we were starting again, obviously we would not have started with those parents—not always, but generally, fathers—who were doing their level best to meet their commitments to their first families. They read about all the parents who were presented in an unfavourable light in the media and somehow felt that they were guilty by association and then, to add insult to injury, they were the ones who were on the learning curve of the agency as it tried to set up a new operation from scratch.

The balance has changed, but by the nature of our surgeries, we do not expect people to come to them and say, "I have been a heel for several years and the agency has stopped that." That does not excuse some of the behaviour that affected some of our constituents who played the game, who felt strongly about their commitments to their first families, who have never thought of themselves as absent parents in that sense, and who felt that they were being tried, not only by the agency, but by the media.

Sir Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): The hon. Gentleman, having said that about his advice centres, may be surprised if I thank him for doing something right. He and the Committee deserve the praise of the House. We have managed—and I am a big enough fellow to say it—to hide behind him in some respects. We have been able to tell our constituents that there was constructive debate, and that it was being listened to on the Conservative Benches. I shall hold an advice centre tomorrow, where I am sure that the administration of the Child Support Act 1991, not its politics, will be discussed in great detail by people who attend. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has put the politics behind him and is now considering, as are hon. Members on both sides of the House, the complicated matter of administration. I thank him very much.

Mr. Field: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments. However, before I finish, I may mention a few strains of criticism about the nature of our report and about what happened to some of the recommendations in it. I am sure that, on that subject, the hon. Gentleman will be with me and perhaps against some of his Conservative colleagues.

Given the nature of the agency, given what it was trying to do in redrawing the boundary of responsibility between the state and the individual, given that it was a complete innovation and given that it was trying to obtain a more adequate contribution to first families from second families, our debate obviously centres on how those second families—and especially the fathers in those second families—have fared. Indeed, most of the recommendations that we made, and most of the recommendations that were voted down by the Conservative majority on our Committee, were in favour of the absent father.

I do not want the debate to pass without recording on the Floor of the House that the group that is often left out of our debates is that of the mother and the children. To listen to some of our contributions, one would think that they did not exist. Although it is true that some women have behaved badly to their husbands or previous husbands or partners, who are very much the injured parties, the overall statistics demonstrate what one mother in my constituency said to me: "We feel that we have been dumped by our husbands. We had no wish to be on benefit—that is an existence that we have had to endure. Although we can understand you, as a member of the Committee, making proposals for change that ensure the effective running of the agency, we sometimes feel that we are left out of the entire debate." That mother described to me the experience of being the dumped mother in the arrangement. I hope that that thought will not be lost. I shall return to that theme later.

Hon. Members will know, from the part of the report that was agreed unanimously, that there is a raft of proposals that we hope that the Government will consider seriously, but at the end of the report there are other proposals, which are more basic in their approach to reforming the agency. I wish to discuss those proposals at the end of the report, but first I make one comment about my reported remarks about the new head of the agency.

I felt that the Secretary of State was getting away—if I may say so—with murder, always appointing a woman to run the agency. Many fathers used that person as the lightning conductor for their anger about the agency. That anger should be directed at the Secretary of State and at us—the people who passed the legislation—rather than all that anger, criticism, hatred and so on being directed at the agency.

My comments were clearly unfair to the new head of the agency, whom I have had the pleasure of meeting on a number of occasions. I have rarely been so struck by a public official's ability to use common sense and elevate it to an intellectual level in discussing policy. That is a model which I hope we shall see reflected elsewhere in the civil service. After making her acquaintance, I am pleased to note that there are two people in the agency who could well take hold of the most senior position.

I come now to the reforms in the report that did not gain the approval of the majority of my colleagues. Again, I underline that the House must exercise its judgment. At one time it seemed that we might be debating the report against the background of a crisis arising from whether the agency could survive. We all know that, as Dr. Johnson said, to be hanged in the morning concentrates the mind wonderfully. If the Secretary of State thought that the agency would collapse, the agenda for reform would be much wider than it is today.

I make a different plea, not in an attempt to stampede people into reform, but for us to consider whether we have made the right judgment about how the agency should operate. The 41 proposals are all worth while, but they are not major reforms. We need to strike a new balance in how the agency will operate and we need to do that in three ways.

First, it is difficult to claim that, in the immediate future, the agency has the needs of children central to its operation. We all know why the agency is in existence. It is an attempt to limit the cost that taxpayers are at present meeting on behalf of absent parents. As income support is being paid, why on earth, logically, should any money go to the first family? But as so often in political activity, logic is not the key thing in determining what we should do.

One of the ingredients that we lack for the success of the reform is a few million cheer leaders out there in the country. If the Government could accept the proposal for a disregard, we would have some important recruiting sergeants out there actively supporting the agency. There is clearly a mass of voters out there—millions of them—who support the agency unreformed. I would hope that they would want it to be reformed in the radical way that we are debating today, but we need some active supporters, which we do not have at present.

The disregard would not only recruit such supporters but play an important part in lessening the attempts that some absent parents are planning to frustrate the agency's operation by coming to an unwritten agreement with the first partner or wife and saying, "If you say that I am threatening to beat you up, I will slip you £10 or £20, you will be better off, you will still be getting your income support and I shall certainly be better off because I will be paying less."

If the penalties in the Act for those whose story in such circumstances is not believed—those penalties should clearly operate in such circumstances—were double-banked with a disregard, it would be difficult for individuals to try to put that pressure on their ex-wives or partners. The disregard should be seen not only in terms of winning supporters out there in the country, but as an effective way of preventing the increase in the number of those—generally speaking, fathers—who are trying to get their ex-wives or partners to say that it is unsafe for them to disclose the name, let alone the address of the father of their children.

Secondly, the House must accept that there is no right of appeal in relation to this executive agency. Is there any other body that makes decisions, let alone decisions as important as those taken by the agency, to which individuals have no right of independent appeal? I do not know of one. Of course, any appeal system would have to be carefully thought out and the basis on which appeals could be made must be carefully defined, otherwise large numbers of people would use an appeal system to try to wreck the CSA. An appeal system is an important matter of principle.

It is immensely important that individuals who feel so aggrieved that they cannot accept the agency's decision can appear before a group of their peers, eyeball to eyeball, and argue their case. That happens in our court system. We all know that sometimes we win in the courts and sometimes we lose, but we at least know that we have been able to put our case personally. This is an important and sensitive issue in people's lives and one cannot expect to run a service only by post or by telephone, however efficient the post or telephone system is. There needs to be that personal right of appeal.

The third reform, to which I attach the most importance, was not supported by a majority of Committee members. It involves having a new simple tax-take formula. The formula is important. Hon. Members who pass legislation should be able to understand it. I know that one Committee member understands how the formula works. Committee members had the advantage of a tutorial from the Department for a couple of hours. When it was over, it appeared that we all understood the formula, until we were each invited to explain the simple examples that we had been given. We could not do it. That was not because Committee members lack intelligence—far from it. If we cannot understand the formula, how can we expect people out there to understand it?

It seems a extraordinary dereliction of duty for a party that believes in incentives not to understand the importance of individuals knowing what the effects on their maintenance payments will be of getting a new job or new qualification, working overtime and so on. The formula needs to be understandable to Members of Parliament, let alone our constituents. It needs to take into account—this is the more substantive point—the retrospective nature of the agency that has been established.

We may all agree that we should never have reached the position where large numbers of families gained no maintenance support, but the Government allowed that to happen. We all know how word spreads through the grapevine from this place. People believed that it was all right to begin a second family and they did not expect to make any major contribution to their first family. In those circumstances, large numbers of individuals began a second family.

Having happily established a second family, those people now find that the Child Support Agency that we established is retrospective. Natural justice demands that the group of people to which we apply the legislation retrospectively should pay a lower contribution than people operating in the world who know not only that there is a CSA but that the CSA is working, will stay and will become more effective.

I underline the point that I believe that we are debating reform of the agency rather than its collapse or abolition. Neither of the two major parties is interested in taking this piece of legislation off the statute book. However, the fact that the Secretary of State is not likely to find egg on his face from having to announce the agency's imminent collapse does not mean that we should not look carefully at the necessary reforms. It requires basic structural reform if we are to do justice to our individual constituents. I do not believe that we are doing that currently and, however useful the majority recommendations of the report may be, I do not believe that they achieve that either. Some of the recommendations that were voted down by the majority go some way towards doing that.

From this debate we need to send out a message to a large number of people who are incredibly angry at the way in which the agency operates and what it has done to their lives. We must let them know that, although we are committed to the agency, we are sensitive to what they say and will try to draw lessons from it. Fiddling about with minor reforms on the edges of the agency does little justice to the social revolution that we began when passing the Act. We were redrawing the line between the role of the state and the responsibilities of the individual. For the first time in 90 years, we have drawn back the line towards the individual. In those circumstances it is crucial that we listen carefully to what our constituents say is still wrong with the agency and that we act on what they say.

4.41 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The Christmas spirit seems to be breaking out. I enjoyed listening to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), particularly when he said that he thought that our lives would become impossible, with people coming to tell us that things were going well. I take that as a fulsome compliment on the way in which the Government are running the country.

I join the hon. Gentleman in complimenting the staff of the Select Committee on Social Security on the help that they provide and, in the spirit of Christmas, I compliment the hon. Member for Birkenhead on the way in which he conducts himself as the Committee's Chairman. He has long experience and, having come to the Committee relatively recently, I feel that I benefit from that and from the fine way in which he conducts proceedings.

The hon. Gentleman was a little disingenuous in his criticisms of some of the items that do not appear in the full report. I listened carefully to what he said about maintenance disregard but I did not hear him provide a figure that he felt would be appropriate. He knows that substantial costs are involved. For example, he knows that a disregard of £15, which was one of the figures considered during the Committee's work, would cost anything up to £500 million. A £10 disregard could cost anything up to £350 million, depending on the take-up.

There are other disadvantages, because a disregard could be considered a disincentive to people wanting to go back to work. It could also be considered as unfair to parents who stay together, who would not receive the disregard if they were dependent on income support. Parents with care who were not able to have maintenance paid would be at a disadvantage compared to those who could. The hon. Gentleman will recognise that that introduces another element of unfairness. There is no easy answer.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): The recommendation for a disregard, which I also opposed as a member of the Committee, fails to acknowledge the proper role of family credit. As maintenance is received by a parent with care, not all the benefit that he or she may be receiving is taken away. The family credit system leaves them better off than they would have been. If the parent with care moves into part-time employment, the maintenance being received is not taken away like other benefits or the disregard would be.

Mr. Thurnham: My hon. Friend is right. Family credit is one of the best ways of helping people back into work. The parent with care can receive all the benefits not only of an additional income but of the social contact that can arise from going back to work.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead was let off the hook by the Committee. He was on record as saying that our formula should be changed to that which applies in Australia and New Zealand. The more evidence we received about the way in which the formula works, or rather does not work, in Australia and New Zealand, the more he realised that adopting that method would be a mistake. In fact, our report made the right recommendations and the hon. Member for Birkenhead realised that the Australian and New Zealand methods were not the most appropriate.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Does my hon. Friend recall that as we looked at the Australian child support system we realised that it was still being questioned some six years after its establishment? We found that one of the principal questions was whether Australia could adopt a more complex formula along the British lines rather than its own simple formula.

Mr. Thurnham: If the Committee report was lacking in anything, perhaps it was sufficient comments about exactly what was happening in Australia. A Select Committee in Australia had reported on the difficulties. Mr. David Butler, the assistant commissioner for the Australian child support agency, said that the agency has been operating for six years and that

> "meeting all expectations is proving most difficult."

Mr. Frank Bosch, the director of child support in New Zealand, said:

> "Persuading people that parents should pay for their own children is a slow process."

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that a previous interim report from the Select Committee made the point that has been made several times by the Australians: that they cannot understand why we went for retrospection, which is the fundamental problem and the one that is causing the greatest difficulty? That problem was alluded to by my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field).

Mr. Thurnham: I was coming to that. That was the other point made by the hon. Member for Birkenhead, although his view on that contradicted his opening remarks, in which he said that he wanted to stress the importance of the mother with care—it is usually the mother—and the importance of looking after those children. If we do not apply the system retrospectively, we will leave all those mothers with children out of the reckoning. We would have to say, "I am sorry, we cannot help you because we have decided not to look at it retrospectively."

There has always been a retrospective element. The courts have always had the power to look at current circumstances. If the father's circumstances are improving—it is usually the father—it is only right that there should be greater payments to help with the children. I do not think that we can say glibly that we can forget about retrospection. In any case, the scheme has been in operation in Australia for more than six years and there are considerable difficulties. Just saying that we will not bother with retrospective cases will not make life any easier.

Mr. Spellar *rose*—

Mr. Thurnham: We have already had an intervention from the hon. Gentleman. I must press on.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): In past settlements was there not, by and large, a division of assets rather than a provision for maintenance in the future? When one understands the distinction between the division of stocks and the provision for future flows of money for the maintenance of children, one realises that the old arrangements under the courts were usually deficient. None the less, the Committee has recommended in its report that some consideration should be given to the retrospective element of past settlements.

Mr. Thurnham: My hon. Friend is right to point that out. We look forward to the Government's response in the latter half of January.

I was sorry that the hon. Member for Birkenhead did not refer to one of the other items left out of the Committee's report. He may recall that he used his casting vote to rule out an amendment that I had tabled, which suggested that the Government might look more closely into the benefits that could be gained from contracting out. Those who have the report will find the details on page 31. We had an equal vote and the Chairman used his casting vote. I was sorry about that because I would have liked to have seen that appear properly in the report. I hope that the Committee will have time to look into contracting out. It was rightly pointed out that it had not had time to take more evidence on how contracting out should be applied more fully.

I shall direct my remarks a little more to the contracting out of the activities of the CSA and to the way in which the scheme would work. The private sector could have been used much more. The fact that the CSA was a new operation was no reason for not considering contracting out its services. I am sure that had the agency's services been contracted out, it would have worked better because firms that undertook to work for the agency, or perhaps directly for the Department of Social Security, would have been very careful about how they did it. They would not have landed themselves with the difficulties with which the Child Support Agency landed itself. Although Ros Hepplewhite has paid the price for those difficulties, they should not have occurred in the first place. I am rather sorry that we are meeting this evening to vote an extra £30 million pounds for the Child Support Agency because, had it been run more efficiently in the first place, I am sure that that money would not have been needed.

We have much experience of the benefits gained from contracting out by local authorities and by central Government. There is evidence that savings achieved in central Government by contracting out may amount to more than 20 per cent. and there is a great deal of evidence about savings in local authorities. The Audit Commission has achieved savings averaging 7 per cent., and in some cases higher. Savings range from those in refuse collection of 12 per cent., to those in building cleaning of 20 per cent. and so on through other local authority activities, saving many hundreds of millions of pounds. More than 40 local authorities are now reckoned to be setting a good example—Berkshire, Croydon, Brent and Wandsworth to mention a few. Indeed, the other day my own local authority in Bolton was able to save £250,000 per annum solely by outsourcing its computer services.

Those are examples of the savings that can be made and many firms can achieve them. At one time, the number of such firms was limited but, with the market building up, companies such as Touche Ross, and through it CSL, provide services. The American firm, EDS, has signed a £1 billion contract with the Inland Revenue to provide many of its computing services. The Cadbury-Schweppes firm IT Net, a French company P Sec, Anderson Consulting and IBM, ICL and many other companies now provide services.

I am sure that private firms of solicitors could play a part in the work of the Child Support Agency. I understand that some 160,000 people are employed in solicitors' firms. The workload of 5,000 civil servants—and it is rapidly expanding to 6,000 plus—in the Child Support Agency could be taken over by private solicitors' firms and perhaps co-ordinated by one of the companies that I have mentioned.

I was able to enjoy a meeting with the Secretary of State to let him know exactly how strongly I felt about contracting out. It was an opportunity for me to meet Ann Chant who, of course, was previously employed in the Contributions Agency. I am not exactly sure of the track record of the various people involved with the DSS. The DSS has perhaps been a little less successful than other Government Departments in contracting out. I do not know why that should be or whether there is some resistance in the Department to contracting out. Instinctively, I feel that the Government should contract out at every available opportunity. Indeed, there are examples of successful contracting out in the DSS, such as the Information Technology Services Agency, under which savings have been made. I do not see why the DSS cannot place greater emphasis on contracting out.

Other Departments have set remarkably good examples. The Ministry of Defence has made a 47 per cent. improvement in the time spent overhauling Challenger main battle tanks by outsourcing that work, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has made savings of 34 per cent. from market testing the work of the intervention board. It is a question not only of reducing costs but of improving quality. I am sure that the two can work hand in hand. There must be plenty of opportunities in the DSS to open its work to competition and I am disturbed that it appears to have done much less compared with other Government Departments.

The Child Support Agency could gain more than any other agency from working in partnership with the private sector. It does not seem to be right to resort to old-style solutions of recruiting hundreds and thousands more civil servants for the task when those already employed have failed to do it so abysmally. Those civil servants were recruited at a substantially higher cost than they would have incurred if they were working in the private sector. If the CSA's work is put out to the private sector at a later date, heavy redundancy costs will be incurred in trying to replace civil servants with people who are on less attractive remunerative packages.

When the Committee considered other areas of the DSS, such as tackling benefit fraud, it was told—at an earlier stage of its work before I joined the Committee—that there was difficulty in tackling it sufficiently well because of a lack of civil servants to do the work. There does not seem to be any lack of civil servants to do the work of the CSA, so why were they not available to work at the benefit fraud office? All sorts of excuses were made to explain why the work of the benefit fraud office should not be outsourced.

I was a little disappointed that the hon. Member for Birkenhead did not comment on those issues. We all look forward to the Government's response to the Select Committee report and perhaps an opportunity for the Select Committee to look into matters further, including, no doubt, outsourcing in the DSS. I was pleased to hear during my meeting with the Secretary of State that there was every possibility of certain work being outsourced,

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such as the collection of debts. I should like to stress that I wish to monitor the progress made by the Secretary of State in outsourcing that work at least.

4.56 pm

Mr. David Chidgey (Eastleigh): The recommendations in the report of the Select Committee on Social Security are welcome, but there is a belief that they do not go far enough, as the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) said. More needs to be done to address what people see as a lack of balance in the operation of the Child Support Act 1991. Recognition in the report that the performance targets should be based on operational factors of the agency and not on Treasury demands is a major step forward, especially as hon. Members will know that in 1993-94, only some 6 per cent. of those who received maintenance awards were not on benefit. Because of the policy of back-to-back withdrawal of benefit on receipt of maintenance, the CSA is being seen by many as not so much a Child Support Agency as a Chancellor support agency, which is clearly not what was intended.

The report highlights the need for the CSA to meet performance targets for customer service. That is vital. We need to establish performance targets to construct minimum acceptable periods of delay in response to people's queries. We need to set targets for customer satisfaction, and, most important of all, targets must be set for the management of agency resources. I agree entirely with those comments in the report, especially as recent revelations have shown that in 86 per cent. of the cases handled by the CSA, it has either miscalculated the maintenance liability or misinterpreted the legal application of the Act. That is an appalling record for whatever reason and no organisation should continue on that basis.

There must be a major restructuring programme for the CSA so that it can start to deliver an acceptable level of service. I am sure that many hon. Members will know from their advice centres of the effect of the current inefficiency on their constituents. We have already heard in the debate about the sort of problems with which constituents are faced. Let us lay that out. Attempts to clarify CSA demands are often met with engaged telephone lines or recorded messages. For those on low incomes who do not have access to their own telephone and have to use public payphones, making such phone calls is a costly and difficult burden. Letters to the agency meet inordinately long delays before they receive a reply and sometimes they receive no reply at all.

Because of inadequate liaison between the maintenance assessment and the debt collecting sections, parents receive differing and often contradictory figures and demands. To make matters worse, the CSA does not store historic computer-generated detailed assessment letters; only the latest assessments are kept on the computer files. That makes it almost impossible for a parent to pursue a query or to challenge a decision while an assessment is being developed.

In my discussions with CSA staff—I am sure that many other hon. Members have engaged in similar discussions—I have been given to understand that when the agency was established it was assumed that staff would be able to assess maintenance payments, and collect them from non-custodial parents, purely by means of paper communication. Naturally, the first reaction of a parent faced with a large and often unexpected assessment is to want to question and to verify it. It is beyond belief that a state agency should be expected to demand major slices of citizens' income—deducted at source if necessary—without providing a facility for those citizens to meet the staff or at least talk to them on the telephone. If the CSA wants to improve its performance, it must restructure its organisation to allow parents to discuss, query and in some cases challenge decisions in person. The Select Committee missed an opportunity in that regard.

Many of the changes that the report recommends are no more than trifling. If more is not done, the Act will have difficulty surviving in its present form. For example, the report fails to address the pressures placed on non-custodial parents to give up work because of the financial burden of maintenance payments. The refusal to consider travel-to-work costs is one of the factors that force many fathers to give up work and live on benefits. No one welcomes that development, but I hear of it from my constituents week after week. Those costs must be allowed: if a person cannot work, that person cannot pay maintenance for his or her children.

The Select Committee's recommended concession is no more than an exercise in pedantry. The costs of a car will not be allowed if the car is to be used privately as well. Again, if a non-custodial parent can travel to work only by car, because—as is the case in so many parts of the country—the public transport system is inadequate, that parent will need to buy a car, and such a purchase will invariably be made by means of a loan. That loan should be recognised in the maintenance assessment.

In many instances, divorcing fathers have taken out loans and mortgages to provide funds as part of a settlement. They have a legal obligation to pay their debts.

Mr. Duncan: Recommendation (xx) in the Select Committee report is simple and explicit. It states:

> "We recommend that travel to work costs are included in the calculation of exempt income."

Where the hon. Gentleman gets his notions about which costs may or may not be included is beyond me.

Mr. Chidgey: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his information, but I am content with the accuracy of the information that I possess. It is not acceptable for such obligations to be ignored; legally incurred and entirely necessary expenses such as mortgages need to be considered at the outset when the maintenance level is devised. That does not happen at present.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Chidgey: No. I have given way already, and we are short of time.

The report makes no recommendations about disregarding any part of a CSA maintenance settlement against loss of income support. Instead, it suggests that income support should be made up to those whose maintenance is held up for any reason if it was reduced after the initial maintenance award.

Although that is welcome, it does not go far enough. It means that the poorest children will continue to be hit by the pound-for-pound rule. Their parents gain nothing from maintenance awards, and their non-custodial parents are those least likely to be able to afford to keep up visits, pay for holidays and so on, having paid maintenance awards which, as we know, go straight to the Treasury.

In many instances, as was verified by a recent report from the five main children's charities, those children could be worse off. Their fathers will no longer be able to afford the informal financial help—clothing, presents and outings—from which they previously benefited. Women on income support should be able to keep the first £15 of a maintenance award under the Act—as they are in the case of family credit or disability working allowance—so that they would be better off co-operating with the CSA.

As has already been said, that incentive to co-operate would reduce the application of the 20 per cent. benefit penalty for women who refuse to name the fathers of their children. The refusal to change that part of the Act will benefit only the Treasury, while increasing hardship for children.

Those who negotiated a clean-break settlement are hardest hit. Fathers who gave up their houses at the time of separation as part of the settlement and took out a mortgage on a new home are now being asked to start paying additional maintenance. Inevitably, that is hitting second marriages hard. Some second spouses are being forced to contribute part of their income to first spouses, even when the first spouse enjoys a significantly higher standard of living.

The agency's action in overriding those court settlements is having a devastating effect on children. When otherwise stabilised relationships deteriorate because of financial pressures, the children find themselves at the centre of post-divorce acrimony. Recognition of clean-break settlements is an absolute necessity for any Government who are seriously committed to children's welfare.

I agree with the hon. Member for Birkenhead that a major fault ignored in the report is the lack of an appeals process. When a parent does manage to contact the CSA to complain about what he or she considers to be an unreasonable assessment, and once an appeal comes to be heard—a process that takes an average of six months—the chances of a fair hearing are still minimal, because the agency continues to act as both judge and jury. It is absurd that an agency such as the CSA, which in the event is answerable only to the Secretary of State, can overturn court orders with which all parties agree and comply. That is why an independent appeals procedure is so urgently required for cases in which severe hardship is clearly being suffered.

In short, the Act needs to be fundamentally overhauled, not tinkered with by a Select Committee that is eager to avoid the U-turn chaos that was described earlier. Clean-break settlements need to be recognised, accountability in the CSA needs to be improved and an independent appeals procedure is required. The Government cannot assume that all-party support for the Act will continue indefinitely: I think that they know that unless some action is taken to deal with the criticisms that have been made of the agency and the Act that it was created to uphold, they may find that support beginning to slip away.

5.7 pm

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): In some 25 years as a Member of Parliament, I do not think that I have ever before ventured into a debate on social affairs. I hope that my hon. Friends and members of the Select Committee will forgive me if I am wrong about some of the technicalities. If perchance I make a recommendation that is already included in the long list of recommendations, I hope that my hon. Friends will accept that as support for their views.

Let me make a serious point. As the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) will know, we have limited time in which to debate Select Committee reports. In a way, I am happy to speak as someone who is not a member of his Committee: as it is often all too easy to have a debate on the Floor of the House that has already taken place upstairs in the Select Committee. We have not yet received the Government's reply to the Committee's report, and although I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will seek to enlighten us as far as is possible, he will be somewhat constrained from making the Government's position clear until the more formal answer has been delivered. None the less, as we are having this debate and as I have dealt with more than the average number of cases, I feel obliged to speak.

I had the misfortune to be divorced some years ago, and I can only say that I know of no more traumatic personal experience. I would not wish on my worst enemy the misery of an unwanted divorce. Some people claim that there is such a thing as an amicable separation but that is rubbish or, at least, I do not believe that it happens very often.

Furthermore, no two divorces are quite the same. It is not a question only of the personalities involved and why two people are splitting up but of their wealth, jobs, circumstances and children. Despite that, and with the best intention—seeking to find irresponsible fathers who have disappeared—we have created a monstrous bureaucracy which pours misery on misery and the many unfortunate people who have already gone through the mental, physical and financial trauma of divorce now have to deal with this ghastly organisation as well. As a supporter of the Government, I have never been so ashamed as when I have had to defend the CSA and what it has got up to in the past two years.

My immediate reaction is that the assessment formula is wrong and unfair. Until, with the wisdom of experience and other countries and the two inquiries by the Select Committee, a more reasonable and equitable and less complex formula can be devised, there will be no substantive improvement in the management or operations of the CSA or its handling of cases.

No benefit will accrue to the children of a first family and/or the children of a second family if, as a result of the CSA's assessment, both families are left with a sum of money only marginally above the income support limit, bearing in mind the fact that the income support limit is far less than the money on which many of the people who come to my surgery are living. Of course, such people are not unwilling to pay; they have been to court and agreed a settlement and are open to a revision of that settlement. They feel bitter and unjustly treated.

The Government claim that the assessment should leave the non-custodial parent and the new family, if any, with approximately 70 per cent. of net income after the

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payment of maintenance. That is not only wholly inaccurate in the case of nearly all my constituents but, because several essential non-elective expenses are disallowed, the reality is wholly different. Some people have even received assessments that leave them with negative income while many others are left with income only slightly above the income support limit.

Any new assessment formula must take into consideration the size and nature of clean-break settlements, something that the Select Committee recognised. It must be possible to overcome the difficulties; courts have been doing so for years. I know that there are legal problems, but they must be sorted out. A new assessment formula must also take into account the voluntary and informal agreements which have been willingly entered into to pour oil on troubled waters and to deal with matters amicably.

Allowable expenses must be extended to allow a number of non-elective expenses to be verified. Council tax payments, heat, electricity and water bills and travel-to-work expenses are easily verifiable. The costs involved in travelling to be with one's children is a crucial expense. One of my constituents is a service man who has been posted hundreds of miles away from his children. He is allowed to see them but cannot afford to do so. Such travel costs are not allowed in the calculation although they should be and would be, at least by anyone who has a heart.

Private pensions should be protected. Periodic overtime is a source of constant aggravation—why should it be included and used as a reason to raise the assessment? An incentive to improve one's financial situation must be allowed. In many cases, overtime constitutes the only way in which the non-custodial parent and his second family can survive economically. It seems fair that children should be maintained on the basis of a standard, regular income but it does not seem fair that maintenance should be an ever-floating item and that any extra money immediately increases maintenance payments. By comparison, many items of essential expenditure are allowed under legal aid so there is a perfectly good precedent.

The financial position of the new partner of a custodial parent is not taken into account. When my office made inquiries about that, it was told that the new partner of a custodial parent has no legal or financial responsibility for the children of the parent whom he or she is marrying. That statement has been included in several ministerial responses to my constituents' complaints.

Conversely, the new partner of a non-custodial parent is automatically liable for 25 per cent. of the household expenses. Letters from Ministers and the CSA have informed my constituents that the new partner's mandatory 25 per cent. contribution to the running of the household may result in the non-custodial parent contributing more in maintenance. Although some recent ministerial letters state that the income of the new partner of the non-custodial parent must be considered—it may result in a lowering of maintenance payments—the inequity remains. Let us keep it simple: when determining the right to, or responsibility for, maintenance we should either take both or neither new partners' income into account.

The CSA assessment must include identical allowances for natural children, stepchildren and the children of second families. Anything less will continue to cause significant psychological and emotional harm to all of the families involved. It strikes me as strange that, despite having such a high grade civil service, we have managed to include in the legislation—through the orders attached to the original Act—so many draconian and irrationally inhumane provisions.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I have the advantage of not having been a member of the Select Committee and I do not want to get involved in detail, but it seems to me that there were three fundamental things wrong with the original legislation. The element of retrospection was and is wrong; the overriding of court settlements was and is wrong; and one needs a double first in mathematics to understand the formula. Does my hon. Friend think that we need a fundamental reappraisal not only of the work of the agency but of the legislation itself? I do not see any other way out.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: As I said in my opening remarks, I do not claim to be an expert so I cannot answer my hon. Friend, but I am sure that his remarks will have been noted.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) sought to excuse to some extent the CSA's bureaucratic, mechanical performance, but there can be no excuse. In all my 25 years in Parliament, I have never known a Government agency perform so badly, incompetently and outrageously unfeelingly. Many of its staff are inexperienced at working in the highly emotionally charged atmosphere that the CSA has created. They complain of abusive treatment by non-custodial parents, but how would they be inclined to respond if, after hearing nothing from the agency for months and months, they received notice, with a threat of court action attached, that they were immediately responsible for paying arrears which, in some cases, could be as high as £3,000 or £4,000?

From the outset, the CSA adopted an adversarial style with all non-custodial parents and has treated them as though they were guilty of trying to avoid maintenance. The constituents who have written to me were paying maintenance all along, years before the CSA became involved. Other flaws in administration have included breach of confidentiality in matters relating to the non-custodial parent; the use of threatening language in correspondence; anonymous correspondence; and the staff's refusal to identify themselves on the telephone or the purpose of the call when initial contact was first made with non-custodial parents.

I do not intend to be wholly critical. I have sought to give the Minister a constructive brief and a solution to some of the problems. The adversarial style must be replaced by one of assistance and information. If necessary, let there be two forms—one for irresponsible non-custodial parents and one for those who have kept up payments. There must be proper and adequate training of staff, preferably in the operations and style of a service organisation, with training in communicating with people suffering stress. Cases should be assigned to two trained staff who will be accountable for those cases and conversant with the details. Only then will they be able to be effective in managing it, handling appeals in a timely manner and using responsibly whatever powers of discretion they have. At the moment, no one knows anything specific about cases and no one is accountable. I hope that such suggestions will improve people's relationship with the CSA.

The appeals procedure must be simplified. Non-custodial parents should be able to speak directly to the case officer, especially in connection with corrections and clarification. An information hotline/public assistance number should be available and published in local papers. The agency should be staffed with qualified personnel during extended hours, to help people who cannot telephone or do anything about such matters while they are at work.

The date of the commencement of arrears causes much misery. Arrears have become very expensive and greatly upset the budget of individual households. Assuming that interim assessments are discontinued, and provided that a non-custodial parent returns information in a timely fashion, arrears should begin no more than 30 days out from the date that a completed accurate final assessment is posted by the CSA.

Parents should not be liable for CSA administrative faults and problems, which have in the past caused months of delay, certainly in many of my cases. A system of retrospective financial compensation must be created for those who, through no fault of their own, have accrued arrears during the time taken by CSA deliberations, and new cases must be protected from such overcharging. If the CSA fails to fulfil its obligations to assess and post charges during a certain period, it should absorb the costs, rather than passing them on to the person being charged arrears. The agency must conform to standard business practice.

We keep hearing that the matter is to be reviewed. Indeed, the Government have reviewed it once already, yet the same people come into my surgery saying, "Why did they bother? It didn't help my case." Now we understand that it is all to be reviewed again, but why the delay? Month after month those wretched people are suffering. I find it difficult to bear that any longer, and I press my hon. Friends in Government to produce an early solution to many of the problems that I have described.

5.21 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I have served on the Select Committee since the House set it up, and we have dealt with many subjects that have caused much heartache to the people who have come before us to give evidence. One of those was the affair of the Maxwell pensioners. But I think that the Child Support Agency has caused the greatest heartache of all.

I have been privileged and proud to be a member of that Committee, but this time I was rather concerned because when we finalised the report we could not reach agreement on many aspects. That was unfortunate because all the members of the Committee work hard, listen to one another and find out what other people's views are, but we still could not produce a report agreed by us all. I am a little concerned about that, and I feel that perhaps we could have done better.

I was once talking to a policeman about people breaking the law and the trouble that he had had at various times, and he said to me, "I'll give you a little bit of advice, Clifford. Don't ever interfere between a man and wife." Apparently, if a couple are having an argument in the middle of the street or in a house and someone goes to interfere they both turn on him and blame him for all the things that have happened, no matter what the row was about.

I believe that when the House passed the Child Support Act 1991 we failed to realise that truth. We did not realise how sensitive an area we were entering, even leaving aside the question of children. When one interferes between those who have loved one another but who for various reasons no longer do so, one is in difficulty—and that is precisely what the Act does. It attempts to make a judgment between a husband and wife as to what allowances should be paid for the children.

We all know that, sadly, children can be used as blackmail in divorce cases by either partner or both. When we consider the legislation we should bear that fact in mind. Even when people have been divorced and everything has gone well, if they come into the constituency office we tend to find that they do not even refer to each other by name, but talk about "him" or "her". Then we realise that we must be very careful in everything we say and do.

In view of that, one could think that there might be a dispute between the former partners over the children, but when the people who gave evidence before the Select Committee were asked, "Do you think parents should be responsible for looking after their children and supporting them?" the answer was always, "Yes, we believe that they should." So far as I can remember, no one was against the idea. So the task is to devise legislation that will allow that to happen.

Retrospective legislation always causes trouble; any retrospective arrangement does. People are going back over old ground and opening old sores—doing all the things that we would wish not to do in such a situation. I know that some of my fellow members of the Select Committee have said that we should not legislate retrospectively. But why is it not within the realms of possibility for the courts that have already made decisions on cases—they can work retrospectively—to reconsider those cases in the light of the legislation and of the assessments made under it?

There is no reason why a court could not look at such cases if they were brought back, even if they were not retrospective from the CSA's point of view. Indeed, I understand that it is the right of someone receiving maintenance to take the case back to court. So there is no reason why the courts should not consider such cases and say, "In the light of the changed situation let us see if we can make alterations." The advantage would be that those representing the non-custodial parent could have made their own case. Some members of the Select Committee thought that in retrospect the arrangements were unfortunate.

I am not talking about the financial side of things or many of the other things that have been expressed in the debate. I am speaking from the point of view of the child. The object of the legislation was to look after the child; that is why it was called the Child Support Act. If we cannot devise an arrangement that looks after the child we must reconsider the legislation. If we are aggravating the two parents of the child something is wrong with that legislation and it must be re-examined.

Some hon. Members would say that it would be better to allow at least legitimate expenses to the non-custodial parent—expenses that would have an adverse effect on

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that parent's ability to pay maintenance for the child. It is a great mistake to ask someone to maintain a child if, at the same time, we remove the ability of that non-custodial parent to have enough money to do it. We should consider the legitimate expenses.

I support the idea of a simpler assessment. It would be much simpler if one could say that it will cost £X if there is one child or two if a parent is divorced. That would be a simpler system and people would at least know what they are up against. Such a system would be helpful. I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) about the assessment forms. We found it very difficult to use the forms, even after instruction.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I have an example of the complexity involved in making an assessment. Four assessments were sent to a constituent of mine on 4 November, each in a separate envelope. Although the amount of income is the same, the assessment in the first letter is for £65.29, in the second it is for £68.86, the third is for £70.27 and the fourth is for £71.12. I have the same difficulty as members of the Select Committee did. I cannot work out which is the correct assessment.

Mr. Forsythe: That intervention reveals the extent of the problem. If one could assess the situation for oneself, the system would be much easier.

If someone disagrees with an assessment, it may be looked at again, but at the end of the day that person will be told, "We are sorry, but that is what the assessment is. If you don't like it, you will unfortunately go into arrears." That will happen regardless of whether that person believes that the assessment is right or wrong.

Someone may come into a constituency office and say that he has applied for disability living allowance, but has been turned down. He may say that he has had a review, but has been turned down again. When that person asks what he can do next, we say that he can appeal. With regard to many cases that hon. Members deal with, we can say, "Well, why don't you appeal? I will attempt to assist you with it." However, we cannot tell our constituents that the best thing to do is to appeal with regard to the CSA because there is no appeal mechanism. As the hon. Member for Birkenhead said, everyone would expect the right to an appeal. For example, even though many people break the speed limit and are not caught, if they are caught, they can appeal.

One of the Select Committee's greatest problems related to property settlements. A non-custodial parent may have wished the parent with care to have the matrimonial home so that the children could live there, attend school and keep their friends. As such a settlement was reached, people tend to believe that it is part of the arrangement. The Department of Social Security believes that such settlements are a matter between adults. However, I contend that if they are in the interests of the child, they should be taken into consideration.

The disregard is a very good idea. It provides an incentive. Without an incentive, many other problems flow. I fully support the idea of a disregard and I am not being disloyal to my colleagues on the Select Committee because that was my view then and it is my view now. However, I do not wish to repeat that argument.

I remind the House that the Child Support Act 1991 was passed by Members of this place. By doing that, they set up the Child Support Agency and they asked it to administer legislation which the House decreed it should administer. While I realise that mistakes can occur in all walks of life and in all jobs, and that they are very unfortunate in the delicate situation between a former husband and wife, I must place on record the fact that all the staff of the offices that we visited were dedicated, sincere, sympathetic and, above all, worked within legislation set up by the House. Hon. Members should remember that.

It is unfortunate that, at times, individual members of the agency are castigated as things are happening over which they perhaps have no control. While we would encourage the agency to make improvements, we must make it clear that we recognise that there are people in the agency who are doing their very best to work the legislation for which we are responsible.

5.36 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): The House owes a considerable debt of gratitude to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and his Select Committee for producing the second report. Some of the earlier comments about the report were slightly churlish. It will not satisfy everyone. No report produced by hon. Members ever does. However, the Select Committee has managed to focus attention again—and, as the Committee said, it is unusual for a Select Committee to do it twice—on a matter which, for a relatively small number of people, is of absolute and paramount importance.

We got this wrong. Hon. Members on both sides of the House got it horribly wrong. I agree with the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) that, while there have clearly been occasions when individual members of the Child Support Agency staff have not acted like paragons of virtue, it is we who have caused the problems that have created the anguish with which they are confronted. We must remember that.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: I was tempted to intervene on the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe), but he sat down at a crucial moment. Perhaps my hon. Friend can enlighten me. He was right to say that we passed the legislation in this House. However, I understand that we passed a very simple Act. Many of the mechanics of the CSA were introduced by orders, none of which was debated in the House. It is a lesson for us all that delegated legislation is not always entirely correct.

Mr. Gale: I concur with what my hon. Friend has just said, as, apart from his comments about CSA staff, I would concur with virtually everything that he said in his extremely excellent speech. The fact remains that we—nobody else—are responsible for legislation, and we got it wrong. We must now get it right.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): I hesitate to intervene, but, so that the House and the country are fully aware of the history of the Act, on Second Reading the Opposition tabled a reasoned amendment and highlighted many criticisms that have now been made. That matter should also be on the record.

Mr. Gale: I am prepared to concede that the Opposition, like some Conservatives, are blessed, not infrequently, with 20:20 hindsight.

The Act has shattered agreements that were freely entered into. It has caused untold hardship and misery. It has brought about friction where there was none. It has actually harmed some of the children whom it was designed to assist. The House sought rightly to ensure that parents took responsibility for their children.

It has been suggested that the Treasury is clawing back the money. The money belongs to the taxpayer. It is not the job of the taxpayer or of my elderly constituents in Thanet, North, having worked hard all their lives and now living on modest incomes, to support other people's children. That was the thesis behind the Act of Parliament. As has been said, bits have been bolted on to it and have made it unworkable.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security for the unfailingly courteous manner in which he has responded to some occasionally unfailingly less-than-courteous letters from me. In my correspondence with the Department, I have sought to reflect the genuine anger of honest working constituents who have sought to meet the obligations into which they believed that they had entered. They bitterly resent the fact that those agreements, which were freely entered into, are now being overturned by others and by us.

I am certain that, in seeking to ensure that parents take responsibility for their children, we have reopened maintenance settlements by the back door. Some of my constituents do not regard the Act as a child support Act, and they do not regard the agency as a child support agency. They regard them as an ex-spouse support Act and an ex-spouse support agency.

It would be naive beyond belief to accept that, when there is an improvement in payment that is not simply swallowed up by the taxpayer, money goes to the child. It does not. My hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) made the very correct point that we place a burden to contribute upon a new partner of an absent parent, but we take no account whatever of, often, an extremely comfortable life style enjoyed by the partner with custody, with a new partner. It is not fish or fowl. We cannot have it both ways, and we should not try to have it both ways. My hon. Friend the Minister will have to determine either that the full incomes of both households are taken into account or that neither of the new partners' incomes is taken into account.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Does my hon. Friend agree that that could have an extremely damaging effect on a second marriage, and, in some cases, could contribute to its break-up? We have two problems instead of one. Change is absolutely essential to stop that problem and many others that have been mentioned.

Mr. Gale: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. We have made a mistake, and the sensible, honourable way forward is to make a change, and as soon as possible. I see no shame whatever, and never have done, in acknowledging that legislation—I can think of one or two other pieces of legislation that are as close to your heart, Madam Deputy Speaker, as to mine—needs to be changed. When something is wrong and is not working as intended in the light of experience, the sensible course is for the House to acknowledge that and change it. That is not a U-turn; it is simply to say, "We have looked at this as it is working, and we need to amend it." My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary are engaged in what seems to have been an interminable review. Nevertheless, that is why the review is taking place, and I hope that changes will be brought forward.

I agree entirely that the worst aspect of the legislation has been its retrospective nature and the fact that, having entered into agreements in court, people now find them overturned. I concur with the view of the hon. Member for Antrim, South that, when the courts made the original disposition, there is absolutely no reason why they should not be asked to review cases. That is the proper way to address a grievance in law. It is extremely dangerous for the House ever to embark on retrospective legislation. I hope that we shall learn lessons from this mess.

I also believe strongly that payments should be needs-related, not means-related. I know that that issue is contentious. There is a strong view that, if an absent parent's circumstances improve, the child should benefit. I do not accept that. Separated families have different and differently developing life styles. If we are to help the child—and let us determine the needs of the child and base the payment on them—and if we are serious about allowing the child in some way to benefit from the improved circumstances, be they so, of the absent parent, anything above the needs-related payment to which I referred should be placed in trust for the child, so that the child will benefit from it when he or she reaches maturity, for example when that kid might be going to university. Otherwise, all that we are doing is rejigging an agreed settlement and giving a former spouse more money to spend on beer and skittles, or whatever. That is not the intention of the Act. The Act is intended to help the child. We must address that matter.

The formula that is used to assess payments does not take into account absent parents' previous debts. That is nonsense. We cannot say that, at the moment a couple separates, all legally binding contracts which have been entered into and which do not form part of a straightforward mortgage repayment must not be taken into account. I refer, for example, to the extension of a house, for which a loan has been taken out—payments still have to be made if a roof is to be kept over the children's heads—a hire purchase agreement for a car that is probably used for work, or any such commitment that was made before the legislation came into being. If previous debts are not taken into account, we cannot possibly claim that we are reflecting true costs out of the income of the absent parent.

Mr. Jenkin: Of course, that matter was in our in-trays when we considered it in Committee, but we did not regard it seriously, because we were confronted constantly with how people were likely to respond to changes such as the one that my hon. Friend suggested. In the case of debts accumulated before separation, the danger is that, by allowing the cost of those debts, we would encourage the accumulation of debts before separation. With the best will in the world, we did not want to create further loopholes, expense and complication in respect of a formula that many right hon. and hon. Members have described as too complicated.

Mr. Gale: I understand my hon. Friend's argument, but I do not accept it. In one or two cases malevolent people might run up debts knowing that they will leave their wife or husband in three months' time and that the debts will be taken into account in the calculation. But my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare said that he

[Mr. Gale]

had been through the trauma of a divorce, and so have I. In the main, divorces are not pre-planned; they are desperately tragic domestic events of the most traumatic and harrowing kind.

I doubt that the sort of thing to which my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) referred would happen in the overwhelming majority of cases. Of course it is possible, but I do not think that it is likely that people will stack up debts. I believe that debts should be taken into account in calculating amounts to be paid.

Travel-to-work costs should also be recognised. My constituents in Margate and Herne Bay can, and do, pay up to £2,000 per year in rail fares to commute to work in London. It is crazy that that contribution to absent parents' earning power—without which they would have no earning power because they would not have a job—should not be taken into account. We cannot simply write off £2,000. People will still have to get to work in order to make money to pay their ex-spouse. It is daft.

I have always believed that travel-to-work costs should be tax deductible—it is a straightforward business expense. But that is an argument for another place and time. Perhaps travel-to-work costs exceeding a minimum level could be taken into account. People do not buy rail season tickets to travel from Thanet to London for fun; they buy them so that they can get to work. It seems to me that that cost is fundamental to the formula. I am delighted that the Social Security Committee has made a recommendation to that effect and I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and the Secretary of State will take it on board.

All hon. Members have constituents who are faced with demands for sums which, unless they win the national lottery, they will not be able to pay. We cannot expect someone who is already in straitened circumstances, possibly as a result of a separation or marriage breakdown, to spirit £500, £900, £1,500, £2,000 or £3,000 out of thin air. It is all very well for someone in the CSA to say, "That is your calculated arrears and you must pay it." People have not made provision to pay those sums. In some cases, the calculation of assessments takes months from when the forms are first filled in.

That is no fault of my constituents: they provide the required information. My constituents have come to me with five or six letters— all posted within days of each other— containing different assessments. That is not my constituents' fault; it is the fault of the CSA.

I have constituents who pay sums of money— perhaps £50— which they recognise are probably on the low side; but they have paid them regularly. They agreed to pay those sums and they have kept their part of the contract. They then fill in a form, 11 months go by and an assessment arrives. It is perhaps more than they would like to pay, but it is not always unfair. However, there is also a huge bill for payments in arrears that they are simply not able to meet.

If there is a court order, the arrears payments do not exist. If people with court orders do not have to meet arrears payments, why do people who have been paying money methodically but who do not have court orders face huge bills? What is the difference? My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary must address that aspect of the Act because it is causing misery.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that some of the delay in reforming this dreadful Act results from a disagreement as to whether the correct route for change is through primary or secondary legislation. The changes to the Act must be implemented by whatever measures are necessary in order to get it right. If we work out what those measures are, it will become blindingly obvious whether they must be implemented through primary or secondary legislation— or, as I suspect, through both primary and secondary legislation.

I urge my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to implement the Committee's recommendations immediately through secondary legislation. He can then pursue the other necessary changes through primary legislation as quickly as possible. In short, I want my right hon. and hon. Friends to act with some urgency; we have delayed for far too long.

5.55 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): We are debating a most important estimate, which will become increasingly important for reasons that I will outline, and it is vital that we make the right decisions.I was struck by the fact that two Conservative Members said that Parliament had got it wrong. I hope that we shall consider the implications of that statement for the parliamentary process.

Why did the Parliament get it wrong? I have attended meetings of the Select Committee which is considering the incapacity for work legislation, and I am not convinced that we are getting it right. Committees allow objective scrutiny of the Executive and its decisions, but I have seen Committee members simply voting the way their Whips tell them to vote. I have seen them doing their correspondence, not listening to the evidence or the arguments, and voting the most complex pieces of legislation through on the nod.

I can envisage hon. Members coming to the Chamber in a year or two saying, "We do not know what we did, but the legislation is not working—it is hurting people and we must think again". Although the incapacity for work legislation is not the subject of this debate, I hope that we shall think through the implications of what has been said today and use the Child Support Act 1991 as an important case study. We must consider the need for pre-legislative hearings and we must take our role as scrutineers of legislation seriously.

However, I think that we knew more about the potential effect of the Act than some Conservative Members have admitted. I recall that there was a White Paper which grappled with the complexities of reform in this area. Anyone who read that White Paper, let alone much of the evidence submitted by research and voluntary organisations, would have appreciated that Parliament was grappling with extremely complex matters.

We are considering an important issue, but it is not only our Parliament and our society that are grappling with those problems. Communities around the world—in the Antipodes, Europe and North America—face the same kind of problems. We have heard a lot about divorce in the debate, but almost a third of children born in this country today are born outside marriage—half of them to unmarried lone mothers and the other half to cohabiting parents.

Accumulating evidence suggests that children in both categories are more at risk, both socially and materially, than those born to married couples. There is a stable group of cohabiting parents whose children will do as well or as badly as any other children in this country, but many children born to cohabiting parents live in circumstances which give us cause to worry about their future. We also know that unmarried lone mothers—the group whose number is increasing most rapidly of all one-parent families—are particularly vulnerable.

Regarding marriage itself, we know that the parents of about 25 per cent. of the children born this year and of children born subsequently will divorce before those children reach the age of 16. That involves a high proportion of children, and one which I fear will grow in the future. At the family policies study centre we once calculated that by the year 2000 only 50 per cent. of children in Britain would be born to married parents and remain living with them until the age of 16.

We are not talking about a small minority: a large proportion of adults and children will be affected by legislation of this kind. The issue of parental responsibility and what that means in increasingly diverse family circumstances therefore becomes a crucial moral question, but also a social and financial question. The demographics are complicated by the phenomena of remarriage, the co-habitation of divorced people and, sadly, re-divorce.

The House of Commons, which is still predominately made up of male hon. Members, speaks most lucidly on the issue with a male voice and in the male interest. However, the present principal victims—certainly the principal financial victims—of the social revolution in family change have been women and children. There is no doubt about that. Research shows clearly something which ought to be a matter of common sense. Following a divorce, the man usually gets richer, as he does not have to provide for his children any more. The women and children get poorer. It is a case of women and children last.

Those are the facts. We do not always hear the facts, and the case studies presented to the House on this most controversial of matters are not those case studies. Nevertheless, I put it to the House that those are predominantly the facts. We should therefore be in no doubt at all that reform was needed and that some kind of child maintenance or support Act was also needed. I have no doubt at all about that.

We must treat with much cynicism, and certainly much caution, any suggestion that before the Child Support Act the system was working smoothly; it was not. I am not saying that that suggestion has been made today, although it was nearly made. The system was a social and financial disaster.

Work was commissioned by the Government and carried out by York university on one-parent families. In a sample survey—a respectable piece of statistical work—it found that only 39 per cent. of one-parent families ever received maintenance at all, and that only 29 per cent. received maintenance regularly. I accept that of the 29 per cent. who were making regular maintenance payments some may have been paying at a decent level to safeguard the interests of their children. I put it to the House, however, that most were not paying adequate amounts, and the research shows that to be the case.

Although hon. Members' advice surgery encounters are among the most difficult, we should have the honesty and courage to say sometimes to a father, "You are paying maintenance. How much? You have two or three children. How much are you paying per week? What do you think the costs of a child are a week?" Before the Act, the system was a disaster.

I am interested in the arguments that the legislation should have been retrospective, although I am not sure what my judgment is on that. If those who are putting the argument that it should not have been retrospective do not go on to say that we should have sorted out the court system so that maintenance was collected adequately, they are not addressing the real problem.

One of the important issues, and one of the reasons why the matter is so controversial, is that the Act and its administration raise the question of what the costs of children are in Britain today. The short answer is that children are very expensive, as any parent knows. I do not make this suggestion flippantly, but I sometimes think that if all parents who are paying vast amounts for shoes, clothing, a university education and all the other things involved, suddenly had a Government agency—I do not mind whether it is a privatised agency or not—presenting a child support bill every week with all that we are paying added up, some of us might run to our Member of Parliament to complain. Some of us might even desert our children temporarily, so shocked would we be at their cost. The Child Support Agency makes it all too explicit to fathers what the costs of children are in Britain today.

For most parents, paying for their children and recognising their financial obligations should be among the first calls on their resources, and not among the last. I am not attacking the idea that some legitimate expenses should be in the formula, and the report and the Government must address those wisely. We hear of the various expenses which are put forward, and the argument that only if one has a few pounds left should one have to pay that for one's children. That should not be the case. Looking after one's children financially is among the most important obligations of parenthood. It should not be a matter of small change.

We cannot get away from the fact that someone has to pay the bill, given the expense of bringing up children. We should be spending and investing more money in children, rather than less. Who is to pay? The parents together can pay, the taxpayer can pick up some of the bill—many taxpayers on low incomes are parents themselves—or the costs must be paid for negatively through the poverty of one-parent families and children. Those are the choices that we have. We cannot do away with the cost: someone has to pay in one way or another.

I heard some hon. Members today talking about ex-wives, and how women spend money. The implication—I hope that I have got this wrong—was that wives spend money on luxuries and it never gets to the children. Unless it was intended as a rather dryly delivered lampoon of saloon bar rhetoric, that sort of remark represents a grave insult to the majority of one-parent families made up of mothers and children. Most one-parent families—I do not know whether it is the case in the constituency of the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale)—are poor, with 70 per cent. on income support. Among single mothers, the figure is 85 per cent. That may not be the case in certain constituencies, but that is the picture across the country.

[Mr. Malcolm Wicks]

I believe firmly that if mothers—sometimes it is fathers, of course—were to receive more money, they would spend it on their children because they need to and because they would take on that responsibility.

That is not to deny that the implementation of the Act has sometimes bordered on the catastrophic. I accept that the injustices which have affected some families and some fathers have been grave. If one is faced with such injustice, that is what counts rather than the more broad brush issues. I accept that unfairness has occurred and that the Act has become an administrative nightmare. We need Government and Parliament to make wise and intelligent decisions about how the system can be reformed.

The theme of my remarks is that a wise Parliament, a wise Government and—dare I say it—a wise press would sometimes listen hard for the silent voices of mothers and children, and not just to the loud, shrill voices which command the most attention on the issue.

If we want child support reform to become a strategy for fairness, we need to introduce a disregard. I regret that that has become a matter of party political controversy, because it should not have done. The issue is clear. A one-parent family on income support has its child maintenance deducted pound for pound, penny for penny from that income support. That means that the vast majority of children who should have been helped by a support measure get no extra money. That is a grave mistake and it is a pity that it has become the subject of political controversy.

I believe that I understand the political history behind the controversy. The former Prime Minister, the then Mrs. Thatcher, on the famous occasion of her lecture to the National Children's Home, said that no father would be able to escape his responsibilities in the future. I think that that promise took Ministers and civil servants at the Department of Social Security by surprise. It was the equivalent of a political hand grenade, with the pin half out, rolling towards the door of the then Secretary of State for Social Security, now the Leader of the House. I am sure that no one will want to confirm or deny my theory, but it is my guess that that is what happened.

In the next chapter, the Treasury, always a bad judge of social policy, saw the opportunity for a new taxation measure to recoup taxpayers' money, which would thus help public expenditure estimates. In the crucial discussions between the Department and the Treasury, the Treasury won. I suspect that the Department argued for a disregard, but we shall never know—or at least not for 30 years or until the memoirs of the Leader of the House are serialised in—

Mr. Bennett: *The Sun*.

Mr. Wicks: No, the right hon. Gentleman is a man of judgment: he would choose *The Observer*. We shall then learn the truth.

The Treasury saw the then Prime Minister's commitment as the chance to introduce an Exchequer support Act. That is when things went badly wrong, because the disregard option is now the subject of a political slanging match. The Labour party rightly believes that such a disregard should be introduced, but Tory Back Benchers immediately ask whether that is a Labour party commitment and how much it would cost. If we had introduced a disregard, we could have presented the Child Support Act 1991 as a policy of fairness—a true child support policy. We could have demonstrated that children were supported. Child support would then have become more accepted as a part of our welfare state and more accepted as a moral responsibility. Savings would have been generated for the Exchequer. That illustrates the fact that the Treasury is a poor judge not just of social policy but of financial policy in anything but the short term.

The Australian example has often been cited. I had the opportunity to speak to child support officials and officials of the Australian tax office, which collects the child support money, when I visited that country in 1989 and 1990. The message I got from Ministers, civil servants and tax officials was that the disregard—in Australia most of the disregard money goes to the mothers and the children—had oiled the wheels of difficult social legislation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has said, the Australians said that there was army out there on the side of a disregard. In Australia, mothers rang up the tax office to see how much money had been collected each week and what their share would be. The disregard became part of social policy. It has not been possible to achieve that in Britain.

The issue at stake is how we try to save a decent principle of parental responsibility from poor practice. Some people do not want to save it. It is easy now to win votes in constituencies and to appear the populist by saying that the 1991 Act should be abandoned. I merely want it to be reformed. It would be irresponsible to abandon it now. How do we save that decent principle from poor practice? If we do not get it right, we shall perpetuate new forms of poverty and new inequalities in the future, which will affect many of our children.

If we were wise, we would want to reform the 1991 Act within the context of a wider family policy agenda. One cannot reform the Act on its own. That policy should include reform of the divorce law to put children first. I know that the Lord Chancellor is grappling with that in his planned White Paper. That policy should also include projects on preparation for parenthood to ensure that people take parenthood more seriously, and also family and sex education because there is no reason why 100,000 teenage women should have unplanned conceptions every year. If we pursued a wider family policy agenda and reformed the 1991 Act, Parliament would truly put children first.

6.15 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): The hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) made a helpful speech. He has just been appointed to our Select Committee, but judging from many of his remarks, one might think that he had taken part in many of our deliberations. I think that he will be a valuable addition to the Committee.

I must take issue with the hon. Gentleman about the disregard, which has been consistently raised in the debate so far. It may be superficially attractive for taxpayers to provide perhaps an extra £350 million or £500 million to oil the wheels and to encourage the system to work, but that would introduce a major element of unfairness. Why should children who happen to depend on maintenance from a non-custodial parent enjoy the benefits of a household that is significantly better off than that in which couples have happily remained married? That was one of the main considerations that led a number of us to oppose the disregard proposal.

The disregard also adds significantly to the poverty trap. One of the benefits of the current system is that the parent with care receives the maintenance. To begin with, one of the big problems was that so few of those parents were receiving the full maintenance that the Child Support Act 1991 intended that they should receive. Once they receive that maintenance, however, in addition to the benefit that tops up their income to the income support level, plus family credit, that money is a permanent building block of income for their household, which they do not lose if they move into work. That extra incentive to work would be discouraged if, by moving off income support level and out of family credit, those parents were then to lose the £15 disregard, as recommended by other members of the Select Committee. That problem convinced certain of us that the disregard was not practical and was not worth the additional resources that would have to be devoted to it.

If we can make the 1991 Act work, that would be the best prize that we can deliver to single parents. I agree with the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West about the importance of the unsung multitude—the people who do not get sufficient attention—those parents with care on income support levels. We are talking about more than 1 million households in which single parents, on or below benefit levels, look after children. We have received relatively few complaints in our constituency surgeries about the 1991 Act compared with the vast number of people whom the Act is intended to help.

The other points raised by—may I say my hon. Friend—the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) were matters that the Committee considered in great detail. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) in paying tribute to him. It is a privilege to serve on his Committee, where we have such an open and frank exchange of views. I look forward to working on further reports with him.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead mentioned two main features. One that has not been widely discussed in the debate so far is the appeal system. We spent a long time discussing how an appeal system could be made effective without returning to the failed courts system that we were seeking to replace. The argument concerns gateways: should we create an appeal system with narrow gateways through which people must pass—or narrow conditions for which they must qualify—before they are eligible to appeal; or should we have much wider gateways so that vast numbers of people can appeal? If we choose narrow gateways, the result will be an appeal system that will contribute to widespread disappointment because few people will benefit from the appeal system. If we choose wide gateways, the system will return to extensive discretion and the failed courts system that we sought to replace.

In its purest sense, the Act is not retrospective because the definition of a retrospective Act of Parliament is one that would create a punishment for something that was not a crime when it was committed. This Act does not do that because it does nothing that the courts could not have achieved, had they been so minded. The question is: why did not the courts enforce higher amounts of maintenance to be paid by non-custodial parents? The answer is that the courts made the most amicable settlements that they could arrange in the light of benefits available through the benefits system. Had we returned to a system in which there were no welfare benefits, the courts may have been much more active because the survival of single-parent families would have depended entirely on the courts system.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman is not quite correct about retrospection. Many of my constituents are upset by the question of travel costs. The courts could always take travel costs into account, whereas I understand that the new agency cannot. It is hard on someone who lives in Stockport but who works in Merseyside, for example, not to have those considerable costs taken into account.

Mr. Jenkin: Indeed, and that point is reflected in the formula. I accept the distinction that the hon. Gentleman seeks to draw because an element of discretion was allowed to the courts but was not reflected in the formula, and we have sought to amend that.

Mr. Frank Field: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I, too, had great pleasure working with him on the Committee. I chided him there, and do so now in the Chamber, for not being Conservative enough. He has an extraordinary view of how society operates. What actually happened was that this place took little or no interest in whether people on benefit were receiving maintenance payments. All too many of our constituents felt that we would never take an interest in that subject and, by winks and nods, the word went round that it was perfectly proper to start another family because people were not chased for maintenance. Because of the escalating bill, we then decided that we would be interested in collecting maintenance.

In that sense, the Act is retrospective, which is why many of our constituents feel that it is unjust. They started a second family assuming that the House of Commons would never discuss the issue and we suddenly not only took an interest but passed an Act that affected them.

Mr. Jenkin: Of course I accept what the hon. Gentleman says, as I find myself doing so often. The point that I was seeking to make is that the Act is not technically retroactive but, like any change in the law, it affects people's past assumptions and the position that they now confront. I shared with the hon. Gentleman for much our discussions a desire to ameliorate those retrospective effects. Indeed, we concluded in our report—it was one area where we created a consensus rather than having instant unanimity—that the Government should look at aspects of the effect of retrospection on the agreements.

It is important to emphasise and re-emphasise the fact that the courts have never recognised what one or two hon. Members call "clean-break settlements" with regard to the maintenance of children. Courts have always had the power to alter agreements, even when assets were transferred to try to remove the need for maintenance payments to be made. They have always had the power to review settlements and enforce higher maintenance payments.

The most interesting issue that the Committee studied was the introduction of an alternative type of formula. Again, I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Birkenhead. As we investigated the matter, we were disappointed to find that it did not solve the problems. We took evidence

[Mr. Jenkin]

from Mr. Frank Bosch and Mr. David Butler on the respective New Zealand and Australian systems. Mr. David Butler said:

> "Even after six years, Australian Members of Parliament are receiving more complaints about Child Support than any other issues. We are currently under Parliamentary scrutiny which attracted more submissions than any other review in Australia's history".

We decided not to go for a major change in the formula because it would not have satisfied the expectations that it would have raised, given that we were determined to introduce some kind of system to enforce better maintenance.

This has been an extremely important debate and the contributions by my hon. Friends the Members for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) and for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) highlighted the extremely sensitive nature of the social reform that the Act seeks to achieve. In that respect, the Act was and is an enormously ambitious project. The benefits system created an environment in which parents, for whatever reason, found it too easy an option to abandon, at least partly, their responsibilities to their children. There is a growing realisation on both sides of the House, evidenced by the contributions of the hon. Members for Birkenhead and for Croydon, North-West, that the Government can no longer ignore the adverse consequences and side-effects of their policies, however benevolent and well intentioned they may be. The evidence is that the benefits system in this case was worsening a social problem.

The costs of those adverse side-effects should not rest solely on the taxpayer. I make no apology for the fact that the measure is designed to recoup money for the taxpayer. That is an important element of the reform. Some 70 per cent. of single parents—1 million households—are on income support and we should reduce that number. Against the background of increasing family breakdowns and the disintegration of traditional society, we all have anecdotal evidence that the Act may already be having a beneficial effect on people's attitudes towards the responsibilities of producing children. What greater responsibility can there be?

6.29 pm

Sir Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): When I took my vow of silence, on 25 July 1989, little did I think that my first speech thereafter from the Front Bench—albeit below the Gangway—would be late on a Thursday evening, having spent most of the afternoon in the Chamber, listening to many experts.

I speak as a constituency Member of Parliament, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson). I am exceedingly grateful to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and other Committee members for their work in producing the report.

I speak as a constituency Member of Parliament because of some of the constituents who have visited my advice bureaux or sent me letters. The decisions in those letters simply do not appear fair—although I understand that life sometimes can be unfair. As a Member of Parliament, I have to sort the corn from the chaff very quickly, and some of the people who write are very persistent.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt), the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, with whom I worked as a Back Bencher in years long past. He considers sympathetically most questions that he is asked. I watch him when he is buttonholed by other colleagues in the House, and he can almost anticipate the words that will be said.

I am aware that the Minister's workload is heavy, and I know the number of letters about the Child Support Act 1991 to which he must reply. None the less, delays occur in the mail and I still expect some replies from him that I would have anticipated receiving by now. *[Interruption.]* I am always tactful, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) knows. Even when I sat on the Treasury Bench, I was always tactful.

The Secretary of State was very helpful because, during the European election campaign, he met the chairman and the secretary of the south Yorkshire campaign against the Child Support Agency. They had an opportunity to speak to him "at length"—for a ministerial visit.

I have noticed the changes that have taken place in the Child Support Agency. Letters are being answered far more quickly than ever before. In the past, letters have been delayed because the CSA needed a reference number or wanted further information. If there was ever a reason for the introduction of a national identity card, it is to ensure that a person has one number that is used at all times, so that the agency does not look for other people with a similar, or the same, name.

Once, subject to what must have been a momentary change of opinion, I telephoned the Child Support Agency. One cannot judge everyone at the end of a telephone, but when I got through I did not find the person to whom I spoke conducive to clear exchange of thoughts and ideas. The worst thing that one can do is to put down the telephone, so I endured that telephone call, which, if I had been someone other than myself, would have caused me great annoyance. I remember saying, "If this is the way in which they behave towards a Member of Parliament, who, as everyone tells me, has some clout, it is sad for other people who telephone the CSA."

The CSA has improved, but one continues to receive lengthy letters from the agency, and I still have to read them several times to understand what they are talking about.

I referred to the south Yorkshire campaign against the Child Support Agency. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Birkenhead for meeting its members. The hon. Gentleman and I had a private conversation in which we discussed how well they had presented their information. They gave evidence to the Select Committee on 28 June 1994. They have sent me all their reports, which I passed to the Chairman of the Select Committee and also to the Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. Frank Field: It was their submissions that governed my thinking, which appeared in the draft report but was voted down.

Sir Irvine Patnick: It is always fatal to give way, as I learnt when I sat on the Treasury Bench, but I accept the hon. Gentleman's words.

It always happens in life that, if one does not receive a reply or the reply is not prompt, annoyance results. It makes one frustrated and causes aggravation. The major result is friction, which can be taken out on many people, such as friends, relatives and other Members of Parliament. Steps must be taken to ensure that cases are processed promptly by the CSA and by the Minister to ensure that people are not, as they would put it, annoyed by the system. I know that, once one becomes annoyed by the system, the system wins.

We must look to the future. I welcome the report. The 1991 Act is on the statute book. I am aware that the Government have altered parts of it and will reconsider it. The agency requires more work—a proper appeal procedure is obviously needed. I await the Government's response to the Select Committee's report. Above all, I await the Under-Secretary of State's reply to the debate.

6.36 pm

Mr. John Horam (Orpington): My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), in a notably lucid and heartfelt speech, advanced an important argument, which is increasing as the months pass—that the arrears of back maintenance are accumulating on a huge scale, and very substantial sums are involved.

For example, one of my constituents recently received a letter requesting £4,960.78 in back maintenance, and was required to pay £95.40 per week from 12 December 1994. He accepts that what he paid in the past was probably insufficient, and that he should be paying more. He would have paid more in the past year if he had been asked to do so. What is intolerable, however, is the no-man's land of uncertainty in which he cannot make any estimate of his liabilities. That is not the result of my constituent's position or his previous wife's position; it is simply the result of the length of time that the CSA has taken to reach its decision.

When my constituent received that letter, he asked the CSA what he should do, and he summarised to me the conversation that he had with CSA personnel. They told him that the letter was a computer-generated letter, sent out as a matter of course and that he should ignore it because no full assessment had been made. We have had the extraordinary phenomenon of computer-generated letters being sent out, untouched by human hand, which apparently we must ignore.

Not only was my constituent to ignore that letter, but he was to ignore further letters that he might receive, which were also likely to be computer generated, because the staff could not prevent the computer from generating further letters. He should therefore ignore them until such time as another assessment was made. Not only that, but the staff could give him no idea of the time that the agency would take, in 1995, to reach a proper assessment.

The way in which the CSA operates—even now, with the extra resources that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has allocated to it—causes considerable concern.

I have always felt that retrospection was a fundamental flaw in the CSA approach. As we know, the Australian system is not retrospective, and the criticism of that, which my hon. Friends have made, is that in effect it creates a two-tier system. I would rather have a two-tier system than the injustices that result from people being placed in a situation that they could not have envisaged when they or the courts made their original decisions about their children. I understand the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) that the system is strictly speaking not retrospective, but that is semantics. We are talking about what, in common-sense terms, is a totally new situation that was not envisaged by people when they originally made their decisions.

I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) although, unfortunately, I did not hear all of his speech. One point that he made that was new to me is that people who have been caught retrospectively should have a discount on the amount that they would otherwise have to pay. That is one way out of the problem. It does not meet the whole situation, but it does represent an element of justice and may not require primary legislation which, I understand, is a problem.

The real villain here is not the CSA, whose problems I understand, or even my hon. Friend the Minister, who, with his cheerful, cherubic face and gentlemanly manner, could not possibly be the villain, but the Treasury. It saw this as a taxation measure and a means of restraining public expenditure. Once again, it is exerting a baleful force on what my hon. Friend is able to do.

That is shortsighted because, in the final analysis, under the pressure of events, we shall have to take a longer view and take into account the human justice of the matter and the individual nature of cases rather than have some fixed formula linked to targets determined by the Treasury. My appeal is not only to the Minister, but to the absent force—the Treasury.

6.41 pm

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): I am pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam). I shall address in a moment his last point about the Treasury effectively driving the CSA according to Treasury objectives.

First, I acknowledge the opening remarks of the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who pretty well said it all, as one has come to expect of him. There is little with which I could disagree in what he said, expect perhaps for matters of detail about how we may or may not amend the formula. It is clear to all hon. Members that his chairmanship of the Select Committee has steered it to some constructive work. It is a Select Committee which does not indulge in political stunts, but gets down to business. It has a great cross-party spirit of co-operation, which I hope is evident in the two reports that the Committee has laid before the House.

I do not accept the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington. It is perfectly acceptable for the Treasury to say that money should be retrieved from parents if they can afford to pay because the Treasury should never have been required to part with that money in the first place.

There are a number of administrative points that I would like to make, but as time is short I shall mention just two. First, the Act is changing behaviour. I do not fully subscribe to what the late Sir Keith Joseph said in his speech in 1973, but he did point to an issue that is of great concern for social patterns and behaviour in Britain. This Act is changing behaviour and it is doing so in a way that will assist rather than undermine Britain's social fabric.

Finally, I ask the Minister to consider once again what is likely to happen to the workings of the Act once it moves to those parents or absent parents who are not on any form of state benefit. If we can justify the state's being involved in the movement of money within a family where a partner is

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on state benefit, it can also be argued that the state has no justification for being involved in the way in which people spend their money when no member of that family is on state benefit. My alarm bells are ringing about what will happen when the state takes on such people. Those are the three points to which I hope my hon. Friend the Minister will respond this evening.

6.44 pm

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): This has been an interesting debate. I start by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), the Chairman of the Select Committee, my other hon. Friends and the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) who served on the Committee, on their genuine attempt to produce a report which dealt seriously with the many criticisms levied at the Child Support Act and the agency charged with its implementation.

I agree with all the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead, but particularly with his opening remarks in which he set out his analysis of where we are in terms of the legislation. It is right to say that there is no going back. We can only now go forward. That is the view of the vast majority of hon. Members. That view was echoed most eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) in a solid and worthwhile contribution to the debate which raised many serious and worthy issues, not just in relation to the Act and related matters but wider areas as well.

Unfortunately, the tragedy of the debate and the report is that the main recommendations, which would have provided a proper framework for changing the legislation were, as anyone can see from reading the report, taken out by the Conservative majority on the Committee. I hesitate to say that those hon. Members were acting in line with the Minister's wishes. I would probably exonerate the Minister. If he disagrees and tells me that he was dictating the pace and direction of Conservative Members on the Committee, I would have to change my opinion.

However, to those who follow such matters closely, it was clear that something like this would happen. In an article in *The Observer* on the Sunday preceding the final decision of the Committee, it was clearly stated that a private meeting had taken place between a senior Treasury Minister and Conservative Members of the Committee in which they were specifically told not to deal with the matter of the disregard contained in the draft report produced by my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead.

That matter has been raised on a number of occasions in the House and has never been discounted or denied. I do not always believe what I read in newspapers, but it is clear—

Mr. Duncan: One does not need to deny something that never took place.

Mr. Ingram: That is one hon. Member who has said that he was not at a meeting with the Chief Secretary.

Mr. Jenkin: I also deny having any meetings with Treasury Ministers to discuss that particular issue. The only meetings that I had with Ministers was to ensure that they would provide the additional resources to fund the necessary changes, which might have some support from the hon. Gentleman. I should add that one sentence on which we all agreed appears in paragraph 52:

> "Finally, any changes we recommend must not only ensure that the system upholds the basic principles of parental responsibility and are fair, but also will be administratively practicable."

That important sentence was included in the report and guided many of the decisions that we took.

Mr. Ingram: We shall have to read carefully the *Official Report* tomorrow to see exactly what the hon. Gentleman has said. Clearly, a meeting did take place. Therefore, the article in *The Observer* was not that misplaced. Perhaps we should have a report on exactly what happened. If such a meeting did take place, that would undermine the very principles and sanctity of Select Committees. That is an issue that will obviously be debated elsewhere.

The Select Committee's report has been strongly and rightly criticised by the many thousands of non-custodial parents and parents with care who had hoped to see a much more radical report. In defence of my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead and of my other hon. Friends who served on the Committee, I say to the critics, as I have said before, that their anger should be directed towards the Conservative Committee members, perhaps the Minister with responsibility for Treasury matters who advised them and the Treasury for its interference. That is borne out by reading the report and by finding out how members voted on the report. The report's main recommendations are a very much watered-down version of what should have been presented to the House.

I make no apology for making those opening remarks. Every time that he was pressed on what the Government would do about the legislation—in debate after debate and question after question—the Minister said, "Wait for the Select Committee report and then we will act." That is the line that has been taken. He built up an atmosphere of great expectation about what the report would entail. However, more hard times have been visited on people affected by the legislation.

It is important to remember that no mention of any change to the legislation appeared in the Queen's Speech. That was an ominous omission for many people who were hoping that the Government would make a commitment that change would take place. The report is before the House, but that does not mean that the Government have to act on it. It is worth bearing in mind the fact that, of the 12 recommendations in the previous report that was presented to the House, only four were accepted in part or in total by the Government. People should not, therefore, hold out too much hope that the report's recommendations will form the framework of any changes.

I must deal with some of the report's recommendations because they are important and should be responded to positively. On Tuesday this week, I attended a mass lobby of Parliament that was organised by the national Anti-Child Support Act group, which was arranged through the offices of my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson). Anyone who thought that the anger and frustration of people involved in groups campaigning against the Act had abated would have been strongly disabused of that view by the meeting. February's amendments of the Act have not won many or any converts to the cause.

Hon. Members' attendance at such events does not mean that they support the principles behind those organised meetings or the views of the groups. The meeting was especially hot tempered, as so many of them are. Although a majority of the people present simply wanted the Act to be abolished—not a view to which I and, I think, the majority of my hon. Friends subscribe—many interesting and valid points of criticism were raised and they must be dealt with if the Act is ever to be accepted by the wider community.

The issue of parents with care who fraudulently obtain benefits was one of the issues that was thrown up at the meeting. Usually, when an assessment charge is levelled against a non-custodial parent, he or she says, "What is happening to my ex-partner?" If the parent with care is making a fraudulent claim, the non-custodial parent reports that person to the Child Support Agency, which reports that person to the Benefits Agency. Of course, if fraud is proven, the parent with care is taken off benefit.

People who report parents with care feel aggrieved that they still have to pay maintenance for which a claim has been made. They have saved taxpayers' money, yet they are still expected to pay more and they feel a great sense of unfairness. I have sought answers from the agency and the Minister on this matter and none of their explanations is clear. If the Minister has time, it would be useful if he dealt with that point. I raise it because an individual at that hot-tempered meeting made a reasonable request for an explanation of the matter.

Obviously, I do not have time to deal with all the aspects and recommendations of the report. It would have been impossible to set out the Opposition's view on all 22 of the report's recommendations in the time available. I want to deal, however, with one or two issues and to highlight where we stand on them.

Recommendations xii and xiii seem to be eminently sensible. It cannot be right that parents with care are placed in severe financial difficulties because assessed maintenance is not paid or is paid irregularly. That point came home to me during my weekly surgery last Friday when I dealt with a case of a parent with care whose ex-husband was a compulsive gambler. During the setting up of the maintenance arrangements, she informed the agency that weekly payments were the only means by which she could guarantee to receive regular payments. She feared that, if he did not pay weekly, her ex-husband would fritter the money away because he was a compulsive gambler.

Weekly payments were set up. She received £87 per week. Her family credit was consequently reduced to £9 per week on the basis of the assumed income that would arise from the assessment. Shortly after that, however, her ex-husband changed the arrangements and asked the Child Support Agency to make a direct debit system available to him. It did so without consulting the recipient of the assessment. Lo and behold, he immediately cancelled the direct debit.

That case is not unique—many hundreds, if not thousands, of other people have suffered similar problems. My constituent receives only £9 family credit. She received the last payment from her ex-husband on 28 October and she will not receive another payment until the end of January when the deductions from earnings order takes effect. For three months, including the Christmas period, she will receive very much reduced income. Clearly, the system is inflexible. That is why recommendations xii and xiii, if they were implemented, would go a long way towards helping people in those circumstances.

Clearly, we must deal with the underlying principle of the Child Support Act: what is in the best interests of children affected by it. It is regrettable that the majority of Committee members rejected the principle of the maintenance disregard. I have heard the arguments. Time is tight so I cannot deal with all the arguments. In pages 28 and 29 of the report, a strong case is made to counter the arguments against the maintenance disregard. Pages 28 and 29 set out the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead in relation to that matter. Sadly, the recommendations on pages 28 and 29 were voted down by the Conservative majority.

I should like to deal with the clean-break arrangements and the extension of exempt income elements. We welcome the fact that the report gives some recognition to the need to consider past property and capital settlements, which were agreed before the Act came into force. That case is well made in paragraphs 45 to 50 of the report. There can be no doubt that this aspect involves retrospective application of the Act. Whether it does or not, that is how it is perceived, accepted and understood by people who have been conditioned by it. Those non-custodial parents feel that, as a consequence, they are in a difficult position.

A similar strong argument can be advanced in relation to necessary expenditure, including travel-to-work and access-to-children costs, which are not mentioned in the report. It seems that the report contains an inherent contradiction. It rejects the principle of an independent appeal system that could deal with extra, exceptional costs, yet it goes on to say that travel-to-work costs should be included.

Anyone dealing with individual cases knows that the matter involves not only travel-to-work costs, important though they are. There are many examples of access-to-children costs where non-custodial parents spend a lot of money ensuring that they continue to maintain contact with their children. That is denied to them because of the high assessment level. An independent review system would allow that sort of argument to be advanced and considered. If children's interests are at stake in those circumstances, a change could be made to the assessment to ensure that children do not suffer as a consequence of the assessment that has been levelled against parents.

I must finish my speech and let the Minister respond to the debate.

I have touched on only some of the main aspects of the legislation. My assessment of the report is that the real issues have been ducked or have been extracted from it by the voting pattern of the Conservative majority on the Committee. The Labour party has argued consistently for four fundamental safeguards to be written into the legislation and they are worth repeating. We have asked for a more flexible financial formula, recognition of clean-break settlements, an independent appeals procedure which would allow departure from the standard formula in exceptional circumstances and a disregard for families on income support.

The Chairman's draft report generally sought to achieve those objectives. It is a great pity that those objectives could not become recommendations with which the Government would then have to deal. Our view is that the

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report does not go far enough and the Government have not acted fast enough. We need fundamental reform of the Act. We do not need more uncertainty, indecision and inaction from the Government. Inertia and delay are no substitute for policy. The Government need to act now.

7 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): Sometimes, people wonder what satisfaction I get from doing my job. This afternoon, we have experienced two of the reasons why I get satisfaction from doing what I do. First, I am involved with extremely good people and some of them have participated in the debate. The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has been praised from many quarters and I add my own tribute. The addition of the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) to the Select Committee will certainly strengthen it. My hon. Friends the Members for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) and for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) are also members of the Select Committee. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton is soon to become the hon. Member for Rutland. I am pleased with that change in local government.

I also work with good people who are not seen by hon. Members—those who work for the Child Support Agency. They are able and caring people who provide advice to the Department of Social Security.

Another reason for my satisfaction is that this is such an important issue. Some of the speeches have touched on the philosophy behind the Child Support Act 1991. The hon. Member for Birkenhead set the tone when he discussed the important move of a crucial item of responsibility away from the state and towards the individual. He said that that social change was almost unique in the post-war era, and he was right. He also said that it was highly unlikely that it could be done without pain. Perhaps that was one thing that the House missed two or three years ago in the general support for the Child Support Agency. The hon. Gentleman rightly brought us back to that point.

The reasons why the Act was needed were best set out by the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West. Sometimes, the House forgets those who have been most silent in this argument—the parents with care, the single parents, most of whom live in poverty. The hon. Gentleman set out the difficulties that they have experienced.

Most hon. Members who participated in the debate did not miss the crucial role of the Treasury. The CSA is not a Treasury support agency. We all knew, because it was in the Bill, that a burden had been placed on the state—for "state" substitute "taxpayer". As the hon. Member for Birkenhead said, one of the purposes of the Act was to move that burden back to the individual. We cannot avoid the fact that if that responsibility is moved, it will land on the shoulders of individuals, who are bound to make a noise.

The exception to those comments is the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Chidgey). He criticised the Select Committee and talked about a Treasury support agency. The Liberal Democrats were around when the Bill was considered and they knew what was going on. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues were not around during the deliberations of the Select Committee because there was no representative from the Liberal Democrats on the Committee. There could have been and there should have been. It ill behoves them now to pop up out of the blue and make criticisms.

Although today may not be full of enormous joy for all quarters of the House, at least we will be spared a Liberal Democrat by-election victor appearing on our screens later this evening, with all the difficulties that that would cause. I look forward to welcoming a new hon. Friend here next week—*[Interruption.]* The evening may unfold in another way.

Having set the background and recognised how we got here, I want to talk about the Select Committee report and the agency. Time is short, but I must make it clear that this is not the Government's definitive response to the Select Committee report. I hope that that will be made before the end of January. We have about two months from the publication of the report. We want to get it right.

The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) talked about inaction. I fully appreciate that this process has taken time, but I know that he is aware of the genuine thought that has gone into this and of the consultation that is taking place with interested parties to try to get this right. We all have a responsibility to see that that occurs.

Mr. Bennett: Many of my constituents are waiting for the Government's response. Can the Minister assure us that he will not just reply to the Select Committee's report but set out a timetable for making some changes so that people see some benefit at the end of January, rather than just proposals that will take another six or 12 months to implement?

Mr. Burt: I am sorry, but I cannot anticipate what I may say in January. The hon. Gentleman knows that making changes takes time because of the procedures of the House. Some things can be done administratively and the agency has already been engaged in some changes to improve its efficiency. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that if the changes require any legislation, either secondary or primary, they will inevitably take time. If it is his wish to improve things quickly for his constituents, it is likely that he will support any measures that would do that.

I have listened with interest to the various points raised about the Committee's proposals for change. We have heard a number of times the arguments for a disregard on income support. I understand the point about the desire for cheerleaders. My hon. Friends the Members for Colchester, North and for Bolton, North-East explained to the House that difficulties are associated with the income disregard, particularly its potentially adverse impact on incentives to work. A disregard may be welcomed by some parents with care, but it is important to look at the effect of any changes that that would produce. Such a measure would be expensive.

As my colleagues have mentioned, to date we have felt it best to concentrate available resources on in-work benefits, where that helps by increasing work incentives. Although that approach was rejected by the Select Committee, it is an idea and I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Birkenhead that it is important to achieve balance and to consider the interests of parents with care. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that has struck a chord with me.

Another consideration has been the pressure for an appeals system over and above the one that is already in place—we must not forget that one already exists. The current system is based on the way in which appeals work in our benefit system. The pressure is to allow discretion to vary what we have already provided for in the maintenance formula. Hon. Members clearly had in mind an objective system for considering appeals. However, if there is discretion, how is it controlled?

There was wide discretion in the systems we replaced. Hon. Members will be aware of the wide variations that were found during the research for the White Paper. The House will know that I am concerned with the low priority that child maintenance received under the old arrangements. Australia does have a discretionary appeals system, albeit tightly defined. It is necessary there because Australia does not have such a detailed formula as ours.

Although the Select Committee did not recommend an appeals system, I am aware of the strong feelings on the issue. In previous remarks to the House, I have made it clear that the principle of discretion is not the only issue; serious consideration of the gateways to such discretion is essential and, despite many months of debate, no potentially workable solution has been offered by Opposition Members. Therefore, we are carefully considering, as we always have, whether it is possible for any form of discretionary appeals system to be grafted on to an objective system without losing the point of the previous system. I am keeping an open mind and so is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

I also know that hon. Members are especially concerned about maintenance assessments where the parties have existing arrangements through the courts based on the so-called clean-break principle. Before the Child Support Act was introduced, it remained open for the parent with care to seek an increase in child maintenance in such cases. It was also part of income support law that the Secretary of State could seek child maintenance in those benefit cases. The clean break was between the spouses and could not exclude provision for periodical child maintenance payments.

The Select Committee requested that illustrative examples be provided for the House demonstrating the effects of varying the basic maintenance calculation to take account of previous arrangements. Those have been provided. We have been carefully considering the issues involved, which, for all its deliberations, the Committee was not able to resolve. But we keep an open mind on that, too.

We are well aware of the strength of feeling about taking into account various expenses in the maintenance formula. There is an argument about changing to a very simple formula, as advocated by the hon. Member for Birkenhead, and taking the advice of the Australians, with their experience. Frankly, as my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North reminded us, the advice of the Australians now is that we should not go for that option. We are still strongly influenced by the experience of the Australians which shows that that may not be the right road for us to go down.

We welcome the Committee's endorsement of not only the basic principles of the agency but the idea that child maintenance should take priority over other expenditure. Our approach has been to make sufficient allowance within the basic formula and protected income provisions to enable absent parents to make choices. But again, we have heard many comments; we will consider more carefully over the next few weeks what has been said about expenses, and we will respond in due course.

I shall briefly comment on the agency's performance as I know that time is tight. I listened very carefully to the remarks of my hon. Friends the Members for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin), for Orpington (Mr. Gale) and for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir I. Patnick). I know the strength of feeling among my hon. Friends about the agency's performance. I accept that the agency has not always got things right and apologise for when that has happened. We must improve. There are signs of improvement and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hallam for having mentioned them.

I am also grateful to the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) for his comments. Anyone good enough to win an Irish cup winners medal has a ready ear as far as I am concerned. His kind comments about the staff were appreciated, as were a number of comments on the new chief executive of the agency and what she is trying to do in picking up from the task embarked on by Miss Ros Hepplewhite.

There are examples of improvement in the agency's procedures. A new telephone system enables calls to be dealt with by the business teams more quickly. There are improvements in output. More cases have been cleared already this year than in the whole of the previous year. More money is being collected through the child support arrangements that are being set up. All round, effort is being made through computer improvements and administrative enhancements to improve the flow of work through the agency. There is great determination from me, my right hon. Friend, the chief executive and all in the agency to produce a better all-round performance.

I am grateful for this brief time in the House this evening to respond a little to the debate. I hope that the House is in no doubt about our good intentions. It is not a great party issue; it is an issue for the House. We set about a social change and we are determined to make it work; we know that it has not worked as we had wished and we are sorry for the hurt that it has caused to some genuine people. The reasons for the agency and the principles behind it were right and we are determined to make it work.

Mr. Frank Field: With the leave of the House, I would like to make one observation. Wherever possible, we politicians should not put our sticky fingers into people's private lives. When we have to, where children are concerned, we have a paramount duty to listen carefully to those who are affected by those measures. Please do not let the House think that even if we make sweeping reforms this time, we will have solved the problem. Life is far too complicated to fit into the simple models that we pass in this Chamber.

The debate was concluded, and the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings was deferred.

VOTE ON ACCOUNT, 1995-96

Class XIX, Vote 4

Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration

[*Relevant documents: First Report from the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration of Session 1993-94 on the Powers, Work and Jurisdiction of the Ombudsman (House of Commons Paper No. 33-I and-II), the Fifth Report from the Committee of Session 1993-94, containing the Government's reply thereto (House of Commons Paper No. 619) and the Sixth Report from the Committee of Session 1993-94 on the Report of the Health Service Commissioner for 1992-93 (House of Commons Paper No. 42)*]

7.13 pm

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That a sum not exceeding £4,277,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, on account, for or towards defraying the charges for the year ending on 31 March 1996, for expenditure of the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioners for England, Scotland and Wales on administrative costs.—[*Mr. Robert G. Hughes.*]

7.14 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I welcome this debate; the first since 1991. Clearly that is far too long an interval and the House should be given greater opportunity to consider the work of the Parliamentary and National Health Service Commissioners, especially since the duties and the powers and responsibilities of the former have indeed been considerably increased.

Currently, the posts of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the National Health Service Commissioner are held by one and the same man—a case of two persons in one being, or as I have heard him described, the dynamic duo. It may be for the convenience of the House and for the purpose of brevity were I to use the more common name, the ombudsman, as I refer to those posts in my speech.

I shall briefly outline some of the powers and duties of the ombudsman. The office of ombudsman was created in the United Kingdom in 1967. Since that time, his role has evolved and changed. Therefore, I shall first refer to the parliamentary ombudsman. The Select Committee, of which I have the honour to be chairman, is responsible for some of changes which are now taking place to the ombudsman's duties. Let me immediately pay tribute to Mr. William Reid, the current holder of the office. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am delighted to hear hon. Members across the Chamber agreeing with that general sentiment. He brings to his position an enormous capacity for hard work and a great insight into the workings of Government. Under his careful direction, the office has grown as the work load has increased. I have discovered that he has a very sturdy Scottish independence of mind, which has been of particular benefit to English complainants.

This may be an appropriate opportunity to mention Mrs. Jill McIvor, the Northern Ireland ombudsman, who does sterling work in the Province, often in extremely difficult circumstances. The House may wish to know that from time to time we visit the Northern Ireland ombudsman to take evidence.

The workload of the Select Committee has substantially increased over the past two years or so. The Committee now meets once or twice each week. Evidence has been taken from a range of Ministers, from the Secretary of State for Health to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. It has also taken evidence from the Legal Aid Board, the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Inland Revenue and many others.

The Committee, in its first report in the past Session, has undertaken the most comprehensive study for some 25 years into the powers, work and jurisdiction of the ombudsman. Our report was published on 13 January this year; a more auspicious date than perhaps it may sound. I am pleased to advise hon. Members that the Government have accepted many of the report's recommendations, and they are contained in our fifth report of last Session. They are designed to reform the way in which the ombudsman is appointed and his office financed and also to ensure that all Government Departments learn from the ombudsman's reports.

The principal recommendations were that Government and Parliament would meet the requirements for the funding and resources necessary for the ombudsman's enlarged responsibilities. I know that the House will welcome the information that the PCA's cash limit was increased to more than £5 million for 1993-94 and for 1994-95 it will rise to some £9.5 million. That additional figure will take into account the PCA's much enlarged responsibility.

The Committee recommended that the two offices of the parliamentary ombudsman and the health service ombudsman should continue to be held by the same person. I must, however, strike a warning note for, as the workload increases, it may at some time in the not too distant future be necessary to split the two offices so that the responsibilities are no longer borne by one office holder. The Government also agreed that the relevant statutes should be amended to refer to "the Parliamentary Ombudsman" and "the Health Service Ombudsman". I know that that helpful clarification will be much appreciated both inside and outside the House.

The Committee recommended that

> "the Government introduce legislation to meet the expenses of the Office from moneys voted directly by Parliament on estimates prepared by a 'Public Administration Commission'."

I am delighted to say that the Government have agreed to accept that recommendation, and will amend the statutes as opportunity presents itself. The Committee also recommended

> "that epitomes of the Parliamentary Ombudsman's reports be circulated by the Office of Public Service and Science to all Government departments".

The Government accepted that recommendation, too. In his response, my hon. Friend the Minister may wish to refer to a development that was welcomed by both the Select Committee and the Government.

The Committee suggested that the public bodies and departments reported upon should be required to publish a report to the ombudsman describing ways in which identified maladministration has been rectified. I am happy to say that that suggestion, too, was accepted.

The House will appreciate that time permits me to mention only a small number of the Committee's recommendations; and those who want more detailed information must refer to its reports. I have received correspondence about the recommendations from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, which relate to the recommendations that will be published in our first special report of this Session.

Not all has been sweetness and light. The Committee was somewhat disappointed when the Government rejected its request that a debate be held each Session on the work of parliamentary, health service and Northern Ireland ombudsmen. I believe that, in that instance, the Government's action was somewhat short-sighted, and did not acknowledge the ombudsmen's substantially increased workload and responsibilities. I am pleased to see that the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), the Opposition spokesman, agrees with me; again, my hon. Friend the Minister may wish to comment.

It strikes me as anomalous that the work of the Comptroller and Auditor General is debated annually in the House, while the reports of the ombudsmen are not. Recent special reports issued by the parliamentary and health service ombudsmen have served to highlight the need for effective scrutiny and standards of administration in the public service, to which my hon. Friend the Minister may wish to refer.

Not content with merely making recommendations to Government, the Select Committee also made six specific recommendations to the parliamentary ombudsman. The most important referred to the length of investigations: the Committee urged the ombudsman to make

"every effort . . . to reduce still further the time taken . . . to meet the nine months target."

The ombudsman fully shared the Committee's objectives, but made the point—which I know to be valid—that the matters that he investigated were complex and contentious, dealing with the seeking of redress, and could stretch over many years.

The Committee also recommended

"that the Ombudsman's Office conduct a survey into public awareness of the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman and Health Service Ombudsman",

and that

"a 'consumer satisfaction' survey be conducted into the attitudes of complainants who have had their cases investigated by the Ombudsman."

The ombudsman responded by saying that he always sought, through the media, to improve public awareness of his office and the way in which it provides a service to the public.

I am happy to say that the Government accepted the Committee's recommendation that the ombudsman's office produce publications on good administration. That, the Committee said, would have the dual aim of publicising the ombudsman's work and improving administration.

The Committee conducted a major survey of the attitude of Members of Parliament to the ombudsman's work. Some 333 Members responded, and 79 per cent. said that they considered the work and record of the PCA to be either very successful or quite successful. What the Committee found more worrying was the reply to the question, "How often do you refer complaints to the PCA?" We were dismayed to learn that only eight Members of Parliament frequently did so, that 174 sometimes did so and that no fewer than 150—45 per cent. of those who responded—seldom or never did so. I found that particularly worrying, because it may mean that Members of Parliament are still unaware of the assistance that is readily available to them from the ombudsman—and, through them, to their constituents.

Let me say to hon. Members who fear that the ombudsman may weaken or impair the relationship that exists between an individual Member of Parliament and his constituents that that will not happen. All Members of Parliament naturally defend that relationship, and pursue constituents' cases with the utmost vigour; but the ombudsman provides a Rolls-Royce service that is truly invaluable, especially in the difficult and protracted cases with which we must all deal from time to time. He has the facilities for detailed examination that are denied to the individual Member of Parliament, with his secretary and researcher.

The Select Committee devoted considerable time to the issue of the "MP filter"—the device that ensures that a complaint can be passed to the PCA only by the Member of Parliament involved. After considerable deliberation, it was decided that the filter should be retained. Let me add a note of warning, however: the justification for its retention will be damaged if more Members of Parliament do not refer cases to the PCA.

It may now be instructive to turn to the ombudsman's report for 1993. Some 208 investigations were completed in that year; we discovered that that was the highest number for some 12 years. The number of complaints referred to the ombudsman by Members of Parliament was 986—the highest number for some 13 years. Paradoxically, however, the number of Members of Parliament referring complaints fell: 31 fewer than in the previous year.

The PCA reported that the number of complaints under investigation at the end of 1993 was some 333—the highest number ever. The increased work load meant, however, that the length of time taken to complete an investigation increased to 13 months. I know that that was a source of disquiet to both the ombudsman and the Select Committee. They found the increase in the time taken to resolve complaints particularly disappointing in view of the nine-month target time.

A recent innovation was the publication of details of fast-track cases—cases referred to the commissioner that did not require the full investigative treatment. They were resolved by an exchange of letters or telephone calls. At this point, I must pay tribute to the Northern Ireland ombudsman because it was her idea to introduce the fast track and it has clearly been accepted by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

Of the 208 cases completed in 1993, 107 led to financial or other tangible redress for the complainant involved. Of the investigations completed, 61 per cent. were found to be wholly justified while in 35 per cent. of cases the complainant was found to be partly justified. The House will not be surprised to learn that the ombudsman's "best customers" were the Department of Social Security and the Inland Revenue. They certainly

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generated a considerable number of complaints, which is not surprising as they impinge on the public to a much greater extent than most other Departments.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Before my hon. Friend discusses particular Departments, will he reflect on our constituents' satisfaction with the ombudsman system? The Committee heard no evidence to suggest that constituents were not able to find Members of Parliament to take up their grievances. Will he confirm that a constituent does not have to refer a matter to the ombudsman through his or her own Member of Parliament if that Member of Parliament is unwilling?

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend is extremely knowledgeable in these matters and is an assiduous attender at Select Committee sittings to which he makes useful contributions. He is right in his supposition that it is not necessary for a constituency Member of Parliament to pursue his constituent's case. Should that Member of Parliament refuse to do so for whatever reason—there are justifiable reasons from time to time—it is usual for the complainant to write to the chairman of the Select Committee and for him to pursue the case.

Members of the Select Committee often see tangible expressions of pleasure displayed by complainants because of the way in which their cases are handled. I am thinking especially of health service cases when the Committee takes evidence from various witnesses, usually health authorities. As colleagues will know, the complainants are often in the Committee Room listening to the discussion and often make it clear that they are pleased with the Committee's response.

In 1993, four special reports were published. That is the largest number ever issued by the ombudsman in a single year. A special report is currently being produced on the Child Support Agency, which was the subject of an earlier debate today. It will be published early next year. The Select Committee has been concerned for a considerable time about the fairly obvious maladministration within the CSA and I am certain that the ombudsman's report will have a substantial bearing on any future agency reforms.

The Select Committee also decided to set up thematic inquiries, the first being on redress. It will be recalled that the citizens charter promises

> "better redress for the citizen when things go wrong".

The Committee therefore invited a number of Departments and other bodies to submit memorandums describing their practices with regard to redress. Additionally, those memorandums were supplemented by oral evidence. The report will shortly be produced and will certainly serve to highlight the many anomalies that we discovered between the various Departments as to how they regard redress and the way in which the anomalies could be resolved.

Further examples of the additional workload accepted by the PCA and the Select Committee have emerged from the White Paper on open government which was published in 1993. The House will recall that it introduced a non-statutory code of practice on access to Government information. The code establishes the right of citizens to request information from Departments relating to their policies, actions and decisions. It is policed by the Parliamentary Commissioner.

When my right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster he said:

> "Citizens will thus have an independent investigator working on their behalf. The ombudsman will be able to report to Parliament if he finds that information has been improperly withheld".

The White Paper also specified, perhaps somewhat unusually, a role for the Select Committee in the operation of the code. My right hon. Friend said:

> "The Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration will be able to call Departments and Ministers to account for failure to supply information in accordance with the code, as they can now call them to account for maladministration and injustice."

One of the key issues in the freedom of information debate is, of course, enforcement and it is clear that both the ombudsman and the Select Committee have a key role in the enforceability of the code itself.

One of the fundamental differences between the two offices is the fact that the Health Service Commissioner may receive complaints directly from a member of the public. It is not necessary for complaints to be fed to him by a Member of Parliament. That is an extremely important distinction. As the House will appreciate, it means that there is no "MP filter" in the operation of the Health Service Commissioner. May I say how delighted I am that the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) is here tonight in his usual place. His presence is a sign of the importance that Departments attach to the ombudsman's reports.

I found it especially significant that, in his report for 1993-94, the ombudsman said:

> "Almost every ombudsman has found in recent years an increase in the complaints referred. We live in a querulous and questioning age but it is noteworthy that the level of complaint against the NHS is still remarkably low when judged against the enormous numbers of admissions to hospitals for in-patient or day treatment. In 1993-94 more complaints were sent to me than in any year since the Health Service Commissioner was called into being".

To put that in perspective, I think that I am right in saying—the Under-Secretary will correct me if I am wrong—that something like 8 million people were treated in NHS hospitals in that time.

In a memorable turn of phrase, which I know that colleagues will remember, one witness who came before the Committee said:

> "Complaints are 'jewels to be treasured'."

The Select Committee and the ombudsman have seen many jewels over the past two years. However, it should be remembered that complaints serve to ensure that citizens receive better service.

While taking evidence we too often found that there was a defensive attitude towards complaints. People who come before the Committee should understand that we recognise that no one is perfect, and a little less defensiveness and a little greater acceptance of fault would go a long way.

Members of the Committee were concerned about the attitude occasionally displayed by bureaucrats, who sometimes seemed so wrapped up in their own armour that they would not accept, or did not appear to accept, some of the criticisms levelled against them. I found one specific case especially disturbing, and it might be helpful if the Committee made representations directly to the Secretary of State about it.

Interestingly, the review committee set up by the Government under the chairmanship—

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): I am sure that the Secretary of State would be pleased to receive such a communication, because it is her wish, and that of the NHS, that every case be looked at and lessons learnt. As evidence of that, I can tell my hon. Friend that the commissioner's latest report will be going from the chief executive of the NHS to every health service chief executive in the country—as an early Christmas present, perhaps.

Mr. Pawsey: It certainly will not constitute light bedtime reading.

My hon. Friend has been kind enough to intervene in my speech and talk about the circulation of the report. Circulation of the report is one thing, but perhaps he can tell me how we can ensure that notice is taken of its contents. Like my hon. Friend, I believe that the reports could do much to improve the quality and the standard of the service that patients receive in hospital. But if that is to happen, it is of paramount importance that the reports be read, studied and digested, and that their findings be implemented. If that does not happen, there is no point in producing them.

I was about to mention the review committee set up by the Government under the chairmanship of Professor Alan Wilson, which suggested that clinical judgment be brought within the ombudsman's jurisdiction. The same review committee, in its report published in May, supported the Select Committee's recommendation to extend the health service ombudsman's jurisdiction to general practitioners. We shall await the Government's response to our recommendations on the reform of the NHS complaints procedure. We revisited that issue following the report of the Wilson committee, and our further comments on the reform of the NHS complaints procedure are contained in the sixth report from the previous Session.

Much of the Select Committee's time was devoted to obtaining evidence from the health authorities that figure in the ombudsman's report. Objectively, I must tell the House that some of the cases that we considered were truly appalling. At times it seemed that a contempt for the patient was displayed; some of the evidence obtained was dreadful, and there were times when I felt ashamed of the service that the complainant had received. If some of my hon. Friends are successful in catching your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they may wish to enlarge on that aspect of the Committee's work.

In his report for 1993-94, the ombudsman said that he had received a record number of new complaints, amounting to 1,384—an increase of about 12.8 per cent. on the previous year. He accepted 203 for investigation, compared with 164 in 1992-93. As a result, the time taken to complete investigations rose to 48 and a half weeks.

In many cases investigated, the ombudsman criticised management for abdicating their responsibilities and for breakdowns in communication. The cases published in the report undoubtedly provide lessons for Ministers and senior management on the pitfalls that should be avoided. That comes back to the point discussed earlier; the public are certainly entitled to expect that the NHS will learn from the ombudsman's investigations. The epitomes of selected cases are widely circulated throughout the NHS and there is no excuse for health service managers not knowing of their content.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): As my hon. Friend knows, members of the Select Committee see complaints covering a range of services, but does he agree that the national health service is unique in that complaints in that area are invariably about events that have affected somebody's health, or a relation's health, or even somebody's death? We must remember the importance of the subject matter to the people concerned. That is not quite the same with the Inland Revenue or any other service that, although important, is different in that crucial respect.

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend makes a telling and valid point. He is right to remind the House that we are talking about human beings with feelings. There are times when I feel that we may lose sight of that, and I am delighted to accept my hon. Friend's point.

The health service commissioner published a special report in February, the first on an individual case. It was about the failure by the Leeds health authority to provide care for a man left highly dependent following a stroke. After about 20 months of acute care, the hospital discharged him to a nursing home. The commissioner found that long-term nursing care should have continued to be provided by the health service, so the health authority concerned was invited to reimburse the man's wife for the costs incurred following his discharge. I am happy to tell the House that that recommendation was accepted. In addition, the health authority undertook to review its entire policy on the provision of continuing care for such patients.

I have referred to that specific case in some detail because it has important implications for the health service as a whole. I think that the Under-Secretary will agree that it is unacceptable for long-term patients to be discharged from hospital into the care of nursing homes purely on the ground of cost. I am delighted, although not surprised, to see that my hon. Friend is nodding in assent.

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The case led not only to that particular health authority reinstating the patient so that he received the care that he needed and deserved, but also to my Department drafting a circular reminding health authorities of their continuing responsibilities in that regard. That has been out for consultation and we shall shortly produce a final version to be distributed so that people receive the care that they need and deserve from the health service.

Mr. Pawsey: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that helpful and timely intervention.

I mentioned earlier the increase in the number of complaints being referred to the NHS ombudsman. There is a growing awareness of his existence, but I suspect that there are still many dissatisfied complainants who are unaware of his office. It remains a sad fact that some NHS authorities, and even community health councils, cannot provide the ombudsman's correct address. Some authorities do not make clear in their own procedures—that includes their leaflets—the patient's right to take a complaint directly to the ombudsman.

I mentioned poor communication earlier, and there is little doubt that that is a major cause of complaint. I know that members of the Committee will recall, for example,

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a case in which differences of view emerged about who was responsible for telling a patient's next of kin about a deteriorating condition.

The Select Committee has long been concerned about the inadequacy of records. Sadly, that continues to be a source of great disquiet, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will take the point on board.

One of the intentions of the debate is to make Members of Parliament and citizens more aware of the work of the ombudsman.

Mr. David Nicholson: My hon. Friend just mentioned the lack of communication in the health service. As my hon. Friend the Minister is present, may I put it to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) that we hear much criticism these days about the number and cost of managers in the NHS. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is absolutely vital that that vast service, which spends more than £30 billion a year and which has so many staff, is properly managed and that there is proper accountability for mistakes, for communication and for dealing with patients and telling them what is happening?

Mr. Pawsey: My hon. Friend draws on his wide experience of the House in order to make a point which my hon. Friend the Minister will have heard.

Increasingly, there is less reason to suffer in silence. That applies to patients in hospital as much as to taxpayers at home. Those who believe—there are many of them—that their particular case has not been handled correctly or that they have suffered maladministration, can obtain redress. In the case of the parliamentary commissioner, that redress comes through a Member of Parliament. In the case of the health service commissioner, the complainant can go directly to him.

Whatever route is taken, the ombudsman will ensure that the complainant's case is thoroughly investigated and that a detailed report of the findings is produced. It is the duty and responsibility of the ombudsman to defend and protect citizens against what can be a sometimes over-bearing and bureaucratic state. Justice is what the ombudsman is about—and that is justice for the citizen.

7.51 pm

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): I apologise for the fact that, due to an unavoidable and pressing engagement shortly, I shall not be here for the duration of the debate.

Sweden first acquired an ombudsman back in 1808. We managed to do so in 1967. There was a good deal of debate at the time as to whether we should acquire one. It is perhaps worth recalling those days to obtain a sense of the system about which we are talking today.

An ombudsman system was recommended in a report by *Justice*. The Government of the day did not think that it was a good idea and set their face against it. A new Government were elected in 1964 and promised institutional reform. They embraced the idea of the ombudsman as part of that reform and passed the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967.

Although that legislation may seem to be an established part of the system now, and something to which we all nod assent and take collective credit for, it is worth recalling that it was a highly controversial measure at the time. I am trying very hard not to make this a partisan point because, happily, we have moved on from the days that I am describing. However, many people, especially among the then Conservative Opposition, thought that the procedure was a dangerous constitutional innovation. They thought that it would subvert the constitution and the relationship between Members of Parliament and their constituents. They also thought that it would damage the efficiency of government.

During the passage of the legislation, that line was taken by the Conservative Opposition led by Quintin Hogg who said that:

> "the new machinery will undermine the position of the individual Member of Parliament *vis-a-vis* the Executive, and it will undermine his position *vis-a-vis* his constituents."—[*Official Report*, 18 October 1966; Vol. 734, c. 74.]

In the interests of fairness and justice, I should add that by Third Reading an educative process had taken place and, on behalf of the official Opposition, he said that he had become simply "grudgingly agnostic."

Mr. Lord: I am listening very carefully to the hon. Gentleman. However, the position taken by the Conservative Opposition at that time was not necessarily a dishonourable one. In a sense, they were anxious about their role and anxious to preserve their responsibility as Members of Parliament. It could be argued that, by accepting the role of the ombudsman, a Member of Parliament's role, load and responsibility are lessened. In a sense, it is easy to look back in the way that the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) has done today, but I do not believe that the Conservative Opposition necessarily adopted the wrong position at the time.

Dr. Wright: That is a very interesting point which I would love to explore at length.

The system involves major constitutional issues. The system may seem to be fairly dry and dusty, but it was thought to be a major constitutional innovation at the time. Indeed, it was thought to be threatening to the traditional way in which we did things. It was argued that there were traditional ways in which Members of Parliament took up complaints on behalf of constituents. They did that through seeing Ministers, questions and Adjournment debates. It was thought that they were adequate mechanisms and that to introduce an external element, albeit established by the House and filtered through Members of Parliament—a provision included at the outset for that very reason—would somehow be threatening and damaging.

As I have said, we have moved on from there to such an extent that there are ombudsmen everywhere. Everywhere we look we see ombudsmen. Indeed, we have to search around for a collective noun to describe such a galaxy of ombudsmen. My best idea so far is to describe them as a complaint of ombudsmen, but I am sure that other hon. Members can do better than that.

There are public sector schemes like the parliamentary commissioner and the local government ombudsman, and private schemes such as the banking and insurance ombudsman. We also have mixes or hybrid schemes such as the legal services ombudsman and the building societies ombudsman. There are a variety of schemes.

Mr. Lord: I apologise for interrupting the hon. Gentleman's flow, but I should like to take him back to an earlier point. I have just been advised that it is never too late to learn. A report of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration in the Session 1993-94 contains a letter from Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone in which he says:

> "I was very critical of the Ombudsman system when it was first introduced. But, in its present form, I think it has justified itself and commands public confidence."

Dr. Wright: As I said, there was an educative process, although in some cases it was a rather prolonged process.

I will argue in a moment that we need to strengthen and extend the system. The point made by the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) is a timely warning. People who might oppose such strengthening and extension now, may come back in 20, 30 or 40 years time and say that such strengthening and extension was right and that it was what we should have done.

Ombudsman schemes have proliferated. We have them here and there are similar schemes abroad. Almost every country has an ombudsman and they come in all shapes and sizes. The other day I heard that there is an ombudsman in Pakistan who sits with a great scoreboard behind him which registers the number of complaints with which he is dealing. He is always into the tens of thousands. As one watches, the scoreboard turns round as new complaints go through the system.

We can see why this great contagion is sweeping the world. The state is very big and citizens are very small. Private corporations are very big, but citizens are very small. Citizens need help and ways to access the system to find redress when they believe that they have been adversely affected.

Sometimes the development and growth of the system is confusing. The Select Committee tried to take a fairly robust view about the use of the term ombudsman. We take a dim view of the fact that, despite our protestations, within the Government there was still as post known as the prisons ombudsman. We also still have an ombudsman appointed by the Government for housing corporations, despite the confusion that is caused. We much prefer the notion of adjudicators and adjudicator schemes such as the Inland Revenue's excellent scheme which members of the Select Committee saw this week.

Several factors distinguish the real article from imitations. First, ombudsmen must be independent. That is absolutely crucial. They must be independent from the system that they supervise and monitor. Secondly, they must be able to enforce their recommendations. Thirdly, they must be comprehensive. They must not deal with just a bit of the issue; they must have full access and jurisdiction. Those are precisely the attributes of our own parliamentary ombudsman scheme.

If possible, ombudsmen should have another attribute—the ability to improve the systems which give rise to complaints in the first place. That has become an important feature of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. Ombudsmen must be able not only to deal with individual complaints but to examine the systems and malfunctions which give rise to complaints. Just as we had the great booklet issued in Whitehall entitled, "The Judge over your Shoulder", to deal with judicial review, it is good that we are to have a booklet entitled, "The Ombudsman in your Files", to make sure that Whitehall knows what maladministration is and how to avoid it, based on the experience of the ombudsman system.

We are dealing with a model system which has been outstandingly successful in enabling citizens—we must never lose sight of the individual dimension—to have their complaints against public organisations and great Departments of state investigated by an Officer of the House who has access to every person and every paper that he needs to investigate, to report, and to have his recommendations implemented. That individual approach is sustained also by the ability to address systems failures.

The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth rightly mentioned the disability living allowance and a case involving slaughtered poultry when the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food did not want to pay but the ombudsman, in effect, made it do so. We should never forget that the official error concession does justice to every taxpayer in the land when the Inland Revenue makes a mistake. That came directly out of a recommendation by the parliamentary commissioner. We have heard also about the extremely important case of NHS continuing care, which has had a decisive effect on the debate.

We have an impressive institution and an outstanding track record, but we must now strengthen and extend the system, which means again having the arguments that we had in 1966 and 1967 when the original Bill was before the House. Many things that need to be done are mentioned in the Select Committee's comprehensive report on the functions and powers of the ombudsman. We have argued, for example, that we must put the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration into the same constitutional position as the Comptroller and Auditor General in relation to the House and his funding. In 1967, it was claimed that there would be an exact analogy between the role of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Select Committee sustaining that post, and the role of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Select Committee sustaining that post. It is a source of neglect and shame that that has not happened. There has been no parliamentary debate on the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration since 1991.

We have recommended that all public bodies need to come under the jurisdiction of the ombudsman. The principle should be that, wherever there is public administration—and thus, by implication, the possibility of public maladministration—the ombudsman's writ should run. We should turn around the legislation to define exclusions and not, as now, merely specify matters that the ombudsman can examine. That would be an extremely important change.

We believe, too, that the ombudsman should have power to initiate investigations. Again, that happens routinely in ombudsman systems elsewhere. It makes no sense to have to wait to receive a complaint when there is conspicuous maladministration. We have an instrument to investigate maladministration and we need to be more interventionist in using it.

[Dr. Wright]

The deepest, most important and most delicate territory of all, which takes us back to the foundation experience, is the so-called "MP filter". The need for citizens to reach the ombudsman through the services of a Member of Parliament was built into the system at the outset to meet some early constitutional fears. In Committee, we robustly discussed those matters and a view was arrived at, but the debate will continue. Every organisation which gave its opinion on the matter said that it no longer made sense to enforce a route through Members of Parliament for citizens to reach the ombudsman. It is almost unique and it is no longer sustainable. Indeed, the ombudsman himself no longer believes it to be a sensible arrangement. In the *House Magazine* of 14 March, he said:

> "I am amazed that more Members do not find a use for my services in helping their constituents who complain that they have suffered injustice through maladministration."

He feels the constraint of that limitation. He considers that the services that he offers are not universally available because there is dependence on Members of Parliament to access the system.

The National Consumer Council spoke to the Committee. I will not quote its evidence, but it is emphatic. The council said that it simply filters out vast numbers of complaints. If one has to go through such hurdles, it is no wonder the take-up of the system, in international terms, is so restricted. The filter is built in.

Mr. Lord *rose—*

Dr. Wright: I can see the hon. Gentleman straining at the leash again.

Mr. Lord: As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is a long, complex debate. Does he agree that if the "MP filter" did not exist there would almost certainly be a significant change in the relationship between a Member of Parliament and his constituents in relation to problems and complaints?

Dr. Wright: Frankly, in no way would that interfere with my relationship with my constituents. It would simply enable me to point them in an additional direction if they wanted to approach me about it, but they would not require me to do that. We have the anomaly that in relation to the Health Service Commissioner there is direct access. It is absurd to have direct access in the health sector but a filter for other matters. That makes no sense at all.

Mr. Lord: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. I will leave him in peace after this intervention. He assumes that many constituents are not getting satisfaction through the existing system. What hard evidence does he have for that?

Dr. Wright: When we consider the size of our population it is striking how few cases come before the British ombudsman. That is why we can talk glowingly about the Rolls-Royce treatment that people receive from the ombudsman. That is the kind of system that we have established. But I am also interested in the Ford Cortinas and the Minis—I want the system to be accessible to everyone. It should not have to accessed through Members of Parliament.

We conducted a survey among Members of Parliament some time ago which received a high rate of return. The wholly depressing finding was that some 45 per cent. of Members of Parliament seldom or never refer cases to the Ombudsman. That is a strikingly high figure. Some 100 Members of the House never use the services of that parliamentary institution, and thus deprive their constituents of a service that was set up for their benefit. It is time that the House looked again at the obstacle course that it put in place in 1967.

Mr. David Nicholson: I respect the hon. Gentleman's interest and experience in this area of public administration. I draw his attention to another filter. Because of the way in which the ombudsman's powers are circumscribed by the legislation to which the hon. Gentleman referred—which is now 25 years old—the ombudsman is unable to investigate a number of matters which come near to being cases of maladministration. Therefore, constituents are dissatisfied or have to resort to the court process— and the hon. Gentleman and I know what a hazardous and difficult process that is.

Dr. Wright: I am glad to have the hon. Gentleman's support. There is no doubt that we must find alternatives to the court system which will enable people to find justice. That is why mediation schemes are being developed in the area of civil justice. It is a growth area. People must be able to seek redress through mechanisms in the public and private sectors for a whole variety of grievances for which they are not able to seek redress through the formal mechanisms of the court system.

The challenge for the House is to examine whether our system is designed for the convenience of Members of Parliament or that of our constituents. I think that the system we have put in place is designed to protect Members of Parliament, and that was the verdict of our survey. On the whole, hon. Members said that they preferred the indirect route to the ombudsman. However, that finding sits alongside evidence about lack of usage by a considerable number of hon. Members, which also involves a denial of access to constituents. It means that the system is designed for the convenience of Members of Parliament and is not allowing citizens access to the ombudsman.

Mr. Lord: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has used phrases such as "for the convenience of Members of Parliament" and "to protect Members of Parliament". I do not see what Members of Parliament have to lose in agreeing with him and allowing him to have his way. Members of Parliament are concerned that their constituents will lose—not that they themselves will lose power, protection or convenience.

Dr. Wright: That is a most interesting argument. I cannot conceive of any means whereby our constituents would lose by directly accessing the ombudsman; they could only gain. They could retain our services—the grievance chasing and righting of wrongs in which we engage every day—but they would have the additional opportunity to access another system. From the citizen's point of view— if not from that of the Member of Parliament— that is pure gain.

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that our constituents look to their Members of Parliament as advocates and therefore feel better if their Members of Parliament are prepared to write to the ombudsman in support of their cases?

Dr. Wright: That would not change. Under a new system, Members of Parliament could discuss with constituents whether issues would properly be addressed to the ombudsman, as is already the case with the Health Service Commissioner. Although my constituents do not need to access the Health Service Commissioner through me, I find that they often do so. It is often after discussing the matter that we decide that it would be sensible to consult the Health Service Commissioner. I think that citizens will gain under a new system; I cannot conceive of any loss.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Is he not missing the most obvious point in the argument? The Member of Parliament filter is an asset to the ombudsman. After all, people do not elect the parliamentary ombudsman; they elect Members of Parliament and we are accountable to them.

Dr. Wright: Before this debate I did not understand why there was so much opposition to the original legislation. Now I am beginning to glimpse it. Hon. Members fear that a doctrine of responsibility is somehow being undermined. I think that the roles of Members of Parliament can only be enhanced under a new system. If we are looking for stronger accountability and responsibility and increased responsiveness by public services to need in the community, we can only gain under a system of direct access.

Several other issues are integral to our reform agenda. We know that the Parliamentary Commissioner is responsible for monitoring the system of open government. It is clear from his preliminary report that the system is not working well. The Commissioner talks about a series of obstacles, as in our previous discussion, through which citizens have to pass to access the open government provisions. There has been an appalling lack of publicity about the system, so it is not surprising that take-up has been low. The charging regime is inconsistent and is excessive in some cases. I am glad that the Select Committee intends to inquire into the operation of the open government code.

The Select Committee has done more than any other forum to reveal how appalling the present national health service complaints system is. It concluded:

> "The current complaints system in the National Health Service seems designed for the convenience of providers of the service rather than of complainants."

I express regret that so far the Government have not responded to the Wilson Committee report. Everyone who heard the evidence given before the Committee and who is familiar with the report understands that we need urgent reform in that area. I wish that the Government had already advanced some proposals.

Mr. Bowis: The Wilson committee was set up by the Government in response to the sort of messages that we have heard from the Health Service Commissioner and from the Select Committee. We are taking the issue seriously, and we have been looking carefully at it. It will not be long before my Department comes forward with our response to the Wilson committee.

Dr. Wright: I am grateful to the Minister, and I know that Professor Wilson himself has expressed disappointment at the lack of progress in the area.

We have an institution here with a most distinguished record. We have, if I may say so, a holder of the post now who, on any reckoning, is the most distinguished there has ever been. His industry and application are outstanding, and I hope that that will be understood and recognised.

In conclusion—I say that because my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) is looking at me anxiously—the time has come for the success story to be built on. Now is the time to move forward. That was summed up in one sentence from Justice, the organisation responsible for moving the Government on the original system, which said to the Select Committee that the full potential of the ombudsman had "yet to be realised".

Our view is that new legislation is required, but it is wrong for the Government to suggest that it can be done casually and, they hope, by the private Members' route. As in 1966-1967, it requires a great reforming Administration and a Leader of the House with vigour and imagination—the era of citizens charters deserves no less.

8.21 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright). Although we have different opinions—as became clear during his speech—I have noticed how hard he works, and how keen and involved he is with all that the ombudsman is trying to do. It was interesting to hear what the hon. Gentleman had to say this evening.

I welcome the debate and, like the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood, I think that it is long overdue. I shall not repeat the points made by the hon. Gentleman, but clearly the role of the ombudsman is moving increasingly towards the centre stage. I am delighted to take part in the debate. I should like to start by saying how much I support the office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration or ombudsman—a much better title—and all the valuable work done by him and his staff.

I understand that the ombudsman has the power of a High Court judge and, like the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood, I think that we are fortunate in having our present ombudsman. Mr. Reid and his staff bring to the task a degree of precision and a clarity of expression, both verbal and written, which make the task of the Committee so much easier. I should also like briefly to mention Mr. Reid's counterpart in Northern Ireland, Mrs. McIvor, and to congratulate her on the excellent work that she does there.

Real efforts are now being made on all sides to improve the delivery of services in every area of national life. I welcome that, and also the vital role that the ombudsman is playing in the process.

I shall say a brief word about the Member of Parliament filter, which has been talked about this evening. It is an enormous subject. I am very much in favour of retaining the filter. Arguments can be made for people to have free

[Mr. Michael Lord]

access to the ombudsman, but that would bring with it all sorts of problems. It is an easy concept to put over, but the consequences flowing from it would perhaps call for a certain amount of caution.

I believe that the filter system works well. If all 651 hon. Members look after their constituencies in the way that they should and if they are diligent—I am sure that most hon. Members are—the existing system, although perhaps not perfect, might be as good a system as one can have in a democracy. I am not denying the role of the ombudsman, nor that that role should be expanded.

The role of the ombudsman has been described as a "bolt in the armoury" for an hon. Member. It is rather more than that now. It is an office with which we should arm ourselves and use when necessary. But I am concerned about the effect of constituents being able to go directly to the ombudsman.

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): Will the hon. Gentleman consider that some constituents in a Labour constituency may prefer not to go to a Labour Member of Parliament—for whatever reason—and that the same might apply in a Conservative constituency? The constituent might then approach a neighbouring Member of Parliament, for whatever reason. That may be already acting as a filter. We would all prefer our constituents to come to us regardless of party, but a filter is starting to be built in, with hon. Members from other constituencies putting cases forward. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the case for a filter at least needs a rather more open mind?

Mr. Lord: I do not know how many cases the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) has come across where that situation has applied. Putting to one side the ombudsman's role, that situation might arise quite often when people have problems, but it is not one that I have come across as a Conservative Member. I am not aware that people who vote Labour do not come to me with their problems. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman has found that Conservatives do not take their troubles to him. If he has evidence to support that—

Mr. Battle *indicated assent.*

Mr. Lord: If so, that justifies the hon. Gentleman's argument to some extent. I am not aware that that is the case.

It is essential that we use the ombudsman properly, as has been described already. The Member of Parliament filter, in my view, may be the best way to go for the time being. We shall return to that argument in the not-too-distant future.

The proliferation of ombudsmen—the subject has been touched on—is something that I am worried about. Our ombudsman was originally a unique institution. It is no longer unique. The growth in the number of ombudsmen of one sort or another is damaging that uniqueness and, as a result, is damaging the ombudsman's effectiveness as well.

I received a note—which was supposed to be helpful—from the National Consumer Council, which was aware of the debate this evening. It referred to ombudsmen here and there, and in one paragraph it said that the

> "NCC believes that consumers should have direct access to the Parliamentary ombudsman, so bringing this scheme into line with other ombudsman schemes."

The point made earlier was that there has been a massive proliferation of ombudsmen. If the House will forgive the pun, I am coming to the conclusion that if ombudsmen are becoming ten a penny, the coinage will almost certainly be seriously debased.

At the very least, we must ensure that people who call themselves ombudsmen are genuinely independent. They cannot be attached or linked to the organisation that they are seeking to scrutinise, as that would be a total denial of the whole principle. I am anxious about that proliferation, and I must say to my hon. Friends on the Front Bench that the whole Committee—myself certainly, and I suspect the other Committee members—was rather disappointed by the Government's attitude to the problem. The Committee felt that ombudsmen should not be allowed to proliferate in the way that they are, but the Government seem to be rather too laid back about it for my liking.

I shall say a few words about the Health Service Commissioner. I feel, as an hon. Member who served on the Select Committee, that we were uniquely placed to see the cross-section of complaints and problems that came before us. I should like to mention some of the lessons that I learnt from being a member of the Committee.

I should like to preface my remarks about the national health service by acknowledging the great amount of good work that it does. Our Chairman mentioned that the NHS deals with 8 million cases a year. We are guilty of carping if we dwell too long on the complaints about the NHS, but our Committee exists to study such complaints and to lift the blanket to see what is going on underneath. The debate is about complaints.

I agree with other hon. Members that the biggest cause of the problems in the NHS is a lack of proper communications. There is a crying need for a clear line of responsibility from the top to the bottom. Everyone in that chain should be able to communicate with one another, from the chairman right down to the patient. That, sadly, does not always happen for a variety of reasons and the Committee sees what happens when things go wrong.

I know that today is not the time to dwell on specific cases, but this week our Committee considered a case in which it had taken a complainant four and a half years to get satisfaction. When we questioned the witnesses, we were far from convinced that they had learned their lessons from that complaint. I was certainly not convinced that, should another complaint be made to that organisation, it would not take another four and a half years to sort it out. I hope that our questioning of those witnesses, under our excellent chairmanship, was sufficiently precise to leave them in no doubt about our concern not just about the complaint but about their reaction to it.

One of the problems in the NHS is the growing use of jargon. Professionals in the health service are developing their own language; they and their colleagues know what they are talking about, but to outsiders it sometimes sounds like mumbo-jumbo. In Committee, we frequently have to interrupt witnesses in the middle of their answers to ask what a set of initials or a job title means.

Job titles are a problem in themselves. The professionals may understand them, but it difficult for the ordinary mortal to know what is going on. We now have nurse directors, nurse managers and line managers. After one Committee sitting, when I had asked someone about jargon, I was accompanied in the lift down to the Lobby by the policeman who sat at the back of the Room. That officer told me how much he had enjoyed hearing our questions about jargon. He said to me, "Do you know, I've got a line manager now. I used to call him my sergeant." That sums it up. Imagine dashing into a police station and saying, "Please may I see your line manager?" That is the ridiculous state that we have reached.

The health service puts increasing reliance on structures and systems; they are obviously important, but they are no substitute for individual responsibility. There is little point in sounding efficient if one acts inefficiently.

I should like to make a special plea on behalf of matrons, which will come as no surprise to some of my colleagues on the Committee. In 1989, I tabled an early-day motion calling for the return of matrons, which attracted 129 signatures. In the same year, I also tabled an oral question asking that matrons be brought back, which was answered by the then Minister of State, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). His reply was rather facile:

> "I recall that that paragon was usually played by Peggy Mount in the films. However, there is nothing to prevent a hospital that is seduced by my hon. Friend's arguments from calling its senior nurse manager a matron, as some hospitals do."

I was not impressed by that response and nor, I am glad to say, was my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), who said in a supplementary question:

> "I suggest to my hon. and learned Friend that it does not matter a row of beans who played the part of the matron in a film. Many people think that almost the biggest mistake ever made in the National Health Service was to get rid of the matron."—[*Official Report*, 21 February 1989; Vol.164, c. 822.]

In 1990, following the snatch of a baby from one of our London hospitals, the *Evening Standard* carried an article stating:

> "Once the title of Matron spelt discipline and respect in hospital life. Now it has been replaced by a management number, and it is the patients who suffer".

My heart lifted when, in 1991, the *Nursing Times* reported:

> "Guy's Hospital in London has reinstated the title of Matron.
>
> A groundswell of public opinion has brought back the matron. More formally described as director of nursing at Guy's Hospital, London.
>
> According to Lewisham and North Southwark Community Health Council, the health watchdog which covers Guy's, the return of matron is one of the most frequent demands from local patients complaining about services.
>
> Assistant secretary Mick Rolfe says the fastest growing area of complaint to the CHC is about attitudes of nursing staff. Those complaining see the demise of the matron figure as one of the root causes of their concern."

I have gone on at some length about matrons, with the tolerance of the House, and I hope that if the Minister is listening carefully, he will take on board my remarks. I am beginning to think that perhaps we shall have to go backwards for progress. I know that that is a contradiction, but the House knows what I mean. I hope that the Minister will consider not just acquiescing but recommending to hospitals that they seriously consider reinstating the matron wherever possible.

The Chairman of our Committee repeated what one of our witnesses said about complaints being jewels to be treasured. We all know what that means, because complaints should not necessarily be horrifying to us. Do hon. Members believe, however, that patients will complain about the service that they receive at the time when they are undergoing treatment? I have serious doubts about that for all the obvious reasons. They may complain afterwards, but then, of course, it is too late.

To complain about something when one is under treatment is different from complaining about anything else. One can take back a shirt to Marks and Spencer and exchange it for another one, or two, or get one's money back. If one has a complaint about the Inland Revenue, it is possible that financial restitution will be made later on. The health service is different and we must come to terms with that dilemma. What is needed is a cultural change within our hospitals.

In a recent case before our Committee, we were told how a relative of a patient sat outside the ward for a number of hours while people walked to and fro, around her; generally ignoring her. That person seemed to be no one's responsibility. That would not happen in a bank, building society or retail shop. Someone would come up and say, "What do you want? Can I help you?" We need that culture in the health service. I know that it is difficult to create that. There are, for example, all sorts of historical reasons for the patient-doctor-nurse relationship. We need to foster that culture, because patients will not complain while they are receiving treatment.

It is particularly difficult to gain redress in the health service because clinicians and medical practitioners of one kind and another sometimes find it extremely difficult to admit fault and to apologise—to do what the Committee would like them to do—because they are anxious that that admission might impact on future litigation or legal problems.

We must resolve that, otherwise it will damage the whole system. We may have to consider the possibility of no-fault compensation, which exists in other countries.

On complaints, we do not want simply to build a huge complaints industry, otherwise the service will not improve because the person delivering it will be aware that the recipient can complain if he does not like it. Ultimately, we need the service to improve and complaints to reduce.

The task of the ombudsman and our Select Committee is to make all those involved in delivering the service conscious of their impact on people's lives. As our Chairman has already pointed out, justice delayed is justice denied, and the Committee is aware of that fact. A week or month's delay in receiving a form or letter may not mean a great deal to officers dealing with a matter but it means an awful lot to a person with a problem who goes to the letter box every morning waiting for that letter or form to arrive.

[Mr. Lord]

I am privileged to belong to the Committee and thoroughly enjoy its work. I have said how well I think of Mr. Reid and all his staff, and I look forward to him and his organisation playing a greater part in those matters as time goes by.

8.40 pm

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): I, too, welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate and to discuss the role and activity of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioner—or "ombudsmen", as the Committee secured the right for them to be called. I am all for demystifying Government jargon in whatever form it appears, and that is an important step forward.

As the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) said, it has taken 11 months—since the publication of the report on the powers and jurisdiction of the ombudsman—for time to be found to debate this report in the House. That may be apposite, as it simply happens to be midway between the average amount of time taken to deal with complaints by the health service ombudsman and the parliamentary ombudsman. The Committee has urged the ombudsmen to achieve an average of nine months, and they are working towards that. I should be happy to settle for a 12-month gap between debates in the House on issues relating to the ombudsmen, provided that we had such a debate annually.

In their response to the report, the Government rejected that suggestion, saying that they could not find time to debate the matter on a regular basis. That is regrettable because the issues that come before the ombudsmen need to be openly debated regularly as they are increasing not just in number but in importance. The number has increased consistently in the past three and a half years since the House last had an opportunity to consider the ombudsmen's reports.

Mr. Deva: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that the Government have acknowledged the importance of the reports and provided time for them to be debated and that, because they have written an important report, we are now debating them?

Mr. Watson: Yes, I accept that, although I suspect that we are having this debate simply because of the special report that has been produced. It is three and a half years since the last debate and we should debate the ombudsmen's work and the Select Committee's scrutiny of their work annually, not just when a report is produced.

I do not wish to cite a list of figures, but the number of cases being referred to the parliamentary ombudsman or directly to the health service ombudsman has increased in recent years. The most revealing figure is that, in the part of the current year for which figures are so far available, the parliamentary ombudsman's cases have increased by 31 per cent. and the health service ombudsman's cases by 34 per cent. Those figures are not just increasing but are increasing apace, which emphasises the need for more time to be given to debating the work involved in the House.

One reason for the increase in complaints is the current climate of complaint, which may not have existed five years ago. I fully recognise that that is largely due to the fact that the Government have introduced citizens charters during that period. Furthermore, the White Paper on open government published in 1993 led to the introduction of a code of practice on access to official information, which has also opened up many other avenues for individuals to highlight issues or events that concern them. That underlines the fact that we need more time to deal with those issues.

Interestingly, just last month the ombudsman published the first of his reports relating to open government—an area that will be of increasing concern to both him and the Select Committee.

Mr. Deva: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Watson: I shall take the hon. Gentleman's intervention, but, to allow as much time as possible for others to participate in the debate, I should like to continue uninterrupted afterwards.

Mr. Deva: Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the citizens charters are an extremely good measure?

Mr. Watson: They are a potentially good measure, but they are not fully utilised and contain a lot of padding and window dressing. I am prepared to accept that the intent is well meant.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): We made the initial suggestion.

Mr. Watson: My hon. Friend points out that citizens charters were originally a Labour suggestion. That is indeed so, but there is a long way to go before they fulfil their potential.

The parliamentary ombudsman's reports reveal many of the concerns of ordinary men and women and their ability to articulate those concerns. They also reveal the effectiveness of the ombudsman's work in securing redress and of administrative reform in areas where it is shown to be lacking. Anyone who cares to read the reports will see that numerous examples are given. I particularly welcome the ombudsman's willingness to produce those special reports, which are a relatively recent innovation. For example, the parliamentary ombudsman's fourth report in the 1992-93 Session on compensation to farmers for slaughtered poultry, which was mentioned earlier in the debate, catalogues a succession of errors by the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The report not only succeeded in securing the redress that otherwise would not have been open to farmers but acted as a shot across the bows to other Departments to show them that they could not act with the impunity with which they believed they could act in the past. The general public now have greater expectations, and the Select Committee has greater expectations that those matters will be brought into the public domain.

A second example of that type appeared in the form of the parliamentary ombudsman's sixth report in the same year, which related to delays in handling disability living allowance cases. That was an amazing case, as it followed the most appalling bureaucratic bungles, and the system virtually ground to a halt. Many hon. Members simply swamped the ombudsman with complaints on behalf of constituents, many of whom were in a distraught state and some of whom were in desperate financial straits through no fault of their own. Eventually, the ombudsman ensured that those who were hardest hit received redress. Sadly, however, the lessons that should have been learned by the Department of Social Security—the Minister's incompetence reached breathtaking levels—have not been learned if what we now hear in relation to the Child Support Agency, details of which are just beginning to emerge, are to be believed.

I note that the ombudsman is to report to the Committee in January on the Child Support Agency. He has recently had to refuse to accept complaints by some hon. Members on behalf of their constituents simply because, if he accepted more, they would slow down his current investigations. Cases not investigated in that way will benefit from any decision at which he arrives, but that fact highlights the extent of the problem and the fact that lessons are not necessarily learnt even if they are particularly forcefully drawn to Departments' attention.

Those special reports, therefore, have a special function which I hope the ombudsman will use more in future if the need arises.

I believe that the effectiveness of the ombudsman in his role is strengthened—as he has said—by the role that the Select Committee plays in helping to highlight some of the cases that come to the ombudsman, and which he places in his reports. Cabinet Ministers and departmental Permanent Secretaries appear before us, and we subject them to rigorous questioning. That further serves to ensure that those Government Departments are fully aware that maladministration will not be tolerated, and that we remain willing to highlight maladministration wherever and whenever it appears.

As a result of the report to which I referred earlier, Departments in which maladministration has been shown to have occurred, and which has been highlighted to them, must now publish a report to the ombudsman describing how the maladministration has been rectified to ensure that there is no repetition.

The role and the importance of the Select Committee, linked with the role of the ombudsman, should not be underestimated. It has grown considerably in weight and stature in recent years. In the period during which I have been involved, the Committee's operations have become more effective and more public than was hitherto the case—although I claim no personal credit for that.

The Committee spent all last year taking evidence for the report from a wide range of organisations and individuals. Many Members of Parliament contributed to the survey, to which the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth referred earlier. We made 36 recommendations, some of which the Government have accepted. I especially regret the fact that they have not accepted two of the recommendations.

One of those recommendations concerns the right of the ombudsman to initiate investigations after the Committee has raised a matter formally with him. That does not mean that the ombudsman does not retain his right to decline to follow up certain investigations, but I believe that the Government have been unduly cautious by rejecting that proposal, simply stating in their response:

> "Citizens will normally complain where alleged maladministration occurs."

That may be so, but there may well be reasons, as we heard in the exchange between hon. Members earlier, why individuals choose not to bring complaints. For instance, they may not be aware of their right to complain. It is important that that door is left open. I hope that the Committee will return to that recommendation some time, because I do not believe that the Government's case is strong, and if we pushed again on that subject we could easily assemble a case that would convince the Government that the powers of the Committee—indeed, the powers of the ombudsman—should be increased in terms of such initiation.

Secondly, as a Scot, I find it not simply an anomaly but unacceptable that administrative acts of court staff in Scotland lie outside the ombudsman's role. I know that that exclusion arises from the different constitutional position in Scotland, where court staff are not appointed by the Lord Chancellor, who is a Minister, but by the Lord President of the Court of Session. None the less, as a Scot and on behalf of my constituents and those of other hon. Members from north of the border, I find it unacceptable for Scots to be denied a right granted to their fellow citizens in England and Wales. No doubt the Committee will return to that issue, because it is one about which we felt strongly, and argued vigorously in our report. I shall also pursue that through other means, directly with Ministers, but it is a clear anomaly that must be tackled.

I have been a member of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration for five years, which I have found rewarding and stimulating. I have gained much from it and I hope that I have made a contribution to the Committee. Those remarks preface my decision to tender my resignation from the Committee, which I shall do in the next few days to the Chairman. That is not for any reason other than that I have been appointed to another Committee of the House and shall shortly take up those duties, and find it impossible to combine the two. I believe that the experience that I have gained in the Committee has been valuable and will stand me in good stead on the Committee to which I am moving.

I pay tribute to my fellow members of the Committee, regardless of party divisions. It has been a good Committee with which to be involved. We have undertaken serious work in a sometimes lighthearted, but never anything other than effective, manner, and I have especially appreciated the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, who has made meetings enjoyable but has been forceful when putting witnesses under the spotlight.

In passing, I pay tribute to the commissioner, Mr. William Reid, whom I am pleased to see in the Strangers Gallery, and Mr. John Avery and Mr. Richard Oswald, his assistants. I have always found their contributions essential to the efficient working of the Committee and I have already paid tribute to the work that the commissioner and his staff do. There are several staff, and I am glad to note that, with almost a doubling of the resources of the commissioner's office, the number will grow in the near future. The role that they play should not be underestimated.

It would be remiss of me, in leaving the Committee, not to pay tribute to the Clerk to the Committee. It was Mr. Colin Lee in my earlier years on the Committee; it is now Mr. Yusef Azad. No Select Committee can work without an efficient Clerk, and I am sure that there is no more efficient Clerk in the House than Mr. Azad.

[Mr. Watson]

I wish the Committee and the hon. Members who continue to serve on it well. They have an important task ahead of them. Part of that is to convince the Government that due weight must be given to the Committee, its members and the job that they do. Part of that, to repeat an earlier remark, is to ensure regular debates in the House on the working of the Committee, and I very much hope that that will become a feature in the not too distant future.

8.55 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I begin by associating myself with remarks made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson), especially with his comments about the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the excellent work that he does, and about the marvellous work done by our Clerk of the Committee, under the excellent chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey).

I shall miss the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central in our deliberations. In the comparatively shorter time in which I have been a member of the Select Committee, I have been enormously impressed by the way in which the Committee tackles many extremely complex and often detailed issues that the commissioner brings before it, and by the way in which the commissioner and his team examine and dissect extremely complicated cases, often with great precision, so that the individual can be assured that someone is standing up for him against the system.

I shall dwell on that aspect briefly, because frequently, in our deliberations in the House, we talk about the way in which the Government or the Executive work. I would like to associate myself with remarks made by one or two of the earlier speakers, who said that one of the real values of the work done by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration is that he can tilt against windmills on behalf of the individual. It is a question of the individual against the system, particularly where the system can be proved to have gone wrong or to have treated the individual wrongly. In that respect, I want to discuss the role of the ombudsman and my belief that the House should use his services more often and debate his reports with rather more seriousness and regularity.

When the Committee, as we have already heard, was first thought of and introduced in the House, it was with the idea that it would, in many ways, mirror the work done by the Public Accounts Committee on the Comptroller and Auditor General. Looking back, I would have supported that strongly because if the House regularly discusses the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the deliberations of the Public Accounts Committee, whose primary duty is to ensure that money is correctly spent by the Executive, surely it is the duty of the House to treat with equal seriousness the work of the ombudsman and the Select Committee, who examine how the money is spent on the services that we offer.

The quality of the service that we offer is surely, to the citizens who elect us, just as important as the way in which we spend the money to pay for those services and for that Administration. I ask the Government, particularly the Leader of the House, to look again at the issue so that the whole subject can be more regularly debated, if not for a whole day, perhaps half a day, as and when reports are presented to the House.

When the Government are concerned about the quality of services, whether through the citizens charter or the individual charters—for the health service or for anything else—it would send the wrong signal if we did not look seriously at the work of the ombudsman and his recommendations where services are proven to have fallen down. To be concerned only about the money that goes to pay for them would be remiss. I am sure that we would do our electors and the reputation of the House some good if we looked rather more carefully at that subject.

Like others in the debate, I strongly believe that the role and task of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration is most valuable precisely because, in a non-political fashion, the PCA brings to the attention of the Executive, by whatever possible political persuasion, complaints and examples of maladministration in services. Those examples can and do serve to improve the quality of those services and the Administration, provided that the PCA's reports are read and acted upon.

If the House debated the reports more regularly, it is more likely that they would be acted upon, because Ministers would be present to respond to them. I happen to believe that Ministers and politicians generally are too ready to take upon themselves the task of apportioning the defence of the indefensible. When things go wrong in an Administration or in Government service, a Minister will frequently be held by others to be immediately responsible or he or she will be encouraged to be extremely defensive on behalf of the Administration which he happens to represent.

Where complaints are made and upheld by the ombudsman, there is a good argument for a Minister or member of the Executive of whatever political persuasion to be able to say, "Yes, we see that there has been an error. We are glad to find that the error has been rectified but, in particular, these are the measures that we are now able to set before the House to show that we have listened and acted carefully on the ombudsman's advice."

I also believe that the ombudsman's work greatly enhances the consistency between Departments of treatment of complainants and redress where the system and the service concerned has fallen down. We surely should be concerned that, in whatever area of Government administration, our electorate is treated equitably and fairly as between one Department and another.

I therefore join the people who argue for the ombudsman's role and position to be extended to every sector of public administration. Furthermore, his role should be extended to Government-funded agencies and, dare I suggest, sometimes to the quangos through which Government money passes. It is within the brief of the Comptroller and Auditor General to examine how money is spent, so it is surely right that the role and remit of the ombudsman should include ensuring that quangos and agencies perform their task in a satisfactory fashion and that, if a complaint over maladministration arises, proper redress is given and citizens feel that someone can take up their case effectively and, where appropriate, obtain redress for them. I hope, therefore, that the Government will consider again the role and remit of the ombudsman and that time will be made available in Parliament to debate his work.

9.5 pm

Mr. John Battle (Leeds, West): I hope that hon. Members who want to take part in the debate, especially those who are or who have been members of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, will be able to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to welcome tonight's debates. We need to debate the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioners periodically on the Floor of the House and in the context of the Select Committee's work, which was admirably described by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), who chairs that Committee.

We need to raise the profile of the parliamentary commissioner—dare I emphasise the word parliamentary—to reaffirm that he is directly responsibility to Parliament and has a particular relationship with Members of Parliament as part of the accountability of our democracy. Let us have an annual debate and not leave it to others to initiate, as has been suggested, a discussion of the ombudsman in a private Member's Bill debate or Adjournment debate, when hon. Members usually raise individual cases.

It is perhaps appropriate that this debate follows immediately on the one on the workings of the Child Support Agency. More specifically, the debate is overdue. Last year, the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration conducted its most far-reaching inquiry into the work, powers and jurisdiction of the ombudsman since the establishment of the post in 1967. The inquiry's report was published last January with 36 recommendations, six to the commissioner and 30 to the Government. The Government reply to the recommendations was published in a report 5 July. Today, we have had the follow-up letter from the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster dealing—helpfully I would say—with a few of the outstanding recommendations.

In the same period since 1991, the Government have published a White Paper on open government with a code of guidance to access to information. In July 1991, the White Paper on the citizens charter was published. Since then, some 40 charters have been published. It is tempting to add that we shall soon need a charters charter to find our way around them. Nor should the citizens charter be regarded as a substitute or replacement for the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. Rather, as he himself insisted in his recent annual reports, the charters

> "should let people know how they can appeal to the Ombudsman via their Member of Parliament if they feel the administration has let them down, treated them unfairly, inefficiently or"—

I note in his most recent report—

> "discourteously, with rudeness, with an unwillingness to treat the complainant as a person with rights and with a refusal to answer reasonable questions."

The emphasis on rudeness, courtesy and decent answering of questions suggests that sometimes our exchanges at Question Time could merit a referral to the ombudsman.

Mr. McCartney: They merit it all the time.

Mr. Battle: As my hon. Friend suggests, it should happen all the time.

Each month, new bodies are added to the parliamentary commissioner's jurisdiction—most recently the urban development corporations, the director of passenger freight rail franchising, the rail regulator and, more topically, the Office of the National Lottery.

I hope that the Minister will reply to this particular point. Rather than change the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 to add every new body, would it not be better to draft the scope of the parliament commissioner's jurisdiction so that everything is included, unless it is explicitly and specifically excluded from his purview?

I hope that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will consider that point, because, in the table of respondents to the Select Committee questionnaire to hon. Members, it is obvious that between hon. Members elected in 1983 and those elected after 1983 there has been a decline in understanding the range of the commissioner's jurisdiction. In other words, hon. Members are less clear which bodies fall within his aegis. That should be spelled out in more detail. It would be helpful if the Minister could give a positive reply. Let us assume that everything is in and that only that which is specified is excluded. As the parliamentary commissioner mentions in his annual report, sometimes it is not even clear to the commissioner himself whether a new body is included. That needs to be clarified.

The new agencies are generating a huge increase in the parliamentary commissioner's workload. It was up by 25 to 30 per cent. this year. The Child Support Agency has led to an enormous number of complaints, and, as other hon. Members have said, in the future it will be subject to a special report. Social security is still a major subject of inquiries and in the past 10 years the Government have replaced the non-contributory invalidity pensions with the severe disablement allowance, the mobility allowance and attendance allowance with the disabled living allowance, supplementary benefit with income support, family income support with family credit and special needs allowances with direct payments from the social fund. That overhaul of the social security system has inevitably led to confusion, muddle and maladministration.

The Department of Social Security continues to account for the most significant part of the commissioner's work load. It accounted for 46 per cent.—nearly half the work load—in 1993. In one of his special reports published this year on the delays in handling disability allowance claims, the Department of Social Security's glaring shortcomings when introducing the new disability living allowance were revealed. On page 2 of his annual report the parliamentary commissioner said:

> "The result was that, despite the Department's best intentions, thousands of disabled claimants found themselves for many months deprived of benefit."

The Department eventually had to pay nearly £500,000 in compensation to some 30,000 claimants as a result of that special report.

[Mr. Battle]

On page 3 of his annual report, published in March this year, the commissioner writes:

> "It is a source of great concern that my investigations reveal one Department repeating unnecessarily another Department's errors. I therefore suggest to the Select Committee that the Office of Public Service and Science could and should be doing more to disseminate among Government Departments the practical lessons distilled from my reports."

In other words, there needs to be some interdepartmental co-operation and some sharing of the information in the reports. Dare I say, there needs to be some joined-up thinking between Departments to ensure that they do not unnecessarily repeat errors and that they improve systems so as to identify problems clearly, and to recognise that, when an individual case is analysed, it can sometimes reveal what we might call a structural fault throughout the whole system, which needs to be tackled.

As more and more people become aware of the existence and the role of the commissioner, I predict that his workload will continue to increase rapidly. From 1989 to 1993 there was an increase of 46 per cent. in complaints referred. The number of complaints accepted has risen by 17 per cent. and the final reports issued increased by 12 per cent. I believe that our constituents should know who the ombudsman is. It is to be regretted that the term of ombudsman has been unhelpfully extended elsewhere, including into the Department of Environment and the Home Office. Avoiding confusion about the role, powers and jurisdiction of the ombudsman should be a primary objective. It is an objective that I know that the Select Committee has set itself, and it should be supported in the House.

I know that the parliamentary commissioner, Mr. Reid, believes that the public ought to be able to go direct to him—the subject of the debate across the Floor of the House tonight—without going through the Member of Parliament filter. Currently, a member of the public approaches the commissioner through a Member of the House of Commons. I know that the Select Committee also rejected that approach and I shall comment briefly on the relationship between Members of Parliament, their constituencies and the parliamentary commissioner.

One of the most valuable elements in our system of parliamentary democracy, flawed though it may be, is that direct constituency-member link between Members of Parliament and the specific geographical areas that they represent. Members of Parliament cannot be only names on lists, carried on the shoulders of others, nor can they be merely talking heads on television and radio or photographs in the paper; at once removed from direct contact with our constituents. That is why we hold advice surgeries, that is why we take on cases individually and have, in some instances, large case loads. I am currently in contact with about 2,500 people. In this age of politics—dare I say—as media spectacle, whether in the theatre of this Chamber, or in the stunts and set pieces outside, it is vital to our democracy that our constituents can buttonhole us; take us aside by the elbow and talk to us directly.

If the work of Members of Parliament can be roughly defined and described as making laws and budgets, that direct access to constituents is important as it often means that our constituents find out quicker than we do the detailed impact of our legislative decisions. They realise before we do, sitting here, the impact of our decisions. In a sense, those who pay the price can usually do the arithmetic. Evidence and information in the questionnaire given to the Select Committee showed that referrals via Members of Parliament were increasingly complainant-led. So, in a sense, Members of Parliament were not acting as a filter, they were passing more and more complaints straight on. People present their Member of Parliament with, as it were, a window on the workings of a particular Department and the commissioner provides the means for a parliamentary check on the systems and the structures without recourse to expensive, private litigation.

In the absence of a written constitution, electors in our parliamentary democracy have two basic rights. One of them, I gather, is to be able to go right into Central Lobby to try to lobby their parliamentary representative. The other is to sign a properly presented and properly addressed petition which can come before the House. Therefore, the "MP filter" is another key means of ensuring that, as legislators, our feet are firmly on the ground. It is of value to Members of Parliament to know what our constituents think of the impact of our decisions.

The powers of the commissioner are, of course, subject to the scrutiny of the Select Committee and accountable, through that Committee, directly to this Parliament. The arrangement depends basically on there being a good relationship between the commissioner and the Select Committee. When there is a good relationship, as I understand there is currently, it can mean, as at present, that the commissioner can and does take the initiative from the recommendations of the Committee. It can be a rather more fluid two-way process than has sometimes been suggested in discussing the "MP filter". The role of the Committee is to strengthen the accountability of the administrative bureaucracy within our parliamentary system through the role of the commissioner.

We need clarification of the whole sector of—what is the new term?—contractual and commercial matters. A change is beginning in the interface between the public and the private as services are contracted out. In practice, that means that the role of the commissioner is becoming less distinct. When the commissioner cannot touch matters relating to contractual and commercial relationships, they may well be referred to the courts; but we need to consider the way in which a whole sphere of Government policy is regularly changing that interface between public and private.

Urban development corporations provide an example. When can the commissioner intervene in regard to decisions that are seen to concern land that is purchased, or otherwise, and members of the public may wish to re-examine the work that has been done? The increasing blurring of the boundary between public and private is likely to generate future complaints, and more work for the commissioner. We need to be clearer about what is within his reach and what is outside it.

Members of Parliament are, in a sense, ombudsmen in their own right. I sometimes think that we are now the last resort for many of our constituents: people bring us problems connected with housing, social security, tax and legal matters such as disputes with neighbours. They approach us not as lobbyists, but because they feel that they cannot "get through" in any other way. They need someone to listen patiently and openly, to take them seriously and to represent them genuinely.

In that sense, we Members of Parliament are already mini-ombudsmen; in that sense we are genuine filters. Those who suggest that our job is done only in this place neglect half the work that we are elected to do. Obviously, the work that we do so patiently in our constituencies is not glamorous and does not attract media attention; nor should it, in my view. But our letters and advice surgeries are the bread and butter of our work as public representatives, and the role of the parliamentary commissioner can reinforce it.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Surely one of the great advantages of insisting that Members of Parliament are approached first is that they can take up an issue as a Minister's case. That ensures that the matter is dealt with at a higher level in the Department concerned. If that filter were not available, far more constituents would go directly to the ombudsman and cases that are currently resolved might not be.

Mr. Battle: I entirely agree. I think we should consider not just whether a person can send a letter directly, but the two-way process that also benefits Members of Parliament, through our inside access to the Administration.

The Government have responded to reports from the Select Committee with, for instance, today's letter about the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. Regrettably, the same cannot be said in regard to the work of the health service ombudsman, although the Minister has suggested that the Department will reply before long. The Government's response is overdue: we need replies to the Select Committee's original recommendations. The review carried out by Professor Alan Wilson of Leeds university published its findings in May, and was followed in July by the Select Committee's fifth report. We are now in December. I wish to draw particular attention to the Committee's recommendation that states:

> "We consider it preferable for the two Offices of Parliamentary Ombudsman and Health Service Ombudsman to continue to be held by the same person".

In its reply, the Department stated:

> "The Government agrees that there should be no change for the present. This subject may need to be revisited at a later date when the extent of the work arising from the Open Government White Paper and the report by Professor Wilson on the Review of the NHS Complaints Procedure is known."

Will the Minister state clearly that there will be a reply and, what is more, that we can debate it on the Floor of the House? That is necessary because there has been a significant increase in the number of complaints received by the commissioner.

Between 1989 and 1993, there was an increase of 74 per cent. in the number of people turning to the health commissioner. In 1992, 1,227 complaints were received and last year 1,384 were received, an increase of 13 per cent. The number of new investigations begun last year was up 24 per cent. on the year before.

Again, the changing interface between public and private is key to the changing landscape. As a result, the clinical administrative, definitional split is shifting. We are now under new regimes of NHS trusts and GP fundholders in which, speaking metaphorically, the knife could be wielded by an accountant as much as by a surgeon. The ground is shifting and we need to respond urgently to that shift in the context of the work, role and jurisdiction of the commissioner.

Similarly, if the health ombudsman is to be, as Select Committee recommendation 127 proposes

> "the apex of any unified NHS complaints system that may be introduced",

the role of health staff raising complaints with the health ombudsman on behalf of patients, which they can do, should be protected. They should not be pushed into the background as a form of unprofessional practice or worse, as happened recently, when staff in fear were reduced to appearing as silhouettes on television because they were too scared to be identified when speaking openly. That directly contradicts the Government's positive response to recommendations 23, 31 and 32 of the Select Committee's report.

The health commissioner's report should not only deal with individual grievances but be part of a setting of standards and supervision within the NHS. The alternative would be litigation which I believe that most, if not all, of us would deeply regret. The role of the health commissioner is to provide a safety valve. We urgently need a positive response to the Select Committee's proposals on the health commissioner and I hope that the Minister will take that on board.

There were some recommendations that the Government said would be implemented

> "as soon as the legislative opportunity arises".

In the light of the Government's legislative programme, I hope that the coming months will provide that opportunity, which should be grasped quickly—let us get on with it and get it out of the way.

It is gratifying to read in the response to the Select Committee's questionnaire that a consistently high level of hon. Members—75 per cent.—are either "very" or "quite" satisfied with the result of investigations. That is a compliment to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, Mr. Reid, and his staff, to standards in public life and, in particular, to the particular nature of our parliamentary democracy.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration is an important, although relatively new, institution and we should continue to seek ways to enhance the commissioner's role, regarding it as a means to strengthen not only democratic accountability but the political institutions of our particular style of constituency-based democracy. In other words, greater awareness of the role, powers and work of the commissioner could go some way to restoring faith in the process of politics in our society.

9.28 pm

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) and privileged to be a member of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration under the excellent chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey).

Today's debate has been wide ranging, but, in the few minutes available to me, I shall try to cast the net even wider and consider the changing circumstances facing our parliamentary democracy as we go towards the millennium.

The work of the Select Committee is now at the forefront of the work on the citizens charter and of the work that we are doing for our electors on consumers' rights and citizens' expectations of the services that they

[Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva]

obtain from the state. I am especially concerned to encourage the Government to consider recommendations 18 and 20 of the Select Committee report. May I be bold enough to say that the work of the ombudsman and of the Select Committee represents one of the most important institutions of our parliamentary democracy.

The instruments of governance and legislation, and our parliamentary procedures, were fashioned and honed in a different age, when the electorate consisted of people who were less well informed and less aware of their rights; sometimes, they saw the state and its agencies as their masters rather than as their servants. In 1979, when the Conservative Administration was elected to power, we said, "We want to set the people free." And we have, indeed, set the people free.

Today, much has changed; the electorate are as well informed about current issues as any Member of this august House and the people are as aware of their rights—if not, sometimes, of their duties—as any Member of the House. Our electorate and our citizens see an equal partnership between themselves and the providers of services from the Government, the state and their agencies.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made a signal contribution to promoting an equal partnership between the state and its citizens through the introduction of the citizens charter, which has been a success. The charter has increased the awareness of the providers of services that their primary duty is to their clients, the citizens of this country, and not to the institutions that employ them. The consumers are supreme, and have every right to be so.

When the citizens charter, to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister wrote the foreword, was launched in July 1992, it said:

> "Through the Citizen's Charter the Government is now determined to drive reforms further into the core of the public services, extending the benefits of choice, competition, and commitment to service more widely."

The range of mechanisms in the citizens charter covers, inter alia,

> "published performance targets—local and national; comprehensive publication of information on standards achieved; more effective complaints procedures; tougher and more independent inspectorates".

It is therefore fundamental that the citizens charter provides that all services, including those provided by local authorities, should have clear, well-publicised complaints procedures.

I had the privilege of serving on the National Consumer Council for six years before I entered Parliament, and during that time it developed what are now well-established consumer criteria. In brief, that phrase describes the importance of information, access, representation, redress, compensation and value for money.

Having set the scene, my central concern is to consider the future. Twenty years after establishing the consumer movement, as we now know it, we have in place the citizens charter. The next 20 years will herald more wide-ranging revolutions that will affect all our institutions. We have part of that today in the information technology revolution. Tomorrow, we expect the multi-media revolution. Those two are great harbingers of the way in which our parliamentary democracy will work, and the role of the ombudsman will be pivotal to the changes to come.

The information technology revolution and the multi-media revolution will increase exponentially public awareness of the issues and problems that confront citizens. Citizens will no longer be passive recipients of news; they will be news makers in real time. The entire nation will be exposed to any problem of maladministration, and the complainants will participate in multi-media news events beamed to each home. The audience will be asked to comment from home and to recommend to the nation at large remedies and actions to correct, redress and compensate for the maladministration.

In short, everything that happens to anyone will be accessible to the entire nation. No longer will it merely be a chat across the garden wall when Mrs. Smith says to Mrs. Jones that she went to the local hospital and was not treated properly, or Mr. Jones says to Mr. Smith in the pub that the ambulance that was called to take him to hospital was 20 minutes late.

After the multi-media revolution, everyone in a town or city will know everything that happens and, more importantly, everyone will express his or her own views and opinions to everyone else from home to home. An information time bomb is waiting to go off. As elected representatives of the people, are we equipped here to meet the challenges of the future using the rather archaic instruments and procedures that we have inherited from the 18th and 19th centuries? Are we equipped to maintain a force of representative and accountable democracy and a partnership of trust with our electors?

If the answer to that question is no, we must change the way we do things so that we are seen to be effective, efficient, accountable and competent to deal with people's everyday problems. That is why today's debate is so important and it is why I believe that the Government should accept, as only a first step in a long series of steps, all the recommendations in the Select Committee report which was published on 14 July.

In particular, I want to draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to recommendation 20 which, as he knows, states:

> "We recommend that the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 be amended so as to specify exclusions rather than inclusions to the Parliamentary Ombudsman's jurisdiction."

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has said that the Government will consider that very carefully. Having looked at it very carefully, is he ready to make a statement about it?

I congratulate the Government on accepting outright 20 of the 36 recommendations in our report. I acknowledge my gratitude for the fact that the Government have promised to consider a further six of our recommendations carefully. I believe that recommendations 18 and 20 are very important indeed.

9.36 pm

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) for allowing me a few minutes to take part in this debate. I also welcome the fact that the debate is taking place. I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate and to have participated, for the past 18 months, on the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. The work has been very worth while and I hope to continue it.

I particularly welcome my involvement with the parliamentary commissioner, because his predecessor, Sir Anthony Barrowclough, is a constituent of mine who lives in Winsford. About a year ago, I made a short film for BBC2 about agencies that help Members of Parliament to do their job. I chose Sir Anthony as an example of the ombudsman and I chose the local Taunton citizens advice bureau which also carries out work which is very much adjacent to that of a Member of Parliament's. I would like to take this opportunity to praise the present ombudsman and his staff for their work which helps us greatly in our work on the Select Committee.

There has been much debate about the "MP filter". I strongly support, and will do so until there is decisive evidence to the contrary, the continuing of the "MP filter". I do not believe that there is evidence of specific unsatisfied demand for the services of the ombudsman resulting from the "MP filter".

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) said that a dissatisfied constituent whose Member will not take up a case can write to the Chairman of the Select Committee or take the matter up with a neighbouring Member, possibly a Member of that person's own political disposition. However, I would deprecate any departure from the principle in our constitution that all Members of Parliament represent their constituents, whatever their views.

I made the point in Select Committee that the work of the Health Service Commissioner should be more specifically related to Members' responsibilities and the constituencies. The reports of cases by the Health Service Commissioner should be made available to hon. Members so that they know what is happening and what is going wrong with the health service in their constituencies. At election time, it is the Member of Parliament who is responsible for the success or deficiencies of the local health service.

My second point was referred to by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle). It relates to the frustrations that arise—I have personal experience of them—from the present restrictions on the jurisdiction of the commissioner.

I commend also the recommendation by the National Consumer Council that the parliamentary ombudsman should be able to investigate complaints involving contractual or commercial matters. A constituent, who seemed to be very dissatisfied with the service from a Department, has been unable to secure redress, despite my efforts to secure an investigation by the commissioner. He deemed what happened—I am sure that he was correct to do so—to result from a contractual relationship that my constituent had made. That is unfortunate. The NCC points out that, with the Government having contracted out a considerable proportion of their work to private companies or next steps agencies, it would be appropriate to extend the ombudsman's role to cover those aspects of public administration.

There might be other examples—perhaps the Select Committee should examine them—of present restrictions on the powers of the ombudsman, even when the constituent has made his case and the Member has put it to the ombudsman, causing frustration because he is not able to investigate successfully and effectively.

My third point relates to the Health Service Commissioner. There is immense potential for good. Despite the fact that constituents are able to refer cases direct to the Health Service Commissioner—there is no "MP filter"—I am certain that there is great unsatisfied demand simply because people do not know that they have that right and that power. We have had some very interesting and disturbing cases before us, as hon. Members have pointed out.

Of course, sometimes we are frustrated by the dividing line between maladministration, which the commissioner can investigate, and clinical matters, which, naturally, he cannot investigate. As recent cases have shown, that dividing line becomes blurred. That is particularly important as concern arises about the success of the care in the community initiative, which is to be the subject of legislation. I am a great supporter of that initiative, and in Somerset it has been very successful.

At page xv of his 1992-93 report, the commissioner referred to a disturbing case involving an absconding mental patient who, at 4 am, caused great damage to a private house next to the establishment where he was detained. What worried us was the health authority's failure to provide proper redress and the lack of knowledge of what became of that patient.

My hon. Friends the Members for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) referred to the attitude of bureaucrats. There was evidence from a hospital in Glasgow on page xvii of that same report, and it appeared that complainants were discouraged from complaining. I am sure that neither the commissioner nor the Select Committee would tolerate that.

We regularly take evidence from the chairmen and chief executives of hospital trusts. There is sometimes an arrogant attitude, a lack of sympathy—even at that stage—and a failure to take responsibility. As I found when I served on the Public Accounts Committee, the officials who were responsible for what went wrong had moved on. I hope that the Select Committee will continue to examine that matter. I look forward to the reply of my hon. Friend the Minister.

9.43 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert G. Hughes): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in this extremely interesting debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), the Under-Secretary of State for Health, who has been present throughout the debate and has intervened in it, has also been extremely interested to hear the many important points that have been made.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) said, it is 27 years since the establishment of the office of the parliamentary commissioner for Administration and, indeed, of the Select Committee on the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. Experience has proved the great value of their respective roles. I join every hon. Member who has spoken in the debate in paying tribute to the Select Committee members and to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth for the dedicated work that he does in chairing the Committee.

The Government must set high standards for administration and must work continually to improve standards still further, thereby presenting new benchmarks

[Mr. Robert G. Hughes]

for the ombudsman. The spread of the parliamentary commissioner's responsibilities has been enhanced in the past year by new functions connected with the code of practice on access to Government information, which some hon. Members mentioned during the debate and which I will mention in a moment.

I also pay tribute to Mr. William Reid, the ombudsman, whom I had the pleasure of meeting in my office shortly after I became Parliamentary Secretary. I was pleased to be able to pay a return visit to his office yesterday to see the work that he and his staff carry out.

I am pleased to say that our intent in establishing a code of practice on access to Government information was welcomed by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson). Since April, the parliamentary commissioner has had an important new role of policing the code. As Mr. Reid said last month:

> "A prerequisite of good government is adequate openness combined with an external regulating mechanism which gives openness its credibility".

Decisions about the release of Government information have been subject to independent review by the ombudsman, which I think is a good thing. The code and the reports published by the ombudsman show that the system is working so far. If there are not enough complaints, people say that the service was not well publicised; if there are many complaints, people say, "Obviously the Government are not being very open". Sometimes one feels that one cannot win.

Although the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) criticised the lack of publicity given to the code, I recall signing answers to parliamentary questions in the past few months which have criticised the Government for spending too much on publicity in some areas. The Office of Public Service and Science has distributed more than 52,000 copies of the explanatory leaflet to more than 1,300 carefully targeted recipients, such as citizens advice bureaux and libraries. We have sent out 5,600 copies of the code and the parliamentary commissioner has done a great deal to publicise the code's existence. I think that the system is working well.

In the short time available to me, I will try to answer a number of specific points raised during the debate. If I fail to do so through lack of time, I will write to the hon. Members who raised other points.

I will use as my basic script the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth. He questioned the use of the term "ombudsman". That point was raised also by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) and the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle).

The Government agree that the term "ombudsman" should not be used in organisations which are subject to the jurisdiction of the parliamentary ombudsman. The citizens charter unit within the OPSS wrote to Departments earlier this year to ensure that they were aware that all charters contain and draw attention to the role of the parliamentary ombudsman.

Although my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central said that the Government are not taking up that point, in fact my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster wrote to the Committee Chairman on 19 August assuring him that we took the point extremely seriously. We have copied that letter to members of the Cabinet, the Attorney-General and the Cabinet Secretary and we have made it very clear that they should avoid confusion and should not use the term "ombudsman" for organisations which are subject to the jurisdiction of the parliamentary ombudsman.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth raised the point about epitomes of Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration cases. He is absolutely correct: it is extremely important that people should know what the ombudsman is doing and saying. The hon. Member for Leeds, West said that it is important that when mistakes happen in one Department, they are not merely repeated in other Departments because of a lack of knowledge of what has been said.

The Government have accepted the recommendation, and the OPSS—with the help of the parliamentary ombudsman's office—has adopted a procedure to circulate epitomes of cases to Government Departments and other bodies within the parliamentary commissioner's jurisdiction. The first batch was circulated in November. As well as that, we hope that the booklet "The ombudsman in your files" will be ready for circulation to Departments and agencies by the summer.

A point made by my hon. Friends the Members for Rugby and Kenilworth and for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves), and by the hon. Members for Glasgow, Central and for Leeds, West was that a debate should be held each Session. I understand the desire for that. The first problem is that it is not a matter for me, but for the Leader of the House, who doubtless always considers matters that are put to him. But it is easy for Members to demand a debate every year, or whatever frequency we want, for every subject which we regard as important.

This is an important subject, of course,but I wonder how much demand there would be from Members for a full day's debate. I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Central that it would not have to be full day's debate. But, with cross-party agreement that we should proceed with much of the Jopling Committee report, the time for such a debate will be restricted. It is important that Members take that on board when asking for more debates on different areas.

The Member of Parliament filter is vital. I agree with my hon. Friends the Members for Rugby and Kenilworth, for Suffolk, Central and for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), and with the hon. Members for Leeds, West and for Cannock and Burntwood. The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton is crucial, and the hon. Member for Leeds, West also referred to it. The position of an hon. Member is crucial. I cannot think why any Member would refuse to pass a case on to the ombudsman. It ought to be clear to everyone that, regardless of a Member's political view, he is elected to be a Member of Parliament and he should take up any case on a constituent's behalf. If he is not able to make progress or if the constituent is not satisfied, the last resort should be the ombudsman, who will give the matter thorough consideration and decide whether something can be done.

I regard the Member of Parliament filter as very important. I refer again to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, who talked about the charter and redress. It is a charter principle that when things go wrong in the public services, they should give an apology, a full explanation and an effective remedy.

Under the citizens charter, the Government are actively encouraging a greater awareness of the complaints procedure. That is partly why the amount of work going to the ombudsman is increasing. As has been said by hon. Members, we are empowering the users of public services and giving them more information. My hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) said that we are making sure what service the public should get and how they can complain if they do not get that service.

Another point made by the hon. Member for Leeds, West and picked up by the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood and by my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth is the complex matter of whether there should be inclusions to a list of jurisdictions, or whether we should simply exclude those areas where we do not want the parliamentary commissioner to operate. The Government are prepared to consider carefully whether the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 could be amended as proposed. As the purpose of the Committee's proposal was primarily to reduce confusion, however, we will first explore whether publicity could describe the position more clearly. We are still studying the matter and considering ways in which to clarify which bodies come within the PCA's jurisdiction. I hope that members of the Committee in particular will recognise that this is not a simple matter and that most hon. Members may not think it appropriate for the security intelligence services, the Cabinet secretariat and nationalised industries to come within the commissioner's jurisdiction.

The hon. Members for Cannock and Burntwood, for Glasgow, Central and for Hall Green argued that the ombudsman should be in the same position as the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Government agree and that change will happen when we have an opportunity to legislate. I was grateful to the hon. Member for Leeds, West, when he said that the Opposition will give all the Bills in this Session a swift passage through the House to enable time to be made available for that specific legislation. I am sure that the business managers also took note of that assurance. We all recognise the difficulty in finding time in the parliamentary timetable, but when an opportunity presents itself, we will legislate to make that change.

The hon. Members for Cannock and Burntwood and for Glasgow, Central asked whether the parliamentary commissioner should have the power to initiate investigations. It is not clear to me why that is necessary. The PCA can, if necessary, take up a deserving case with a member of the Select Committee. As for the question of the "MP filter", I believe that hon. Members should take a case to the ombudsman only after they have taken it through the appropriate stages. I am not sure that the power to initiate investigations would add anything to the ombudsman's role.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal, who complained about the use of initials, acronyms and jargon. That drives us all absolutely mad. In common with other hon. Members present, I spent some time in local government and it is awful when people talk in a language completely incomprehensible to anyone not part of the same organisation. It is not just local government which is guilty of that. According to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, the way in which we have changed the whole structure of government through the next steps initiative has been the most successful reform in recent decades.

I accept, however, that we could have come up with a clearer name than "next steps". If we intend to put examples of what the parliamentary commissioner has said at the disposal of people, I wonder whether calling them epitomes is the most clear way of describing them.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Central raised the difficult case of court staff in Scotland. He recognised the constitutional difficulties, but he will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland wrote to the Chairman of the Select Committee on 8 December to say that he has decided to review the position and is consulting the Scottish judiciary. He will contact the Committee again in due course.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West and my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton spoke about commercial and contractual matters. The Government believe it appropriate to continue to exclude them from PCA jurisdiction, other than those concerning the compulsory acquisition of land or the disposal of surplus land acquired compulsorily. I will write to the Chairman of the Committee and hon. Members about that specific matter in more detail.

The points that hon. Members have made about the health service are extremely important and they have been noted by the Under-Secretary of State for Health. He has already made it clear today that the Government will respond soon to the Wilson report. Hon. Members will appreciate, however, that 600 responses have been received and it is important to ensure that they are considered carefully.

The debate has revealed our common belief that the parliamentary commissioner plays an important role in assisting Parliament to protect the individual citizen against the effects of maladministration. Sometimes he plays a crucial role in issues of national importance, but sometimes he plays a role in putting right a problem for an ordinary citizen which, to him or her, is equally important.

I express what I believe is the sense of the House: that Parliament has been well served by those who have been appointed ombudsmen, those who serve him on his staff and hon. Members on both sides of the House who serve on the Select Committee.

It being Ten o'clock MADAM SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Questions which she was directed by paragraph (5) of Standing Order No. 52 (Consideration of Estimates) to put at that hour.*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1994-95

Class XIII, Vote 4

Resolved,

That a supplementary sum not exceeding £45,825,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges that will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1995 for expenditure by the Department of Social Security on administration, for agency payments, the promotion of Government policy on disability issues, and for certain other services, including grants to local authorities and voluntary organisations.

VOTE ON ACCOUNT, 1995-96

Class XIX, Vote 4

Resolved,

That a sum not exceeding £4,277,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, on account, for or towards defraying the charges for the year ending on 31st March 1996, for expenditure of the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioners for England, Scotland and Wales on administrative costs.

It being after Ten o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the Questions which she was directed by paragraphs (1) and (2) of Standing Order No. 53 (Questions on voting of estimates etc.), to put at that hour.*

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1994-95

Resolved,

That a further supplementary sum not exceeding £1,230,882,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges for civil services which will come in course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1995, as set out in House of Commons Paper No. 3 of Session 1994-95.

ESTIMATES 1995-96 (VOTE ON ACCOUNT)

Resolved,

That a further sum not exceeding £95,393,674,000 be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund, on account, for or towards defraying the charges for defence and civil services in Classes I to XVIII, Class XIX, Votes 1 to 3 and 5 to 7, and Classes XIX, A and XIX, B for the year ending on 31st March 1996, as set out in House of Commons Papers Nos. 4, 5 and 6 of Session 1994-95.

Ordered,

That a Bill be brought in on the foregoing resolutions: And that the Chairman of Ways and Means, Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Jonathan Aitken, Sir George Young, Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory and Mr. Anthony Nelson do prepare and bring it in.

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Sir George Young accordingly presented a Bill to apply certain sums out of the Consolidated Fund to the service of the years ending on 31st March 1995 and 1996; And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time this day and to be printed [Bill 7.]

Orders of the Day

CONSOLIDATED FUND BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Motion made, and Question proposed, pursuant to Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills), That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Wood.*]

Employment Rights After Manic Depression

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

10.1 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker, for putting at the top of tonight's agenda the subject of employment rights after manic depression.

Each kind of disability has its own problems, challenges and opportunities but of none is that more true than of manic depression. I mean nothing but encouragement for concerns about other kinds of disability and for disability in general in raising this much-neglected part of the subject.

The Government's consultation document on disability said that a workable employment right should be based on a definition that, in principle, covers physical, sensory and mental impairments. I hope that the promised Bill, code of practice, notes of guidance and national disability council will deal more fully with mental illness than did either the consultation document or the Minister's statement on 24 November.

In the index of the House's proceedings I can find no record of the House of Commons having had a debate specifically on manic depression, or any aspect of it, in the past 10 years. More broadly, on mental illness, including depression, a recent Gallup survey showed that the general public believe that people with mental illness, including depression, should be at the bottom of the national health service priority list.

There is much straight ignorance. In still too many cases people are discharged from hospital without their families being told of the nature of their illness or even the necessary continuing drug regime. Neighbours and social workers unschooled in the symptoms of mental illness put outrageously anti-social behaviour down to avoidable malice. But, mercifully, many ordinary people are extraordinarily understanding, forgiving and helpful.

Attitudes are changing. In the past generation, there has been a much greater acceptance into the community of the mentally handicapped, who are more easily recognised than the mentally ill. In my constituency experience—first in a constituency on Teesside and later in Scotland—the changed attitude to mentally handicapped people has owed much to Catholic influence.

Mental illness is less easily recognised, but attitudes to it also appear to be changing. The younger generation show greater understanding and support than their elders. The sight of so many homeless people sleeping rough on our streets after discharge from psychiatric hospitals has been a great shock, giving the sense of, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

It is more widely appreciated that mental illness is as genuine as physical illness, and that it is not malingering. Indeed, evidence is accumulating on the possible physical causes and symptoms of different types of mental illness. During a visit last week to the Institute of Molecular Medicine at Oxford, as part of the inquiry into human genetics by the Select Committee on Science and Technology, it was interesting to speak to researchers who are applying the ideas and methods currently being pursued in developing somatic cell therapy for principal physical diseases such as cancer and cardiovascular diseases, to mental illnesses and handicap.

In addition to a normal distribution of human attributes generally, manic depression often appears to carry with it a heightened sensitivity and awareness, which has a wider function in day-to-day society and in the family, the community, the work group, business, democracy, committee, Parliament or football team. Employers take advantage of the energy, vitality, productivity and enterprise of people vulnerable to manic depression when their condition is under control. They may be qualities that we all need, but they can get out of hand in a manic depressive. Those are matters not only for objective medical and psychiatric research but for social accommodation and public understanding and for campaigning and organisation, of which we need to take account in framing social policy.

One per cent. of the population will suffer from manic depression during their lives, and another 1 per cent. from schizophrenia. Many more people suffer from acute, disabling depression, without manifesting the full symptoms of the manic depressive. About 20 per cent. of women and 10 per cent. of men can be expected to suffer from depression at some time during their lives.

Suicide is overwhelmingly associated with depression. Each year there are more than 100,000 attempted suicides in this country, of which 4,000 are fatal. That figure compares with 3,500 road deaths. Christmas is an especially difficult time for mentally ill people, when so many activities and services are closed.

The experience of each sufferer from manic depression is unique, but between the swings into manic elation and acute depression, manic depressives behave like anyone else. Their wish is to be accepted in society and to contribute to it fully, in every way, in work, at home and in their wider social life; often they succeed.

The characteristics of manic depression are frequently not noticed by people who already have a difficult enough job coping with normal problems—social workers, housing and social security officials, personnel managers, employers and trade union officials. I confess that it was many years before I learnt some of the obvious signs of mental illness myself, when constituents in trouble came to see me.

According to the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Royal College of General Practitioners, who can be expected to be objective about those matters, surveys show that 50 per cent. of those people suffering from clinical depression do not visit a doctor at all, and of those who do a further 50 per cent. are not diagnosed.

The cost of not treating depression has been estimated by the Office of Health Economics at about £3 billion per annum—nine times the £333 million cost of treating depression.

In his statement on 24 November, the Minister for Disabled People said:

> "Greater employment opportunities are at the heart of enabling disabled people".—[*Official Report*, 24 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 741.]

On 26 November, the Manic Depressive Fellowship held a useful forum on employment, which I attended. I shall tell the House about some of the things that were said and points that were made, there and elsewhere, by people who have suffered from manic depression.

Some people have to live with episodes of manic depression throughout life, but others are able or enabled to control it. They suffer from only a temporary incapacity, but they remain vulnerable. Care can be effective, but mental illness is not a high priority for community care in many parts of Britain. Manic depression is an illness that begins in adult life or late adolescence, so appropriate continuing and adult education is as necessary as appropriate school education is for other disabilities. Strategies for completing studies and achieving a professional or vocational qualification are important.

The perception of manic depressives is that if they go along to the jobcentre and say that they have had an episode of manic depression they will be steered towards low-paid, unskilled work. That is a common experience of graduates, accountants, lawyers, teachers, business managers and other professionals. Their true capabilities are not recognised or thought to be recoverable.

What specific practical help is offered to manic depressives under the access to work programme? It is good that the Department of Employment is willing to spend money on the disabled who need easily identifiable physical aids, but what will it do to boost the skills, performance and self-confidence of those whose productivity has been undermined by mental illness?

The Government's talk of civil rights education for the disabled makes no reference to the existing battery of legislation on mental health. Episodes of illness can provoke irresponsible behaviour which can endanger the safety of the patient and of others. Fortunately, patients can recover from manic depressive episodes, and from a medical and psychological point of view those people are fully able to resume their usual responsibilities. Unfortunately, much of society and some aspects of the law presume that once a person has gone mad, he will always be mad. People are awaiting the new mental health Bill with keen interest. I trust that its scope will be wide enough to accommodate the debate needed and to enact the conclusions that are reached.

If manic depressives are honest about their illness to their employers, or in seeking work if they are out of work, they find that the only work options that they will be offered are jobs well below their capabilities. To overcome that prejudice, many patients lie or tell less than the full truth. Consultant psychiatrists and general practitioners actively encourage manic depressives to do that. The practice has helped a good many manic depressives to very senior positions. Suggestions are made now about how to fill in gaps in curriculum vitae with less than the full truth.

Is it not right that people should have the right to say nothing of a long past episode of mental illness? If a discharged prisoner can legally keep silent about his record, why should not a discharged mental patient? Any legal requirement to tell people of mental health records should not extend back further than five years.

As long as the patient does not become ill in the workplace, the practice of lying or omitting to tell the truth can prove satisfactory to the employee and to the unwitting employer. However, if a patient becomes ill at work, or his psychiatric case history becomes known some other way, problems may occur. Neither the employee nor the employer would have made contingency plans to cope with the event of a mental health

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

emergency, and the employee would have committed a breach of contract by lying or by telling only part of the truth.

We need a clear legal framework that is fair to employees and to employers, but the industrial tribunal may not be the best place to resolve a dispute regarding a psychiatric patient. Industrial tribunals are pretty traumatic for those who are mentally stable. They would be horrendous for a psychiatric patient. Who would want their psychiatric case history to be laid before the tribunal, let alone read out in open court? There needs to be some legal remedy against employers who use the illness to discriminate. The mutual responsibilities of employer and employee are not clear and the lack of clarity acts as an effective artificial bar to the labour market.

The manic depressive is vulnerable in other ways. Far from easing someone who has been ill for a long time back into employment, the social security benefit system makes re-entry both difficult and risky. It is often better for someone who is getting over an episode of manic depression to re-enter the employment market gradually and cautiously. The possibility exists of retreat back to benefit should the move be premature or too stressful. If such people fail to hold down a job, they should not have to face all over again the barriers, delays and humiliations that the benefit system inflicts. The means should be found to provide people who are prepared to try entering employment after a long and severe illness with a safety net—that they will be able to return to invalidity benefit without waiting six months and going on the much lower income support.

In theory, the disability working allowance should offer a well-supported route upwards into employment but with a safety net for those people whose illness recurs. In practice, however, few manic depressives claim the allowance. Severe problems are connected with it. Its receipt depends on the understanding of the employer. That may be fine if a person is in a wheelchair or suffers from Down's syndrome but, as I have already said, the mentally ill are faced with major problems in relation to what to tell employers.

The number of manic depressives entering employment via the allowance route is minuscule. People who take that route are often no better off financially than they were when on benefit. Someone who has been covered for six months by a doctor's sick note should be on invalidity benefit and can do therapeutic, part-time work—for example, for a charity—and earn up to £15 per week pocket money without losing benefit. That would bring the disposable income of a single person up to £79 in round figures. In addition, one would be entitled to housing benefit and council tax rebate, both of which are valuable benefits.

If people on the allowance begin to work again, at most they will be only £1 to £2 better off than they were on invalidity benefit. The problems of the combined effects of tapers and clawbacks are well known, but they are especially crippling to vulnerable people. They amount to a 97 per cent. tax on additional earnings of more than £50 per week. It is small wonder that only 3,500 people with all kinds of disability are on the allowance. About the only thing that can be said in favour of the allowance is that, if people on it cannot sustain a job, it provides a safety net. They can go back immediately to the benefits to which they were formerly entitled.

Those problems have been argued for many years in relation to many sorts of disabled people, but fresh problems exist in the Social Security (Incapacity for Work) (General) Regulations, which were laid before the House on 24 November 1994 and which, no doubt, we shall debate soon under the affirmative procedure. The regulations omit people with severe mental health problems from the list of persons with a severe condition who are to be treated as incapable of work, despite an undertaking given to a number of organisations that persons with severe mental illness would not be subjected to the work test.

The effect of the regulations as drafted will be that persons with severe mental problems will be subjected to a work test, regardless of their mental state. The questionnaire that will be used to assess them has been widely criticised as inappropriate. Administering the questionnaire is likely to cause extreme distress to many severely ill patients. I cannot believe that the Government would allow the regulations to be the last word. I look forward to what the Minister has to say.

Good practices and pioneering projects on employment operate in many parts of the country and in many different fields. They play an invaluable role for those recovering from mental illness. Counselling and staff support schemes are now operated by some employers, offering confidential support to help individuals in employment to deal with problems that may be affecting their performance at work.

The cost of mental health problems to British employers is enormous. The Health and Safety Executive estimates that sickness certificates attribute 30 to 40 per cent. of absences from work to some form of mental or emotional disturbance. The Scottish Association for Mental Health has reviewed the experience of the counselling and staff support schemes. Obviously, such schemes can play an important role in keeping people well and productively employed.

Many employers in Scotland operate staff support schemes in all or some of their establishments. They include British Telecom, United Distillers, Scottish Mutual, BBC Scotland and Marks and Spencer. The Working Well trust in Tower Hamlets supports employment and training in printing, clothing manufacturing, office services and shops and is now branching out with a new project in Bath. The Mental After Care Association runs a wide range of activities nationwide, some of which are directed at employment and training.

Another route that many manic depressives find useful is the voluntary work that is available in a wide variety of organisations. It offers them a start on the road back to regular employment. It is often not the content of the work but the availability of a supportive working community that is important.

Those who have been mentally ill want to return to a normal social and working life. They do not want to be stranded in a ghetto. The contracting-out revolution has made work insecure for a great many people and the mentally ill are not the only ones who suffer. However, on the way back into employment, the contracting-out revolution makes it possible for some people gradually to re-enter the labour market in some skilled and professional areas. Good employment practices for contracting out services by the fully fit require clear task setting, milestones, delegated responsibility and an interest in and encouragement of progress. Those are doubly important for those who have been mentally ill.

Perceptive and enterprising practices are not limited to large firms. One of the best worked-out schemes that I have seen is in Context, the firm that is recording for posterity on compact disc our proceedings in the House. The employment offered by some firms is not undemanding. Some firms in the market for new high-tech skills realise that people who have had a breakdown can learn fast and perform well.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists and the Royal College of General Practitioners, in their current comprehensive defeat depression campaign, are seeking to raise awareness at work, to promote health education for employees, to address the organisational forums that create stress and to provide effective occupational health services. The Government should join forces with all those and other firms and agencies, many of whose activities they are already supporting in one way or another, to create a pilot scheme or schemes geared directly to the needs of manic depressives and their employers. They have done that with particular groups of the physically disabled. The evidence and experience gained can provide the basis for a national scheme that can be backed up with the proposed legislation and code of practice. It needs to be run by a multidisciplinary team and, of course, implementation should be done by those already active in and responsible for educating, training and re-establishing the manic depressives in employment. In that way, employers can get back-up when they need it and of the kind that they need.

The scope of individual schemes needs to be considered. At the point of delivery in a firm, a scheme covering a wider field—covering depression and mental illness generally—would have a wider scope and be more often used than a scheme for specific mental illnesses such as manic depression. The treatment needs of different illnesses differ greatly and it would be necessary to be able to call on those able to deal with the special needs of each of them.

In the guidance notes and in implementing the Government's code of practice, there would be scope for those several different kinds of people, who are all called disabled but whose particular problems, challenges and opportunities need to be addressed separately, to be served by a coherent set of schemes. Manic depression would be a good place to start because it has been neglected, because there is a potential to be realised and because there are people throughout the community who have a deep understanding of the condition that is so near to the centre of each of us.

10.25 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe) *rose—*

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): Would the Minister like to speak first? I do not mind, it is near Christmas.

Miss Widdecombe *indicated dissent.*

Mr. McCartney: First, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) on his success in the ballot. I congratulate my hon. Friend not on the lucky draw but on the subject that he selected. For many years before I became a Member of the House, I was a voluntary advocate for people suffering from mental illness and stress. Indeed, in my family today, through my wife, that role of working with people who suffer from mental stress continues.

I welcome this opportunity, therefore, especially as this is my first speech in my new portfolio as spokesperson for employment. Previously, I had been spokesperson for health. I did not expect my first debate in my new capacity to be so directly related to my previous portfolio as Labour party spokesperson on occupational and mental health. Although it is late in the evening and few other hon. Members are here to support either the Minister or me, I welcome a debate in which we can have a dialogue on the serious issues that my hon. Friend raised.

It is important to set a background to mental stress at work and what has been happening during the 1980s and 1990s. We now know from various reports that upwards of 1 million British workers suffer from work-related stress as a direct result of Government activities and the labour market changes in the 1980s and 1990s. Employees in full-time work are now working harder and longer hours than ever before. Redundancy, short-term working, part-time working, temporary or part-time and temporary low-paid jobs produce a sense of a loss of security and an overwhelming sense of insecurity at work. That has led to—it is continuing—increased stress at work, including manic depression.

That is the view of not just the Labour party, the trade unions, the advocacy groups representing people at work with a mental illness, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Royal College of Nursing and the Health Select Committee; it is shared across a range of activities. Interestingly, a recent report, highlighted in *The Times*, was produced by Professor Cooper of the university of Manchester's institute of science and technology on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive—an organisation directly responsible to the Government, which advises them on stress at work and on health and safety issues in general. Professor Cooper, in his report to the Health and Safety Executive, said:

> "the situation was probably worse in Britain than in America as the country had gone through greater change."

That relates to the Labour market changes imposed by the Government. He said:

> "The Thatcher era had been marked by technological and economic change and the country was also facing substantial social changes. The incidence of work-related stress had increased markedly in the past 20 years and more people were taking sick leave because of anxiety . . .
>
> 'Those on the shopfloor work till they drop while senior managers take a few days off every now and then'".

That report was produced by an eminent professor, on behalf of the United Kingdom's most eminent independent Government-related body dealing with health and safety.

Last year, citizens advice bureaux in the United Kingdom answered 882,257 queries about employment problems. That is an astonishing figure for a voluntary organisation, and it does not count those who consulted trade union or other employment organisations or sought the help of their doctors, the Royal College of Psychiatrists or advocacy groups. It suggests the existence of a deep-seated, underlying problem in the British economy: people's sense of insecurity is manifesting itself in stress and mental illness.

[Mr. McCartney]

Again, that is the view not just of the organisations that I mentioned. A recent report in *The Guardian* by Tim Radford stated that in Britain workers were suffering the worst levels of stress in Europe. It stated:

> "British white-collar workers have the lowest 'feelgood' factor in Europe, according to a survey of office workers".

The survey was carried out throughout the world, but Mr. Radford referred particularly to Europe. He said:

> "More than half claim stress has increased in the past two years, and 16 per cent. admit it has caused them to take time off. Thirty-seven per cent. do not feel appreciated at work, against a European average of 29 per cent. Confidence in management ability is 53 per cent., against 69 per cent"

in other European countries.

British workers felt that their jobs were less safe—they felt less secure about being able to remain in employment—than their European counterparts, which led to increased mental stress at work.

The Policy Studies Institute's survey of 1993, which I am sure the Minister read, revealed two startling facts. About one in three employees reported significant stress levels owing to working conditions, while 54 per cent. felt that their level of stress had increased over the past five years. The Department of Health and the CBI estimate that sickness absence related to stress and mental disorder is costing the United Kingdom economy a staggering £56 billion per annum. That does not count on-costs such as medication, benefits, high staff turnover and poor judgment leading to bad decision making.

The Department of Health also states that mental illness is one of the main three causes of certificated sick leave, with a consequent loss of 91.5 million working days in the British economy. In 1993, the number of working days lost through strikes was 649,000. Those, too, are staggering figures.

The situation has become so acute that the International Labour Organisation, which brings together union, employer and Government representatives, has said that

> "the time has clearly come for a shift in attention in occupational health prevention activities away from a 'physical hazards only' perspective to a focus which includes full attention to psychosocial hazards".

In layman's terms, that points to a large increase in the number of people suffering from mental illness and stress in the workplace. We need to ensure that organisations such as the Health and Safety Executive, and indeed the Government, bear in mind the key subject of mental stress when making policy: it is as important and damaging in the workplace as accidents and other forms of illness. The Trades Union Congress and its general secretary, John Monks, have identified occupational stress as one of the top five health and safety priorities. Mr. Monks and various trade unions have a team to advise them on how to tackle the problem through the development of prevention strategies.

A research review of occupational stress by Professor Tom Cox for the Health and Safety Executive reported that there was too strong a focus on caring for or curing individuals and that

> "only a minority of organisations appeared to be directly and deliberately addressing the management of occupational stress."

Professor Cox, on behalf of the Health and Safety Executive, said that there was a need for intervention policies in industry, involving employers and employees, to create a programme for the prevention of stress and a comprehensive package of care in the workplace. Where stress had not been prevented, it was necessary to ensure that sympathetic policies were followed so that individuals suffering from mental stress were able to continue in work, either full time or part time, as described in detail by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South.

I shall deal now with the discrimination suffered by citizens with a disability such as manic depression. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South spent a great deal of time outlining the problem, and rightly so. The level of discrimination against those suffering from mental illness or a perceived mental illness is a challenge for policy makers of all political persuasion. One and a half million people with disabilities are without a job and are not in training. People with a psychiatric history experience severe discrimination in the employment market. Those recovering from mental distress need help to find ways back to work and may need support in the workplace so that they can work on equal terms with other employees.

A survey of users and ex-users of mental health services carried out by MIND, the National Association for Mental Health, found that there was a massive exclusion of such people from the workplace as a mental health disability was seen as relevant to the ability to do a job. Sixty-three per cent. of people felt that their job prospects were affected by their history while the unemployment rate among ex-patients was found to be sometimes as high as a staggering 62 per cent. The most poignant fact to come out of the survey was that one third of those suffering from mental stress said that finding a job was the single most important thing that could assist them back to health and help them to regain their dignity.

Why is employment such a low priority for health and social services funding? Users of mental health services regard employment and training as high priorities, but, of the 554 projects funded by the mental illness specific grant, only 19 are employment related. That is a travesty, and the problem is compounded by the fact that the Employment Service restricts the funding of rehabilitation programmes to 13 weeks' crude targeting of the funding criteria. It is leading to severe discrimination against users and former users of mental health services.

There is a danger under community care that the Government will declare that many people are too well to be dealt with by the health services but too unemployable to be helped by the Employment Service, which means that they will fall between two stools and fail to get access to employment and training opportunities.

People suffering from mental illness require the Government to initiate an action plan. They need urgent policy initiatives by the Departments of Employment, Health and the Environment to rectify the lack of co-operation between Government-funded agencies and to provide employment and training opportunities. We need a redefinition of mental distress at work as an occupational health issue, which would mean enforceable codes of good practice involving support at work. I shall explain what is required in a moment, but it is important at this stage to point out that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South said, there are employers—large and small—that already have in place model agreements with their work force to ensure that there is a policy for the prevention of stress and mental illness and that, when people are suffering, there is a code of practice agreed between the employers and employees.

The Post Office has one of those codes of practice, which I advise other employers to read. It represents a way forward with regard to preventing mental stress or dealing with it so as to ensure continuity of employment for the individuals concerned, if possible, or at least to ensure that they are treated with dignity in the workplace during a period of mental stress.

The first aspect of the code is interesting, as it clearly shows the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive, through the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974. It says:

> "The parties to this agreement recognise that stress at work is a health and safety problem and that employers have a duty under *Section 2* of the *Health and Safety at Work Act* to take all reasonably practicable measures to prevent stress at work. Under *Section 7* of the *Act* employees have a duty not to endanger themselves or others and to co-operate with their employer in meeting statutory requirements."

The Post Office is an employer that implicitly accepts that causing mental stress and mental illness at work because of poor conditions of employment is a breach of health and safety legislation. It is to be commended for accepting that responsibility.

The code says much more. It specifically sets out positive measures that the employer will take to ensure that an individual suffering from mental stress can remain in the workplace during a period of treatment, with opportunities to work full or part time, by agreement. There are also practical measures to be taken by the employer to eradicate aspects of workplace activity that are leading to mental stress or to an escalation of mental stress, culminating in illness. That is a major step forward and the Post Office, and its employees represented through their unions, are to be congratulated on that model agreement.

Some of the other aspects of an action plan to ensure good support and good practice at work are as follows: extending paid sick leave; provision for retraining or other assistance to enable an individual to continue his or her job or to undertake another job; contacting appropriate Government services and health services for advice, and discussing with an employee whether he or she can continue in the same job or needs to receive special assistance to continue in work. Counselling, too, must be a major aspect of that activity. Those employed in counselling by the employer must, none the less, be independent of the employer and must provide a confidential counselling service to the individual concerned.

There should be provision for special arrangements when employees return to work—for example, flexibility in the times of leaving and arrival; a phased return to work, allowing individuals to come back, probably part time, extending attendance to full time later; extending rest periods for people who wish to continue in work while receiving treatment for their illness, which may be stress related; and exploring the possibility of finding an alternative job, or part-time work, when an employee is unable to continue with his or her existing job.

Those are all practical ideas, and if they were adopted by most employers in the United Kingdom, they would go a long way towards meeting many of the needs described by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South on behalf of sufferers from depression who are in employment and wish to remain in employment, or who are out of work but wish to return to the work force.

It is also important to examine other aspects of the way in which we organise our employment and training services in the community, to ensure that those services are designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities, especially people who suffer from mental illness or mental stress from time to time. The Department of Employment must act as a facilitator and catalyst at the local level to bring together the Department, local authorities and other agencies to ensure that there is a strategic responsibility at local level for collaboration on, and provision of, specialist resources for employment opportunities for people with mental illness. There must be a direct link between health, social care and employment.

As I said earlier, the report by MIND stated that one of the most important aspects of the social care of mental illness was the ability to have access to training and worthwhile employment; bringing social care and employment together had a dramatic effect in improving an individual's overall health. That is particularly important for people who suffer from manic depression.

To help mental health services users become involved in, or to re-enter, the labour market, all training and enterprise councils should employ specialist disablement resettlement officers. I support the TEC movement and I know that many TECs do that. However, determining the level of that input in a particular TEC is usually left to a reliance on the keenness of the individuals on the ground.

We must ensure that such provision does not simply rely on a commitment at local level by individuals in a TEC. All TECs must have minimum levels of standards in terms of the deployment of disablement resettlement officers to ensure that there is a coherent strategic approach to retraining and re-entry to the marketplace by people suffering from mental illness.

It is therefore important to consider the record of TECs in the provision for disabled people. Where we can improve things, we should surely do that. We should give TECs tasks with regard to this difficult area of the employment market. We should clearly define the right to quality assessment of rehabilitation and training for work or college-based schemes for people with mental illness. It is essential that they can enter, and have easy access to, training, but it must be quality training and it must fit in with the employment needs of the individual.

There is nothing worse than for someone suffering from a mental illness to be put into a scheme that is going nowhere and has poor training and, at the end of it, poor opportunities for entering the marketplace and for getting employment. That is a rejection and it undermines the well-being and mental health of the person concerned.

For many people who have suffered mental illness in the past and are looking for a way back into the workplace, proper training schemes are an important aspect of that rehabilitation programme. I would welcome the Minister of State's comments on the specific action that she would like TECs to take to become involved in that aspect of activity with regard to mental stress at work and getting people with mental illness back into the workplace.

My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South quite rightly raised the issue of anti-discrimination legislation. We look forward to seeing precisely what is

[Mr. McCartney]

in the Government's mind with regard to their Bill this Session. As a minimum standard, I hope that it will ensure the prohibition of discrimination in respect of selection, promotion or dismissal of people suffering from mental stress in employment.

It is important that the Government use that Bill as a clear message to employers not to use mental stress as an easy means to sack employees. Instead, employers should take the positive attitude of prevention of mental stress at work and model agreements between themselves and the employees and employee representatives to ensure that, when mental stress arises, it is eradicated and that it is not, in any circumstances, used as an easy method of dispensing with individuals or a group of individuals in the workplace.

The marginalisation and exclusion of people with a mental health problem, or a perceived mental illness, from the labour market is an overwhelmingly significant factor in undermining their rights to participate in society as a whole. In 1995 and for the remainder of the decade, we will still see, tragically, the continuation of the mass lock-out of people with a mental illness. We will also see the insidious and damaging health effects of long-term mass unemployment.

Of the 1 million people in the United Kingdom who have been unemployed for more than a year, many have experienced or will experience an impairment of their mental health—distress, feelings of depression, anxiety, irritability, sleep loss, inability to concentrate, a lack of or loss of confidence, and a strain in close personal relationships. They are direct consequences of unemployment and the Government's failure in labour force strategies.

It is an appalling indictment that young people may be passive about their plight in terms of unemployment, but that belies the major strains in family relationships and deep-seated feelings of anger which will eventually manifest themselves in individual or collective actions of hostility. Alienation is linked like an umbilical cord to mental health and suicide. The suicide figures, as my hon. Friend said, are a sobering indictment on society. Many young people feel total hopelessness about their lives and their ability to be seen as a meaningful part of society, and they end up taking their lives because of the alienation of unemployment in the community.

I hope that I have demonstrated that the Labour party is genuinely in the business of advocating co-operation with employers, employees, users and ex-users of mental health services, to ensure appropriate, genuine access, free from discrimination, to training, rehabilitation and employment opportunities. I hope that the Minister will rise to the occasion and give a clear indication that the Government, at long last, will take seriously the growing scandal of mental stress at work and, with it, the cost in human terms and to the British economy.

10.51 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I congratulate the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) on obtaining the debate and on using it for the purpose that he chose. He put his case in a sensitive, moderate and thoughtful way, which contrasted somewhat with the ranting which emanated from the Opposition Front Bench.

Before addressing the general issues surrounding mental illness and manic depression in so far as they relate to employment, I shall refer to some specific points that have been raised. One or two specific points were more properly for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education with respect to one point, and my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People. Nevertheless, because there is rather more interdepartmental co-operation than the Opposition spokesman gave us credit for, I will be able to answer other points raised under those other departmental responsibilities.

Clearly, how the consultative document will translate into law is a matter on which I cannot give detailed advance notice tonight, even if I had all the details at my disposal. However, there will indeed be guidance to employers about the implications of employing people with different types of mental illness and the types of reasonable adjustment that could be made in respect of employing them. We do not yet know whether that will be guidance or a formal code, as the hon. Gentleman requested, but there will be guidance, and it will not just be on mental illness en bloc. There will be guidance in respect of different types of mental illness. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is reassured on that point.

I support what the hon. Gentleman said about the public perception of depression. I think that that spills over into employers' perceptions of depression and how it affects the individual's ability to work. I hope that the disability legislation which we will be introducing in the current Session will focus employers' minds on the issue.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of access to work and suggested that, whereas the scheme does very well by the physically disabled, perhaps it is less efficient in assisting those with mental illness. The scheme makes provision for support workers to attend in the workplace people with mental problems, or those who have had problems in the past. The support workers smooth people's transition into work, set up communications with colleagues and support them when they perhaps feel uncertain in the early stages.

However, the Government are always interested to hear further suggestions about what else the access to work scheme could provide. It is a highly successful scheme which has been broadly welcomed and generally praised, and we would be delighted to consider any suggested refinements to it. I am always willing to receive representations from the hon. Gentleman, either by correspondence or in person— as I told him earlier in the day.

The hon. Gentleman drew a comparison between a prisoner and a mental patient in terms of the information that must be revealed when applying for employment. He suggested that mental conditions did not need to be declared after five years. I point out to him that, even in the case of discharged prisoners, in some occupations it is possible to make inquiries about a person's previous convictions. I am sure he will agree that one cannot make a sweeping generalisation: in certain circumstances— particularly where the safety of others is concerned— it may be appropriate to inquire about someone's medical history, including his or her mental medical history.

The hon. Gentleman asked for a clear legal framework on discrimination. I hope that he will not be disappointed with the Government's disability legislation. He queried whether tribunals were the best place to hear claims for discrimination on grounds of mental disability.

The advantages of tribunals are that they are cheap, informal and, despite the hon. Gentleman's reservations, they are probably the simplest court in which to operate. It is possible to be represented either fully legally or at a lesser level, and I think that, if we are to make sense of anti-discrimination laws as they apply to disability, our tribunals already have ample experience in interpreting the niceties of discrimination law in respect of sex and race. Those bodies have experience in dealing with both employers and complainants.

Obviously at the moment I cannot set out the details of what redress will be available to complainants, how it will be available, and what the procedures will be. That will be made known when the legislation is finalised and brought before the House.

The hon. Gentleman queried the working of the disability working allowance. I share his disappointment at the low take-up generally—quite apart from the low take-up among those with mental illnesses. The figure is somewhat higher than he suggested: it is now 4,562. The Policy Studies Institute has released an encouraging report which states that, although take-up is low, the trend seems to show that the allowance is reaching the people whom it is meant to target. There is a note of cautious optimism there. Nevertheless, the Government have seized on the fact that the take-up of disability working allowance has not been as rapid or impressive as we would have liked. Therefore, various initiatives have been taken to ensure that DWA customers are better off in work rather than, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, possibly facing some sort of poverty trap.

We have now raised the threshold for single people from £43 to £54.75 a week. When that is implemented, it will raise the point at which single people float off DWA from just over £108 a week to £120 a week. We have also addressed the rate for couples and lone parents, whose allowances will be increased from £63.75 to £73.40 a week. We have also decided that DWA recipients with less than £8,000 in savings will now qualify for remission from NHS charges, bringing them into line with those receiving income support and family credit.

We have also adjusted child care elements. Earnings up to £40 a week will now not be taken into account when we calculate entitlement to family credit, housing benefit, council tax benefit and DWA. There have been various other initiatives which I will not go through in detail. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about those if he is interested.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the question of the statutory instrument which has been laid, and the issue of the procedures which those claiming invalidity benefit must go through if they are mentally—

Dr. Bray: Incapacity benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman is quite right. He raised the issue of the procedures that those claiming incapacity benefit have to go through if they are suffering from mental illness or disability. It is true that those procedures were not specified in the regulations, as it was not believed to be necessary to do so. It was never intended that the same questionnaires would have to be filled in by those suffering from mental illness. My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People has written to the Royal College of Psychiatrists to offer reassurance on that point and to say that, since the matter has caused concern, the explanation will now be made explicit through necessary amendments.

Dr. Bray: Will it be made explicit by including mental illness among the types of illness which do not require a works test?

Miss Widdecombe: I will have to write to the hon. Gentleman on that point, as that is the responsibility of my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People. I have been told that he has written today to the Royal College of Psychiatrists to offer the necessary reassurances, and to make it clear that those would be made explicit. I cannot comment on the exact nature of the wording to the hon. Gentleman and therefore I will have to write to him. I also entirely endorse the hon. Gentleman's support for supported employment and for sheltered workshops. I very much value those schemes, as do the Government. I endorse what he says about the efficiency of the schemes in dealing with people who are suffering from the type of disability that he mentioned.

I turn now—with some reluctance, I must admit—to the speech of the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). May I first congratulate him on his appointment, and secondly apologise for just not noticing him? He and I share one disadvantage, which is that when we are sitting behind the Dispatch Box, we disappear.

Mr. McCartney: The Minister should get a high chair.

Miss Widdecombe: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should get a high chair, as I totally failed to notice him.

Having noticed the hon. Gentleman and listened to his speech, I must say that I thought it introduced a jarring note into what had been, up to that point, a series debate. The hon. Gentleman tried to lay the blame for mental illness, suicide and just about every other disaster which could befall an individual at the door of the Conservative Government. I regard that as a trivialisation of an extremely serious subject, which had been receiving a proper debate in the House until that moment.

Mr. McCartney: Will the Minister give way ?

Miss Widdecombe: I listened to the hon. Gentleman—

Mr. McCartney *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) knows full well that if the hon. Member who has the Floor does not give way, he must resume his seat.

Miss Widdecombe: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Since the hon. Gentleman raised so many issues, some of them should be addressed. We heard the old myth that part-time work is a source of stress and is somehow second-rate work. That assumption completely ignores the results of the labour force survey, which is completely independent and is not written by the Government. That survey found that 87 per cent. of those who are in part-time work are not in that work because they could not find a full-time job. I should have thought that, given

[Miss Widdecombe]

the subject of the debate, the hon. Gentleman would have welcomed the availability of part-time work because it offers opportunities for precisely the type of people we have been talking about—people suffering from specific types of illness—to ease themselves back gently into the workplace.

Mr. McCartney: Will the Minister give way?

Miss Widdecombe: No. I listened in silent disbelief to the hon. Gentleman's rant and I now intend to address his points without taking any further nonsense from him.

The hon. Gentleman then said that the British feel very much worse than their European colleagues because of their employment situation. What an extraordinary comment, when we have a lower than average European unemployment rate and a high percentage of part-time work. It is all very well making comparisons of how workers feel appreciated at work, but the first and most important thing is to ensure that they have work in the first place. We appear to be doing rather well on that point.

The hon. Gentleman then called for a proper Government strategy. I can only conclude that he has never read "The Health of the Nation", in which we made mental illness one of the five key areas; set targets for improving the health and social functioning of mentally ill people; set a target to reduce the suicide rate of the mentally ill by 33 per cent. by 2000; and set out a three-year public information strategy to try to combat stigma and attitudes, in which we aim to increase understanding, reduce stigma and help users to understand their rights and responsibilities.

The hon. Gentleman then raised the issue of training—at that point I had sympathy with his remarks. The training and enterprise councils operating agreement requires TECs to ensure that suitable high-quality training for work is made available to all participants who are shown by assessment to have disabilities or other special needs. That specifically includes people with mental health problems. I agree with him that we must monitor that agreement carefully to ensure that it is realised in the practice as much as in the theory. I share that aspiration.

People with disabilities, including those with mental health problems, are eligible for training for work, regardless of how long they have been unemployed. They also have recruitment priority for suitable places. About 11 per cent. of people who start training for work have a disability; that is an encouraging statistic, but it is one on which we could obviously build.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about interdepartmental co-operation. An inter-agency group has been set up by the Government, which advises on improving mental health in the workplace. The Government are working to improve employers' awareness of mental health issues. In November 1994, which was not a million years ago, we published the "ABC of Mental Health in the Work Place". In October, the Secretary of State chose the subject of mental health to speak on at the Confederation of British Industry conference. In July, the Department of Health ran a stand on mental health in rural areas at the royal agricultural show. None of that detailed attention is the mark of a Government who are ignoring the issue.

I should now like to consider the serious speech of the debate and to answer the points raised by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South. We recognise that manic depression is a serious mental illness and a serious disability. It causes profound changes in mood. It can swing an individual from severe depression and deep lethargy to high elation and over-activity. Such mood changes significantly affect a person's ability to function in all aspects of life, including the workplace. The illness typically follows the pattern of remission and relapse, but it can generally be controlled by mood-stabilising medication. Consequently, people who even have severe manic depression can often function perfectly well for much of the time.

People who have the illness are covered by the same employment legislation as those with other disabilities and they can benefit from Government help that is available to disabled people in the labour market. Current legislation on the employment of disabled people is contained in the disabled persons employment legislation that we introduced this year, under which the quota scheme was established. Hon. Members may recall that the scheme imposes a duty on all employers with 20 or more employees to employ registered disabled people as 3 per cent. of those employed. It is abundantly clear, however, that the scheme is not working as intended and does not meet the needs of disabled people.

The quota scheme does not take account of people who become disabled while in employment as the enforceable duties relate only to recruitment and dismissal. In addition, many disabled people think that the entire approach of the scheme stereotypes and stigmatises them.

People with disabilities are increasingly asserting the wish to be treated as individuals and to train and work alongside non-disabled people. They wish to earn their own living in productive jobs on the basis of their abilities. This change in the aspirations of disabled people has increased their reluctance to register as disabled. There are now only about 1 per cent. of registered disabled people in the labour force, many fewer than would allow the 3 per cent. quota to operate as it was originally designed.

My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibilities for disabled people has therefore announced that we intend to replace the quota scheme with a new statutory right that will protect disabled people from unjustifiable discrimination in employment. We know from the response to our consultation document, which was published in July, that the measure will win the support of many disabled people and their representatives. It will be a major step forward in improving the work position of people with disabilities.

The legislation that we propose to introduce will make it unlawful for an employer to treat a disabled person less favourably than a non-disabled person unless there are justifiable reasons for the difference of treatment. Employers will be required to make a reasonable adjustment to the workplace or to working practices where to do so would help to overcome the practical effects of an individual disability.

Under that legislation, disabled people who consider that they have been the victims of discrimination in employment will be able to make a complaint to an industrial tribunal, as I have already said. The proposals and remedies will be broadly the same as those in relation to complaints under other discrimination legislation. The

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service will similarly offer the full range of its conciliatory services. We shall be consulting on a statutory code of practice to accompany the new Bill. We shall take into account representations such as those made by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South this evening. The consultation will be painstaking and thorough. We shall want to be sure that the code takes account of the views and needs of the fullest range of people with disabilities and their representative organisations, and of employers, on good employment practice.

Dr. Bray: I am glad to hear the Minister's intentions. I hope that she will listen also to my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). I assure the hon. Lady that he is a sensitive, active and able advocate on behalf of the causes of which she is speaking.

Miss Widdecombe: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's courtesy to his colleague. I shall read what the hon. Member for Makerfield said. If I can extract anything from it that appears to be a sensible proposal, I shall, of course, take it into account. Most of it, however, will be lost in the rhetoric of how the Government are responsible for all ills.

Mr. McCartney: Pathetic.

Miss Widdecombe: The speech was indeed rather pathetic—I found it so.

The new right will apply to persons with a physical or mental impairment that is long term or recurring and has a substantial effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. It will not, therefore, apply to someone with a temporary disability, such as a broken leg, but people with a long-term substantial or recurring depressive illness—hence manic depression—would be covered.

More generally, the Government would always encourage employers to treat all their employees with the consideration due to them, and to adopt fair and objective personnel policies which maintain a high degree of employee morale and commitment. A comprehensive framework of statutory employment protection rights exists to safeguard employees against unreasonable treatment by their employers, and naturally that applies to individuals with a disability in the same way as it does to other employees. The Government have recently extended and enhanced those rights, including especially provisions in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993.

We are committed to safeguarding legitimate rights of employees, but we must be careful not to damage employment opportunities by imposing excessive financial and administrative burdens on employers. We are satisfied that the current employment protection legislation strikes the correct balance between the rights of employees and the costs to employers, but we stand by our long-term policy of educating and persuading employers to implement good practice in the employment of disabled people.

We aim to enable disabled people to progress as far and as fast as their talents and capabilities allow. The Employment Service network of placing, assessment and counselling teams will continue their work with employers, providing specialist advice and helping them to adopt good policies and practices. Significant progress has already been made, with more than 950 employers now using the disability symbol—twice as many as did so this time last year.

We have debated much tonight about what should be done, but perhaps one should also consider what has been achieved and pay tribute to that. I believe that the introduction of disability working allowance, the carer's premium in income support, the improvements that we made during the passage of the TURER Act, the disability symbol, the work done by placing, assessment and counselling teams and the continuing support that we give to Remploy and other organisations provide solid evidence of our commitment to disabled people. More than 53,000 disabled people were helped to find work last year by Employment Service advisers.

The debate has been useful, and for the most part constructive. I repeat my congratulations to the hon. Member for Motherwell, South. I am glad to be able to share many of his aspirations and I hope that, in turn, he will give a genuine and enthusiastic welcome when our Disability Bill comes before the House.

Pig Industry

11.17 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I am pleased, as a result of the luck of the draw, to speak so early in the Adjournment debate following the Consolidated Fund measures, when the House voted a further total of about £146 million for Government expenditure by various Departments of State. If my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning), the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who is to reply to the debate, could have won just one tenth of that amount for the pig farmers of this country, my speech would not be necessary.

It is no bad thing to start a speech with an undisputed fact. British farmers are the most efficient in the world. However, farmers everywhere have a reputation for being prophets of gloom. Even so, no one can deny—not even I, as a farmer, and one with an interest to declare in that respect, though not as a pig farmer—that in the past two years agriculture has received considerable benefits from the devaluation of the green pound and that on the whole business has been very good. Arable farmers did well this summer because the weather was kind for once.

Things have not, however, been good for the pig industry, whose fortunes are very low at present. Peaks and troughs have always been a feature of pig farming, but the current trough has been deeper and longer than any others that I can remember. Pig producers financial losses, coupled with existing and pending legislation on nitrates in water, slurry storage and sow stalls is making them consider carefully whether they can continue as pig farmers.

It was clear to me from talking to pig farmers in my constituency only last Friday that specialist pig producers are losing money for the second year running and some may even face bankruptcy. Many of them farm on quite a small scale and quite small acreages and do not have the luxury of being able to diversify into other farm enterprises.

The continuing low level of pigmeat prices has been largely due to a long period of oversupply. The pig herds of European Union states have increased, while here the size of the herd has remained static. The latest EU survey now anticipates a Community-wide fall in the breeding herd which may lead to reductions in 1995, but that is unlikely to result in a big enough increase in prices to stave off a disaster facing the UK pig industry.

To illustrate the problem on prices, I quote from a note from the National Farmers Union provided by Dafydd Owen, the NFU pig adviser. I thank him for the help that he has given me with the figures. He says:

> "The cost of producing pigmeat in Britain is estimated at around 105 pence per kilo when fully costed and including depreciation of capital. The Average All Pigs Price, which is a weighted average of the prices paid for pigs in the UK, has only exceeded this for one month out of the last 16. The AAPP in the week ending 10 December"—

just recently—

> "is 102 pence, producers are therefore continuing to lose money on the pigs they produce."

Those losses are market related, but the market has been distorted, first by unfair competition from Europe, particularly Holland, Denmark and France, and secondly, by the self-inflicted burdens of British legislation.

I know that the Government are committed to ensuring fair competition among member states. The common agricultural policy rules must be obeyed at home and when other member states cheat they must be punished. I welcome the fact that as a result of pressure from the Government the European Commission has opened proceedings against a package of state aids to French pig farmers and that the Commission has ruled against the schemes and has demanded the repayment of aid paid illegally. That is welcome, but there is further action that I would like to hear that Her Majesty's Government will take.

In 1991, the House approved regulations which ruled that breeding sows should not be kept in close confinement systems as they were detrimental to the welfare of the animals. I accept that those regulations will not be revoked, but their economic impact can be reduced without compromising the principles that they encompass.

I am also happy that the Government have undertaken not to introduce any further unilateral farm welfare measures which could undermine the competitive position of our producers. That is precisely what the Welfare of Pigs Regulations do. They ban the use of stalls and tethers but give the industry until 1998 to phase them out. Those regulations have been followed by action in Europe and an EC directive now bans the use of tethers in the EU from 1 January 2006. It does not ban the use of stalls. A ban on tethers will therefore not come into force until seven years after the Welfare of Pigs Regulations 1991 have banned the use of stalls and tethers in the UK.

Imported pigmeat produced using restricted systems will have a cost advantage over our domestic product and imports are likely to win an expanded market share. The economic impact of the regulations on the UK is devastating. The Meat and Livestock Commission estimated that the additional cost of the regulations will be up to £2.70 per pig sold. That is the equivalent to between 15 and 50 per cent. of the annual profit margin. The ban will therefore absorb a significant proportion of the profits, if any, in good years; and when the pig cycle is on the downturn it will merely exacerbate the losses.

The sum of £2.70 per pig is equivalent to more than £1 per sow per week or £2,000 per month for a 500-sow herd. It is estimated that at least 40 per cent.—about 300,000 sows—of the British breeding herd are still kept in stalls with tethers. The total cost of the ban will amount to more than £15 million a year across the industry and will seriously damage the competitiveness of British pig production. In comparison, 90 per cent. of Danish sows are housed in close confinement systems and discussions with Danish industry representatives show that a ban on the use of tethers is not expected to have a major impact.

The MLC estimates that a 10 per cent. fall in pigmeat production in the United Kingdom would weaken our balance of payments by about £100 million—and that excludes the impact of any loss of employment and added value in the processing and manufacturing sectors. There will also be a tremendous impact on individual businesses. The production of pigmeat has become specialised and the backbone of the industry is the hard core of large and efficient producers. Within the UK, 80 per cent. of pigmeat is marketed by fewer than 20 per cent. of producers. The impact of the ban will not be even; those most affected will be the innovators and the committed pig producers, rather than the laggards in the industry, of which there are a few.

What am I asking the Government to do? First, they should amend the regulations to allow the use of stalls for 35 days post-weaning to ensure maximum protection for sows immediately after weaning and during the service period. Secondly, the re-phasing of the ban should be timetabled to harmonise with the European Union tethers-only ban, which does not come into force until 1 January 2006. I should like a firm commitment this evening that Ministers will press to have the EU directive reviewed at the earliest opportunity, with a view to the rules being brought into line with our own, or the ban on the use of stalls and tethers in the UK should be delayed until 1 January 2006.

The third action relates to financial help for pig producers. The amendments that I have suggested will not remove the need for reinvestment by most pig producers of more than £200 per sow. Financial support is necessary to offset that cost. That could be achieved either by introducing a grant scheme or through the taxation system. Currently, expenditure on capital investment may be depreciated at only 4 per cent. per annum when calculating the tax liability of the business. That should be increased to at least 10 per cent. All external fixtures and fittings necessary to replace stalls and tethers should be treated as plant and machinery so that they can be depreciated at a rate of 25 per cent. per annum. Better still, such expenditure could be treated as revenue expense and entirely offset against the earnings of the business.

The other financial help that could be given to pig producers is through the farm and conservation grant scheme operated under objective 5a. That EU regulation allows grant assistance for investments made to improve welfare, but that is not included in the FCGS. I should like the Government to extend the FCGS to include the reinvestment necessary to meet the requirements of the welfare of pigs regulations.

One other measure, which is a Treasury rather than MAFF matter but on which I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to comment, would be to enable the industry to carry back losses for three years to bring its personal taxation into line with corporation tax. The last measure that I want the Government to consider is a degree of compensation from EU farmers for those being forced to leave the industry because we have been unable to level the pig playing field.

On the positive side, at the Smithfield show a year ago I was pleased to see the launch of the British quality assured pigmeat initiative—BQAP—in which all parts of the British pigmeat industry have co-operated. There are already encouraging signs that that initiative will develop successfully.

Britain's processors, retailers and producers are working to distinguish British pigmeat from that of our competitors on the grounds of higher quality and welfare standards. They also take every opportunity to add value to their pigmeat products for the benefit of everyone in the production and marketing chain. That will help to improve pig prices, but many producers will not be there to enjoy the improvement if the Government do not seriously consider and, I hope, implement the measures that I have outlined this evening.

On Friday I went to see my pig farmers. I have always enjoyed going to a pig roast. I do not enjoy being the roast, but that is what I was last Friday evening. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, is replying to the debate. I did a little in 1992 to help to get her elected and I hope that she will do a great deal to help the pig farmers of the United Kingdom.

11.30 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on obtaining his debate early in the evening. It certainly helps me, and I am sure that it helps the Minister.

The Labour party's view is that it will be best for the animals if the ban on sow stalls and tethers is maintained in Britain. We appreciate the position of the Government on the issue. They made a stand vis-à-vis our European Union allies, but possibly they went a little too far. I cannot criticise the Government for doing that. However, we should press strongly to have the same rules within Europe. It is not right that we should protect our animals if we can then import animals from the European continent which have been treated far worse.

We agree with the hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside that use of stalls should be allowed for 35 days after birth. Research seems to show that that is best for the offspring of the sows. If it is confirmed that that is the case, we shall support such a proposal.

We believe that the tax regime should be exactly the same in Britain as in our European competitor countries. I hope that the Minister will agree to do everything that she can to make sure that the tax regimes will be the same.

"Level playing field" is perhaps a phrase that should be banned within these four walls. However, it is possibly the best way of describing what should be the case. It helps no one and it certainly does not help the animals if unfair treatment is exported to other countries. The animals suffer just as much in other countries as in Britain. Our animal welfare conditions are on the whole better than those of any other country in Europe. It is important that we in Britain make sure that our animals in Britain are treated as well as they can be. Our farmers would support that. Animal welfare organisations do so, but I hope that there is no support for exporting to other countries poorer treatment of animals. I am sure that the Minister will consider that point.

Mr. Colvin: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but one of the most active animal welfare organisations is Compassion in World Farming. Should it not turn its attention to the world, rather than concentrating—as it seems to do—entirely on the United Kingdom? Ports are picketed and ferry companies are threatened in order to prevent the export of live animals. Yet the UK animal transport regime is probably better than any in the world. Would it not be a good idea for welfare groups to turn their attention to the continent, where so much abuse continues?

Mr. Jones: I agree that concerned individuals in the UK concentrate on conditions in this country. Sadly, if they got their way the conditions that they deplore would be exported to other countries, whose products the UK imports. The compassion that such organisations display should be directed at animals in other countries as well. By and large, British farmers have the interests of their livestock at heart. I should be loth to see the practices that the hon. Gentleman cited exported to other countries.

[Mr. Jones]

We have a responsibility to see that our animals are well maintained. It does no animal good to suffer the unfair treatment that the hon. Gentleman described in other countries. I welcome the Minister's response.

11.37 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Angela Browning): I am grateful for the opportunity provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) to debate the pig industry, and I thank him and the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) for their contributions.

Both mentioned sow stalls and tethers, which have been discussed under the EU directive. I am disappointed that it allows the continued use of tethers in member states until the end of 2005 and does not address stall systems. The UK voted against that directive because it falls far short of our high standards of animal welfare, which we have sought to extend throughout the Union.

My hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman stressed the importance of the UK's high standards and the need for unanimity among EU states so that competitive difficulties are not created between Union countries and the UK. I assure the House that we will continue to pressurise the EU to raise its standards to our high level.

We accept that farrowing crates make a valuable contribution to the welfare of piglets. We are funding research into alternative systems, but the risk of piglet mortality is too high to recommend any of them yet.

The Government appreciate the importance of our pig industry. It is a vital sector of agriculture, with total annual production amounting to 1 million tonnes of meat worth around £1 billion at the farm gate. It is a considerable industry. It runs neck and neck with poultry meat as the most popular meat in this country, and leads in most European countries. Annual production of pigmeat in the European Union is a staggering 14 million tonnes, twice the European level of poultry meat production.

I am, of course, aware that pig producers have had a very difficult time. My colleagues and I regularly meet individuals from the industry and the representative organisations. Hon. Members have, moreover, been assiduous in their representations on behalf of the industry. We are, therefore, very fully briefed and I have a great deal of sympathy for the industry's case, which my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside has outlined tonight.

My hon. Friend mentioned the pig cycle, whereby good profitability leads to herd expansion, increased supplies and, ultimately, falling producer prices; it is characteristic of the market. The recent period of low prices and poor profitability, which has affected pig industries throughout Europe, not just in Britain, has come about for exactly that reason. On this occasion, the trough in the pig cycle has lasted much longer than anyone in the industry expected. Cycles have their ups as well as their downs, and the signs are that a long-delayed improvement may now be under way. I am sure that we are all aware that the improvement is somewhat fragile. It is only in the past three weeks that we have seen a small rise in average pig prices, but that is most encouraging and we hope that the rise will continue.

The August pig survey results show that in most member states, weak prices have led to cuts in the breeding herd. This is most important. The total EU breeding sow numbers were 3 per cent. down on a year earlier and there were reductions in all countries except Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal.

Pig producers are in a sector that is very much reliant on the market. I know that, for the most part, they are pleased to operate with minimal interference from Government and from Brussels. For that reason, we are determined to ensure that our pig producers are not disadvantaged by other member states of the European Community paying illegal subsidies, however well hidden, to their industries. Hon. Members have mentioned that point; we consider it to be a matter of great importance.

When market conditions are poor, there are always rumours of illegal assistance. If we have any evidence at all, we take it up with the country concerned and with the European Commission. It is, after all, the Commission which has direct responsibility for policing the rules of the Common Market. We have questioned a number of countries—some have already been mentioned in the debate—including Spain, Italy, Denmark and Ireland. So far, only in the case of France have we obtained firm evidence of illegal aids to the pig industry. The example of the illegal French aid scheme demonstrates our commitment and enthusiasm on this point.

We first came across evidence of the French scheme in September 1993 and raised it in that month's pigmeat management committee. We have not let up since. My right hon. Friend, the then Minister, regularly raised it in the Council of Ministers and with Commissioner Steichen. We also pressed the point in every monthly management committee. The Commission eventually took action, under article 93(2) of the treaty, against a FF30 million interest relief scheme and the Stabiporc price stabilisation scheme. The Commission has ordered the French Government to recover aid paid illegally.

I hope that both my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside and the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West will be encouraged by the fact that we relentlessly pursued the matter because we believed that we had good evidence. We are pleased that the Commission has the evidence before it. We are now awaiting confirmation from the Commission that recovery of the money has started. We will not let France off the hook. French producers should not be able recklessly to expand their herds in the knowledge that their Government will rescue them. I assure the House that, if my Department is given information that stands up about any evidence of fraud or subsidies that put our industry at a disadvantage, in this or any other agricultural sector, we shall pursue it too. The free market works well in the pigmeat sector, and we are determined that it should operate without interference.

Concern exists, and has been expressed tonight, about the phasing out of sow stalls and tethers, particularly because our welfare requirements are stricter than those set out in the EC directive. The current rules stem from a private Member's Bill introduced in 1991 by the hon. Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body), with overwhelming parliamentary support. That Bill would have banned stall and tether systems within five years: it would have come into force in 1996.

We took the view that such a short phase-out period would be damaging to the industry, and pressed for a deadline that would give the industry time to make the adjustment at a containable cost. As a result, our regulations required the replacement of stalls and tethers by 31 December 1998. The Bill was withdrawn.

The recent long period of low profitability has, of course, affected the ease with which pig producers can comply with that extended timetable. We have received many representations on the point, some of which my hon. Friend has echoed tonight. It has been suggested, for instance, that the timetable should be extended to correspond with the EC directive; that would ban tethers by 2005, but not stalls. Such a proposal, however, ignores the clear view of Parliament, expressed in 1991 and confirmed in a debate on welfare regulations earlier this year. My hon. Friend recognised that there was unlikely to be any change, and I see no realistic prospect that the House will now adopt a different timetable.

It has also been put to us that sows should be kept in stalls during the early part of their confinement, on welfare and productivity grounds. The National Farmers Union recently produced a paper arguing exactly that point. We are reading the paper and taking veterinary advice on it; my officials will discuss it with the NFU shortly.

My hon. Friend mentioned the campaign for higher tax investment allowances. As I think he recognised, that is a matter for the Chancellor, and I am sure that my hon. Friend and other hon. Members will draw it to his attention. Many of the letters sent as part of the industry's campaign arrived too late this year to influence the Chancellor before he had made up his mind; in fact letters are still coming in, even after the Budget speech.

We are aware of the strong feeling in the industry. The Chancellor has made it clear that he does not wish to disturb the neutral tax policy that he has established so carefully, whereby tax allowances reflect the actual life of buildings rather than providing distorting incentives. I can reassure my hon. Friend, however, that the Department considers Budget representations relating to agriculture very carefully, and that if representatives of the industry make known their views in good time for the next Budget we shall consider them carefully when the Department discusses tax changes with the Chancellor.

We are proud of our high standards of animal welfare. I am grateful to both hon. Members who have spoken for their endorsement of those standards. We believe that they are an example to the rest of the Community, and want them to be extended throughout the Community. We are disappointed that our objective has not yet been achieved. In the meantime, I assure my hon. Friend that the Government have undertaken not to introduce further unilateral welfare measures that would undermine the competitive position of our producers.

To help the industry, we are funding a substantial and wide-ranging programme of pig research amounting to some £1.6 million in the current year 1994-95. Of that, £447,000 is being spent on research into alternative systems of husbandry in response to the stall and tether ban. We have also contributed to advisory booklets produced by the pig welfare advisory group and have sponsored meetings organised by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service on our behalf to provide additional advice to pig producers on alternative systems.

I am sure that the future of our industry lies in getting across to consumers the message about the unrivalled quality and value of the British product and the high welfare conditions under which British pigs are produced. It would be helpful if the welfare organisations could use some of their formidable powers of persuasion to demonstrate to consumers the high welfare standards employed by British pig producers.

We apply high standards but the fact that the consumer often chooses imported products made from animals that have not been raised under such high standards of welfare sets us all the challenge of raising the consumer's awareness. The consumer must be made to realise that when he buys British pork and bacon he is buying meat from animals that have been reared under humane conditions.

The recently announced British quality assured pigmeat initiative, in which all parts of the British pigmeat industry have co-operated, is equally important in getting the message across. We want it to develop successfully and there are encouraging signs that it will do so.

Our processors, retailers and producers are working to distinguish British pigmeat from that produced by our competitors on the grounds of high quality and welfare standards. Only recently I attended the food fair in Sial in Paris and was enormously encouraged that the British charcuterie stand was very successful and the subject of great interest.

It is important that our producers take every opportunity to add value to their pigmeat products to the benefit of everyone in the production and marketing chain. I know that some British processors are using high-quality traditional pigmeat products and innovative ones to increase our market share and exports.

We are self-sufficient in pork and have achieved record levels of exports in the past two years, but we still have much ground to make up in the bacon sector. The efforts of the industry through the charter bacon scheme, which is now part of the British quality assured pigmeat initiative, have established the British product as a major supply. We have around 43 per cent. of the market share, the remainder being in the hands of the Danes and Dutch. I wish that when people are deciding what to buy in the supermarket or the butcher's shop they would bear in mind not only the quality but the welfare standards behind British products.

We have recently heard of a number of enterprising processors taking back markets from the imported product, which is an encouraging trend. I am sure that it is within our industry's capabilities to make further gains so that we become wholly self-sufficient in pigmeat and perhaps even become a net exporter.

The signs are that in 1995 we shall see better returns and improved profitability for our pig producers although I do not dismiss, and assure my hon. Friend that I share, the concern which was perhaps behind his recent roasting when talking to the producers in his constituency.

I am confident that the British industry has a sound and promising future and I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the subject.

Mr. Colvin: I intervene because I was under the impression that my hon. Friend was coming to her peroration but had not answered my question about grant aid. Under objective 5a, money would be available from the European Union. I think that the current rates are

[Mr. Colvin]

about 25 per cent., or 40 per cent. for eligible capital investment. I wondered whether the case could be made for grant aid to carry out the improvements that the debate is about.

Mrs. Browning: I am sorry that I did not respond specifically to that point in my hon. Friend's speech. I am not in a position to make pledges on grants or other financial assistance tonight, but I can assure my hon. Friend that his question will be considered. I shall certainly take that message back with me and when grants are being considered in future, if there is a possibility of giving assistance we shall certainly study it seriously. I shall have to return to my hon. Friend on the subject at a later date.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the opportunity to discuss that important sector of agriculture tonight, and I thank him and the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West for their supportive contributions.

Local Services, Wandsworth

11.55 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I am one of the Members of Parliament for the London borough of Wandsworth, a council known in London and perhaps in other parts of the United Kingdom for having one of the lowest rates of council tax in the country. I intend to explain the price that the people of Wandsworth have had to pay for that low tax.

I live in the borough, whose local authority has two basic objectives—first, to keep its council tax as low as possible and, secondly, to get rid of as many of its local authority responsibilities as it can. In both objectives it has been helped in every possible way by the Government, who have worked hand in hand with it. Indeed, Wandsworth has been the testing ground for many Government policies, and no council has more willingly offered to try out any policy. The former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, idolised the council, which indeed was her servant. Its attitude could be summed up in the phrase, "And what next, O leader?" Whatever Lady Thatcher wanted, it was more than willing to help her to test it out.

Wandsworth's reward was generous Government help with funding, which in the days of the poll tax allowed it to set no poll tax. We all know that unless revenue is coming in, the cost of services has to be found in some other way. Wandsworth's solution was the privatisation of some of the services formerly run by the council, cutting other services and closing things down. No council in the country has been more ruthless in doing that than Wandsworth, always with the full support of the Tory Government.

Let us look back over the years. The Tory council in Wandsworth came to power at about the same time as the Tory Government, since when its policies have hit people and the services that are now needed in the borough.

There are now two Wandsworths. The first consists of people who have moved into the borough and who often need very few council services. They say, "If my dustbins are emptied, the streets are kept reasonably clean and the street lights are working, that's it; I don't want or need anything else." The second is made up the people of all ages, from the youngest to the oldest, who need the services that local authorities used to provide, and many still do.

Since the Conservatives won control, the provision of services to meet real needs has declined. I have already referred to the Government's generous funding of Wandsworth council. The Government are still maintaining that funding, but the signs are that it will not continue indefinitely. We are facing what, by any standards, are the worst and most vicious cuts that we have ever seen in the London borough of Wandsworth.

From whatever direction one enters the borough, one sees signs that read, "Wandsworth the brighter borough". One would never see signs reading, "Wandsworth the caring borough," because the borough is most certainly not caring.

I sought this debate to highlight what is happening in the borough and how that will affect services and jobs. The policy now being followed is meant soleey to keep the council tax as low as possible and to get rid of any services that are currently being run by the local authority. That will be achieved by closing existing services and handing other services over to private contractors to run and to charge what they want. It might also be achieved simply by cutting grants.

No matter how hard organisations try, we know that in the present economic climate they will not be able to make up for the loss of funding that many organisations now receive from the council. I represent Tooting, which, with the other two parliamentary constituencies in the borough and every area and section of the borough, will be hit by those policies. People from all backgrounds running all kinds of services have tried to express their concerns. Someone sees those people, but, as I am told time and again, that person does not listen and most certainly does not care.

I quote from a letter that appeared in the local press. The local press has put the very deep concerns expressed by the people of Wandsworth on its pages week after week. The letter was sent by Jane Taylor, an executive committee member of Age Concern Wandsworth. It was published in a local paper on 13 October. It is headed:

> "Elderly had been robbed of rights."

She writes:

> "Age Concern Wandsworth is outraged at council plans to sell residential homes and close day centres.
>
> These plans will affect those most vulnerable, the very old and frail who are socially isolated.
>
> No discussion or consultation has been made with those who use these services and they have been given very little time, if any, to make their views known.
>
> When Community Care legislation encourages joint working practices with the health services and the 'independent sector', this council has decided to go it alone!"

The letter continues:

> "We would hope that any arrangements to move older people from their home will be done with sensitivity and care.
>
> Undoubtedly, most of the residents will be devastated not only from the physical moving, but, more importantly, by the psychological upheaval this will cause . . .
>
> Age Concern Wandsworth opposes the decision to close the day centres and luncheon clubs.
>
> As the only means of entertainment, in Wandsworth, for older people who are potentially socially isolated and vulnerable, we have been inundated by callers wishing to express their shock and outrage. Again, our concerns are that these decisions were made without discussions with health care workers and other professionals."

No one can ask me, "Age Concern? Who is it? What does it know?" That letter sets the scene for the brutal, uncaring policies that will be followed by the London borough of Wandsworth. All hon. Members, no matter what party or what area of the country they represent, know that services are needed by people of all ages, but, under the policies that will be followed by that local authority, not one service in the borough will be unaffected.

It is a matter not only of the services that will be affected but of the loss of jobs that will follow. We know that, whoever may take over those jobs, or what is left of them, will do so under new contracts and worse conditions than exist now. Wandsworth already has high unemployment. At the previous unemployment count for Greater London, Wandsworth was the eighth highest.

I have spoken of the closures and cuts and how they will affect all areas of the borough, and there are plenty of them. Let us consider first the closure of the George Potter old people's home. There is absolute outrage in all sectors of the community at the closure of that home. The letter from the executive committee member of Age Concern referred to that home and the problems that the residents could face.

Day centres for the elderly—for example, the Shakespeare, the Queenstown, and the Penfold—in different areas of the borough of Wandsworth are to be closed. In my constituency, the Church lane day centre, which is very popular with local people and which is staffed by dedicated people who are well liked and respected by those who use it, is to close and become a centre for the frail elderly. However, no other provision is to be made in the area for people who now use it. No one in the borough of Wandsworth and no councillor or officer who works for the authority can say, "It's not needed; it's not popular with the local community." It is certainly used and it is very popular.

Longhedge, Holybourne and Park Lodge residential care homes are to be sold. Who will run them and be responsible for the care and living standards of their residents? As the letter from Age Concern— from which I have quoted already— says, there has been no consultation whatsoever with the people affected most directly by the sale of the homes: those who live in them.

Funding cuts will take place across the borough of Wandsworth. The Battersea arts centre, a well-known and respected arts centre, will lose £20,000 from its grant and Wandsworth youth advisory service will lose £22,000. At a time when most people would be looking to increase their involvement with young people, many of whom are out of work and are finding life very difficult, a service to which they relate and which relates to them is to have its funding cut by £22,000. The Garfield community centre will lose £4,700 and the Roehampton community council will lose £4,474.

All types of local groups will have their funding decreased. Many such groups have worked with the people of the borough for a very long time and have proved their worth within the community. One has to ask where the Minister and the people who run Wandsworth council expect those organisations to find other sources of funding when we all know how difficult it is to raise money.

Funding of the local citizens advice bureau will be cut, but I understand that no firm figure has been given yet. Funding of Battersea neighbourhood eye centre will be cut by £28,000. I could list many more local groups that will suffer similar funding reductions.

Balham family centre is located in my constituency. The centre, which has operated for a long time, is highly respected and its work has been quoted often in Government publications. That is a recognition of the skill and competence of those who run the centre and of how well they have performed their duties over the years.

[Mr. Tom Cox]

In a letter dated 24 November, Caroline Hartnell, the chairperson of the centre, says:

> "We understand from Jeff Turmath, our Wandsworth Council liaison officer, that it is proposed to reduce the Family Centre by 20 per cent. from April 1995— a reduction of around £18,000. We feel that a cut of this magnitude would have a very detrimental effect on the work we do".

The centre provides a creche for 15 children aged 18 months to three years four mornings a week. It provides a latchkey project for 29 primary school children of working parents, a school drop-in club four days a week for 10 children aged eight to 13 and lunches for the centre's users and other local people.

The letter from Caroline Hartnell continues:

> "If our grant is cut by 20 per cent., we will probably be forced to cut our lunch service as we would not want to cut any service provided specifically to children. However, we feel this would seriously detract from all the other work that we do. The lunches are used by many parents and children who use the centre. Many of these are one-parent, low-income families; some are living in bed and breakfast or temporary accommodation. We see the lunches as having two main functions, social and nutritional."

There we have a very clear example of what effect the envisaged cuts of some £18,000 will have on the work done by the centre. What annoys me, and so many people who live in the borough, is that the council cannot say—dare not say—that its problem is that its council tax is so high that it cannot afford to give grants to local groups. It just cannot say that.

The council now says that it will announce shortly that it will be losing money from the Government, and because it is totally committed to its low council tax, it will fight to the death to keep it. Anything that stands in the council's way in keeping the council tax low can simply go the wall.

Many of the services are, sadly, going to the wall, with all the effects that that will have on the very people who need and make use of them. I have touched on only a few items, but the list of cuts that hurt people and the local community goes on. All hon. Members know that our constituents go to district housing offices for a range of reasons. They may go to pay their rent, or if they have problems in their home. However, six offices are to be closed in the borough of Wandsworth.

Home help charges are to go up from £2.30 to £2.70 an hour. Forty pence may not sound like a great deal, but it is if one has a low income and needs a home help. Hon. Members know how valuable and vital home help services are to many of our constituents, wherever we may live or represent.

I shall give another example of the problem. Hundreds of properties in the borough are boarded up, and for one reason only—to be sold. The December issue of the council's newspaper contains photographs of council properties that are now being advertised for sale. Yet this is the borough that has one of the highest number of people living in bed-and-breakfast accommodation of the London boroughs. When people are put into such accommodation, someone has to pay for it—the rest of the community in the borough.

When people become homeless and need bed-and-breakfast accommodation, the one thing that Wandsworth council avoids at all costs is putting them into accommodation in the borough. It will house people anywhere it can, in any other London borough, rather than in those people's own borough. That policy has created problems for youngsters, who may have to travel a long distance back to the borough to attend their local schools.Those who are lucky enough to have a job, but who have to move into bed-and-breakfast accommodation outside the borough, have to cope with the problems of travelling and increased costs.

Such is the utter stupidity of Wandsworth's housing policy that people are put into bed-and-breakfast accommodation, at great cost to the community and with all the upheaval that that causes them, when there are hundreds of empty properties in the borough, waiting to be sold. So much for Wandsworth's claim to be "the brighter borough". For the vast majority of its residents, it most certainly has not lived up to that claim in 1994, nor will it in 1995.

I recently wrote to the Prime Minister to express my concern that the borough's policies would hurt not only the local community but the most vulnerable. He did not respond; he sent my letter to another Department. I received the usual reply, which stated:

> "We have total confidence in the policies followed by Wandsworth council."

How out of touch can Ministers get? I quoted two letters, one from Age Concern and the other from the chairlady of the Balham family centre. Those organisations are held in great respect and are closely involved in providing services to the people of the borough. I have been told by Ministers, however, that they have total confidence in that borough's policies.

I have already referred to the two Wandsworths that exist. The local people and I accept that the Conservative party controls the borough because it sets an extremely low council tax and has attracted new residents who have little need of council services. The Conservative party is aided and abetted in keeping control of the borough with Government help and its utter obsession with keeping its council tax as low as possible.

As the council prepares its budget for the coming year, we in the borough believe that it is engaged in the most ruthless attack against the services that people admire and want to use. We all know that people needing services and organisations losing funding cannot now turn from the council to other organisations. We all know that it is extremely difficult to obtain additional funding for other projects, let alone to try to maintain the sizeable sums that many organisations in the borough are shortly to lose.

Governments have responsibilities. They can put pressures on local councils. They can question what they do. Indeed, the Government do so repeatedly in their dealings with councils in which they do not have "total confidence". When it does not suit the Government to accept the policies of local authorities, they never cease to attack and to curb them. The Government cannot say that they do not have the necessary power or the responsibility.

I hope that the Minister and his Department will challenge what Wandsworth council proposes to do in the coming months. The other two Members who represent parts of the borough are the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), the Under-Secretary of State for Health, and the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). I understand why the hon.

Member for Battersea is not in his place: he is, after all, a Minister. I do not wish to attack other hon. Members. Where the right hon. and learned Gentleman is, only he would know.

The issues that I have raised affect the three constituencies in the borough. I beg the Minister not to say, "I have listened to what the hon. Gentleman has said, but we have confidence in the council." The lives of people of all ages are at risk because of the council's obsession with a low council tax. If not tonight, I beg the Minister to think about what I have said. I ask him to contact the various organisations that I have quoted and to listen to what they say. Let him hear whether they have any confidence in the Conservative-controlled borough of Wandsworth. I can tell him that he will not learn of any confidence as a result of any research with which he or his Department may wish to be involved. The organisations to which I have referred will express no confidence.

12.28 am

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on securing the debate. I congratulate him also on the eloquent and passionate way in which he has exposed the problems that his constituents and others in the borough of Wandsworth are facing.

My hon. Friend has rightly highlighted the concerns expressed by many organisations who work with local people and see the impact of the cuts that are threatened. He has quoted the concerns of Age Concern, which is appalled by plans to close day centres and sell residential homes without consultation. He has quoted the sad histories of local community centres, including the Balham family centre in his constituency. Vital services are threatened by cuts. He has mentioned many other voluntary organisations, such as arts centres and youth services, which face the prospect of similar damaging cuts. That catalogue of misfortune suffered by the residents of Wandsworth is all the more extraordinary when viewed against the background of the vast sums of public money that have been, and continue to be, lavished on Wandsworth council by the Government.

Let me give some figures. In 1993-94, Wandsworth council received £33.8 million in transitional relief payments to reduce the cost of the council tax. That represented a staggering 25 per cent. of the total transitional relief subsidy made available to the whole of London. Wandsworth, one of 32 London boroughs, received 25 per cent. of the total relief made available in the capital—8 per cent. of the total relief made available to the whole country. Wandsworth does not contain 8 per cent. of the population of the country; it received, in 1993-94, 8 per cent. of the total money made available for transitional relief.

If that were not bad enough, the figures for the current year, 1994-95, are even starker. Although the sums are decreasing, because, as we all know, the transitional relief programme is decreasing, the £22 million that Wandsworth receives in the current year from the Government is no less than 44 per cent. of the total money made available by the Government to local authorities in London to reduce the council tax through transitional relief and about 17 per cent. of the total relief made available to local authorities throughout the country. Wandsworth does not contain 17 per cent. of the population of Britain, but it receives 17 per cent. of the total sums made available by the Government for council tax transitional relief in the current year.

Taking into account the estimated expenditure next year of a further £12.5 million, a grand total of almost £68 million will have been made available by central government to the London borough of Wandsworth in three years. Currently, the estimates that we can see show that there are approximately 17,000 council tax payers in the highest bands—bands F, G and H—in Wandsworth, who will each have received more than £1,000 in transitional relief in that period. I am talking not about council tax payers in the lower banded properties but about those in the highest banded properties. That is a measure of where that relief is going.

In addition to council tax relief, the Government spent in Wandsworth £26 million in standard spending assessment reduction grant in 1994-95 and will spend a further £21 million in 1995-96. We all know what that is about: a crude process of buying votes, by cushioning Wandsworth residents against the cost of the council tax, when the council had been able to create a position whereby it charged no poll tax at all. Instead of those vast sums of public money—£68 million in transitional relief alone in the three years 1993-94 to 1995-96—being used to help finance desperately needed services in Wandsworth or in the capital's areas of greatest deprivation, they have been used to keep a fundamentally rotten Tory regime in power in Wandsworth council, matching the similar largesse that has been offered by the Government to the similar regime in Westminster.

Let us examine some of the outcomes for Wandsworth residents resulting from that remarkable largesse. What has the borough achieved with its vast slush fund of Government grant? What records does it proudly hold? My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting rightly highlighted the unenviable record that Wandsworth has held for the past two years of having the largest number of homeless families in bed-and-breakfast hotels of any London borough. Mercifully, the numbers are decreasing, but at one time a year and a half ago, there were more than 400 families in bed-and-breakfast hotels who had been placed there by Wandsworth council.

Bed and breakfast is symbolic of all that is wrong with current housing policy—unsuitable, cramped, often squalid and unsafe accommodation for homeless families who should be provided with secure, safe homes, and, to add insult to injury, at vast cost to the public.

Do not take my word for it. Let us read the words instead of Councillor Mark Simmonds, then the chair of the housing committee in Wandsworth, who, a year ago, wrote:

> "The cost to Wandsworth of the 1,300 or so temporary units of accommodation of all types is costing an average of £7,000 per family per year or £9m in total in 1993/94."

What a record. What a waste of public money.

One reason why Wandsworth has had so many homeless families in temporary accommodation is that, as my hon. Friend rightly highlighted, it has deliberately sold off large numbers of council homes, some to existing residents, some on the open market, but with an explicit aim of increasing the number of council leaseholders to match the number of council tenants by the end of the lifetime of the current council.

[Mr. Nick Raynsford]

I wonder why there is that particular target date. I wonder why the end of the lifetime of the current council is the target date for matching the number of leaseholders with council tenants. Could it be anything to do with the borough elections? Could it be anything to do with the election prospects of the current majority party in Wandsworth? One wonders, after hearing so much about the way in which the Tory administration in Westminster has behaved, whether similar motives are driving housing policy in the London borough of Wandsworth.

I have to tell the Tory leadership in Wandsworth that it will have difficulty in achieving its target for two simple reasons. First, market conditions will make it difficult to persuade people to buy homes, not least immediately following a Budget that has cut away the safety net of income support which used to be available to help middle to low-income households, who have bought their homes but are worried that they might run into financial difficulty.

With that safety net gone, with interest rates rising and with the cost of owner-occupation going up because of the withdrawal of MIRAS, prospective home owners and home owners are facing large increased costs next year as a direct result of Government policy. That will frustrate the hopes of the political leaders of the London borough of Wandsworth to secure a sizeable increase in the number of leaseholds.

Those political leaders have also got themselves to blame, not just the Government. Their own performance has aroused a certain amount of local hostility. Once again, do not take my word for it. Let us look at the report on service charges from the director of housing of the London borough of Wandsworth on 27 September this year. With admirable and remarkable tact, he writes:

> "Members will be aware that an increasing hostility is already being registered to the overall cost and method of provision of these services."

Let me provide one example of why there is that hostility. In late April this year, I visited an elderly lady in Putney who had bought her maisonette in 1988. The right-to-buy offer, which she received from the London borough of Wandsworth—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) should stop laughing and listen, because he would then realise one of the sad human consequences of crass Tory policies.

The right-to-buy offer that the lady received specified certain repair costs which she would be due to pay as a result of the repairs to the balconies of the block for which her contribution was assessed at £6,880. As anyone who knows the detailed provisions of right-to-buy legislation will understand, that estimate was covered by the five-year guarantee which safeguards those exercising the right to buy from charges in excess of the estimates over that period.

The lady concerned was told that the works were due to be completed in 1990-91, well within the five-year guarantee period. But, in the event, the works were not carried out in 1990 or in 1991. They were not completed until 1993, just after the five-year guarantee period had expired.

What then happened? Instead of receiving a bill for £6,880, for which the lady had made provision, the unfortunate leaseholder received a bill from the London borough of Wandsworth for £16,119. She received no apology or explanation. No reason whatever was given for that outrageous increase in costs—just a demand to pay. What an outrage.

Needless to say, when I was given details of that, I took up the matter, first, with the local Member of Parliament and, subsequently, with the hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford)—a former leader of Wandsworth council with whom I happened to be discussing the matter. He kindly referred it to the council leader, who wrote to me on 25 July. He said that the

> "case is very well known locally"

and

> "has occupied a very substantial amount of officer time over the past three years."

We wish that the officers had been busy ensuring that the works had been carried out promptly, expeditiously and to budget, rather than pushing paper, as they obviously do a great deal. He continued:

> "Regrettably, the Council's best efforts have not produced a course of action which would enable the service charge in question to be substantially reduced."

There is no explanation of why not; it simply failed to do it. The council leader continued:

> "Notwithstanding my above comments, I have asked the appropriate officers to look once again at this case. I will write again in due course."

That is where the matter rests. Five months have passed and I have received no further communication from the leader of Wandsworth council. Nor has the lady concerned received any explanation of the council's outrageous behaviour. All she has received is one further communication increasing the sum demanded from her by the council from £16,119 to £16,674. If that is the way that Wandsworth treats its leaseholders, it is hardly surprising that its director of housing is reporting

> "an increasing hostility . . . to the overall cost and method of provision of these services".

I would use slightly more choice language.

Of course, that is not the only example of Wandsworth's gross incompetence, maladministration and shameful failure to look after the interests of local people. Many hon. Members will have memories of other schemes that it has promoted in recent years. Those of us who pass Battersea power station will remember all the pledges given about the great planning scheme to transform it into an Alton Towers-type theme park. We remember that Baroness Thatcher heralded the proposal as a wonderful example of private enterprise and local government working hand-in-hand for the benefit of Britain. It did not turn out that way, did it?

Planning consent was given to Mr. John Broome, who said:

> "we always deliver what we promise on target".

He predicted the opening of the new theme park at precisely 2.30 pm on 14 May 1990. The appointed hour came and went and, as we all know, Battersea power station remains empty, derelict and deteriorating. It is another monument to Wandsworth's crass incompetence and failure.

I could quote countless other examples of failures by Wandsworth to meet the needs of its residents, of actions that damage the interests of local people and of policies that are damaging to the interests of its community but that it pursues for ideological and dogmatic reasons.

The theme of this debate is the effect of Government policy on local services in Wandsworth. In fact, the relationship between Government policy and Wandsworth is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting rightly said, a two-way process. It is a symbiotic relationship in which each party appears to be feeding off each other's prejudices in an attempt to prove that it is the true heir of Baroness Thatcher—hence, returning to housing policy, the extraordinary events of the past year in policy towards the homeless.

Over the past 15 years, the Government have conducted two reviews of their policy on homelessness—the first after 1979, set up by the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) and the second after 1987, set up by the late Lord Ridley and completed by Mr. Patten, currently the Governor of Hong Kong. Both those reviews concluded that part III of the Housing Act 1985 was working reasonably well and that there was no need for change.

Then, for no apparent reason, a year ago the Government suddenly announced that it was time for a fundamental review and a fundamental change of policy. Was it merely a coincidence that that happened at the very moment when the chair of housing in Wandsworth was writing about the need for a radical overhaul of Government policy on homelessness? His paper set out certain objectives: first, that the local authority should provide only assessment and temporary accommodation; secondly, that a regenerated private market should provide longer-term housing with guarantees of benefit or rent and other encouragement needed in the early stages; thirdly, that housing associations should be progressively replaced by the private sector as developers, with financial incentives; and fourthly that long-term rents should move to equalise at a free market level.

Those of us who are rather familiar with those proposals will notice the parallel between the proposals from Wandsworth and the proposals that were published by the Government at the beginning of the year in a consultation paper on changes to the legislation governing homelessness. The Government proposed to end the obligation imposed on councils to secure permanent housing for homeless people. They proposed instead to place homeless families in private lettings. They have also—not in that paper but in their actions—given substantially reduced emphasis to the role of housing associations. They have cut £300 million off the sums available to the Housing Corporation in last year's budget and cut a further £340 million off the Housing Corporation's allocation in the latest budget.

The impact of Government policies on the residents of the London borough of Wandsworth are immensely damaging, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting has demonstrated. But equally damaging is the impact of the prejudices of the current political leadership of the London borough of Wandsworth on the policies of the Government. Happily, we can look forward, on the night when Labour is poised for victory in Dudley, to a speedy end to both the Government and the malign influence of the Wandsworth Tories. Both will be consigned to the political dustbin before long.

12.46 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert B. Jones): Tonight is a historic moment in terms of debates on the Consolidated Fund. Many hon. Members will miss them, having participated in them over the years at all sorts of hours of the day and night. I certainly remember initiating several such debates. I congratulate the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) on having had the fortune to secure a slot on this historic night. It is historic in another sense. It is the first time that the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) and I have met across the Dispatch Box since my appointment and his and since we turned from our previous relationship as fellow members of the Select Committee on the Environment.

If I may put the debate in context, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has recently announced the provisional settlement for local authority expenditure for 1995-96. We have considered the demands which will be placed on local authorities, including Wandsworth, next year. We also have to be mindful of the interests of the economy as a whole, and in particular the Government's objective of reducing the public sector deficit. We have considered the level of inflation. It is the lowest it has been for more than a decade. We have also taken into account our policy that increases in pay and prices within the public sector must be met through greater efficiency and economy.

I have no doubt that many authorities have scope to improve their efficiency. Wandsworth, the subject of tonight's debate, has been particularly innovative in this respect. Indeed, I believe that Wandsworth has made savings of some £15 million per annum from competitive tendering of its blue and white collar services. The hon. Member for Tooting said that there were two Wandsworths. I rather agree with him. There is the Wandsworth of Labour demonology, which we have heard about this evening, and the Wandsworth that has won four charter mark awards and is one of only five United Kingdom organisations awarded accreditation for achievements in energy efficiency by the Institute of Energy, an award which, as the Minister with responsibility for energy efficiency, I certainly applaud. It was also one of the first authorities to publish, in June 1994, its citizens charter performance indicators. Wandsworth was also quoted in a recent independent survey as the London borough offering the best overall telephone services.

To return to this year's local government settlement, the Government's view is that the appropriate level of revenue spending for local authorities in England for 1995-96 will be £43.511 billion. Central Government grant and income from non-domestic rates in support of that expenditure will be more than £34 billion. Those proposals, including provision for community care of £647 million and £50 million for reorganisation costs, provide for a 2.2 per cent. increase in local authority spending year on year, including the spending of police authorities.

Even leaving aside the increase in community care, those proposals amount to an increase in provision of just under 1 per cent. year on year. Of course this year's settlement is tough, but it is entirely consistent with our determination to maintain a firm grip on public spending.

Standard spending assessments were criticised. The indicators used to arrive at the SSA for Wandsworth are the same used for every authority. The fact that neighbouring authorities have higher SSAs than Wandsworth reflects the fact that their needs—as measured by SSA methodology—are perceived as greater.

[Mr. Robert B. Jones]

For 1995-96, we have brought our SSA indicators up to date. That has been particularly beneficial to authorities in inner London because the area cost adjustment for inner-London boroughs has increased. For the first time, we had access to detailed data from the new earnings survey, which enabled us to calculate actual relative wage rates. That data showed an increase in relative average wage rates paid in inner London but a decrease in outer London and in the rest of the south-east. As a consequence, Wandsworth's SSA will increase by 2 per cent. in 1995-96.

Wandsworth's provisional total standard spending assessment for 1995-96 is a little over £240 million, which is £904 per head—an increase of 2 per cent. over last year and of £18 per head, using adjusted figures, comparing on a like-for-like basis. That increase is not as great as for the average inner-London authority, due mainly due to a small drop in population compared with an increase on average for other London authorities, and fairly static pupil numbers.

In 1994-95 there were significant changes to SSAs because of the incorporation of detailed data from the 1991 census. When we undertake reviews—the hon. Gentleman is familiar with them from our past work together—it is inevitable that changes will occur and that some authorities will lose. In the absence of any special measures, those authorities adversely affected by SSA reductions would have been forced either to make rapid cuts in their budgets or to levy large increases in council taxes. We introduced SSA reduction grant to recognise that such authorities will need time to adjust their spending.

As a result of last year's review of standard spending assessments, Wandsworth's SSA for this year was reduced by more than 10 per cent. That was due largely to the use of 1991 census data, which showed that social conditions in the borough had greatly improved since the last census in 1981—no doubt a result of the energy and effectiveness of the Conservative council. As a consequence of that reduction, Wandsworth received £26.4 million of SSA reduction grant. It will receive a further £21 million from a similar special grant in 1995-96, in respect of those same changes. That will protect council taxpayers from the immediate effects of the 1993 review.

It is clearly for local authorities to determine their spending priorities within the confines of capping. They should have regard to the most efficient and cost-effective way of providing services. If they feel that that is best achieved through partnership with the private sector, that choice is one that we have opened up but are not forcing them to take.

In the same way that local authorities all over the country have been reviewing their provision of care, so too has Wandsworth. That borough and others have done this in the light of the White Paper "Caring for People", which stressed the need for authorities to improve services by working closely with voluntary organisations, private homes and providers to devise imaginative and innovative packages of care for the benefit of care service users and their families.

Wandsworth has obviously taken the decision that it will best be able to maintain its services to the elderly in the area by contracting out this service. I understand that it has decided to invite offers from independent operators for the running of three old people's homes. It is for each social services committee to decide, in collaboration with other local agencies, on the most appropriate pattern of services to meet the social service care needs of the people in its area. I am sure that Wandsworth reached its decisions having carefully considered the best ways in which to provide services, taking due regard of the need to maximise efficiency.

There are, of course, many independent sector providers with a track record of offering high-quality residential care. It is right that Wandsworth council should seek to utilise further that expertise to the benefit of residents in the borough. Indeed, Quantum Care, which operates in my constituency, is investing in a considerable improvement of the homes in my area and the building of a new one. That must be to the benefit of the people of Hertfordshire. I am sure that it will be welcomed if those skills are also harnessed for the benefit of the people of Wandsworth.

Mr. Raynsford: The Minister stressed that it was right for Wandsworth council to reach its decision on the most appropriate way forward. He will recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) quoted Age Concern on the point that there had been a total lack of consultation with the organisations representing elderly people in the area and, by implication, with elderly people themselves. Does he really believe that that is an appropriate way in which to proceed?

Mr. Jones: I am rather glad that the hon. Gentleman has asked that question. The hon. Member for Tooting did, indeed, say that there was no consultation, and the hon. Gentleman repeated that later. I have with me—I thought it worth while to study this—the document presented by the director of social services on residential care for elderly people in the borough. It sets out in considerable detail what consultation took place. I shall quote some of it. In the opening part of paragraph 37, the director says:

> "Full consultation will need to be undertaken with the existing residents and their families and the day centre users and, where appropriate, their carers. A letter has already gone to each resident and his/her next of kin informing them of these proposals."

Paragraph 38 of the report details the fact that letters were sent to the residents of all four homes. Letters were sent to nominated relatives and friends. Letters were sent to day centre users. Letters were sent to relatives of users. A memorandum was sent to the purchasing social work teams telling them about the proposals. There were meetings for day centre users of George Potter house and meetings for residents of George Potter house and their relatives. There was a meeting for the users of Longhedge day centre. I do not want to quote the entire report because it goes on for several pages, describing in considerable detail precisely what consultation took place. It also describes the consultation with staff. Neither the hon. Member for Tooting nor the hon. Member for Greenwich can justify saying that there was no consultation.

Mr. Cox: Can the Minister tell us the date of that report?

Mr. Jones: The report was given to the social services committee on 16 November and to the establishment committee on 22 November.

Wandsworth does not, of course, just get Government funding through the local authority finance settlement. It also receives other forms of Government support, such as £43 million of urban programme resources to date. That has resulted in, to name but two schemes, £400,000-worth of projects on and around the Doddington-Rolls estate and significant environmental improvements to the Tooting, Balham and Clapham junction shopping areas. There is £670,000 from the urban partnership programme for Battersea business 2000—a combination of an adult information technology training and employment guidance centre and a mini-technology park for 12 business units in the IT sector.

There are £2.9 million of single regeneration bid funds over the next three years for the Wandsworth partnership, which is an area-based initiative that focuses on Wandsworth town centre and aims to revitalise the area comprehensively over the next three years. Wandsworth benefits from two other single regeneration budget bids in which it is a partner. One is Wandle strategy, a targeted programme of site preparation and infrastructure improvements to bring forward for redevelopment existing key sites along the Wandle valley. Funding for that will £3.75 million over three years. "Unlocking the Economic Potential of Young People" aims at increasing the competitiveness of the local economy through raising the skill, achievement and qualifications of young people. Funding will be £5.64 million over three years.

The Government have introduced a plan-led system to ensure that individual planning decisions are taken in line with relevant development plan policies. I am pleased that Wandsworth is making good progress with its own unitary development plan, which I understand is due to be adopted today. It will ensure that planning decisions are made on a rational and consistent basis, and help to reduce uncertainty and blight.

Government policy also requires planning applications to be handled efficiently and speedily. Wandsworth is one of the top performers in London in terms of its handling of planning applications: more than 70 per cent. have been decided within the eight-week target in recent months. That has contributed to the authority's being awarded a charter mark for the excellence of its overall delivery of planning services.

I have ranged quite widely in my speech, to give hon. Members an idea of the breadth of Government support for local authorities and the particular impact that it has had in Wandsworth. The proposals in the local government finance settlement represent a balanced and reasonable response to the conflict between the pressure to provide ever-more resources for local government and the need to control public spending. Local government will need to continue to respond imaginatively to the pressure that it faces, just as the private sector has. I am sure that many local authorities could learn from some of the approaches adopted by Wandsworth to ensure that services are provided as cost-effectively as possible.

Cyprus

1 am

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Many years ago, George Bernard Shaw sent Churchill two tickets for one of his plays. He wrote on them, "Winston Churchill and a friend, if he has one." Churchill wrote back saying that he could not go to the first night of the play, but would go to the second night—if there was one.

The purpose of that story, Madam Deputy Speaker—apart from the promise that I gave you over dinner earlier tonight to try to amuse the House for at least 10 seconds—is to reiterate that so long as the current situation in Cyprus continues, there will be a second, a third, a fourth and a fifth night on which the House will debate the issue. Indeed, this is the third occasion in 1994 on which I have raised the Cypriot question in late night, early morning or other "end of term" debates. It is appropriate that we have debated Cyprus on several occasions in 1994, and it is always a pleasure on such occasions when the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) takes part in them. I hope that he will do so briefly tonignt.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the invasion of Cyprus. It is a tragedy, and shows the failure of the policiesof United Nations states, that we are no nearer a solution in 1994 than we were in 1974. There have been mediators and interlocutors; the United Nations has tried and failed. Not a one square centimetre of territory has been given up by the rulers of northern Cyprus, and the fate of not one missing person has been determined. There has been no indication of any desire for a settlement on the part of the rulers of northern Cyprus.

A commentator writing about Cyprus might refer to the great prosperity of the bulk of the island. Gross domestic product per head has grown from $1,489 in 1973 to $10,430 in 1993, owing to the hard work and resilience of the people of Cyprus. I remember visiting Cyprus in 1977, three years after the invasion, going to a small hotel in Limassol and realising that already, within a relatively short period, the Cypriot tourist industry was being rapidly rebuilt.

Commentators might also refer to the calm within the island. Indeed, only six people have been killed along the green line in recent times. But the fact that there is calm and quiet in Cyprus does not mean that the Cypriots are happy—it means that they grieve in silence.

Many thousands of individuals in Cyprus are unable to live in their own homes which have been in their families for generations. Those individuals are unable to return to their villages or tend the graves of their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. They can see their family homes but are unable to live in them. Eighteen months ago I, my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and the ex-mayor of Famagusta, who is now in exile, saw the owners of such homes and sensed their anger that they could not live in them. They also knew that their homes might have been requisitioned for Turkish settlers.

Others endure the pain of uncertainty, not knowing what has happened to their loved ones. There are 1,619 missing Cypriots; wives do not know what has happened to their husbands; children do not know what has happened to their fathers; parents do not know what has happened to their sons. I have here a picture from *The Observer* showing old ladies wondering what happened to their husbands.

Most of the missing persons were young men. Nine hundred young brides were left not knowing what had happened to their husbands and forced to bring up their children on their own. Not knowing whether their loved ones were dead or alive, they were unable to mourn and unwilling to remarry. It is a tribute to their loved ones that only 24 have remarried since 1974. In 1981, the United Nations set up a committee on missing persons which has not solved one case. Thirteen years on, the committee has not discovered the fate of one person.

Next year, the European Union will be considering the application by Cyprus to become a member. Cyprus' desire to join and become closer to Europe is of long standing. I remember going in 1979 to a place called Charlie's bar in Nicosia, where I talked to members of the Cypriot information office. They said then that they wanted to become closer to Europe and that has been Cyprus' objective ever since. Cyprus has played a major role in western civilisation and it would be wrong for its application to join the European Union to be subject to further delay.

The delay until now has been justified by the fact that the island of Cyprus is divided, but the division of Cyprus should not influence the European Union one iota. If Cyprus were to be told that it could join the European Union only if partition were ended, it would in effect give the Turkish Cypriots a right of veto over whether the legitimate Government of Cyprus were to be allowed into the Union. Historically, East Germany had no right of veto over the application by West Germany to become a founder member of the European Union.

It would surely be wrong for the Government of northern Cyprus, which is not recognised by any Government in the European Union, to be able to prevent the Government of Cyprus, which is recognised by all members of the European Union, from becoming a member. I hope that there will be an early determination of that application.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): The hon. Gentleman knows that I have the highest regard for him and for his commitment to Cyprus. He makes an important point. Does he agree that the membership of Cyprus would benefit not only northern Cyprus but the Turkish Cypriots who he and I and many other hon. Members believe have as much right as the Greek Cypriots on the island of Cyprus? They have suffered enormously over the past 20 years.

Mr. Marshall: It is a pleasure to be able to agree with the hon. Gentleman. Of course the benefits would be felt by all the people of Cyprus. It would therefore be to the advantage of the island as a whole if Cyprus became an early member of the European Union. I hope that the Minister will be able to give us some good news, if not tonight at least in the near future.

Earlier this year the European Court of Justice ruled that trade between the European Union and northern Cyprus was against the rules of the EU. I hope that that embargo will be strongly enforced, because economic pressure on northern Cyprus may persuade Turkey to reduce its support or to bring pressure to bear on the Government of the north.

It is sad that northern Cyprus has degenerated into nothing better than a client state of Turkey. It has also become a haven for criminals such as Mr. Asil Nadir, who has decided to dodge justice in Britain and now seems to be dodging taxes in Cyprus too. Who knows, the Cypriots may put a little notice on him saying, "Return to sender—unwanted here as well."

In northern Cyprus there has been ethnic cleansing as evil as anything in Yugoslavia. Thousands of Turkish settlers have come in, and there is a Turkish army of 35,000 troops there. That is an amazing situation, with one soldier for every five Cypriots. The United Kingdom equivalent of that that ratio would be an army of occupation with 10 million men. There are more Turkish troops in northern Cyprus than there have ever been British troops in Northern Ireland. Who are they protecting the country against? Does not the fact that so many troops are needed there suggest that there is much unrest?

As *The Economist* pointed out earlier this year, it is perhaps significant that the standard of living in northern Cyprus is one quarter of that in the rest of the island. Many Turkish Cypriots have demonstrated their despair by emigrating. Thousands have gone to the United Kingdom, to Australia, to Canada, to the United States and even to Turkey.

In the *Sunday Times* on 17 July there was an interesting article quoting a Turkish Cypriot as saying:

> "I've come all the way from Melbourne. My mate George gave me that watch. He's a Greek Cypriot. We get on very well over there."

If Greek and Turkish Cypriots can get on very well over there in Australia, in London and in the United States, why can they not have the opportunity to get on well in Cyprus again?

Surely there is something wrong with a country such as northern Cyprus when many of the young choose to emigrate, there is a large army of occupation and tens of thousands of settlers, and the place has made itself into a haven for a fraudster.

On a previous late night parliamentary occasion I made a speech in which I said that I hoped that peace would come to the middle east by means of a series of building blocks, and suggested that Gaza would be one of the first. I believe that that will happen in Cyprus too. There will be a series of building blocks there, and the most obvious of those is, of course, Varosha.

That town was once a Mecca for tourists, a jewel in Cyprus's tourist trade and a home for thousands. Now it is deserted. The hotels were bombed and have collapsed and what was once a centre full of laughter and amusement has only one noise today—the sound of the rats and other wild animals scurrying around. Only sheer unadulterated intransigence prevents Mr. Denktash from agreeing to the return of Varosha. That deprives thousands of people of their homes; it deprives the Cyprus tourist trade of a great opportunity and it deprives the island of Cyprus of the hope of peace.

In the past 10 years we have seen remarkable progress in the world. I remember in a maiden speech talking about the plight of the refuseniks in what was then the Soviet Union. Today, virtually anyone can leave Russia to settle in Israel. The Berlin wall, which was an even more effective barrier than the wall in Nicosia, has disintegrated. We have seen the jackboots of the communists yield to the flame of freedom. In South Africa we have seen apartheid give way to a multi-racial Government. Who would have guessed five years ago that Mandela and F. W. de Klerk could be part of the same political process?

In the middle east we have seen peace between Israel and Jordan and we have seen Itzhak Rabin and Arafat shake hands on the White house lawn. However, during all that remarkable progress, there has been no movement on the part of the Turkish Cypriots. The fact that it is Turkish Cypriot intransigence that is holding up progress in Cyprus has been confirmed by the United Nations. Earlier this year, Mr. Boutros-Ghali said:

> "The absence of agreement is due essentially to a lack of political will on the Turkish Cypriot side."

They hope to institutionalise partition. Many thousands of young Turkish Cypriots have never met a Greek Cypriot. They have only met Turkish Cypriots, Turkish settlers, and Turkish troops. There must be a danger that the longer that situation prevails, the more difficult it is to reach a conclusion.

The Turkish Cypriots today are subject to the same religious intolerance that hit this country during the reformation and which was still alive in this country in the 1960s. I well remember the first election campaign that I fought. I knocked on the door of a house in Bridgeton in Glasgow and said that I was the Conservative council candidate. The person said that it was very nice to see a Conservative candidate, "We've not done that for a long time." The next question was, "What's your religion?" I thought very carefully. I did not think that I should say Church of England as I was standing in Glasgow, so I said, "Episcopalian. Is that all right?" The answer was,"That's fine, because we're Christians and we can't vote for a Catholic."

That was the kind of intolerance that prevailed in Glasgow as late as 1963. That intolerance is magnified 1,000 times over in northern Cyprus simply because the people of northern Cyprus are inward looking and do not have the opportunity to meet Greek Cypriots. That makes it that much more difficult to solve the problem in the longer term.

In this House, we must commit ourselves to continuing to provide the oxygen of publicity. We must press the Government to indicate their agenda for action. We must show that we want an early decision on the application by Cyprus to join the European Union. Above all, we must assure the people of Cyprus that they will not be ignored and that we will continue to fight for them until once again democracy and freedom prevail right across that island.

1.18 am

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on winning a place in the ballot and on introducing the debate. Both he and I wish that he had managed to acquire a more prime time slot for his debate—

Mr. John Marshall: And the Minister.

Ms Quin: Indeed. We all share that feeling. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman also on his assiduity and his determination to give the issue, as he said, the oxygen of publicity. He also introduced a similar debate in July.

[Ms Quin]

I pay tribute to certain hon. Friends who have also been assiduous in drawing the attention of the House to the issue. I refer to my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) and to some of my hon. Friends who spoke in the July debate—for example, my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) and others.

I shall be brief because of the hour and also, as hon. Members can probably hear, because of the state of my health. Unfortunately, I am suffering from a heavy cold.

I come fairly new to the subject; I do not share many hon. Members' personal knowledge of Cyprus, and I do not have many constituents of Cypriot origin. However, when reading briefs and previous debates, it struck me that there has been a lack of progress, about which I am sure that hon. Members are very sad. The hon. Member for Hendon, South was right to mention the number of people living in Britain and in Cyprus who have had their lives blighted by the tragic events in Cyprus. I refer, for example, to the uncertain fate of the people of Cyprus, and to people who have lost their homes and families. Although "ethnic cleansing" is a relatively new expression, it is sadly not a new phenomenon and it has certainly applied to Cyprus and elsewhere.

Since the July debate, there have been few significant developments. Indeed, the developments that have taken place have tended to give even fewer grounds for optimism. I have been staggered by the immigration into Turkish Cyprus from the Turkish mainland, and at the number of Cypriots who have left Turkish Cyprus who felt that they did not want to have their future in that part of a segregated island.

I note also that in August controversial resolutions were passed by the assembly of the so-called Turkish republic of northern Cyprus to co-ordinate its defence and foreign policies with those of Turkey and to reject a federal solution to the Cyprus question. There have been meetings between President Klerides and Mr. Denktash, but although they were held in an effort to restart the stalled peace process, they have achieved very little indeed.

I note also that a United Nations resolution asked the Secretary-General, in consultation with the parties involved, to submit by the end of October 1994 a programme for achieving a comprehensive settlement. I do not know what progress was made by the Secretary-General in that task, but perhaps the Minister will update us on that matter. Bearing in mind what has happened, one is tempted to agree with the statement of the Foreign Minister of the Cypriot Government. He said that, if anything, they are in an even less satisfactory position than before. That is of great regret to all hon. Members.

Mr. Cox: I congratulate my hon. Friend on her appointment to the Opposition Front Bench and to her responsibilities in respect of Cyprus. Even though the debate is sparsely attended, my hon. Friend is aware of cross-party agreement on Cyprus. Will she make a clear statement on the embargo imposed by the European Union regarding exports of products from northern Cyprus? Many Cypriots believe that it is crucial in applying essential pressure on Mr. Denktas so that he will enter meaningful discussions regarding the Secretary-General's efforts.

Ms Quin: My hon. Friend makes a very valid point. The embargo is an important way of putting pressure on the Turkish Cypriots and Mr. Denktash and his followers. However, given the statistics that the hon. Member for Hendon, South provided about the existing economic disparity between the Turkish and Greek parts of the island, an embargo might worsen the country's economic situation.

Although very little progress has been made in reaching a settlement in recent years, one or two of Mr. Denktash's comments have revealed a few glimmers of hope. It seems as though he is trying to soften his position, perhaps partly because of the effect of the embargo to which my hon. Friend referred.

Another important issue referred to by the hon. Member for Hendon, South is Cyprus's application to join the European Union. Labour has consistently supported the line that the hon. Gentleman advanced about the timing of the application and the fact that it should not be held up awaiting a settlement of the dispute over the division of Cyprus. Progress with the application could bring about the desired settlement.

The Government have sent out confusing signals about the matter, with the Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister and the Minister of State making slightly different statements in the past year about how much a decision on Cyprus's application will depend on the progress that is made in resolving the dispute between the two parts of the island. Perhaps the Minister can clear up that confusion in his reply to the debate tonight. In so doing, we hope that he will agree with us and with his hon. Friend who introduced the debate.

In a recent communication, the Commission said that it could foresee no economic problems for either of the Mediterranean applicants for European Union membership— Malta and Cyprus. That is a very important statement because it means that, at least as far as economic issues are concerned, Cyprus should be able to make progress towards a successful application.

The enlargement of the European Union to include Malta and Cyprus has political benefits for the Union as a whole. France, Spain, Italy and the other Mediterranean countries are keen to see the European Union accept Cyprus and Malta as members because they feel that it will provide a geographical balance to the also very welcome moves to open up the Union to the countries of eastern Europe. We obviously look forward to the Minister's reply, and I hope that he will refer to that point.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South talked about the extraordinary changes that we have witnessed in recent years. He mentioned the end of the cold war and the changing situations in the middle east and in South Africa. He could also have mentioned the hope for a peaceful future for Northern Ireland. There have been momentous changes—I am almost tempted to refer to an extraordinary change in a certain by-election result tonight, which is very welcome on the Opposition side of the House.

It is heartening that such changes are occurring, but I join the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friends in hoping that there will be a similar momentous change in the form of a resolution of the Cyprus problem. That is a process in which Britain is honour bound to play a full and major part.

1.29 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis): I join other Members who have spoken in the debate in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on gaining the debate in what is, I think, historically the last of these occasions in quite this form. I also congratulate him on his determination and perseverance on the issue of Cyprus over some time.

I shall endeavour to answer all the questions asked by the hon. Member for Gateshead (Ms Quin), but I shall not resolve all the problems of Cyprus this evening. I have sympathy with her about her cold—we share the House of Commons virus this evening.

Cyprus is important to the United Kingdom. Our countries are bound, as we have heard, by a shared history and personalities and common political interests. Our common history gives us shared values and outlooks, and we are bound together in the Commonwealth. Cyprus is one of the major British tourist destinations, and the integration of Cypriots in Britain—especially here in London—proves the closeness of the relationship. It is also fair to say that our two sovereign bases in Cyprus are strategically important to Britain, as was demonstrated clearly during the Gulf war.

Those connections mean that the estrangement of the two communities which lead to the events of 1974 was viewed with great distress in the United Kingdom. We do believe that the division of Cyprus since 1974 is unacceptable, and any subsequent settlement cannot be based on division. The passage of time will not, as some hope, lead us to accept it.

What are we and the international community doing to solve the apparently intractable problem? We have always supported the effort of the UN Secretary-General to broker a settlement. I should like briefly to set out the course of his efforts this year. At times this year progress seemed close—as the hon. Lady intimated earlier—but at other times it seemed much more distant.

Last year, President Klerides accepted a package of confidence-building measures proposed by the UN Secretary-General. We thought that the package was an excellent basis for getting talks going. We were therefore disappointed that Mr. Denktash was not able to match President Klerides's acceptance, and did not return to New York to continue negotiations.

Sadly, as the UN Secretary-General concluded in his report to the Security Council on 30 May, the Turkish Cypriot side had not demonstrated sufficient political will to secure agreement on the implementation of the package of confidence building measures. The Secretary-General's report of 30 May was in itself an important development. It encouraged Mr. Denktash, with some prompting from Turkey, the UN, the United States and the UK, to shift his position. He moved far enough for the Secretary-General to conclude in his letter to the President of the Security Council on 28 June that there was a substantial measure of agreement on the substance of the package, and that he was prepared to recommend its acceptance.

The letter demonstrated how close the two sides had come to agreement. We should not lose sight of that. We strongly believe that the potential benefits, both in real economic terms and more importantly in terms of intercommunal contact and confidence building, are so great that further effort is worth while. That is not the view of the United Kingdom alone; it is shared by the whole Security Council.

We think that building up confidence is essential if a lasting settlement is to be achieved. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South said, there were once extensive and friendly day-to-day contacts between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. Now a generation has grown up on each side of the divide, suspicious of, but knowing little of, the other community.

On 29 July, the UN Security Council responded to the developments which I outlined by passing resolution 939. The resolution called for further work on confidence-building measures, and also included language on the overall approach. It called for reflection on other ways of making progress towards a settlement.

I see the resolution as an opportunity for the communities to reaffirm their commitment to essential central principles for a settlement. The Secretary-General gave effect to the second aspect of resolution 939 by inviting the two community leaders to talks with his representative in Cyprus. Those discussions took place between 18 and 31 October. We welcome that approach.

The hon. Member for Gateshead asked me about the action plan of those two communities. She is right to say that that was not forthcoming, but the Secretary-General is preparing a report, including an action plan. He is continuing to pursue his activities on that front.

No progress was made, regrettably, at the round of talks in October. Both leaders sought to press their own agenda and there was little overlap. Mr. Denktash did reaffirm his commitment, however, to a bizonal, bi-communal federation, as called for by the UN. He has subsequently emphasised that in a letter to the Secretary-General. President Klerides had some useful and positive ideas relating to future constitutional arrangements. The UN is continuing its own discussions with the two leaders with a view to establishing a common basis for further discussions. We support that and hope that it will be possible to restart direct talks soon.

I have described our view of where things stand, but what of our approach? We want to help to bring about a settlement: there is no other agenda. The overriding consideration is that we should support the good offices mission of the UN Secretary-General, set up following UN Security Council resolution 367 in March 1975. Our status as a guarantor power, however, means that we try to do more, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South correctly pointed out. We aim to complement as well as to support Mr. Boutros-Ghali's mission, while sticking, of course, to the UN framework.

I should make it clear that we are not in the business of prescribing the details of a settlement. In our view, a settlement must meet the interests of both communities and have their agreement. The history of the dispute, and others, shows that a settlement imposed without such an

[Mr. David Davis]

agreement will not last. We consider, however, that the UN Secretary-General's set of ideas, first proposed in 1992, provide a good basis for settlement.

Mr. Cox: I am one of the United Kingdom delegates to the Council of Europe. Lord Finsberg—we all know that he was a Member of the House for many years—serves on the Political Affairs Committee of the Council. He has prepared the Finsberg report on Cyprus, which will be presented at the next major session of the Council at the end of January 1995. Will we get clear outline of the Government's opinion on that report before it is presented to the Council? I have met President Klerides to discuss the report and I know that the Greek Cypriots are unhappy about many aspects of it. We need some clarification of the Government's opinion of that report, which has been prepared by a member of the United Kingdom parliamentary delegation to the Council of Europe.

Mr. Davis: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an instant answer. Matters will develop in January, because other issues are in play.

We are not talking about a settlement between two separate countries divided by a border. We want a settlement that will allow the communities to live side by side on a small island, in the same federal state, in peace. That can be achieved only with their agreement and when the two communities feel that the terms of the settlement will guarantee their future safety and interests. Bullying will not work.

I stress that there is no question of our recognising the so-called Turkish republic of northern Cyprus—not now, not in the future. If we are to be effective in encouraging a settlement, however, we must speak to both communities. Refusal to deal with one community would make it less willing to deal. It would make a settlement harder to achieve. We therefore maintain contact with Mr. Denktash and others who are prominent in the Turkish Cypriot community. Our sole aim in doing so is to encourage the Turkish Cypriot community to move towards a settlement. We are determined that those contacts should continue.

We also want to promote contact between the communities. Our high commissioner in Nicosia, and, indeed, some members of those communities, try to promote that contact. They need encouragement, not criticism for doing so. That is crucial. Those who criticise such contacts undermine the chances of an approach agreed by both sides. The logical extension of criticising contacts with one or other side is that a solution should be imposed against the will of one community. I have always said that an imposed solution will not work.

We see our role as encouraging the two communities to move towards a settlement, by persuading and encouraging them and the other guarantor powers, and fostering the right environment for negotiations. Our substantial diplomatic effort and intensive contacts play a part in this process. That effort is supported by our contribution to the UN force in Cyprus, known as UNFICYP. The force has a mandate to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order, and a return to normal conditions. It plays an important part in creating the stability and security that are necessary for a settlement. We have played a major role in UNFICYP through thick and thin. We believe that our commitment—one of successive Governments and successive generations of British taxpayers—has been an important factor in securing the success of the United Nations military operation in Cyprus.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South and others have talked about European Union accession. We share the hope that the prospect will bring the communities together. Perhaps I should set out our approach. The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) hit the point rather well.

We support membership of the Community for those European countries that want to join and can meet all the conditions of membership. Cyprus applied to join the European Union in July 1990. The European Commission submitted its opinion on the application of Cyprus in June 1993. The opinion confirmed the European identity and character of Cyprus and its vocation to belong to the Union.

The opinion recognised the difficulties of accession ahead of an intercommunal settlement. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said:

> We want to remove those difficulties; we want to see Cyprus admitted. That is one reason . . . why we, perhaps more than any other country, are working . . . hard to find a solution . . . Our attitude is a positive one—to remove the obstacles to the accession of Cyprus."—[*Official Report*, 11 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. 702.]

The Commission has considered developments in the intercommunal talks. It has decided to review the question of the accession of Cyprus to the Community next month—January. At the European Council at Corfu in June, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister agreed conclusions which noted that

> "the next phase of enlargement would involve Cyprus".

That approach was reaffirmed at Essen with our support. It is too early to talk about precise dates for accession, or for the opening of negotiations about it, but that does not discriminate against Cyprus.

It is too early to talk about dates for any of the countries involved in the next phase of enlargement, which will not take place before the intergovernmental conference, which starts in 1996, has reached a conclusion. Even though there are difficulties, it is important to emphasise that neither Mr. Denktash nor anyone else has a veto over Cyprus's application. The Commission opinion was carefully drafted on this point.

We should be wary, however, of seeing the prospect of membership as a panacea. We cannot ignore Turkish Cypriot concerns about the prospect of Cypriot membership of the European Union. Some Turkish Cypriots question the validity of the application. Others are concerned that the terms of membership might conflict with elements of a settlement that they regard as essential. Others worry about its effect on their relationship with Turkey. In our view—again, I take up a point raised by the hon. Member for Tooting—the EU has much to offer both communities. Membership of the EU is not something that either community should fear. We are encouraging Turkish Cypriots to think hard about the benefits of EU membership.

The solution to the Cyprus problem lies in the hands of the communities themselves. It is not in the power of the UK or the EU, or the UN, to force a workable solution in Cyprus on those who live there. Progress can be made only with the full backing of both communities. Agreement depends on the will of the two communities, helped and guided by their friends. I know that that will has often been lacking, but that is no reason not to continue probing persuading and encouraging. The status quo is no solution.

1.43 am

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): I apologise to the House for arriving now and being unable to hear the speeches of the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), my other colleagues and the Minister. We were expecting the debate to take place somewhat later, but I understand that matters have progressed rather rapidly.

I am delighted that we have had an opportunity—I was going to say this evening, but I perhaps should say this night or this morning—to debate Cyprus, which all of us who are in the Chamber tonight will agree is one of the outstanding issues in the world that need to be resolved.

The debate takes place against a background of great sadness for the Cypriot community in this country, in that this week, sadly, the death occurred of Dr. Homer Habibis, who was one of the leading figures in the Cypriot community in Britain for many years. He was a great man, whose qualities as a community leader, a professional man and a doctor were widely respected. He is mourned, not only by the Cypriot community but by his many friends in Britain, and especially by all those people who support the cause of Cyprus. He will be greatly missed.

This week, a tremendous reception was held in the House, hosted by my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), who is in his place this evening, and attended by my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin), who speaks on foreign affairs from the Opposition Front Bench. That reception, which was a timely reminder, was about and for an association of organisations for refugees.

Many Cypriots came to this country as a result of the invasion and the continuing occupation of 1974. When we discuss Cyprus, we should always speak of the events in 1974 as an invasion. They were not an intervention but an invasion, and what has happened is a continuing occupation. It is very important that we speak in those terms.

Mr. Cox: I welcome the contribution that my hon. Friend has made, and also her warm and moving tribute to Dr. Homer Habibis, whom many of us knew, greatly respected and loved.

My hon. Friend mentioned refugees. Does she agree that, in the Greek Cypriot community, there is what I would call a "gut feeling" that a settlement should allow people, for example, from Morphou, to return to their homes if they so wish? The hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) has repeatedly referred to Verosha—Famagusta—but there is also Kyrenia.

I congratulate the Minister on the constructiveness of his speech, but we must be able tell both communities in a settlement that they will have the right to move anywhere, and live anywhere, on the island of Cyprus. I am sure that the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) and the hon. Member for Hendon, South will accept that, unless we can say that, we shall be unable to surmount an enormous hurdle.

Mrs. Roche: I agree with my hon. Friend, who has been campaigning on that issue for many years.

It is an absolute right that refugees should be able to return to their home. Many members of the Cypriot community have come to this country, and very many people who remain in Cyprus are refugees in their own island—their own country. One of the reasons is that the democratic republic of Cyprus has been extremely successful in building a vibrant modern economy, and it has managed to deal with its refugees extremely well. There are no refugee camps or anything of that nature. Therefore, people often ask why the refugees want to return to their homes. The answer is simple: for all those refugees, the place where their fathers and mothers, grandparents and great grandparents lived has tremendous historical and emotional significance.

Many Cypriots cannot return to their homes or visit family homes or graveyards. One of the terrible things that has happened in the illegally occupied area of the north has been the complete destruction and desecration of places of religious significance which also have great significance to western culture. That is extremely dangerous to the cultural map of a place that is essentially part of Europe. We must take that seriously in all our arguments.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting mentioned Morphou. Like him, I have been to the Morphou rally which every year is a focus for the refugee community for the whole island. People gather for a demonstration which is extremely moving. I have marched with them. One can see the occupied area. First, there is the United Nations buffer zone and then people can see their land. I have been there with Cypriots who have pointed their houses out to me. They can smell and see their orange groves. The feeling is so apparent that no one can remain untouched by what they see and experience.

The last time that I went to Morphou was with a number of hon. Members. I was met at the airport by the mayor of Morphou, who extended very pleasant greetings. He said something that had tremendous significance for me. He said that one day he would meet me at the airport and take me not to Nicosia but to his home in Morphou. That was his dream and that was very important to him.

There are a couple more issues of which we should never lose sight. The first is the fate of the missing people, those people of whom we have heard nothing since 1974. I am sure that much reference has already been made to those people in the House. I have constituents who have not seen or heard of their relatives since 1974. Each time I go to the Morphou rally, I am met by the same elderly lady who shows me a wonderful photograph of her handsome young son whom she has not seen since those terrible events in 1974. That is something that we must keep dear to our hearts.

We must also realise what it means to the Cypriot people to have what is basically an occupying force in their own land. In addition, settlers have come into the occupied areas quite illegally. We must bear that in mind when we discuss the issue. We have a tremendous opportunity in the House to give Cyprus a pledge that Britain and the British Government will support Cyprus's application to join the European Union.

[Mrs. Roche]

I caught only the last of the Minister's remarks when he spoke about the solution to the Cyprus problem being in the hands of the two communities. But, with respect, if one goes down that road, one is entering dangerous territory. It is a great mistake to view the Cyprus conflict as one between two different communities. It must not be viewed in that way. The Cyprus conflict is clear. It is a conflict between a democratic country which is a member of the United Nations and the Commonwealth and an illegal regime which is recognised by no one except Turkey.

Britain, as a guarantor power, has a unique role to play, especially through its relationship with the United States—a country that could do much good in the region. Also, as a guarantor power, Britain could have tremendous influence in pressing Cyprus's case. I say in all sincerity to the Minister that if the Government are concerned about finding a solution to the Cyprus problem, the best action they could take would be to hasten Cyprus's admission to the European Union. That is where it belongs; if it were a member, it would be impossible for Cyprus to remain divided.

Cyprus is a thriving country with a tremendous amount to offer Europe. It has a marvellous heritage and a marvellous people with a variety of talents, skills and ability. We must solve the problem of the continuing scandal of that divided island. It is an outrage that, as 1994 draws to a close, a year in which we have solved so many of the world's outstanding problems, we still have not solved the Cyprus problem. The blame for that must be firmly placed on Mr. Denktas and his illegal regime and on the Turkish Government for not ensuring that proper pressure is applied. We can look for Turkey's motives in that. We must make it clear to Turkey that we disapprove of not only what is happening in Cyprus but its appalling human rights record.

Let us talk not about an intra-communal dispute in Cyprus but about Mr. Denktas, his illegal regime and the way that he has blocked any constructive moves. Let us say that in 1995 we will do all that we can to ensure that there is a just and lasting solution to Cyprus.

Anglo-American Mutual Defence Agreement

1.56 am

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I wish to put on record my gratitude to Madam Speaker for arranging for at least an airing of this matter in the Consolidated Fund Bill debate. I had hoped that the Government would raise it in Government time, at a slightly more popular hour, but perhaps it is more fitting that it should go through the House in the dead of night.

I am disappointed with the way in which the extension of the mutual defence agreement has been handled and I want to mention some of the features of the debate—or non-debate—about it. Had the Government had their way, the agreement would have passed us by without any debate. It was laid formally on the Table on 21 October and, under the Ponsonby rules, would have been left there for 21 working days and then ratified without debate in the House.

Although the draft agreement laid by the Government was brief, half-way down the front page it said that the agreement had already passed through the American Congress on 23 May 1994. A number of hon. Members have already questioned why the matter has been delayed in Britain until now. The explanation lies somewhere between cock-up and contempt. The cock-up part of the explanation is, I am told, that the agreement was lost somewhere within the Foreign Office. Fairly late in the proceedings it was hastily retrieved from the other side of the Atlantic.

I should also point out that, among the other points of difference in the way in which the matter was processed, was the fact that when the agreement went through Congress it had been laid before both the Congress and the Senate for 60 days. That certainly has not been the case in the United Kingdom Parliament.

The agreement expires at the end of this month. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do not have much longer to wait before this part of this Session of Parliament finishes. It would be extremely embarrassing, although not fatal for its renewal, if the agreement were not signed before it expired and had to be re-signed as a renegotiated agreement. However, that has not happened. I picked the matter up only on the last day on which, under the Ponsonby rules, the agreement was formally to lie to on the Table.

I had an interesting time trying to get copies of the original agreement. I found that it was much easier to get access to it through sources in the United States. For the record, we ought to recognise what the agreement sets out. The formal title is:

> "An agreement for the co-operation in the uses of atomic energy for atomic energy for mutual defence purposes."

It commits both the United States and the United Kingdom to communicate and exchange information and transfer materials and equipment to the other party for their mutual defence and security. There is specific focus on the nuclear arms programme. The agreement refers to the exchange of information, which would include

> "classified information, sensitive nuclear technology and controlled nuclear information, as is jointly determined to be necessary".

It covers the "development of defence plans", the "training of personnel in the employment of atomic weapons and defence against them, other military applications of atomic energy . . . the development of delivery systems compatible with those atomic weapons and research, development and design of military reactors".

There is fairly comprehensive coverage of the areas in which exchange of information and personnel will take place. It is difficult, though, to find out the implications of the agreement. In fact, it has been extremely difficult and well nigh impossible in some cases, for Parliament to find out anything about it since it was originally signed in 1958.

I was intrigued by the use of the Ponsonby rule. Perhaps I can clarify how and why it has been used. The Minister replied to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 30 November, simply formally recording that the 1994 amendment was laid before Parliament on 21 October and that the Ponsonby rule required it to remain there for 21 days before it could be ratified.

The normal procedure under the Ponsonby rule is that if there is an objection, the matter is brought before the House. The briefing note given to Members of Parliament about the matter clarifies that that is not an obligation but a custom. It also says:

"There is no presumption that Parliament will debate every treaty laid under the Ponsonby rule, but once Parliament has been presented with the text of an important or controversial treaty, it is difficult in practice for the Leader of the House to resist a debate on it. Indeed, Ponsonby's original announcement included the promise that 'If there is a formal demand for discussion forwarded through the usual channels from the Opposition or any other party, time will be found for the discussion of the treaty in question.' Consequently, it may be said that any controversial treaty which requires ratification is as likely to be debated in the House of Commons as in other comparable Parliaments."

I hope that I will make it clear that that is not what happens. Parliament is systematically deceived and has been so ever since the first signing of the agreement. The systematic and consistent refusals by the Leader of the House to hold a full debate before Parliament in Government time are part of a process which goes back almost 40 years.

The letter from the Leader of the House states:

"Neither the 1958 agreement itself nor the amendment now under consideration involves any financial commitment by the UK or entails any obligation to purchase goods or services from the United States. The servicing, maintenance, operation and decommissioning costs of the Trident programme are determined by separate agreements."

Strictly speaking, it may be accurate to describe the situation that way, but it is also economical with the truth. The way in which the matter has been dealt with in the American Congress reveals a markedly different picture of the practical and financial implications of the agreement into which the UK entered all those years ago.

I am grateful to others who have raised the issue in the past—particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), in a debate on 21 December 1981. In it he said:

"I am deeply embarrassed by the possibility that plutonium provided by the British civil nuclear power programme might be contributing to that weapons drive."

He was referring to the rapid expansion of the American nuclear weapons programme in the 1980s, and added:

"That contribution will remain real whether the plutonium that we send is used directly for one of the 14,000 nuclear warheads or merely used indirectly to start the Clinch River fast breeder, and thereby to free stocks of plutonium for the weapons programme that would otherwise have been used to start the fast breeder reactor."—[*Official Report*, 21 December 1981; Vol. 15, c. 733-4.]

The years since then have produced a realisation that the agreement provided significant, core underpinning of precisely that expansion of the American nuclear weapons programme. There is substantial evidence that there has been crossover from the civil plutonium produced in the UK to the American nuclear weapons programme.

My hon. Friend received limited answers. I was shocked to have had it confirmed by the Library that the signing of the original agreement was never formally announced to Parliament. In the United States, the agreement's terms and implications were the subject of four months of detailed formal hearings by Congress. Yet the UK Parliament was denied any access to the agreement or any scrutiny or discussion of its implications. That is a dreadful indictment of Parliament's role in determining the ethical if not legal acceptability of agreements and treaties which the UK enters into. The public and Parliament were deceived over the signing of both the original agreement and its extension now.

The House was never told either that there were additional details of the agreement which have never been acknowledged by the Government. On 28 November 1979, one of the congressional records—a message from Jimmy Carter, the then President of the United States, to the Congress of the United States—simply said:

"I am pleased to transmit to the Congress the text of an amendment to the agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for co-operation on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes of 3 July 1958, as amended . . . The joint classified and unclassified memorandums, which provide summary analysis of the amendment, are also enclosed."

Those documents were supplied to the US Congress. Under the American Freedom of Information Act, it has been possible to get access to that annexe.

My excitement about the annexe quickly dissipated when I discovered that, although people have access to it, this comes in a form that is described as "sanitised"—and it certainly is. The document is entitled

"The technical annexe to the agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the United States of America for co-operation on the use of atomic energy and mutual defence purposes of July 3rd 1958".

The title is followed by nine pages, all of which are blank apart from three, which have just titles at the top.

I am not complaining that the full details of the technical annexe are not available. What concerns me is that the British Government have never even admitted that such an annexe exists. The information about it has systematically been kept from Parliament and there has been no discussion about the implications it might have for the governance and defence of the United Kingdom.

The Leader of the House, when he wrote to me, said that this was not a matter which should concern us because it was a "nil-cost" agreement. I was fascinated to discover, though, that there are substantial costs. It is a matter of how the costs are dealt with rather then whether they exist. I am especially indebted to Greenpeace which has done a phenomenal amount of work in bringing this

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information to light in the United Kingdom—information which has been more readily available in the United States.

It is worth putting the transactions on record and then looking at the resultant costs. It is true that the agreement does not oblige the United Kingdom to purchase goods from the United States, but in that sense, it is a bit like a hire purchase agreement. It costs nothing to sign a hire purchase agreement; it is only when one starts to acquire goods under it that the costs begin. As a result of the American Freedom of Information Act, I was able to clarify that, between 1959 and 1978, the UK Government spent a total of $6.6 million on materials purchased under the agreement. The annual cost was $350,000 dollars. In addition, it is acknowledged that there is to be built into the account the costs of staff in London and Washington who are dedicated to handling material and information transfers. There are at least 10 such staff simply doing the administration. There is also the cost of visits to US facilities to obtain information which has to be accounted for.

I am sorry to go into acronyms at this stage, but there are two areas to which specific costs relate. One is the jowogs—the joint working groups. These are groups of scientists and experts who work on a variety of detailed technical exchanges in relation to the nuclear defence programme. As I understand it, there are at least 40 such jowogs in operation. They cover such subjects as neutron sources, high explosives for nuclear weapons, computational methods and procedures, metallurgy of weapons materials—that is, plutonium research—non-nuclear components, non-metallic materials, weapons physics, tritium technology, the spread of nuclear contamination, the joint use of test facilities, procedures and techniques for the manufacture, inspection, testing and acceptance of materials and weapons assemblies, existing and proposed Polaris warheads, the Polaris joint re-entry system working group, the strategic weapon test group and the joint United States-United Kingdom financial management working group. If there are no financial implications, it seems somewhat bizarre to set up a financial management working group.

We have also acquired equipment. We have acquired a series of items over the past 10 years which includes components such as velocity sensing devices, tritium gas reservoirs, timers, specially designed hardware items, structural components, by-product and unfabricated special nuclear materials such as plutonium, normal or depleted uranium and thorium, testing and handling equipment for nuclear weapons, swapped nuclear test debris samples and components used in the fusing, firing and making safe of British nuclear weapons—including switches, relays, cables, printed circuits, batteries and irradiated vacuum tubes. Those items have all been exchanged under the agreement.

I was fascinated to know how and why those exchanges would take place at nil cost. The description suggests the sort of homely exchange that takes place on the porch at the end of a long sunny evening, when people are just swapping tales. The practicalities of the agreement, however, are far removed from that. They relate to practical exchanges of information, resources and hardware that are essential parts of the nuclear weapons programmes of both America and the United Kingdom.

The details of how the agreement was to be financed were never presented to the House. Some were set out in a book by John Simpson, who is neither a relative of mine nor a newscaster, but who was a special adviser to the Palme commission and a member of the UN secretary-general's expert group on conventional disarmament. In "The Independent Nuclear State", he wrote:

> "It was planned that the Atomic Energy Commission would create a $200 million revolving fund to finance the Anglo-American trade in fissile materials, though the precise mechanism envisaged remains somewhat obscure. There is a strong suggestion that the money was initially to be lent to Britain, which would then use it to pay for some or all of the enriched uranium and tritium purchased from the AEC prior to 1964. Receipts for this transaction would then be used to purchase plutonium produced in Britain. This procedure would have the effect of making the transaction a virtually cost-free exercise for the United Kingdom Government."

The exercise may be cost-free in a strict accounting sense, but it is a version of the Asil Nadir approach to accounting for exchanges, which I find extremely dubious. Again, though, the House was never told that such a fund was being set up by the United States to allow the United Kingdom to purchase materials, and to have the plutonium purchased back in what would appear to be a nil-cost transaction.

If that sum existed in 1964, does it still exist now? Will the Minister tell us whether it has moved with the retail prices index? If so, we are talking about a sum that must now be in the region of $1 billion—not insignificant in anyone's accounting terms.

I also wondered about the sort of materials which were involved in the exchange. I am grateful to the United States Natural Resources Defence Council, which managed to establish the current volume of exchange—the "shopping basket"—between the United Kingdom and the United States, through to 30 December 1994. The United States estimated that the following quantities would be exchanged in each calendar year: 500 kg of normal or depleted uranium, 100 kg of thorium, 200 g each of other source, by-product and unfabricated special nuclear materials. In addition, there would be an exchange of "test equipment". The one item that was deleted by the American vetting system was the specific details of the amount of plutonium that was part of the exchange. Clearly, however, plutonium was the other component of that exchange.

For a long time, the Government attempted to say that the plutonium was part of the nuclear weapons programme and that there was no prospect of any plutonium produced in civil nuclear reactors being part of a weapons programme, either directly or indirectly. However, on 4 July this year my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent asked a written question to which the then Minister of State for Defence Procurement replied:

> "The 1962 test confirmed the technical feasibility of constructing a nuclear explosive device using reactor-grade plutonium. This fact was declassified by the United States in 1977. There are, though, significant technical difficulties which would complicate the manufacture and storage of any weapon based on reactor-grade plutonium."

In a second written answer, my hon. Friend was told:

> "The assurance given in 1964 by the United States Government to the United Kingdom Government, that plutonium produced in the United Kingdom civil reactors and supplied to the United States under the 1958 agreement would not be used for weapons purposes, remains valid."—[*Official Report*, 4 July 1994; Vol. 246, c. *82-3*.]

These seem to be completely contradictory statements.

The United States admitted on 27 June this year that it had used civil plutonium in a nuclear explosion. What we do not know is how many other nuclear explosions were conducted using civil plutonium. We know only that it is now accepted that that happens and that the UK objections are technical rather than ethical. I must say that I think that the ethical aspect is much more important than the technical one because it raises important questions about the integrity of the United Kingdom's civil nuclear programme and that of any commitments that we make about the use of plutonium in the production of nuclear weapons.

We also know from our own UK sources that the United Kingdom has produced some 80,000 kg of plutonium—enough to make 20,000 nuclear bombs. However, we have no account of the plutonium transfers between the United Kingdom and the United States. We have no knowledge of how many of those transfers involved civil nuclear materials, or how much of that plutonium was used in the American nuclear weapons programme.

Many hon. Members have become increasingly disturbed about the dishonesty of the United Kingdom's approach to signing, conducting and sustaining an agreement which may well have a destabilising rather than stabilising effect on global and international relations.

I remind the House of a comment made on 13 May 1986 by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). He said:

> "The biggest cover-up of all, for which I shall never forgive those responsible, was that throughout the period when I was Minister, plutonium from our atoms-for-peace reactors was going to America to make bombs and warheads that would return to American bases here. That view has been confirmed by Ministers in this Government. I was cross-examined about it at the Sizewell inquiry, and only recently has it been admitted that the atoms-for-peace power stations are in reality bomb factories for the United States."—[*Official Report*, 13 May 1986; Vol. 97, c. 612.]

The scale of that bomb-making process has never been admitted. The only estimate that I could come across was in the technical annexe to the book by John Simpson, in which the author said that the initial view of the United States was that it would acquire a maximum of 6,500 kg of plutonium from Britain to support its nuclear programme. The House has never been given any confirmation of how much plutonium the United Kingdom has supplied to the United States as part of the agreement. I now formally ask the Minister to tell the House what congressional committees have almost certainly been told in the United States. The House has a right to know what scale of plutonium exchanges this country has been involved in as a result of the obligations entered into as part of the agreement.

Some enormous implications follow from the way in which the agreement has been signed, conducted, sustained—and now, possibly, renewed. The first implication relates to the non-proliferation treaty, and the conference on its extension that will begin in April next year.

Many of us have long argued that Britain is in breach of articles I and VI of the non-proliferation treaty. The Trident programme is almost certainly an act of nuclear proliferation. Everyone outside the United Kingdom acknowledges the fact that the massive increase in the nuclear warheads available to this country puts us in breach of those articles. Also, specifically, the agreement appears to put us in breach of article I.

It is worth reminding the House what article I says:

> "Each nuclear-weapon State Party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons or explosive devices directly, or indirectly".

Yet that is precisely what the agreement sets out to do.

The agreement also puts us in breach of article VI, which reminds us of our further obligations:

> "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament".

For the past 25 years of the non-proliferation treaty, the United Kingdom Government have not participated in any nuclear arms reductions whatever. In fact we are now one of the few countries that appear to be moving in the opposite direction.

Will the Minister explain how he sees the renewal of the agreement as consistent either with the existing NPT or with the extension negotiations that will take place in a few months' time? And how does he see it as consistent with the agreement, or accord, recently signed at the Budapest summit? The Budapest document contains a simple statement on the principles governing non-proliferation:

> "The participating states strongly believe that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles to deliver them poses a threat to international peace, security and stability, and hereby affirm their commitment to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons".

Yet the list of exchanges which have taken place under the agreement, and the intention to continue that agreement for a further 10 years, sets the United Kingdom off on a practical path that will render both of those agreements worthless. They will not even be worth the paper that they are written on because the practical consequences of our agreement is to disregard our wider international agreements. The Government attempt to do so in ways that systematically deceive the House, the country and the international community.

The agreement also has some phenomenally dangerous and destabilising implications for the prospects of the signing of a comprehensive test ban treaty. Non-nuclear weapon states, which are being asked to subscribe to a treaty that will effectively exclude them from ever being nuclear weapons states, are already asking what the nuclear club will do in return. It is no longer acceptable for the nuclear powers to say, "We will act as a stabilising force and we will protect you," because the wars across the globe have made it clear that no such deterrent or stabilising force is particularly credible at the moment.

Many of the non-nuclear states, or the "maybe" nuclear states, are looking much more seriously at the argument that we have been using for a long time. They are saying, "If it's okay for you to have nuclear weapons, it should be okay for us. If you don't want us to go down that path, the quid pro quo must be that if we don't secure and obtain nuclear weapons, you have to stop testing."

One of the big issues in that dialogue is the extent to which the nuclear states have a technical capability now which no longer requires us to physically test nuclear weapons. That testing can be carried out by computer modelling in ways that allow for the refinements and upgrading of our weapons systems to improve—and I use

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"improve" in parenthesis—and increase their effectiveness and the diversity of ways in which they can be used. That, in itself, is an act of proliferation. Seen through the eyes of the non-nuclear world, it is not a stand-still situation. However, this agreement is the bedrock on which we can continue acts of selective proliferation for ourselves while we seek to deny others access to the nuclear club.

It has been a serious error of judgment and a serious dereliction of duty for the Government to think that they could simply ratify an extension of such an agreement without giving the House an opportunity, in Government time, to raise fundamental questions about the ethics, advisability and acceptability—in global terms—of moving along that path. Given the opportunity, the House may have wanted to say that it is time to let the agreement lapse. If the world required a gesture from the United Kingdom, one of the most important suggestions that we could have made is that we would cease to be involved in this bilateral exchange of high-level nuclear information.

The agreement also raises questions, as a process, about ways in which the Government might use the Ponsonby rule, to ratify other treaties which would have equally profound effects on the governance of this country, and the place of this country internationally, and which would pass through the House without Parliament having the right to debate, disagree or even register an opinion on the implications of some of those proposals.

I end with several fairly simple questions that I would like the Minister to answer. Will he arrange an open debate, in Government time, on the set of implications contained in any proposal to renew and extend the agreement? Will he supply to Parliament and to the Select Committees on Defence and Foreign Affairs the information that has been supplied to similar committees in the United States Congress and Senate? Will he set out the detailed costs of all aspects of the 1958 agreement, including the administrative costs, and also the barter and loan arrangements that have been built into it?

Will the Minister set out the details of all the jowogs and eivrs that currently exist? The eivrs are the official visits and consequent reports. I should like him to do that so that Parliament is again treated to information in precisely the same terms available to the American Congress, and to the American people under their Freedom of Information Act.

Will the Minister explain how the signing of an extension to the agreement will contribute, first, to the Budapest summit commitments that the Government entered into—specifically in terms of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons; secondly, to the implementation of article 1 of the non-proliferation treaty; and, thirdly, to making progress and offering reassurances to other states in relation to the signing of a CTBT?

Will the Minister explain also whether the bottom line realities of the agreement that he proposes to have renewed are that, without the agreement, Britain does not have an independent nuclear deterrent but that, with the agreement, we have a policy that gives us no independence? What we have is an umbilical link between the United States and the United Kingdom, in which this country and the House have become the nuclear lackeys of the American nuclear arms programme.

The agreement is essential to the underpinning of the £30 billion costs of the nuclear arms programme with which this country is saddled. It is part of the process which underpins our nuclear servitude and the nuclear instability that threatens the planet. This is a dreadfully high price to pay for nuclear dependence and a dreadful price that the country and Parliament has had to pay for its systematic deception for almost 40 years.

2.36 am

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on his perseverance in trying to obtain this debate and on what he has just said. I echo his requests for information from the Government.

Over the years that I have been a Member of the House, the Consolidated Fund debate has been a useful way for hon. Members who wish to uncover what the Government want to hide to pry a little into what is going on. If this is to be the last Consolidated Fund debate that keeps us up all night, I hope that, when we exchange it for time which might be much more convenient on a Wednesday morning, it will be just as easy for people such as my hon. Friend to prod and pry into matters that the Government want to keep secret.

Although I am pleased that my hon. Friend has obtained this debate, it is an absolute disgrace that we have to debate this matter in such a way. If the treaty is important, and if it is the key to the whole of the Government's strategy of nuclear deterrence, why is a Minister not prepared to stand at the Dispatch Box and set out why we should have the treaty and its benefits? Instead of trying to smuggle it through without debate, if it is so central to the Government's policy, they should have been prepared to say, "These are the benefits to the United Kingdom. As a result of the treaty, we really have an independent nuclear deterrent."

Although it is an abomination, at least the Government should be prepared to set out why they want such a position and what the benefits to the United Kingdom are. They should say how, as a result of the treaty, even if we have political disagreements with the United States, it will still be contractually bound to supply us the with things that we need to keep the nuclear deterrent independent. A Minister should tell us proudly what the benefits are, instead of having to be dragged to the House to answer questions.

I should have thought that the Minister would set out clearly what the cost to the United Kingdom will be. It is one of the fundamental principles of Parliament that we should be given information about costs, and that the Government should set out to justify them. Again, it is extremely difficult to find out what the costs are. The Leader of the House has suggested that the arrangement has no cost implications, but he does not put a very convincing case—obviously there are cost implications.

What are the safety implications of the arrangement? We know that materials are to be transferred. I think that the Minister owes the House an assurance that the transfer of fissile material between the two countries carries no safety implications at all.

The Minister must assure us that the arrangement contains nothing that has breached, or will breach, the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in any way. We are extremely keen for other country's nuclear industries to be inspected and regulated to ensure that they are not likely to breach the treaty or pose an international threat. It is fundamental that the British Government try to show—if they can—that we have not breached the treaty.

The Government should set out reasons why the agreement does not make it more difficult for us to renegotiate the non-proliferation treaty. It is in everyone's best interests to renew the treaty and get it to work effectively. While they are making other countries give cast-iron undertakings, the Government should be prepared to say that they have not breached the treaty and that the agreement will not weaken our negotiating position. The Government have not made such a statement and I hope that the Minister will at least attempt to produce that information in his reply to the debate.

It is sad that the Government treat the arrangements with so much secrecy. Much more information is available in the United States. I accept that the Government do not want to put details about the design of a nuclear triggerhead before the Parliament, but I do not understand why most of the information in the arrangement cannot be revealed to the House.

When we want to establish an effective deterrent, we tell people what we have and what we are capable of doing with it. If we do not inform people of our capabilities, the implication is that we probably do not have anything to act as a deterrent. That has been the case with most nuclear deterrents in recent years. It is quite clear that the Polaris submarines are not functioning effectively and that their whole deterrent effect has crumbled. That is why the Government want to pretend—it is the emperor's new clothes syndrome—that things are operating well when they are not. The Minister should tell the House whether the agreement is operational and whether all the details are in place, but I understand why he is not prepared to do that.

The Government must set out the answers to key questions. Are we still dependent on the United States for the design of the triggers for the nuclear weapons? Are they being designed at Sandina; if so, is it specified in the arrangements and how does that fit in with the nuclear non-proliferation treaty? Will we be able to say during the treaty negotiations that there has been no transfer of information and nuclear capabilities, which I understand is in breach of the non-proliferation treaty?

What will our officials say during treaty negotiations? Can they prove that we are not dependent on the transfer of the trigger design? Can they prove that there is no collaboration and no transfer of fissile material between the two countries? Unless we are prepared to be open and above board about our dealings with the United States in negotiations on the non-proliferation treaty, I do not see how we can expect other countries to assure us that they are not transferring information or trying to develop their own nuclear systems. It is fundamental that the Government can convince not only the House but the world that we have not been in breach of the non-proliferation treaty and that we will have no difficulty in signing up to future sections of it.

We must set out the details, for which my hon. Friend asked, of all the collaborations. What the British and United States Governments have been doing—and whether what they have been doing has been in any way a breach of the treaty—must be set out clearly in the record. I also suggest that the cost must also be set out clearly.

I want to leave plenty of time for the Minister to respond to the debate, because the main complaint from Opposition Members is about the Government's unwillingness to put forward their case. I make a final plea for openness about the negotiations. The Government ought to be proud to tell us what they are doing. The Opposition may be critical—I certainly am—of the Government's approach, but the Government ought not to be ashamed of what they are doing if they believe in the nuclear deterrent. If they believe in it, they should be prepared to put it forward as a positive policy. They should tell us the benefits and the costs, and they should certainly be able to guarantee to the House that the agreement will not make the non-proliferation treaty more difficult to negotiate and will not lead to the world becoming a less safe place.

I shall certainly listen with considerable interest to what the Minister says, although I do not accept that that will be an adequate response in one of the key areas of Government policy. We ought to have a proper debate in Government time in which a Minister sets out what he claims to be the benefits of the agreement.

2.46 am

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on his ingenuity and persistence in obtaining this debate, which is important because it may be—I hope that it will not be—the only opportunity that the House has to discuss the agreement. I cannot identify myself with everything that my hon. Friend said, not least because of his criticism of poor old Ponsonby, whose rules we are the victims of tonight. In his day, Ponsonby was a man after my hon. Friend's heart—and my heart—and he introduced the rules precisely to extend openness. If we find the rules restrictive this morning, it is because the need for open government has moved on since 1924.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that it is quite unacceptable that the agreement should be debated at such an hour and in such circumstances. If we believe in openness in government, it must be necessary to have a proper debate in Government time with the full text of the agreement in front of us. That, of course, is what my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has requested from the Government. We do not regard this debate as a substitute for that, nor do we regard it as fulfilling the terms of my hon. Friend's request to the Foreign Secretary, expressed in his letter of 13 December.

The debate focuses on one article of the agreement, although I welcome the fact that it has strayed more widely. We shall continue to press for a real debate. In doing so, we are not expressing our determination to object to the agreement or to its ratification in an amended form. That is a reasonable inference, although we cannot be sure, because of the obscurity with which the agreement has so far been treated, that the agreement has played an essential part in maintaining Britain's nuclear weapons system. We are insisting that there is an opportunity for scrutiny, and not one that is focused on or confined to article III of the agreement.

Although I have no means of knowing whether the explanation offered by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South is correct, it is worthy of note that there was a five-month delay between the agreement being reached and its being laid before Parliament. That

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may mean that the Government find themselves in difficulty; if so, it is, sadly, a problem of their making. Our desire for proper parliamentary scrutiny of the agreement cannot be constrained by difficulties of the Government's own making.

My hon. Friends the Members for Nottingham, South and for Denton and Reddish drew attention to the non-proliferation treaty; the conference on its extension will, I hope, take place next year. It is essential that we devise an extended non-proliferation regime that commands the means and the legitimacy for it to fulfil its objectives. Those objectives have been put on the record by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South, who reminded us of the full text of article VI of the treaty, which expresses the objective of nuclear disarmament. The Government and Opposition support that objective, as we do the treaty.

The division of the world into nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states, under the terms of the existing non-proliferation treaty, was only possible as a temporary expediency. The business-as-usual-attitude towards its ratification is a slightly disturbing sign of what the Government's real attitude may be to that treaty. My hon. Friend for Nottingham, South is right that the agreement is open-ended, particularly its exchange of information clauses. It would be useful to be given a thorough explanation of why the treaty requires amendment and what circumstances led to the drafting of article II of the revised agreement. We have been told in a parliamentary answer that the terms of that article have been operating in practice for some time, but it is important to know the circumstances that led to that necessity.

My hon. Friends the Members for Nottingham, South and for Denton and Reddish asked some perfectly proper questions. For example, has the agreement allowed for the exchange of information about warhead design or the exchange of advice or information relevant to that design? Has information on trigger systems—on fusing and firing systems for nuclear weapons—been passed to us as a result of the agreement? It would be perfectly proper if it had, because it is covered by the terms of the agreement. It seems right and sensible at this juncture, as we are considering more openness about and verification of nuclear proliferation, that the Government should at least be clear about that exchange of information.

Under the terms of the agreement, both parties to it may have passed information arising out of weapons tests to each other. My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South asked the perfectly fair question whether that is reconcilable with the test ban treaty. If it is, how much stronger would the Government's position be if they made that clear? It is in our national strategic interest that that point is made plain. If there is no difficulty in reconciling that agreement and the obligations entered into under the test ban treaty—that may be the case—it is in our national interests that that is made clear. That would strengthen the hand of our negotiators at the treaty conferences next year, which will deal with the extension of the test ban treaty and the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

My hon. Friends are right to draw attention to the terms of article I of the non-proliferation treaty, which used the word "indirectly". The agreement makes it clear that nuclear weapons "as such" and information about weapons "as such" cannot be exchanged under the terms of the agreement. Is there any possibility of a breach of the non-proliferation treaty because of "indirect" exchanges of information about or relating to nuclear weapons systems? If, since 1970, when the NPT obligations were entered into along with the agreement that runs side by side with them, there has been no problem of reconciliation, how much stronger our position would be in convincing the non-nuclear weapons states of our good intentions and in creating additional legitimacy for our negotiating positions if that could be demonstrated. By not having a debate to clarify these matters, we have a missed opportunity from the Government's point of view. It would be helpful to have an assurance tonight that no action will be taken under the agreement in future that would contradict the terms of the test ban treaty.

Article III is the basis of the important point to which my hon. Friends have drawn attention: was weapons grade plutonium handed to the United States under the terms of the agreement? It would be proper, within the terms of the agreement, if that had taken place. If there were such an exchange, unless the material was subject to the special exemption clause for civil use—that is provided for in the agreement—it must be presumed that the exchange was for the purposes of defence planning and military uses. Under the terms of the agreement, unless there is a special exemption for civil use, all other uses of article 3 bis must be presumed to be for defence and military uses.

The original terms of article V are as follows:

> "Except . . . as may be agreed for civil uses, . . . the information communicated or exchanged, or the materials or equipment transferred, by either Party pursuant to this Agreement"

shall be used by the recipient party exclusively for

> "the preparation or implementation of defense plans in the mutual interests of the two countries."

So the argument that exchanges may have been for civil uses is one of exception. The normal exchanges of information and material that are provided for under the agreement are and must be

> "for the preparation or implementation of defence plans in the mutual interests of the two countries."

That is extremely important, and it is only right that my hon. Friends wish the Minister to take up the matter.

Amendments are proposed under the terms of the revised agreement. There is a slight but significant change in the wording that is provided for in the third article of the revised agreement. What is the purpose of the amended wording? Does it carry any significance? What is the need to distinguish between "arranging" for something and "providing" for something? We have become used to the terminology of "provision" in other areas of the Government's activities. Is it implied that the terms of the agreement as proposed to be revised would allow other parties than the Government performing the functions or exchanging the materials that are provided for in this part of the agreement?

It causes us concern that the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority was a party named in the agreement, and the Government, in making the agreement, were making the agreement on behalf of what was in 1958 the Atomic Energy Authority, and which has now become two Government organisations—British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. It would be useful, if that curiously worded amendment is being tabled, to have some explanation of why that was necessary.

Are the terms of the agreement, as proposed to be amended, capable of allowing for direct bilateral exchange between those agencies of the Government and the United States of America? Are the provisions of the agreement exercisable by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. and by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority? What part might that play in any privatisation proposals for those agencies, and in the present format that those agencies now have? "Arrange for" rather than "provide" could imply a loosening of terms, precisely to allow companies and enterprises that are not part of the Government to exercise powers under the agreement. That is an important point, and the Government should clarify it.

We are moving, necessarily, to an era of greater openness in defence matters. Indeed, if we, the nuclear weapons states—Britain is one and, for some time, will remain one—do not exercise openness in our doings and dealings, we shall never convince the non-nuclear states to remain so. That is an argument that was made firmly by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish, and in that regard I associate myself equally strongly with his remarks.

The control of proliferation is at the heart of our own security needs and the existence of scrutiny and verification is essential, now that the technologies of war and peace are so similar. To debate those issues openly—to have a frank exchange on what is implied by the obscure terms of those agreements—is not only right in terms of parliamentary accountability but a necessity for our future security, and it is in our national strategic interest.

3.1 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis): I congratulate the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on obtaining the debate, if not on the time at which he obtained it—we would all sometimes like to debate in the daytime.

It might be helpful to begin with several points of clarification for the benefit of the hon. Members for Nottingham, South, for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins). I fear that they are labouring under several misapprehensions, with regard both to the nature of the 1958 Anglo-United States mutual defence agreement and to the procedures under which the 1994 amendment has been laid before the House, and under which it will, in due course, be ratified.

The hon. Gentlemen who raised the matter appear to allege that the Government have not followed the procedures by proceeding with ratification before the House has had a chance to debate the issues. I do not believe that that is so.

I begin by discussing the procedure by which the agreement has been laid before the House—the Ponsonby rule. I noted that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central spoke favourably about Mr. Ponsonby. Hon. Members will be aware that the Ponsonby rule, which dates back to 1924, is a convention of the House and does not impose any legal obligation on the Government. The rule states—I quote from page 215 of the 21st edition of "Erskine May":

> "when a Treaty requires ratification, the Government does not usually proceed until a period of 21 days has elapsed from the date on which the text of the Treaty was laid before Parliament by Her Majesty's Command. This practice is subject to modification, if necessary, when urgent or other important considerations arise."

There have certainly been occasions on which the Government have proceeded with ratification of an agreement before those 21 days have elapsed. For the agreement in question, the period of 21 days elapsed on 1 December, as I think that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central noted.

Under the Ponsonby rule, there is no obligation on the Government to wait those 21 days, but, as we have done in this case, we would always seek to do so unless there were pressing reasons to the contrary.

Nor does the Ponsonby rule oblige the Government to hold a debate before a treaty is ratified. The procedure is obviously different when ratification of a treaty entails new UK legislation or the amendment of existing legislation. That is, of course, a different matter, but it does not apply here.

There has also been a suggestion that the 1958 agreement entails a financial obligation on the part of the UK, and therefore that the House is entitled to a debate before ratification. That is a red herring.

The Ponsonby rule does not refer to financial commitments; nor, and in this case more importantly, does the 1958 agreement entail any explicit financial commitment by the UK. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman has been misinformed on both counts, and I shall elaborate. But to summarise this point, we could therefore have completed the ratification procedure already. As I have just said, we are not even obliged to wait for the 21 days.

Nevertheless, I can confirm that, out of respect for the House, we have deferred the exchange of notes which will constitute ratification until after the debate. I hope that the House will accept that the Government have behaved entirely properly in the matter.

I come now to the substance of the 1958 agreement.

Mr. Simpson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Davis: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way because I want to make an intricate argument. He made some complex points which I want to try to answer this evening.

I come now to the substance of the 1958 United Kingdom-United States mutual defence agreement and the objections that the hon. Member for Nottingham, South has to it. He originally raised his objection to the ratification of the 1994 amendment during business questions on 1 December. He argued then that the House should have the opportunity to debate the amendment because, unless ratification were stopped, the Government would be committed to a bill of some £20 billion to the United States for the servicing, maintenance, operation and decommissioning costs of the Trident programme.

I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is misinformed on that point. As my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has since informed the hon. Gentleman, neither the 1958 mutual defence agreement nor the amendments now under consideration involved any financial commitment by the UK. Neither the agreement nor the amendments

[Mr. Davis]

commit the UK to purchase any goods or services from the United States. It certainly is not an agreement that commits the UK to pay the operating costs of Trident.

The hon. Gentleman referred to a number of costs. As far as I am aware, the sort of costs that he talked about are mostly covered under the defence estimates votes as a different issue altogether.

It might be of assistance to the House if I were to explain what the 1958 agreement is for and why we are renewing it. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for repeating in part what I am sure he will already know from reading the text of the amendments, Cm 2686, which was laid before the House on 21 October.

The background to the 1958 agreement is to be found in the United States Atomic Energy Act of 1946, the so-called McMahon Act, which prevented the United States from sharing atomic energy information with other states. Although a new Atomic Energy Act was passed in 1954, which permitted full exchanges of information on civil aspects of atomic energy and even limited exchanges on military uses, in order to facilitate a full nuclear relationship with the UK, the United States Administration considered it necessary to enter into a formal agreement for co-operation on the uses of atomic energy for mutual defence purposes, the so-called mutual defence agreement.

In view of the United States Atomic Energy Act, which would otherwise limit severely the scope of our bilateral co-operation, the agreement has to have legal force in the United States. But the nature of the agreement is such that it does not require legislation for the UK; hence the procedure for ratification to which I already referred.

The amendments that have been laid before the House amend the one element of the agreement, article III bis, which requires regular renewal and adds a new paragraph to article VI.

If I may leave my text for a second, the hon. Gentleman referred to article II. Speaking from memory, that deals with the accounting arrangements that have been common practice in the past and are important in these days of nuclear smuggling. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman if I am wrong about that.

Article III bis concerns the two-way exchanges of special nuclear materials and other products. It requires periodic amendment to ensure its continuing relevance and validity.

The new paragraph F of article VI, which is set out in full in Cm 2686, includes strengthened obligations on both parties to follow adequate materials control and accountancy procedures in respect of nuclear materials transferred under the agreement. It also provides for consultation between the United Kingdom and the United States on these arrangements.

Both we and the United States already operate rigorous and effective materials control and accountancy arrangements, but we believe that it is correct that we should acknowledge explicitly the existence of those arrangements in the text of the agreement. Given the recent international concern about the need for rigorous materials control and accountancy procedures, I am sure that the House will welcome the explicit acknowledgement of our arrangements in the mutual defence agreement.

I think that it is clear why the hon. Gentleman sought a debate on the amendments to the mutual defence agreement. His intention became apparent towards the end of his speech. He challenged the very existence of our nuclear deterrent programme and the basis of our bilateral co-operation on nuclear matters with the United States of America. The House will not be surprised to learn that we are not prepared to accept those challenges. We intend that Trident will provide a minimum strategic nuclear deterrent for the United Kingdom. Our strategic deterrent provides the ultimate guarantee of our national security and contributes to NATO's strategy of war prevention.

The hon. Gentleman said something in his speech that was, in fact, wrong. I am sure that he did not mean to mislead the House, so I shall correct what he said. He implied that there had been no reduction—indeed, he implied that there had been an increase—in the UK's level of nuclear capability during the past few years. The fact is that we have eliminated our maritime tactical nuclear capability, we have reduced the number of nuclear bombs carried by aircraft and announced that they will not be replaced when they are withdrawn from service, and we have decided that Trident will carry fewer warheads than originally envisaged—thereby keeping the available explosive power to a level similar to that which existed previously. The overall effect is to reduce the total explosive power available by about 25 per cent., which is quite a significant change.

The other matter raised by the hon. Gentleman related to our attitude to the comprehensive test ban treaty. We are committed to negotiating an effective, verifiable and affordable CTBT. The agreement does not inhibit that commitment. We believe that there are good prospects for achieving an effective treaty. I am afraid that I missed a very small part of the hon. Gentleman's comments, but I understand that he referred to the alternative, so-called non-testing methods of ensuring the viability of nuclear weapons. For as long as the United States moratorium on testing continues, we are committed to not doing any further tests of our own. We are looking at the non-testing systems.

Mr. Simpson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on a point of clarification?

Mr. Davis: Yes, if it is a point of clarification.

Mr. Simpson: Is the Minister saying that the joint working group dealing with co-operation on computer modelling is no longer working? United States records list that group as being operative. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that it is now subject to the moratorium?

Mr. Davis: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not be drawn into the detail of these matters. I shall consider his point after the debate and if I can give him an answer, I will. However, I cannot make an outright promise to do so.

It is now widely accepted—although perhaps not by the hon. Gentleman—that, during the cold war, NATO's nuclear forces were essential in ensuring that major conflict never occurred. They removed any rational basis for an adversary believing that a war could be fought in Europe and won. So we should not think lightly of dismantling a stable and secure framework for maintaining peace. Risks and uncertainties still exist. We are forging new relationships with Russia and the other countries of the old Warsaw pact. That process will be helped by the stability provided by NATO's strategy for peace and security, including its minimum nuclear deterrent.

However, we cannot be sure that the positive trends that we have witnessed are irreversible. Other risks may develop. We cannot afford to wait for potential threats to become real before we respond, given the time lead and lag in such decisions. Our deterrent is, and will remain, operationally independent and under the absolute control of the British Government. We have undertaken that the system will be operated in defence of NATO, but have reserved the right to use it independently should supreme national interests so require.

Therefore, we believe that our independent nuclear deterrent remains our ultimate guarantee of national security as well as a fundamental element of the defence of the alliance of which we are proud to be part. We will not accept that that should be put into question by a procedural objection to the agreement that forms the basis of our nuclear defence co-operation with the United States of America. I should emphasise that we are not alone in that perception. Our allies continue to reaffirm that European security and stability are enhanced by the continued possession of nuclear forces by the United Kingdom and France. I am sure that the House will wish to reflect on those fundamentals, and not on the misinformed and misguided attacks of the hon. Member for Nottingham, South on the mutual defence agreement.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It seems discourteous of the Minister, with 15 minutes of the debate left, not to allow interventions. It suggests that he is frightened to answer the questions. It is particularly discourteous that he has not answered all the questions that we raised about the non-proliferation treaty. I simply think that you ought to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that that is not a point of order for the Chair. It is a matter for the Minister.

Internet

3.16 am

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I begin by thanking my colleague and friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology, whom I have known for many years. I feel that I should apologise for requiring him to be up at this late hour. I believe that this is one of the last debates that is likely to be heard in the House of Commons on the present basis.

The history of this august building in which we have the great privilege to work goes back some 900 years. It is interesting that we are about to debate what may take us forward to the next 100 years in a way that may transform lives in a way that probably no one in the past 900 years except those who have been alive in the past couple of decades might have fully comprehended.

The development of the Internet and the information super-highway is certainly an exciting development. On a scale of one to 10, many would certainly rate it a 10. It is probably a little short of that in terms of human development, but certainly an enormous change in our lives will result from the Internet and the information super-highway. Subject to any copyright restrictions of *Hansard*, I hope to be able to place a copy of this debate on the Internet in the next fortnight. I hope that will be seen and read by as many as 30 million people, instead of the small number of hon. Members in the Chamber now, at 3.15 am.

People who get carried away with Internet and become over-endowed with excitement are known as techies or techno nerds. They say Internet will make politicians obsolete. I hope that that will not happen. I do not subscribe to their vision of the future, which is that 40 million people or more will vote by electronic means, on television. We are a long way from that.

However, there will be enormous changes, and opportunities for people to express opinions and views. The Government's world wide web server on Internet allows the public to convey views and comments to the Government and Ministers.

I believe that I was the first Member of Parliament to subscribe to Internet, in April this year. I have found it an interesting experience, and I hope that those subscribers with whom I have corresponded have done so. I hope that those of my constituents who are also subscribers, particularly schoolchildren, will find the project of benefit and use.

It is incumbent on me to present a mini glossary of information super-highway terms. The language may be obscure now, but it will become common parlance in future—words and abbreviations such as bandwidth, megabytes, WWW, or world wide web, WAIS, or wide area internet search information service, ARCHIE, GOPHER, TCP/IP, FTP or file transfer protocol, e-mail—electronic mail—and hypertext. The latter will become common terms when establishing a world wide web page.

The information super-highway offers enormous employment and business opportunities, and this country must take a lead even if Internet did not start and develop here. Internet is also an attractive means for pupils and students to learn, obtain information and exchange ideas. My four-year-old son spent part of the summer communicating with four-year-olds and older children in Colorado, Nebraska and California.

[Mr. David Shaw]

Internet and the super-highway also offer a wider range of home-based entertainment. They offer an enormously powerful source of information. For the price of a local telephone call, one can connect to a global network that allows information to be extracted from computers in Honolulu, Australia and many other parts of the world.

Although Internet was originally established for information and research, now businesses are using it to communicate with each other and with consumers. The information super-highway is much more than Internet. For some time, the United States has led in cable television, which is one of the major ways in which the information super-highway will be developed and brought to people's homes in the United Kingdom.

It is interesting that the United Kingdom has a broad-band communications network based on optical glass fibre cables which will be able to carry much more information than traditional cables, whereas the United States is primarily cabled with the old copper-based twisted pair cables. I am fairly confident that we shall have—

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology (Mr. Ian Taylor) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Shaw: I see my hon. Friend the Minister nod. I am fairly confident that we shall have the most advanced optical fibre information technology network in the world when it is completed. The network will be achieved by low regulation, in which the Government believe strongly. That low regulation encourages the development of the information super-highway and the United Kingdom's connection to the worldwide network.

There is some irony in that because we have been helped in this development by a number of companies from the United States and Canada. We must be grateful to those companies, which have been very supportive, ambitious and competitive, for the way in which they are helping to develop high-capacity, broad-band cabling which is bringing us voice, data and video capacity. It will enable telephone shopping, home banking, remote security and energy management to become normal services for many people who do not have them readily available at the moment.

The United Kingdom's lead will, when it is fully under way, probably result in the employment of 25,000 people in jobs that did not exist a few years ago. It will result in 60,000 miles of glass fibre cable being installed in the United Kingdom. For the majority of homes, the cabling should be complete by the end of the decade. I talked to some American congressmen recently at a Bow group event about which my hon. Friend the Minister knows; he, like me, was privileged to be asked to speak at it. The congressmen raised with me one issue that is relevant in parts of the United Kingdom—how we shall bring the information super-highway to the more remote parts of the country. There is a problem in the United States in working out how that will be achieved. There is a rush to cable cities, while many remote communities are concerned about whether they will be able to get on to and benefit from the information super-highway.

The United Kingdom is also the only major country to allow cable operators to provide cable television and a full, competitive telephone and data service. In that regard, I am delighted that so far, the Government have franchised areas that cover 14.5 million of the 20 million households. Some 4.3 million homes have already had cable constructed which enables or will enable them to get the services that are available. Some 630,000 homes have telephony services installed and are using telephone services already.

The investment to date is approaching £3 billion. The only significant question I have for the Minister is, when will Dover and Deal get that cabling? The constituency would like to gain the advantages as soon as possible. This is an exciting development which will join three major industrial areas that were hitherto thought to be totally distinct. Telecommunications will join television, and that combination will join computing. Computing will provide the power to give telecommunications and television a much wider range of services and the ability to call up those services interactively and actively in a way that has never existed before.

It will probably be a little while before many people use the system, one of the main reasons being that the industry is still working out exactly how to motivate people to use it and working out the criteria that will help the system to develop to the extent that many expect. The price is currently considered a little high for some people—although, given the number of people who have already subscribed to satellite television, the costs will not necessarily be enormous. One way to reduce them would be through competition in the provision of telephone services.

It has been forecast that between 19 million and 20 million households in the United Kingdom may have access to the service in the long term. That would require investment of some £11 billion or £12 billion. Many people who are not accountants will nevertheless realise that, with a 10-year depreciation rate, that means a cost of about £1 billion a year in depreciation alone. The industry's staff and running costs amount to some £2 billion a year, and if we assume a 50 per cent. penetration rate, we can roughly compute that it will cost most subscribers between £200 and £300 a year to get on to the information super-highway and take advantage of all the available services.

The current television licence is about £84, but, as I have said, the potential telephone cost savings will largely compensate for the difference in cost. No doubt many people will want to take advantage of that opportunity. Some may not find the service user-friendly to start with, especially as a wide range of services is not yet developed; at present, such services require access to computer systems which may be rather technical in terms of people's ability to interrogate. But the industry is increasingly moving away from hardware and towards software development, and I hope that we in the United Kingdom will encourage a number of our companies to develop software products.

Much of the software development results from the fact that the United States started Internet some years ago, but I hope that many of our universities will develop sophisticated software handling of the information super-highway in the near future. Certainly there has been considerable investment in the United Kingdom, and I trust that that investment will result in consumer products in the not-too-distant future.

We may ask why people should use the system. Sometimes it presents a challenge: at the conference that my hon. Friend the Minister and I attended recently, I found it quite enjoyable to challenge some of the industry's specialists by asking them why people should want to communicate through the information super-highway rather than—like most people—having a good night out in a pub, restaurant or cinema. Why indeed? The traditional British methods of entertainment and communication have been established over many hundreds of years and are very successful; certainly I do not want the leisure industries in my constituency, such as pubs and restaurants, to be done out of their trade.

Most people realise, however, that the new service presents a tremendous opportunity—not just for communications within the local town or county but for worldwide communications, entertainment and sources of information. The only question is whether the information super-highway can be made as friendly as a visit to the local pub or restaurant in good company.

The futurologists and the cable industry employees have not yet convinced the masses, and it will be some time before we see enormously wide use of the system. Indeed, it could be said that wide use is necessary to encourage wide use. If we really believe that there are business opportunities for the United Kingdom, we have to get out there and explain the Internet to people. I hope that this debate will, in a modest way, encourage wider use among businesses, children and many people of more than school age.

The many uses that have been identified to date for the Internet include entertainment and home video on demand. The Internet also has enormous potential for home shopping and considerable potential for home banking. There are also prospects for many Government services to be privatised using the information super-highway. There are opportunities for private individuals and companies to take on Government services and offer new ways to deliver them. One thinks immediately about the prospect of better services for the elderly and other home-based people. Care managers could be kept in contact through the Internet with those about whom they are concerned and for whom they are responsible. All that is required is a more user-friendly interface between the elderly person and the care manager.

We should not assume that elderly people are computer illiterate. Indeed, that would be doing them a great injustice. It is surprising how many pensioners are purchasers of home computers. Perhaps as many as 20 per cent. of pensioners have at one time bought a home computer, although the statistics are probably slightly distorted by the fact that many buy small home computers for grandchildren. Nevertheless, all Members of Parliament will know that an increasing number of pensioners use home computers to write to us. The letters are slightly longer than they used to be and perhaps slightly more well informed and well argued, too. They are also, thank goodness, sometimes much easier to read than when they were written in the traditional way.

Other Government services that might be better delivered by the Internet include medical services. Only the other day I saw that the information super-highway is being used in Oxfordshire by doctors who want to communicate directly and as soon as possible with hospitals about samples taken from patients and the results of tests. Information can be relayed speedily and efficiently to the doctors.

The Internet could also be used for education and training. It would mean that people who thought that they could not easily take a degree or who currently use the Open university but are restricted because of the reliance on standard broadcasts that have to be available everywhere in the country will be able to pick the university of their choice and communicate with it directly from their home. A university in Scotland, for example, will be able to take on home-based students from the south of England and students from Scotland can take courses at universities in the south of England. Such flexibility will mean that many more people will have the opportunity to study in ways not previously thought possible.

The delivery of some of the Department of Employment's training and reskilling programmes is sometimes criticised for being expensive and inefficient. The programmes are delivered with the best of intentions, but in a standard package and that cannot be as varied as delivery by the Internet. I look forward to the day when the Internet is used in that respect. It is an exciting prospect.

When the Select Committee on Social Security recently discussed pensions, we were told that people will in future be expected to have at least four if not more employers in a 40-year working life. Therefore, constant retraining and learning is likely to be a feature and the information super-highway offers a tremendous opportunity to develop new methods to help people go through that process.

So people should want to use the information super-highway. There is an enormous challenge in developing the services, and there are many aspects to that. One that people sometimes worry about is whether there will be information overload—and there have been problems in the past with the older technology. That is an especially good reason why the United Kingdom should be better placed than most, because by having an optical fibre network we can make information overload less likely to happen. Much more information can be carried in that way than by other methods that use older technology.

On the information super-highway, and especially on the Internet, about 300 people may now post to what is commonly called a news group. There are often thoughts about what would happen if 100,000 or 1 million people wished to express their views to a particular news group. Of course, there is a risk that if the system failed it could result in alienation and disenchantment, which could lead to individuals withdrawing. So it will be important for the system to be flexible and capable of development—and those are among the features of the Internet.

The Internet started in 1969 and was originally called the DARPANET. The Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency in the United States was responsible for it as a military research project, the object of which was to enable a number of establishments involved in military research to exchange information by computer in a way that, if any one of the computers was lost from service—whether by accident or in war—all the other computers would still be able to carry on communications.

[Mr. Shaw]

By 1972 about 37 computers were involved in the DARPANET, and it grew and grew, and became known as the ARPANET. By 1983 the military had found that they wanted to get off the civilian system, as it was rapidly becoming, and develop their own system. In the Internet's short history the other major feature was that in 1987 the system suffered a severe overload when, because of the state of the technology at that time, it was unable to cope with the growth in the numbers of computers and users.

As I have already said, it is most unlikely that exactly that sort of system overload would be experienced again, because we are now operating such an advanced system. The United Kingdom has an especially advanced system, into which the Government have put a considerable amount of money. That is called JANET—the joint academic network—and it is now being developed as SuperJANET. I have had the privilege of discussing the system, which works well, with some of the professors who have been involved in its development, and this country can be proud of the fact that our system is probably technically superior to the system in America, and many people regard it as such.

The Internet now involves 30 million to 40 million people. Although in 1972 it had only 37 computers, there are now estimated to be more than 1.8 million computers connected to it. The *Financial Times* published a good table this summer showing the enormous growth that has taken place. The system is not only for academics and universities, and not only for ordinary people using it from their homes. It extends to businesses and many other users, including four coffee houses in San Francisco. I should add that the first Internet coffee house in London opened recently, and I believe that others are planned.

Every day thousands of people join the Internet—from Russia to Australia to Japan. Growth in the United Kingdom has been enormous, and my service provider, having given a pretty good service, nevertheless now responds with the engaged tone for several hours a day. I believe that the system is doubling its capacity every three months.

What do people do on the Internet? I described some of the services earlier. Primarily, the services on the Internet can be identified as electronic mail, information browsing using the world wide web servers, the ARCHIE servers or the data base searching techniques that are available.

File transfer is also available as a service on the Internet. One can download photographs from great distances. That gives rise to some concern because of the risk of pornography, but most people on the Internet do not have access to pornographic photographs which, so far, have been a minority oriented problem. The greatest use of downloading photographs has been for educational benefit.

During the summer, I was able to download a photograph of Saturn from the NASA computers in Pasadena in California for the price of a local telephone call. The photograph was of great interest to me and, I am pleased to say, to my four-year-old son. It was accompanied by a short narrative, so I did not have to do too much explaining about the moons of Saturn, the details of which I had probably learned at school, but which I have managed to forget over the years.

It was a great experience to show one's son that level of information. He found it quite valuable because his school has carried out a short project this autumn on flight and space travel. Clearly, the ability to download a photograph of a planet, which had been taken by the Voyager satellite in the past 20 years, was quite useful in that process. That is one of the uses that schoolchildren in my constituency are now making of the Internet.

The Internet also has an amazing socialising aspect. I believe that at least one marriage has taken place between someone in the United Kingdom and someone in the United States as a result of meeting on the Internet. I do not think that that is the sole reason why many people join the Internet, but it is an interesting area where people exchange news and information. It is an area where chat and discussions take place.

When I tested how the Internet chat system operated the other week, I had the interesting experience of joining a chat group in the United States. I had a great problem because the chat takes place in a language that is sometimes rather difficult to understand. One has to learn about "smilies" if one wants to take a serious part in such conversations. Smilies are typewritten items that appear on screen comprising colons and semi-colons with little brackets that are used to make smiling faces so one can show whether one is happy with a comment made on the Internet or slightly unhappy, as happens from time to time. I believe that there are "saddies" if one requires them. The Internet is largely a happy place and most people on it have generally enjoyed its benefits and using it.

The key point about the Internet is that, while such communication has taken place between human beings before, it is now taking place on a world scale. One can talk very easily to people in Australia and America. When, as a member of the Social Security Select Committee, I had to draw up a report on the Child Support Agency earlier this year, I posted to the American Internet news group on child support and I asked for information.

I received information about the American child support system from all over America. In particular, I would like to thank the engineer with the PhD in California who provided me with some very interesting information about the Californian child support system, and the lady lawyer in New York state who gave me a good analysis of the New York state version of the American child support system.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): The hon. Gentleman is interested in the Internet and he is also a member of the Social Security Select Committee. He has been able to talk to America about the Child Support Agency. Can he communicate with the CSA itself through the Internet? That indeed would be progress.

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. In the next few minutes, I shall comment on the way in which the Government have gone on the Internet. I am sure that hon. Members would like to have the facility that the hon. Gentleman mentions. Many of my constituents who come to me with Child Support Agency problems have not yet bought the modem, although many of them have home computers. It would have helped if the Child Support Agency had been able to take e-mail down the Internet. It would have been able to process many queries much more quickly and efficiently.

I congratulate the Government on going on the Internet with a world wide web server called "open.gov.uk" a couple of months ago. It has been enormously successful. About 100,000 people used it in the first couple of months. That compares favourably with the White House system. I understand that 45,000 people sent President Clinton e-mail in the first three months of the White House server being set up. That is a sign that people want to use that means of communication as a way of finding out what their Governments are doing on their behalf.

On the way in which we spend research moneys in this country—I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is not responsible for all research moneys; perhaps he will have a word with the other Ministers responsible—there is a strong argument that we should not spend so much on pure electronic and information technology research and that we should spend some money on setting up databases of Government information and other information that people might want on the Internet.

By facilitating the setting up of databases, we will encourage more people to use the Internet and obtain more value out of it. It is not that I am against pure research, but we need to consider ways in which the consumer orientation of the Internet can be developed for the benefit of the United Kingdom and encourage the development of a software industry that will search databases and use them better than has happened in the past, as the Internet has developed.

I also pay tribute to the CCTA, the Government centre for information systems and the Cabinet Office for their development of the Internet and the world wide web server. It should be congratulated on developing a modern and well-structured series of world wide web pages of information. They compare very favourably with the other world wide web servers to which I connect myself. I am impressed that the information is well laid out and of such good quality.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister, who recently answered my parliamentary question on what his Department is doing about the Internet, by posting the Command Paper entitled "Creating the Superhighways of the Future—Developing Broadband Communications in the United Kingdom" to the Internet on 24 November. Many people have found that to be an interesting document to search. I am pleased that the Department of Trade and Industry is taking such an active role.

We should be delighted that, within the past 24 hours—before I came to the debate, I checked the Government's world wide web server—the Office of Science and Technology has gone on the Government Internet. Within the past week, the Defence Research Agency has gone on the Internet. Usage statistics for the Defence Research Agency on the Internet show that people from Russia, Poland and Czechoslovakia have been looking at the world wide web pages that the Government's Defence Research Agency has posted.

If there is a successor to the KGB or the security services in those countries, it is interesting that they no longer have to employ members of the staff of *The Guardian* to obtain information about this country. They can now dial through the Internet and obtain the information direct.

The natural history museum is on the Internet. That is an extremely interesting page to which I hope to introduce my son in due course.

Those of us with a European bent—of whom I know that there are many in the House—can retrieve a full history of Europe, languages in Europe and other detailed information on the Government's world wide web server. By pressing the relevant word on the relevant page using a mouse, one is transferred directly from the Government's world wide web server to the European union world wide web page.

I am pleased that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is on the Internet. However, I am slightly disappointed to learn from answers to my recent Parliamentary Questions that some Government Departments are a little slow in realising the benefits of going on the Internet.

The Department of Transport should examine the benefits of going on the Internet. A UK transport news group and a UK environment news group have been on Internet for many months, and I think that the two Departments could post a lot of useful information. Many people are interested in environmental developments, and the Department of Transport could post many of its cone warnings and motorway works messages on Internet. People could search for that information on Internet very easily.

In closing, I would be remiss if I failed to mention the wonderful project that is being conducted by local schools in Dover and Deal. I pay tribute to the schools which have come on line. I initiated the project during the summer, and Walmer school has taken a leading role.

A Congressman friend in the House of Representatives, Tom Petri, and his staff member, Kim Forsberg, who has assisted in setting up the project, have helped the local schools to connect with schools in the Wisconsin No. 6 district. Now 13-year-olds in my constituency are exchanging life style information with schools in Wisconsin and making lifestyle comparisons. I hope that the project will develop further and will prove to be of immense educational benefit. We intend that the project should work with the national curriculum to provide an interesting source of information.

On a recent visit to the school, I was shown the results of the children's latest project. They had searched the information super-highway using the word "Turner", with a view to discovering all the art work by Turner which is available on the Internet. They showed me a number of paintings. A feature of Internet and the information super-highway is that the computer delivered everything it had under the name "Turner". Therefore, as well as wonderful old English paintings, the computer retrieved a modern picture of Tina Turner. The male members of staff found that most acceptable, and it was a source of amusement to female staff.

The project has demonstrated that Internet and the information super-highway present many interesting opportunities which will add an extra dimension to education in this country. Children are no longer limited by books; schools in my area have an installed base of about 70 or 100 computers. The argument about whether schools have enough books has long since dropped from public debate in this country. Government resources for information technology are many times more than those spent on school books as a source of learning.

[Mr. Shaw]

I believe that Internet and the information super-highway are important because the systems will create jobs and assist in education and skills training. The Government have much information which people wish to access and I hope that they will be given that access in the future. The political debate will certainly be enlivened as more people have access to more information about the issues of the day. A very lively debate on political issues takes place already in the news group "UK politics".

Substantial further development will be required before the system is truly user-friendly. In the last few years, enormously rapid technological change has helped to make the system more user-friendly than ever before. We can envisage in the next 10 years a wide range of people in this country taking advantage of the information super-highway, and that will certainly lead to a considerable transformation of people's lives.

3.59 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology (Mr. Ian Taylor): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on his extremely well-researched speech, and on taking the opportunity to bring us here at this hour to discuss it.

My worry at standing to speak just before 4 am is lessened because—probably uniquely—I am inspired by the fact that, rather than addressing a thinly attended House, I am probably addressing 30 million people through the Internet system. My hon. Friend undertook to make sure that his speech and mine were downloaded on to Internet. I feel that all of our words of wisdom this morning will get their just size of audience. The figure of 40 million Internet addicts around the world has been given, but I like to be conservative in these matters.

There are 50,000 known subscribers in the United Kingdom and, interestingly, 30 per cent. of businesses in the United Kingdom are already connected to Internet. I believe that the impact is fast and growing, as my hon. Friend said. It is estimated that, by the year 2000, Internet will be the largest single community of contacts in the world—larger than any European Union state. The dramatic impact and the potential of Internet are difficult to understand, but it is important that we access and take full advantage of it.

I welcome the initiatives which my hon. Friend has taken in his constituency. I shall look into the issue of when Dover and Deal will receive cable, but I hope he will follow my maxim about cable communications: that is, "Do not complain if the cable industry is digging up your street—complain if it is not." The technology which the cable industry can bring is dramatic, and it will transform the way in which many of us live or lives.

Super-highways—the other part of the debate which my hon. Friend initiated—have come about as a convergence in the area of multi-media, involving television and publishing together with data. That fusion is taking advantage of the cheaper telephone costs which are now available, the exponential growth in computing power and the dramatic fall in the cost of computing. It is an exciting revolution.

My hon. Friend issued a few little challenges to me to make sure that I was up to date. I do not think that he quite called me an Internet nerd, but I shall have a word with him after about that. I can exclusively inform him that I have downloaded the Government's Command Paper on the information super-highways, which I issued on 22 November, directly to the mailing address of Vice-President Al Gore at the White house. What Vice-President Gore does with it is another matter.

I am also able to tell the House that I have my own e-mail and Internet address. This is, I believe, a first in Government. I am the first Minister to be on Internet, and my address is "taylor@mintech.demon.co.uk". I shall be happy to receive messages—one hopes positive ones—at that address.

Mr. Cousins: Can the Minister assure us that the system has been tested, so that people attempting to pick up his words do not, unfortunately, get pictures of Elizabeth Taylor instead?

Mr. Taylor: Internet freaks may well prefer Elizabeth Taylor, but I shall do my best to smile. If the hon. Gentleman cares to access the Command Paper, he will see that my photograph appears alongside the opening caption. There is no doubt that Internet is also exciting to access when photographs of Ministers appear on it.

I take the issue of being on Internet seriously. As Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology, I am delighted to say that that address should work. If it does not, one can put a note on the internal message board, and I shall get the experts to look at it.

Internet is an exciting development in communications and the telephone system, which is the main carrier, has now been adapted to take digital information from one place to another. My hon. Friend was absolutely right to talk about international communications being so useful, but it also worth stressing that when one accesses Internet, wherever one goes around the world, one can do it for the cost of a local telephone call. The cost of using Internet is therefore dramatically lower than it would be were other routes used.

One small point of interest is that the world wide web, to which my hon. Friend referred, was developed at CERN in Geneva, which took on the American technology and enabled the network to interconnect and to deliver exciting new multi-media applications. Those of us in the United Kingdom can access Internet via public service providers, BT and CompuServe. Internet is used not simply for data transmission—texts or photographs—but for videos. One can pull down CD-ROMs through the Internet and digitally reschedule sound recordings: for example, songs. Yesterday, the "Today" programme broadcast how that can be done from CD-ROMs for the music industry. There are many other ways in which visual images, as well as a mixture of sounds, are now available on Internet and effectively free.

Internet is becoming the backbone of the information super-highways, and, although it will not be the only one, it is critical. I am pleased to be the closest thing in the British Government to Vice-President Al Gore or, in the European context, to Martin Bangemann, because I am responsible for co-ordinating questions on the information super-highway for the Government. I have gained an extremely exciting job, which has brought with it a steep technological learning curve.

The United Kingdom is in a strong position to exploit and use networking capacities. That derives from a strong user interest and from a strong supplier capability. As I have said, we are already quite extensive users of Internet, both as private individuals and as businesses. United Kingdom subscriptions are estimated to be growing at the rate of 20 per cent. each month. As there is no payment to be made and no register, it is difficult to make an estimate, but the estimates we receive are provided to us independently.

We have a long user history of network services—for example, the use of videotext and the on-line systems used by travel agents to book our holidays. The access to networks is normally via personal computers and the United Kingdom uses more PCs per head of the population than most European countries. We have 22 PCs per 1,000 citizens against a European average of 10 PCs per 1,000 citizens. Our usage is, of course, behind American usage. User numbers are increasing fast and people are looking for new applications.

The supplier strengths are also important. One of the main drivers in that fast developing market is the PC and more than 40 per cent. of those sold in Europe are made in the United Kingdom. Our producers need fast developing markets and Internet provides one of them. Together with our competitive and liberalised telecommunications framework, that puts us in a strong position to develop the European market and win our fair share of business. I am delighted that at the November Telecoms Council the other members of the European Union agreed to liberalise both services and infrastructures by 1 January 1998. As we began our own liberalisation in 1984, we are, therefore, some way ahead. We wish to retain the advantages that we have derived from that.

We have been a favoured target for inward investment, especially in information technology and the electronics industries. That builds on our indigenously based suppliers such as ICL, Viglen and Acorn. We have major investments in personal computer production by IBM and Compaq. In total, in the 20 years to 1991, the United Kingdom has attracted 36 per cent. of all the United States direct investment coming into the European Community and over 40 per cent. of investment coming from Japan. That is critical. The UK is proving to be a healthy place for investing and producing within the information technology business.

The liberalisation of telecommunications has provided the right framework. It is essential that anyone who believes in the unrolling of the super-highways, which are difficult to predict and not a single mechanistic structure but an interconnecting and interlacing of networks, must at the same time believe in liberalisation. Liberalisation cannot take place against any other background. The Labour party needs to take that into account, as many of the other member countries of the European Union are beginning to do.

Mr. Cousins: That is a most interesting argument. Will the Minister assure that outside the areas covered by the cable franchises BT will be free to put broadcast entertainment down its lines? That would greatly promote the extension of the information super-highway and the fibre optics system to those parts of the country.

Mr. Taylor: I can give the undertaking that is to be found in the Command Paper that BT will be encouraged to bid for the future franchises for those parts of the country that are not currently franchised, using, where appropriate, its own infrastructure within the franchised area. If the hon. Gentleman is asking whether BT will be free to broadcast simultaneous entertainment on its national network, the answer is no, as he will recall from the Command Paper and the 1991 White Paper. The reason for that is that we have encouraged the cable industry and other services, including radio spectrum, to come in. The commitments that have been made to those industries are being returned in massive investment—£10 billion in this decade—to provide alternative infrastructures in the areas that are already franchised.

I shall return to the BT point later because the hon. Gentleman has raised an important point. There is a misconception about what BT is and is not entitled to do. BT is entitled to do everything, including carrying all the interactive services nationally, with the exception of simultaneous broadcast services, such as carrying BBC or Sky on its existing network.

Since the privatisation of BT and the liberalisation of the market, the price of telecommunications has fallen by over 35 per cent. in real terms. The take-up of basic telephone services has moved from an already high percentage to an even higher one. In other words, the universal service provision has increased since liberalisation rather than decreased. The figures have risen from 79 per cent. of households in 1984, when BT was privatised, to more than 90 per cent. now. The cable companies are contributing to this usage by linking customers who have not previously had a telephone. It is often forgotten that many people who do not have a telephone live in urban areas. As a result of the falling costs that are provided by competition, cable companies are finding that people are prepared to take a telephone for the first time.

BT is contributing to that. It has had a magnificent record since it woke up to the stimulating impact of competition; it has spent more than £22 billion since 1984 in modernising its network and continues to invest heavily. The cable companies, as I said, are investing £10 billion in this decade. The cable companies alone are undertaking 50 km of cable ducting per day—a remarkable figure. The United Kingdom is making substantial progress, therefore, in building out the super-highways.

The question is how we are using the networks that are being developed. E-mail is the strongest driving force—the ability to send quick messages and packets of information directly to someone outside one's organisation or home. E-mail is cheaper than other methods, for example the fax, which itself is usually cheaper than ordinary postage stamps.

Other people want to transfer whole files of information down the line, and my hon. Friend the Member for Dover mentioned that, especially in reference to the JANET and SuperJANET systems. The SuperJANET is fully broadband. Both systems enable academics and researchers to send huge amounts of data, including visual data, down the network.

Education is crucial. I am delighted to hear about the arrangements in schools in the constituency of the hon. Member for Dover. The cable networks and BT are also rapidly linking up schools so that they have access to the local loop and, through the local loop, can network around the United Kingdom. That will make possible new ways for children to do homework, and also distance learning, which is increasingly important.

[Mr. Taylor]

The university of Southampton recently launched a Master's degree course in information engineering. It is transmitted by e-mail and accessed wherever IBM employees can make best use of it.

Doctors are already using their network systems for prompt delivery of test results. Speed is often critical to a patient's health. The Department of Health is extending its own network links and a good number of UK organisations are in the European advanced informatics in medicine programme. An interesting trial of remote medical diagnosis is also currently under way in Powys in Wales.

Updates of computer software packages are being sent over the wire, which is easier than posting. In other words, if one is connected, one can now increasingly even update one's CD-ROM in realtime. In America, for example, a CD-ROM for American football is automatically updated through the telephone system, so that results of games currently being played are fed into the system. If we develop that in this country, it will be an incentive for someone who has bought a personal computer with a CD-ROM capacity to add a modem and connect into the network, so that, instead of being self-contained, that person becomes geared up to the network.

Only two days ago, Phone-Link, a Birkenhead-based information services company, announced with W.H. Smith and Son that it would develop an on-line office supplies catalogue. Office supplies could be ordered via the network, saving time and improving accuracy. I give those examples simply to show how the network is being rapidly built out and interesting ideas applied.

What the Government are already doing to encourage awareness among potential users was described in the "Creating the Superhighways of the Future" Command Paper, which was issued on 22 November 1994 and which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Dover said, I arranged to be downloaded on to the Internet. We shall consider other ways of disseminating Government information and I know that new ideas are being put into practice constantly.

The Treasury is also now connected to the Internet and is attempting to provide information. The Budget was made available on the Internet system immediately my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor had sat down.

The CCTA, for which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary at the Office of Public Service and Science is responsible, recently launched a server to put Government information from a range of Departments on line, and make it accessible through the world wide web. He was right to pay tribute to the work that the CCTA is doing.

The Department of Trade and Industry has supported development programmes, which are using Internet to disseminate information and encourage wide participation by companies. One is "Computer Supported Co-operative Work", which is developing teleworking technologies and related standards.

We are also talking to industry about a further initiative in e-mail preferred, by which large organisations, including the Government, would opt for e-mail communications wherever feasible. The backbone of the DTI's own communications system is the Osprey system and I am looking closely to see how that can best be developed in order to go into the DTI's old building, which has been renovated, when the move takes place next year.

I am also participating in the follow-up to the Bangemann report in the European context, and the G7 Ministers' conference in February on the information super-highways which I expect to attend. In those forums we will study specific applications on which more emphasis should be placed. For the UK, reaching the small and medium-sized companies with competitiveness messages and building on our strengths in large and critical software applications will be among our priorities. I agree with my hon. Friend that greater access to databases should be a priority. There is an enormous amount of data in government that could be made more widely available.

The Command Paper highlighted the areas of multi-media services and applications that will play an important part in the development of the super-highways. Multi-media services combine still pictures and moving images as well as audio and textual information in a single digital bit stream. Substantial bandwidth is needed to carry all these bits, and that is one of the reasons why operators are developing broadband networks.

Many of the networks in the UK, the United States and continental Europe are being used to trial a range of innovative services, including home shopping and home banking, which my hon. Friend mentioned. An incredible number of American citizens regularly make financial and stock exchange transactions through the super-highways, something that simply does not happen in the UK. It has been one of the driving forces in the United States and the lack of the habit here has held back wider public use of the Internet.

We are on the verge of a great new leap forward in the use of the Internet through the various ways in which multi-media is now becoming available. The largest single publisher of encyclopedia is now a software house, Microsoft—an incredible development in a short period.

Together, multi-media and the use of networks are tending to blur the boundaries that mark one industry from another. It is affecting the competitiveness of firms in those industries. Opportunities are emerging in the form of new ways to reach consumers with alternative products. The key asset of modern business is accessing information, analysing it and making good distributive use of it faster than any other company in the same sector.

The DTI is taking a clear stance on multi-media. We have taken some other initiatives which I shall mention briefly. We have reorganised the Department itself to have a multi-media steering group and unit within the DTI to co-ordinate the Department's policies in relation to the sector.

I have established a multi-media industry advisory group to help me in my new task of co-ordinating all information. That group is made up of senior industrialists from the main sectors affected by multi-media—information technology, telecommunications, media, publishing, television, and so on—and of individuals whose expertise in health and education will be a great benefit to the group. The group had its first meeting yesterday evening and we had a lively and constructive session covering an incredible range of matters. I look forward to subsequent meetings.

The DTI is doing its best to ensure that we are looking ahead to see how multi-media can best benefit British people and businesses. We also have closely in mind the other matters which need to be looked at—regulation, standards and policy making on intellectual property. We also have a number of research and development and technology transfer financial programmes which can help to offset the costs associated with getting to grips with multi-media questions.

The key point that we should bear in mind in this debate is that to meet the challenges that the United Kingdom will face in global markets, we must be much more aware of what technology can provide and then apply it through the super-highways in everyday life and work. There must be a greater awareness of these matters and a greater clarity about the business benefits so that we can fully understand how companies can gain competitive advantages.

It is not often realised that if we make a phone call to at least one of our big national airlines, it is probable that we will be processed through computing centres elsewhere in the world, without necessarily realising that. That is a result of the way that communications technology has developed.

We also need to look closely at the payment systems. The integration of payment into the process of information will transform many of our shopping habits. It will also be a big indicator of how the industry is likely to develop. I know that that is being looked at in various ways in terms of Internet, or at least the super-highway network. Some of the experts in the City and in business are producing some fascinating ideas.

I do not have time tonight to deal with other matters such as security and intellectual property rights. However, before I finish my speech, I want to put into a better context some of the debate that followed the publication of the Command Paper. This relates to a point raised by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins).

There has been a suggestion that the super-highway will not happen in the UK simply because British Telecom has been prevented from conveying or providing entertainment on its infrastructure. That is simply not the case. BT was quite capable of bidding—as, indeed, it did initially—for any of the cable franchises on offer. It decided not to pursue that. In doing so, it left it open for other cable companies and their investors to take up the cable franchises, to invest in them and to build them out. We have made commitments to them that we will not undermine. Therefore, BT's position will not be reviewed prematurely and the date for review has been set at 2001.

BT is free to do virtually everything else that it is minded to do. I remind the House of the BT press release of 22 November, pursuant to the Command Paper, which said:

> "BT will therefore be pressing ahead as already announced with multimedia investment where regulation allows it on commercially viable terms, including installing fibre to most businesses with five or more lines by the end of the decade, developing applications for education, health and community services, trialling new network technologies . . . and developing interactive television on demand services to the home."

I warmly welcome that. It puts in a much better picture some of the critical comment made in the press.

The BT director of procurement and research was quoted in *The Sunday Times* of 20 November—actually just ahead of the Command Paper—as saying:

> "government regulations banning BT from transmitting simultaneous broadcast services over its network were no longer as serious because future services over fibre will be individually interactive and on demand."

I absolutely agree with that. It is the most exciting part of the super-highways. No longer will the customer have to wait to see what is delivered to him; he will be able to demand, choose and readjust the services on offer from the provider, whether it be BT, the cable companies or, ultimately, any of the other television channels. The interactive nature of the super-highways is the most exciting part. I know that BT will play an active part in its development, alongside the cable industry.

I hope that that puts the strength of the Government's policies in context. I have no doubt that, as the Minister with responsibility for technology and the co-ordinator of the Government's policy on the super-highways, I have one of the most fascinating jobs in government. There is also no doubt that industry in this country is responding well. We would like there to be more UK-based software, and the DTI is considering how it might help the industry.

However, there is no question that, in relation to the rest of the European Union, Britain is well ahead of the game. If we were catching up with the Americans faster than we are now, I should be much happier, but for a long time there has been a different attitude to access in the home to information technology. The culture change which has happened in America will perhaps take time to reach us. We have nothing to be ashamed of but everything to gain from pushing ahead as fast as we can possibly go. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Dover on giving me the opportunity to respond to the debate.

International Station (Stratford)

4.29 am

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): We have reached a point in our proceedings when it is judged that the body is at its lowest ebb. The case for Stratford having an international railway station is certainly not at its lowest ebb. I would go further: the support for the railway station is gathering momentum up and down the country and particularly in the House of Commons.

The House may be puzzled about what could possibly bring together Basildon and Newham. It certainly is not politics. I am a Conservative Member of Parliament and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is a socialist Member of Parliament. It is clear that the point which unites us all is Newham itself. It is the place where I was born and where I have spent most of my life. So regardless of my good fortune in representing Basildon, I take a keen interest in everything that happens in Newham.

In my early years I despaired of much that was happening in Newham. I saw it as decay. It is a delight now to see Newham, through the good offices of a range of people, being regenerated. When I drive back later today, I shall see Stratford station in all its glory. There are many other signs which I welcome, and I pay tribute to the people who have made that possible.

I fought four elections in Newham, all in the 1970s. I fought two council elections, one GLC election and one parliamentary election. I am sorry to say that I was the runner-up on each occasion. I do not intend to be the runner-up on this issue. We intend to win. We are determined that Stratford railway station should gain international recognition. To achieve that end, we formed only last week a parliamentary support group. I was impressed with the presentation that we enjoyed at the meeting. The only thing that separates me and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West is that he is the chair of that group and I am the chairman. Other than that, colleagues from all parties in the House will support our group. It seeks to persuade Members that Stratford deserves recognition as an international railway station.

I congratulate and pay tribute to the officers of Newham council and particularly the business consortium which is backing the project, on their impressive and professional presentation. On every count, the Government should support the case for Stratford international railway station. They should certainly support it on economic grounds as the Stratford promoter group has shown that the international passenger station can be produced at no cost whatever to the Government.

We should support the international station for the sake of docklands. Baroness Thatcher rightly inspired the docklands development. I am delighted to see Canary wharf now more than 60 per cent. occupied. I am also delighted to see the new railway station that is being built just outside the precincts of the House. The disruption annoys some people but that work is another step forward. If we want docklands to succeed, Stratford is the ideal location for the railway station. I was delighted also to be taken to the top of Holden point, to see the 200-acre brownfield site, which is ideal for the station. That project is also important to Newham in terms of job creation. I and other Members of Parliament representing Essex constituencies are behind the railway station being located there.

Incidentally, the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann) and other hon. Friends representing Essex constituencies hoped to attend this debate. If they cannot be here in person, they are certainly here in spirit.

A Stratford station would satisfy all the Government's key objectives. It was said that

> "our decision means that the line will be built through east London, where the prospect is welcomed for the economic regeneration that it will bring."

Those are not my words, but those of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), the former Secretary of State for Transport. He also said:

> "It is envisaged that the high-speed train from the channel tunnel to King's Cross will stop at Stratford".—[*Official Report*, 14 October 1991; Vol. 196, c. 26–34.]

If there is no station at Stratford, however, there can be no regeneration based on the channel tunnel rail link in east London. All the regeneration benefits would flow to Kent, leading to a further decline in east London. The east Thames corridor concept, now called Thames gateway, makes the connection between regeneration and the CTRL.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration described Stratford and the royal docks as the western focus of the Thames gateway. If the objectives are to be realised, a station must be located at the CTRL at Stratford. The Dartford Ebbsfleet station is the complementary eastern focus.

Union Railways, in its report of March 1993, specified three important objectives. First is the international objective of providing a link between Britain and Europe. Some weeks ago, hon. Members were invited to travel on Eurostar, and I accepted. Some propaganda suggested that the British had done nothing to enhance Waterloo station but that everything was wonderful in Europe. As we travelled at 178 mph through the channel tunnel, I felt very proud. When we alighted at Brussels Midi, far from a haven of investment, I would describe that station as a dump. Waterloo International is magnificent and, sadly, Brussels Midi is a dump. That puts the issue in context.

Britain's planning laws are quite different from those of other countries. In terms of the link that I hope will be debated next year, real issues must be grasped—particularly by hon. Members representing Kent constituencies. That is another reason why I believe that everything is in place for Stratford railway station. I am totally behind the link through the channel tunnel and I believe that Stratford offers a marvellous opportunity to enhance the scheme.

The second objective is that of the commuter. The station could help to provide a major increase in the capacity and quality of journeys between Kent, Essex and London—and, my goodness, we need some enhancement there.

The third objective—this is critical to the Government's strategic and regional objectives—is the development objective of providing the transport spine for the east Thames corridor development, shifting pressure from the west to the east of London. Both the London and south-east regional planning conference and the London planning advisory committee support that objective. If development leapfrogs east London to Ebbsfleet because there is no station at Stratford, development pressure will certainly be unrelieved in west London. The House should reflect carefully on the repercussions for us all if that happens.

A firm decision—I make this point to my hon. Friend the Minister, for whom I have the highest regard—to locate an intermediate station at Stratford is required to underpin other Government strategic decisions. Stratford, located at the foot of the Lea valley corridor initiative, is eligible for European regional development fund objective 2 funding. I am delighted to say that Stratford, through the initiative of the local authority, has recently been successful in its bid for single regeneration budget funding. I know that that is warmly welcomed.

The transport arguments for Stratford international may be summarised as follows. Stratford will permit much faster journeys to the continent from east London, East Anglia and Essex. It will take 20 minutes less than going from St. Pancras. The same applies to docklands, an area that will capitalise on close links with Europe. Stratford will also provide marginally quicker journeys to the continent from the City of London.

I went to see the docks, together with one your colleagues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before the City airport was built there. It is magnificent to see the important effect that the airport has had on the area. Again, that is a good link with Stratford railway station. Stratford also provides the public transport solution for travellers from East Anglia, Essex and east London. If Stratford station is not built, passengers from those locations will—I know that this is an extraordinary expression—use kiss and ride at Ebbsfleet. Every rail journey will thus be replaced by two car journeys over the Dartford crossing, which would be nonsense. That could deter potential growth in CTRL users from East Anglia and Essex.

By dispersing flows of commuters and south-east international passengers, Stratford will enable the heavy cost of expanding underground capacity at St. Pancras to be avoided. Crossrail will call at Stratford's existing station, poaching passengers from the heart of the Heathrow catchment area, west London and, dare I say it to my hon. Friend the Minister, Slough and Reading. The Stratford promoter group's proposals include a passenger interchange between CTRL and crossrail. The station at Stratford will complement the existing and planned interchanges at Stratford.

I now turn briefly to the transport business case. The transport case implies extra business and extra revenue for Union Railways and the successful bidder. A modest estimate suggests that an international station at Stratford will produce £20 million extra revenue for Union Railways and £5 million for the station operator. The Union Railways model is incapable of forecasting the extra business or extra revenue, because it uses a fixed-trip matrix based primarily on observed travel through Heathrow and Gatwick and therefore hugely underestimates the demand from east London, Essex and East Anglia.

The latest London area transport survey issued by my hon. Friend's Department shows the scale of the error that has resulted. The same errors apply to the whole of east London and East Anglia. Seventy per cent. of the population of East Anglia and all the population of Essex live in the Liverpool Street-Stratford catchment area, and services to King's Cross-St Pancras are simply not an option for the great majority of those people. It is quite wrong to encourage people from Essex to drive via Dartford to Ebbsfleet when a perfectly good public transport alternative can be provided via Stratford.

Railtrack East Anglia handles 300,000 passengers a day, is the same size of "business" as the Kent zone and has the largest infrastructure investment programme of all the Railtrack zones: some £200 million has been invested in signalling alone. The three counties of East Anglia are Cambridgeshire—including the Prime Minister's constituency—with a population of 690,000; Norfolk, with a population of 767,000; and Suffolk, with a population of 657,000. If Essex and East Anglia are added, along with an estimate for eastern Hertfordshire, we arrive at a figure of 3.5 million.

There are also regeneration issues. The LPAC-Hausner report concluded that experience in France gained through the TGV projects suggests that major developments of regional significance will occur only in inner-city fringe areas, not in city centres or out-of-city locations. The establishment of Stratford international station will herald a mixed-use development including business park, industry, office, retail, hotel, leisure and residential uses. It is a magnificent proposal, providing the desperately needed potential for 15,000 new jobs, nearly 1,800 new homes and environmental improvements. If implemented, it will protect nearly 67,000 existing jobs. Training schemes will be offered, and the bid aims to provide opportunities for jobs during the CTRL construction period.

I know that one Minister, my hon. Friend the Paymaster General, knows Newham only too well. He has been to the borough a number of times to see at first hand all the different initiatives that the local authority wishes to implement.

Finally, let me deal with the economic issues. The LPAC-Hausner report concluded that new rail infrastructure could be used as a spur to significant economic development. The SPG's proposals suggest that inward investment will create new jobs at Stratford—4,000 by the millennium, 15,000 by 2015, and 40,000 jobs in the royal docks. As I have said, the international station will safeguard 67,000 jobs in east London. An area with well over 114,000 people unemployed within a five-mile radius will gain much from the project. It will create an inflow of construction capital of £235 million from the SPG proposal, and create a general uplift in land values. The international station will have a major regenerative impact.

There is widespread support for Stratford from the LPAC, SERPLAN, London First, the Confederation of British Industry and the East Anglian local authorities. There is business and local public support. Yesterday evening, I was delighted to receive a letter from the City of London corporation which is watching the project closely. It has held talks with the local authority and is very keen on the project.

Let there be no doubt that many hon. Members will not let the matter rest. There is support among all parties for Stratford to be an international railway station. The message is being spread not only throughout the House, the other place, Newham, Basildon and Essex, but throughout the country. The local authority, local Members of Parliament and the SPG deserve to have their

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case judged fairly. If it is judged fairly on every count, Stratford should become an international railway station. We are determined that that will happen.

4.50 am

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on choosing this subject for debate. We endorse every single word that he has uttered. It is a privilege to follow him and say that we in Newham are very grateful for his support. We know of his connections with the borough and welcome the fact that he has always worked constructively with the borough council and local Members of Parliament. We acknowledge that he has roots in the area and it is a privilege on this occasion to be able to extend the hand of friendship across the Chamber to a member of the Conservative party. We are grateful for all that he has done for the borough to which he is still greatly attached and with which he has worked closely.

I cannot say that I hope that the hon. Gentleman will win Basildon at the next election and, although I have not consulted my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms), perhaps I might suggest that, should he lose, he will always have a place in Newham working with us, perhaps even in a paid appointment, to promote the case for Stratford as an international station. The hon. Gentleman has done a great deal of good work for us and I hope that he remains on our side.

The hon. Gentleman has made most of the points that I wanted to make and I shall not repeat them all, but some need to be stressed. We need the international station at Stratford, not just because it would be good for the area but because it is the key to the regeneration of that part of east London, through the Thames corridor and into the south-east of England. It is an international decision and I hope that the Government will acknowledge that.

We have had occasion to invite any number of Transport and Environment Ministers to Stratford to have a look at what we have to offer and they have all made useful comments. I hope that the new Minister of State, the hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts), will also take the opportunity to inspect the land. We recently took the President of the Board of Trade to Holden point to show him, as we have shown others, the extent of the land available for development. As the hon. Member for Basildon said, there are 200 acres of brown development land available for the international station and ancillary developments. If one looks at it, the case is obvious. That is the important point.

We have always felt that we do not have to overdo our argument. Our case is good, and it is not simply a matter of local Members of Parliament getting enthusiastic about a local case. Obviously we will do that, but because of the cross-party support, and the fact that if people go and have a look at what we have to offer they become as enthusiastic as we are, we have always been able to rely on the quality of our case. We do not have to push it heavily; we feel that it is almost self-evident. But we want a little more support from Government and a little more acknowledgement that there is a good case, which they are prepared to accept for the benefit of the people not only of Newham but of Basildon and the rest of Essex, and indeed of Britain as a whole.

I want to raise one or two points with the Minister. For instance, I have a personal interest, which I shall now declare. The channel tunnel railway route that has been selected, which we shall discuss early next year, not only comes right through Newham but passes directly underneath my house. That is why I am making a personal point.

I do not mind that; I really do not care at all. But for obvious reasons I would rather my house did not fall into the tunnel. That does not worry me too much, but it seems to bother my wife a bit. There are several environmental considerations that I hope the Minister will address—or at least, if he does not deal with them tonight I hope that he will cause Union Railways to address them. Although we are enthusiastic for the station at Stratford, we are not unmindful of the fact that environmental considerations are involved.

As the hon. Member for Basildon said, there is enormous local public support. He did not give all the figures, but I have the figures from the opinion polls, and 77 per cent. of Newham residents support the Stratford proposal; 85 per cent. of those in the Stratford area support it, and 80 per cent. expect that a station would revitalise both that area and Newham; 84 per cent of businesses in the area support the proposal. So there is enormous support.

However, one should not take that support for granted and say, "Well, that's fine; we don't have to worry about environmental considerations then." We are worried that we are not getting the sort of information that we should be getting from Union Railways. I have looked at the route and, as I said, it goes immediately under my property in Forest Gate, neither to the left nor the right. It looks to me as though the epicentre of the tunnel will be immediately below my living room.

That is fine. Perhaps we could think about having an extra stop so that I can come straight up into my living room, or descend from my living room on to a train going to Paris or Brussels. I would not mind. But there are matters that must be sorted out. We do not know how much vibration and reradiated noise and so on will come from the chosen route, and Union Railways is not being as open as it should be with the people who live in the area. The company does not seem able to offer the kind of information that we require. We are enthusiastic, but we know that there are environmental considerations, and personal considerations for those who live in the area, not least my own family. Will the Minister ask Union Railways to address those matters a little more readily than it is doing at the moment?

We are arguing for the station not only because it will be good for the area but because it makes a lot of transport sense. The Government are putting a great deal of money into transport infrastructure development in the Stratford area, although the Central line upgrading is not working too well as yet.

Here I shall digress slightly if I may, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yesterday morning I was travelling in to do a live broadcast on Radio 4, so there was some immediacy involved in my journey on the Central line. I took one of the new trains on the Central line which went from Stratford to Mile End and then stopped. Nothing happened. The driver then announced that he was very sorry and said, "Would all passengers sitting at the end of a row please stand up because I think that that is the only way we can get the doors to close? If they don't close, I will have to take this train out of commission."

That was a brand-new train on the Central line on which £750 million is being spent. That line is now being described as the new misery line. Something is going badly wrong here. If all that money is going into the Central line, but it has taken over from the Northern line as the misery line, there are clearly problems. While we acknowledge the Government's investment, something is clearly amiss if we end up having to stand up at the end of a row on a new Central line train in order to try to get the doors to close.

In the event, the doors on that train did not close and it was taken out of service. I immediately bolted across the platform at Mile End and jumped on a Metropolitan line train going towards Liverpool Street. That train went about 150 yd into the tunnel and then stopped because there was a signal failure somewhere in the South Kensington area.

There are many problems which Ministers must address. Even though there has been an uptake recently, there has been an historic under-investment in our public transport system in London. That does not serve us well in terms of our competition with other capital cities. People who relocate into London will obviously look at our transport system and if it does not work and it is not reliable, that will be a deterrent. Transport is crucial to the economic viability of a city such as London.

Returning to the Stratford case, a great deal of investment is being made in the area. We have the docklands light railway and we may have crossrail. I hope that that will be revived. We have the North London line and the Liverpool Street line goes from Gidea Park. We have docklands with all the development that is being carried out there. We also have the City airport and links to the M11. All the transport infrastructure is there or is being prepared there. Stratford makes a great deal of sense. It seems crazy to have all that development, but then not make the other links that would enable that development to achieve a point of success that would unite the parties in the House and do a great deal for the east end and for the south-east.

The hon. Member for Basildon has made all the points about the number of jobs involved and protecting existing jobs and creating new jobs. There is something to be said for that. Stratford was a traditional railway area. British Rail Engineering Ltd. used to be in Stratford. Plenty of people in the area have that tradition and experience of working on the railways. They could use that experience and expertise to help the promotion that we discussing tonight.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will acknowledge that we have a good case. I have not said a single nasty word about Ebbsfleet. I am not trying to trade Stratford off against Ebbsfleet. If I were drafting the Bill, things would have been different. However, we have what has been proposed. Within the Bill, the long box preserves Stratford as a station. We are looking with the promoter group to make a case to the constructors that will enable us to say, "Here is a good case for an international station at Stratford."

As the hon. Member for Basildon said—I underline this fact—there is close partnership between the local authority and the public agencies which the Government are supporting, such as city challenge, and the private sector in the Newham area. Together, we have a broad partnership, without ideology and without rancour. It is based on the justification and the quality of our case. I hope that the Minister will look objectively at what we put forward, will listen to us, and will say that we have a good case that the Government are prepared to support.

5.4 am

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): I welcome the debate and congratulate the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) on his success in securing it. I welcome his generous words about the changes in Newham being led by the local authority, working in partnership with a great variety of other organisations. I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman and to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for the consistency and diligence with which they have supported the provision of an international station at Stratford. That one project is the key to major beneficial change in east London. It is our once-in-a-hundred-years opportunity to change the nature of east London for the better, for good. I join my hon. Friend in urging that the green light be given to the project as soon as possible.

The starting point for my contribution is the Government's own existing commitment to a station at Stratford. In his statement to the 1991 Conservative party conference and subsequently in discussion on that occasion with Newham council's then leader of the opposition, who was attending that conference, the former Secretary of State for Transport made it clear that it was intended to route the channel tunnel rail link through east London in order to secure regeneration there and that that would be achieved through a station at Stratford. As the hon. Member for Basildon said, the Secretary of State returned to this Chamber and repeated those commitments. He said:

"our decision means that the line will be built through east London, where the prospect is welcomed for the economic regeneration that it will bring."

He went on to answer a question, and he said:

"It is envisaged that the high-speed train from the channel tunnel to King's Cross will stop at Stratford".—[*Official Report*, 14 October 1991; Vol. 196, c. 26-34.]

Given those commitments, it is surprising and disappointing that, more than three years later, there is still uncertainty about whether those pledges will be fulfilled and whether the Stratford station will be built. I hope that that uncertainty will not last much longer. However, I am aware that there are people, not in the Government but elsewhere, who argue that the Secretary of State's commitments should be set aside.

There are those—I have it on good authority that it is the understanding in some parts of Union Railways—who claim that the Secretary of State never meant what he said in the first place, that the right hon. and learned Gentleman, now the Secretary of State for Defence, made the announcement in order to relieve political difficulties in marginal constituencies in Kent and south London, and that, the 1992 general election safely out of the way, promises about regeneration in east London could be safely forgotten.

I do not believe those allegations. I dare say that the position in those marginal constituencies might have been a factor in some people's thinking, but I believe that the commitments about regeneration in east London were

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genuine. The council in Newham and the residents in my borough believe that they were genuine. We have gone forward in good faith on that basis, and the Government must not now let us down.

There is another view that, although the commitments to regeneration made by the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) were sincerely meant, they will be fulfilled by the development around the station which is proposed at Ebbsfleet. I have no quarrel with the green light which has been given for that project, because London local authorities have always recognised the case for an M25 station in addition to the station at Stratford, but the developments around Ebbsfleet could never be regeneration, as they are developments on a greenfield site around disused gravel pits. However desirable and welcome that might be, it is not what is meant by urban regeneration, and it is not what the Secretary of State had in mind in 1991.

Beyond that, the Secretary of State was specific in his statement that he was referring to economic regeneration in east London. Ebbsfleet is nowhere near east London. Development at Ebbsfleet would not constitute in any way the regeneration in east London to which the Secretary of State committed the Government. Development at Ebbsfleet alone would also fatally undermine the regeneration of east London to which the Government so firmly committed themselves with the London Docklands development corporation, the Jubilee line and the other initiatives to which hon. Members referred previously.

I emphasise that important point. The London planning advisory committee— the statutory body which represents all the London boroughs and the City of London corporation— expressed the point with great force and clarity. In its 1994 "Advice on Strategic Planning Guidance for London", and in other reports on the issue in the past year or so, it has said:

> "the provision of an international station at Stratford, with the necessary public sector support, is seen by LPAC as a pre-requisite to securing regeneration in East London and for LPAC to continue to support the easterly alignment of the channel tunnel rail link.
>
> If Ebbsfleet were the only international station to be provided, serious detriment to the cause of regeneration in East London would result. The task, important to Government, of securing new economic development for inner East London would be impaired because business and investors would be attracted out of London to where access to the European railway exists. This would reinforce the spiral of decline in the inner part of the metropolis".

If the Government's commitment to a station at Stratford were to be abandoned, not only would there be none of the regeneration which the Secretary of State promised, but there would be a sucking away of investment which might have been attracted to east London and which would instead relocate to the M25 and Ebbsfleet. The development would leapfrog east London for the M25, wrecking the prospects for the economic regeneration which the line was intended to achieve in east London. The reality is that the only way in which the Secretary of State's commitment can be honoured is by giving the green light to the international and domestic passenger station at Stratford.

There is a third ground on which it might be supposed that the 1991 commitment could be set aside. That is that the Government's policy has changed and that the commitment to regeneration in east London which existed three years ago no longer applies. I do not believe that that is the case, and I do not believe that Ministers would argue that it is. From what I have seen of the development of Government policy in the past three years, the policy support for the station at Stratford has hardened substantially.

The Government have obtained European regional development funding for the Lee valley, which contains Stratford. Stratford has been given city challenge funding and, as the hon. Member for Basildon mentioned, Ministers announced two weeks ago the go-ahead for the major single regeneration budget project at Stratford. Stratford has been described by the local government Minister as the "apex of the Thames gateway"—another important Government initiative which was unveiled recently.

In March this year the Government issued planning policy guidance note No. 13 which deals with transport. Paragraph 1.8 advises that planning and land use policies should

> "promote development within urban areas, at locations highly accessible by means other than the private car, and locate major generators of travel demand in existing centres which are highly accessible by means other than the private car".

The Government's policy is clear: urban regeneration, or brownfield development, should be promoted at the expense of greenfield development. Development should be encouraged in locations with good public transport access and not just good car access. Government policy is for Stratford.

I return to my original point: the Government made a clear commitment in 1991 to using the channel tunnel rail link to secure regeneration in east London through an international station at Stratford. I believe that the Government meant it; they were not just having us on. It is clear that having a station only at Ebbsfleet would severely damage the prospects for regeneration in east London, and the Government's overall planning policies still point unequivocally to the Stratford station. The Government must not let us down.

The Stratford case wins on whatever criteria it is tested: regeneration, transport, business or financial. The 1991 census showed that Newham, Hackney and Tower Hamlets have the greatest concentration of urban deprivation in the United Kingdom. Stratford is where those three boroughs meet. There are today 115,000 unemployed people living within five miles of the proposed Stratford international station site. It is estimated that the station and the surrounding development should support 15,000 jobs by the year 2015, and will make a decisive contribution to the achievement of the 40,000 jobs which the London Docklands development corporation envisages in the royal docks.

For the past 15 years, the Government have been expressing their commitment to the regeneration of the area, but they have not just been talking about it. They have been investing through the LDDC, city challenge and the capital's biggest transport infrastructure projects. The question which the Government need to answer now is—did they mean it? Will they see it through, or abandon it half way? I think I know the answer to the question and, if I am right, the Government will say yes to Stratford.

Even without the regeneration considerations, there is an overwhelming case for the Stratford station. At peak times, there will be 15 trains per hour running up the high-speed rail link—five international trains and 10 domestic commuter trains. If all those passengers can get out only at St. Pancras, there will be a 50 per cent. increase in the number of passengers using the underground at King's Cross. That could be managed only with enormous investment in the underground network serving King's Cross, and that is not a realistic proposition. There is a London Underground study on the proposal which is to be completed shortly, and I look forward very much to seeing the conclusions.

Even if the capacity could be provided, I do not see why one should compel people to go all the way into St. Pancras when they would be far better off changing at Stratford. People going to the City would be better off changing at Stratford and using the Central line, assuming that the problems referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West can be resolved. Those passengers could use the Central line to go the City, rather than continuing on to St. Pancras and having to trundle back to Liverpool Street along the even worse Circle line.

People going to south London, Waterloo and Westminster would be better off changing at Stratford and using the Jubilee line. People going to docklands would be much better off changing at Stratford and using the docklands light railway. I have not mentioned the impact of crossrail, which my hon. Friend also referred to, and which I am sure will one day be built.

People going to Essex and East Anglia will be better off changing at Stratford and using the rail services to Norwich, Ipswich, Southend and elsewhere. Those people would save 20 minutes, and probably longer, on their journeys as a result of the international station at Stratford. We are not talking about a handful of people. As the hon. Member for Basildon explained, we are talking about Essex, East Anglia, Hertfordshire and east London—about one eighth of the entire UK population. We must not overlook the fact that, with the construction of the M11 link road through east London and its spur to Stratford, there will be excellent motorway access directly to the Stratford station. I was speaking earlier this week to the chairman of the east London CBI, whose view was that missing out on Stratford station would be a gigantean missed opportunity. I know that the CBI's eastern region takes the same view.

Nobody declines to travel on inter-city trains from Euston because the trains stop at Watford junction, but many people travel by train from Watford junction who would not go all the way to Euston to catch the same train. Watford junction generates business for InterCity, and Stratford will do the same, but on a much larger scale, for the channel tunnel rail link. It has been estimated that a station at Stratford would generate additional annual revenue for the train operator of some £20 million.

It is unfortunate that the model developed for Union Railways by Coopers and Lybrand missed out on most of that potential, by assuming that international travellers would come from the same places as do people who travel to Heathrow and Gatwick—as if people from east London, Essex or East Anglia do not want to travel. That is nonsense, and it has severely undermined the work on which Union Railways' case is based. I am afraid that there have been two or three occasions when the case for Stratford has been misrepresented as a result of poor research and careless analysis.

The Stratford promoter group is an excellent example of just the kind of regeneration partnership that the Government have rightly said should be encouraged. It includes the key public and private sector players—Newham council, the London Docklands development corporation, the University of East London, Land Securities, Britain's biggest property company, the Carpenters Company, whose historic landholdings in Stratford were established in the 18th century, P and O Developments and others.

The Stratford station project is not asking for massive Government investment, because it stands up commercially in its own right. As has already been said, local support for the project is huge—85 per cent. of Stratford residents want it. The project commands enormous support from local businesses, East Anglian local authorities and others.

Stratford international is the one big chance that we have to change the nature of east London for the better, for good. That has been clear since Newham council first backed the idea in 1988. We must not let the opportunity pass us by. I urge the Government not to delay for much longer and to give the go-ahead for that vital project as soon as possible. Then we would not waste the enormous investment that the Government have already made in east London, but build on it and complete it to secure success for the decades ahead and achieve the transformation in east London that we all want to see.

5.20 am

The Minister for Railways and Roads (Mr. John Watts): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) for bringing this important subject to the attention of the House yet again. I also thank the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) for the constructive contributions that they have made to the debate.

The route proposals have been the subject of a good deal of press attention in recent weeks, much of it misleading. That, in turn, has given rise to much confusion and misunderstanding about what has and has not been decided, particularly in respect of a possible intermediate station at Stratford. I am grateful for the opportunity to set the record straight.

It may be helpful if I start by explaining the process by which the Government have reached their decisions. I shall then describe the current position and how we see things moving forward to a final decision in the spring of next year.

The House will be aware of the role that Union Railways, an operating company owned by the British Railways Board, is playing in the development of the route proposals for the channel tunnel rail link. As part of that work, Union Railways and its consultants have been responsible for assessing options for intermediate stations. It is as a result of their advice that decisions about the choice of stations have been made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and the hon. Member for Newham, North-East questioned the basis of the underlying assumptions of Union Railways' recommendations on the choice of intermediate stations. It is possible to make different studies and to reach different conclusions. The decision reached is to leave open the option of a station at Stratford. That provides the opportunity for the promoter group—I recognise the strength of that group, which has brought together precisely the right type of combination of the public and private sectors—and its parliamentary supporters and the local authority to put across their evidence and views to

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the consortiums, which have to bid for the concession. It will be possible for that group to make the economic case that those hon. Gentlemen have already made tonight.

Union Railways and its consultants initially looked at four intermediate station options—Ebbsfleet in Kent, Nashenden in Kent, Rainham in Essex and Stratford in east London. They worked closely with each of the station promoter groups and with the principal local authorities concerned. They looked at all the relevant issues, evaluating and comparing outline designs, passenger demand, road traffic and highway impacts, associated developments, the socio-economic impacts, environmental appraisals, cost-benefit analyses, contributions by third parties and safety considerations.

The results of that substantial body of work were summarised in the October 1993 report from Union Railways to the Government. That report was published and placed in the Library on 24 January this year, when the former Secretary of State for Transport—my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor)—announced the Government's decisions on much of the route for the channel tunnel rail link. Those decisions were that there was scope for one or, at the most, two intermediate stations between Ashford and St. Pancras. The Nashenden option had no private sector or local authority promoter or support and was therefore ruled out. The other three options were retained for further consideration. Of the two M25 parkway options, Ebbsfleet appeared clearly preferable to Rainham. The conclusion was that the economic case for a station at Stratford had yet to be made. My right hon. Friend also stressed that the provision of any intermediate stations on the rail link would be dependent on securing robust offers of financial support from the private sector.

Following my right hon. Friend's announcement, the Government asked Union Railways to carry out further work. In particular, it was asked to hold further discussions with each of the promoter groups supporting the three remaining station options, with a view to achieving the fullest possible understanding of their proposals.

Each promoter group was invited to refine its bids and, especially, to firm up its financing proposals. Each of the station promoter groups gave presentations to Ministers, and Ministers met hon. Members representing the areas affected by the proposals. I assure the House that no improper influence was brought to bear on the Government and no unfair advantage was given to any of the proposals. It was as a result of that exhaustive process of assessment alone that Ministers reached the decisions that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 31 August.

My right hon. Friend announced that there would be a combined international and domestic station on the new rail link at Ebbsfleet in north Kent. That would be the parkway station. He said that no provision would be made for a station at Rainham, and that the option of a further station at Stratford would be left open for decision in March 1995, when bids from the four consortiums to build the rail link were received. I emphasise that the option of a further station at Stratford would be left open for decision next March. Readers of some press reports may be labouring under the assumption that we have announced already that there will be no station at Stratford. It is important for those who are still supporting Stratford, and for the four bidding consortiums, to be clear that the option is still wide open.

An international station would undoubtedly assist the regeneration of the Stratford area. The hon. Members for Newham, North-West and for Newham, North-East, who know the area much better than I do, have explained with great clarity how they see such a station assisting the area. I say in response to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West that I would be happy to accept an invitation to see the Stratford site and to have the proposals explained in greater detail, as I understand my predecessors in office have done.

An international station would certainly aid the regeneration of the Stratford area. The Union Railways study, however, gave rise to concerns about its impact on the operation of the rail link and the viability of the entire project. It is on that point that the promoter group needs to make its case to the consortiums. As part of the tendering process, we have asked the four bidding consortiums to enter bids on the basis of, first, combined international and domestic stations at both Ebbsfleet and Stratford; secondly, a combined station at Ebbsfleet and an international-only station at Stratford; and thirdly, a combined station only at Ebbsfleet. That means that all the permutations of Ebbsfleet and Stratford can be thoroughly examined.

Meanwhile, we have included within the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Bill, which received its First Reading on 23 November, powers to grant outline planning permission for the station at Ebbsfleet and powers to construct an enlarged open concrete "box" at Stratford. The box would allow for both cross-over and emergency exit, but, importantly, would allow station platforms and fittings to be installed if it is decided that a station should be provided there.

The decisions that have been taken on intermediate stations are entirely consistent with the original thinking behind the easterly route, which was to secure as much of the regeneration benefit of the rail link as possible in the Thames gateway area.

I acknowledge that a station at Ebbsfleet, if there is a station only at Ebbsfleet, shifts the focal point, but I would not accept that, if there were not to be a station at Stratford, east London would receive no economic regeneration benefits. Earlier, hon. Members commented on the substantial investment in infrastructure, transport, and so on, that is being made in east London; obviously, that would provide opportunities for the benefits of the channel tunnel rail link also to influence the development potential of the area. However, I do not minimise the substantial additional benefits that would come to Stratford if it were to have a station.

Although I do not doubt that the enhancement of development potential that would flow from the Stratford station is important, it remains true that, on the advice that we have received from Union Railways as the promoter and through its consultants, the economic case for an additional station at Stratford has not yet been made, but we have an open mind on that. Indeed, the hon. Member for Newham, North-East met me shortly before the announcement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made on 31 August, and I indicated to him as well as I could then that that was still the case, although I could not at that stage anticipate the announcement.

I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and the hon. Members for Newham, North-East, for Newham, North-West and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who are now in the Chamber, that our minds are open. If they can convince the consortiums bidding for the concession of the powerful case, which has been put forward on behalf of the promoter group, that a station at Stratford would generate additional traffic on the rail link, not merely divert it from other stations, and that an additional stopping point would not reduce capacity on the line, and therefore reduce revenue for that purpose, or if they can convince one or two of the consortiums that there is merit in taking those economic benefits and the revenues that would flow from that additional traffic into their bid, the position of a station at Stratford may yet be secured.

I hope that hon. Members appreciate, from what I have said this morning, that there is still everything to play for in relation to an intermediate station at Stratford. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently accepted an invitation from the promoter group to hear its proposals for himself at first hand, and I have said that I would be happy to do so as well. I am sure that seeing the site and hearing the case in detail and at first hand will inform the decisions which, ultimately, the Secretary of State will take, but to which I hope to make a contribution, in spring 1995.

We welcome the fact that the Stratford promoter group is proceeding with discussions with the four bidding consortiums. The Government have given the Stratford group the opportunity to make its case for a station directly to the bidders, and I believe that that is the best way to proceed.

I conclude by referring to two other ancillary matters mentioned by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. I am aware of complaints that the flow of information from Union Railways to the local authorities on the route has not always been what those local authorities would wish. We discussed that matter recently at the high-level forum. I have done, and will continue to do, what I can to ensure that that flow of information improves.

Obviously, as we approach the start of parliamentary proceedings on the Bill, it is important and sensible that as many potential problems as possible are resolved before the need to petition, or to consider changes to the Bill, arises. It appears to me to be common sense that that process is assisted if the flow of information is as rapid and open as possible.

I shall draw the difficulties of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West on the Central line and on the Metropolitan line to the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, who has responsibility for those matters in London, which, happily, are not my responsibilities.

Finally, I thank my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Newham, North-East for a useful and constructive debate. I am sure that their constituents in Newham will value the vigour with which they have presented the case. Clearly, I can say nothing about any decision that might be made, not least because we do not yet have the evidence before us, but I can assure them that we will be even-handed, objective and open-minded in the way in which we view whatever the bidding consortiums suggest to us about a station at Stratford. I wish the promoter group well, although I cannot say that at the end of the day I will deliver it a victory.

5.34 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): First, I present my deep apologies to the hon. Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) for my bad timekeeping and to my hon. Friends because I did not hear all that they had to say. The Minister, in his general tone and in his summing up, has typified what is undoubtedly an all-party or non-party occasion. Most people in east London will say, "A curse on both your heads."

I have a chance to introduce a topic that has not yet been fully aired and to bring to the attention of the Government and the public some additional potential of Stratford which might appeal even to Her Majesty's Government.

The Minister has rightly emphasised that the options are still open, but he has narrowed them down to the option of one of the four consortiums that are now bidding for the operation. In effect, therefore, the builders of the railway have the choice.

The railway is there. The box is there; it may need enlarging slightly if platforms are established, but the Government have made it clear that the additional cost of building some terminals, over and above the platforms or perhaps including them, would have to be for the consortiums. That would be justified if they thought that the traffic and the benefits to them in terms of commercial advantage would be worth while.

I want to put the case to the Government, on the basis of strategic planning, and to the consortiums indirectly—representatives of which my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) have been meeting—that almost everybody will gain from the Stratford location through strategic planning and public transport, particularly the rail network, not just in Greater London but throughout south-east England and beyond.

The Government and the public are now saying that we must get to grips with balancing the railways—whether publicly or privately owned, that is not the issue today—road transport and our planning objectives. The Government have made known their views about out-of-town shopping centres, motorways, and so on. We welcome that because we in London may not be on all fours about the solution or its funding, but we are, probably for the first time in many years, on all fours about the objectives.

There is no doubt that the route of the channel tunnel rail link could play, and perhaps will play in any case, as the Minister has outlined, a part in the balance of the Thames corridor, whatever is ultimately decided about Stratford.

The matter hinges on the commercial viability of whatever minimum extra capital is involved for a through station at Stratford, and any effect that it might have on the viability, speed or efficiency of the railway would be a minus. It is true that a two-line railway may need an acceleration zone at either end for any trains that are stopping, whether they be south-east England commuter traffic or international trains. Given that one can start immediately after a through train, any delay as a result of stopping would have minimal effect on the flow and capacity of fast trains on the line. That is a railway operational fact, especially when it concerns the signal sections for stopping trains that are accelerating away from the station.

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

I want to talk about the existing connections from Stratford by fast rail link, even without crossrail. I must be slightly careful because the Minister represents Slough—although I know that he would be objective—and one of the great potentials of crossrail is the advantages that that controversial route will confer on London.

Even without crossrail, more than a dozen routes from Stratford currently exist or are likely to built—for example, the Woolwich tunnel which, by next May, will extend one of the routes that already exists to north Woolwich. Those 12 routes run from the focus of Stratford. I am counting the Central line in both directions, taking account of the fact that it divides into two in north-east London. That is a remarkable fact.

In a memorandum that I sent to the former Minister I analysed the lines—more than 180 stations in Greater London connect directly to Stratford, and would be connected if it were an international station. It would not be difficult to have a travelator between the domestic station—with its connections to the docklands light railway—and an international station. That would open up a tremendous and complementary catchment area to the King's Cross location. If we add the two together, it is a considerable catchment area.

King's Cross-St. Pancras, the accepted station, is also well connected, but to a rather different range of stations. Of course, being in the centre of London its auxiliary capacity for handling excess traffic, especially for road connection, is very limited. Therefore, a station at Stratford could be an important complementary location. It is not unknown for trains to Paddington, because of some fault, to have to terminate at Reading or Slough, or at Clapham junction for those going to Waterloo. That happens even on the best-run railway. An alternative station might be useful as a safety factor.

I want to describe the extraordinary spider's web reaching out from Stratford. There is the line to Cambridge and the airport at Stansted. A short spur, which already exists, could take a line to Chingford. I have already referred to the Woodford and Epping branch of the Central line. There is the Wanstead and Hainault branch. There are suburban trains to Chelmsford and Colchester. There is the Ipswich, Harwich and Norwich line and the London-Tilbury-Southend line through Forest Gate. The reinstatement of the junction is a controversial matter, but at least it is already there. There is the line to the royal docks, the DLR to Canary Wharf and on to Lewisham, and the Mile End-City-west end branch of the Central line. Last, but not least, there is the important north London link line around north London via Highbury and all the way to Richmond. I am sure that the Minister will not mind me mentioning one of my 20-year-old hobby horses. With a Greenwich tunnel, or even without it, there would be a circle of electrified railway for a possible London ringway. All those would be accessible from Stratford.

Bearing in mind everybody's wish to maintain a balanced transport system—not least my hon. Friends who represent Hackney—there could be nominated stations on any of those lines for extra car parking, some sort of ticket or handling facility or perhaps even through-luggage trolleys. There is scope for enormous ingenuity, which I suggest would add to the commercial attraction of whoever won the competition. It would be to their advantage to have the additional capacity.

I have not mentioned trains from outside the Greater London and immediate south-east area. Stratford is well connected with the Great Western. There is the London North-Western line—I am using the old nomenclature—the Euston line, the Midland line from St. Pancras and the Great Northern line. Those are existing links. It would be possible for trains from other parts of Britain heading for different destinations on the continent, particularly at night, to call at Stratford for auxiliary purposes. There could be flexibility of traffic, and so on.

On strategic planning grounds, the benefits for the railways, the operators, the people of London, and in particular the London borough of Newham, of the Stratford site for an international station are much greater than some have perhaps realised. I commend them to the Minister and to the four consortiums.

East Timor

5.45 am

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): On 10 December, we marked international human rights day. That annual event is an opportunity to remind ourselves of the ways in which countless people all over the world continue to be denied their basic rights and freedoms. It is also an opportunity to take stock of our foreign policy and the record of the international community in alleviating the suffering of thousands of people. The series of programmes that have appeared on the BBC this week, which have marked international human rights day, and the 10,000 calls that the BBC has received so far, are a sign of the seriousness with which many people in the United Kingdom view human rights.

The long and well-documented record of human rights violations in Indonesia and East Timor remains one of the greatest challenges to the international community in fulfilling its obligation to promote and protect human rights. In many ways, the record of the international community in meeting the challenge illustrates its failure to give human rights the priority that they deserve.

Human rights, security, trade and the environment are issues which, in an increasingly interdependent world, must be addressed collectively. However, the international community can be effective only with the political will and the support of individual Governments. In Indonesia, the United Kingdom's response to human rights violations has been sadly inadequate.

With a group of other parliamentarians, I was one of the people who visited Indonesia and East Timor in March 1989. As a result of what I saw and heard at that time, in August that year I addressed the decolonisation committee of the United Nations in New York on the subject of East Timor. I urged the rights of the East Timorese under the decolonisation procedures to a referendum on the way in which they wished to be governed.

Human rights violations have persisted on an alarming scale in Indonesia since the military coup of 1965, which brought the present Government to power. The slaughter of between 500,000 and 1 million people following the 1965 coup established a dangerous precedent for dealing with political opponents. In East Timor, 200,000 people—one third of the population—were killed or died of starvation or disease after Indonesia invaded in 1975. Between 1989 and 1993, at least 2,000 civilians were killed in Aceh during counter-insurgency operations. Hundreds of people have been killed in Irian Jaya over the past 15 years—many as a result of their peaceful opposition to integration with Indonesia.

Political killings are not the only example of fundamental human rights violations in Indonesia and blatant flouting of the international human rights declaration. Criminal and political prisoners have been routinely tortured and ill-treated—some so severely that they died or suffered permanent injury. That is regardless of the fact that torture is prohibited under the Indonesian criminal code as well as in international law.

National laws and regulations have not prevented torture and ill treatment. Neither have they been effective in bringing those responsible to justice. As a result, torture and ill treatment have become institutionalised in the security forces. The substantial Amnesty report "Power and Impunity", published a few weeks ago, provides the most recent documentation of violations of human rights in Indonesia and East Timor.

Thousands of people have been imprisoned following show trials, solely for their peaceful political or religious views. An estimated 3,000 prisoners have been held on political charges since 1966. Most were convicted after unfair trials. Many others were detained without charge or trial for as long as 14 years. Some disappeared in custody.

The price paid by the advocates of independence in Aceh and Irian Jaya—Islamic activists, former PKI members, university students, farmers, workers and human rights activists—for exercising their right to freedom of expression is imprisonment and sometimes death.

When trials are held, they routinely fail to meet international standards of fairness. Once charges are filed, guilt is assumed and conviction is a foregone conclusion. Defendants are often refused access to lawyers, and lawyers are often denied access to vital documents. Defendants are frequently convicted on uncorroborated evidence and confessions extracted under duress. Evidence of ill treatment, torture and other irregularities are routinely ignored by the courts.

Such practices would cause public outrage in this country, yet we are in danger of appearing to condone them by our failure, and that of the international community, to respond in a manner commensurate with practices in Indonesia.

There has been much public disquiet at the extent and persistence of human rights violations in East Timor following its illegal occupation by Indonesia in 1975. Although Indonesia declared East Timor its 27th province in July 1976, its sovereignty has never been recognised by the UN or the United Kingdom.

Evidence from many quarters is regularly brought to the attention of the UN, proving the responsibility of the Indonesian Government for systematic human rights violations in East Timor, yet the international community has all but turned its back on the struggle by the people of East Timor for independence and justice. Because it has done that, the international community must share responsibility for the long-standing human rights problem in East Timor.

Human rights violations in East Timor are not a thing of the past. In 1991, as many as 270 civilians were killed when Government troops opened fire on a peaceful procession in the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili. Most were shot while attempting to flee and others were beaten and stabbed. There were reports that dozens of people, including witnesses, were killed in the following weeks. Some were recovering from their wounds in a military hospital.

Following the Santa Cruz massacre, the UN and many Governments expressed outrage at the action taken by Indonesian security forces. In March 1993, the UN Commission on Human Rights expressed deep concern about continuing human rights violations in East Timor and offered several concrete recommendations for improvements. Yet with minor exceptions, the Indonesian Government have failed to comply with the spirit or the substance of the recommendations.

The catalogue of present atrocities in East Timor is worth placing on the record. In mid-November, during a series of pro-independence rallies in Dili, 124 people were

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arrested by the security forces using batons, riot shields and tear gas. Most of the detainees were held for several days and were beaten and in other ways intimidated. About 30 people are still under arrest and likely to be charged.

The BBC's correspondent Catherine Napier reported on 8 December:

> "reports of beatings and electric shock treatment against the detainees are some of the worst to have emerged for many months."

She said that in the district south-west of Dili,

> "several youths regarded as potential trouble-makers were reported to have been stripped naked, beaten and tortured with electric shocks by the military."

As foreign journalists were present, the troops were under orders not to use fire power, but during the protest, there was great brutality.

One incident was reported by the BBC's correspondent Philip Short, who was present in Dili on 19 November when a protest took place outside the cathedral. On this occasion, the protest was peaceful until, as Short reported, police agents outside the cathedral started to throw rocks at the protesters. All hell broke loose as protesters were rounded up and chased, and foreign journalists present were also chased. A bystander who had offered to show a German television crew the way to their hotel was later severely beaten up by the security forces. The crew extricated him from the police and brought him to their hotel. He had blood streaming down his back and one side of his face was so swollen as to be unrecognisable. Philip Short added:

> "They thrashed the living daylights out of him . . . Now if the Indonesians mete out that kind of violence to people who were not involved in the demonstration, one can only too readily imagine what they do to people who were."

Asked by the *New York Times* on 22 November about suggestions that the security forces were more restrained, Bishop Belo, who is the Roman Catholic representative in East Timor, said:

> "They are the same, the same attitude."

Soon after the above incident, the military started ordering foreign journalists to leave. We know of at least seven journalists who were ordered to leave. The military clearly felt restrained by the journalists' presence and even blamed the journalists for inciting the protests. While the army has, apparently, refrained from slapping a blanket ban on foreign journalists, no permits are at present being issued. The absence of journalists is, of course, extremely serious as it gives the military a free hand.

At the end of November, the military commander of East Timor made it clear that no peaceful protests of any kind would be permitted in East Timor. He said:

> "If any more demonstrations occur, I will not hesitate to cut them to pieces"—

he used the Indonesian word "sikat", which means precisely that—

> "because . . . there is a limit to our patience."

The mid-November incidents brought into focus growing discontent in East Timor about the huge influx of Indonesians into the territory. No hard figures are available, but there could be well over 100,000 Indonesian settlers in the towns and countryside by now. They control commerce and the administration, marginalising the East Timorese, who are being impoverished and left without jobs.

On 12 November a Timorese trader was stabbed to death by an Indonesian trader in a dispute at Becora market. That led to waves of violence against Indonesian shops and stores and the burning of vehicles. Such attacks are not part of the strategy of the resistance movement, but the outburst reflects a grave social problem that is certain to become worse as more and more ships arrive regularly in Dili with hundreds of settler families on board.

Bishop Belo recently announced that he was extremely concerned about the sterilisation of East Timorese women against their will, and was collecting data on the issue. He told John Pilger on the telephone that in a village that he visited recently nurses at the clinic told him that nine women were being readied for sterilisation without their consent. The Indonesians are clearly moving to alter the demographic composition of the population of East Timor.

On 7 December, the office of the Dili-based daily *Suara Timor Timur* was vandalised by youths from a pro-Government organisation renowned in many places for its thuggish practices. They chased and beat up the journalists. Their basic complaint related to the newspaper's reporting of the November incidents and atrocities. According to the Alliance of Independent Journalists, the security forces failed to give the newspaper any protection against the attack, or later when the thugs continued to threaten the office.

A theology graduate, Jose Antonio Neves, who was arrested by the police when he was just faxing a document abroad, is now on trial in Malang, East Java, on charges of rebellion which carry a maximum penalty of 20 years' imprisonment, or life. The charges mean that the most basic, legitimate act of keeping in touch with the outside world and sending out information about the situation inside East Timor is treated as a serious criminal offence carrying heavy penalties.

The November atrocities show that the situation in East Timor is extremely volatile, the army's grip on the territory very tight and the level of repression very high. The momentary opportunity to gain a glimpse of the level of protest—foreign journalists were allowed in on the occasion of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit—reveals that East Timor is like a power keg that may explode at any time.

As Bishop Belo said in his interview with the *New York Times* on 22 November, the basic issue is not whether the army has been a bit more restrained recently, but the political issue of self-determination.

What is going on in East Timor is replicated in other parts of Indonesia. Exactly two months ago, four men were detained by military intelligence officers in Jakarta itself. Over two days and nights, they were grilled about their political beliefs and activities; they were beaten, kicked and given electric shocks by their interrogators. Holding a pistol to the head of one of the men, a military officer said, "This gun is loaded; I have the right to kill you."

What provoked the assault was the fact that the four men had released balloons with pro-democracy slogans such as "Uphold the rights of workers" and "The constitution guarantees freedom of assembly". Those four men are not alone. Arbitrary arrest and torture of suspected Government critics has been routine in Indonesia and East Timor for years. In recent months, there has been a dramatic escalation in that kind of official harassment and intimidation. In August and September alone, the authorities broke up or prevented seminars, cultural events and professional meetings across the country by invoking an obscure law requiring police permission for meetings of more than five people. The banning of Indonesia's three leading news magazines in June has deepened the climate of fear among journalists.

In the run-up to November's APEC meeting—these incidents were well documented in the British press—the Government flooded Jakarta with 15,000 military and police officers to clear the streets of political and criminal undesirables in what they called "operation cleansing". Some Indonesia watchers consider recent developments to be a temporary setback in a general trend towards increased political openness but claims of greater political openness and a new-found commitment to human rights have never amounted to much for those outside Indonesia's small political elite.

For most ordinary Indonesians and East Timorese, the repressive powers of Indonesia's military and Executive have remained intact throughout. What has changed in recent months is that the small middle class has found its own freedom under threat.

The major campaign launched by Amnesty International only a few weeks ago focuses on the past five years and shows how hollow the Government's human rights pledges have been. In that time, human rights violations have continued unabated, even in parts of the country portrayed as stable and harmonious. The political and military torturers have continued to get away with their crimes.

At this point, I must pay tribute to Amnesty International for its work. In 1989 I went to East Timor with a list of people who had been imprisoned and then documented by Amnesty International in its annual report. After making a request to the military governor, I was able to go to one of the prisons to interview some of the prisoners named in that report. I was able to verify everything in the report down to the last detail. I was grateful to the Indonesian authorities for allowing me access because it enabled me to confirm that some prisoners had been tortured when they were first captured but that, once in prison, the torture had ceased. Anyone who says that Amnesty International makes wild allegations is wrong because the organisation takes great care when it documents such cases.

The Indonesian Government's human rights activities seem designed mainly to improve their image in international circles. Of course, this is not the first time that the Government's actions have not lived up to their words. In March 1966, only months after the military coup which brought the current Government to power, President Suharto, then General Suharto, promised that his new order would restore the rule of law and would be free from any form of oppression and exploitation. But, even as he spoke, Indonesian military forces were taking part in a grim campaign against the Communist party, leaving more than 500,000 people dead and a similar number imprisoned without charge or trial. Now they target those who organise trade unions—I know that the British Government have recently taken up the case of the last remaining leader of the independent regime in Indonesia—and those who oppose land developments or test the limits of political freedom by criticising the Government or their policies. The tensions and the political targets may have changed but the premium placed on maintaining national security at all costs has not.

The Indonesian Government try to brush off those violations as isolated incidents, or the work of a few poorly disciplined soldiers, when in fact they are the by-product of a network of institutions, procedures and policies that the Government themselves use to crush perceived threats to stability and order.

What is scandalous is the fact that foreign Governments, including ours, have let the Indonesian authorities get away with it for so long, apparently seeing that country only as an economic prize and a strategic linchpin. In the aftermath of the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991, a handful of Governments suspended certain kinds of aid and military transfers, but their efforts were short-lived and most have since returned to their previous habit of paying lip service to human rights while adopting few concrete measures to back up their words. That is what the United Kingdom does.

Some Governments, including ours, have continued to supply military equipment that could be used to commit human rights violations. Indeed it is so used, as I shall illustrate. Other Governments have turned away Indonesian and East Timorese asylum seekers, and may do so again. Foreign Governments will have to stop putting economics ahead of human rights if we are to see the fundamental policy changes necessary to restore human rights to the people of Indonesia and East Timor.

As the Minister will know, there has been much public disquiet in the United Kingdom over the continued and increased sales of arms to Indonesia. Many people have questioned the Government's decision. The contract for 24 Hawk jets, with a further 16 under negotiation, is just one example of the increase in arms sales from this country.

We challenge that decision, first because of the well-documented involvement of Indonesian military and security personnel in human rights violations. The publicly stated primary aim of the Indonesian military is internal security rather than dealing with external threats. The United Kingdom relies on assurances given by the Indonesian Government that the equipment will not be used for internal repression, but past promises have not been upheld. Clearly the onus should be on the exporter—the United Kingdom—to ensure that the equipment is not likely to be used for that purpose. In Indonesia there are many well-documented cases in which it has been so used.

Another reason to challenge the decision is the Indonesian Government's obstruction of independent international monitoring of human rights in the country. Some opening up has been seen over the past few years but visitors, including United Nations personnel, journalists, human rights groups and so on, are restricted in the freedom with which they can exercise their independent monitoring function.

Indonesians who speak to visitors usually fear reprisals. That was clear when we were there in 1989. The people whom we met in East Timor, who were brought to us as people who were free to speak their minds, were clearly terrified. They spoke in very soft voices, and even when a member of the Church came to speak to us he could not

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say what he felt, because the door was open when we met him and somebody from the security forces was obviously listening to our conversation.

The meeting that we were supposed to have with Bishop Belo never took place, although it was part of our programme. Afterwards we were told that the bishop had not even known that we were there. The so-called freedom to speak is a myth.

There is a lack of regular monitoring by the United Kingdom Government of the end use of arms exports. The Government claim that it is impractical to monitor end use, and in a letter to me Baroness Chalker made it clear that she believed that it was not possible to do so. She wrote:

> "It is not practical to monitor their use once they have reached their destination."

Any pretence that that is going on must be dispelled.

However, other Governments do monitor end use. The United States general accounting office reported earlier this year that US military assistance to Colombia had gone to units responsible for human rights violations. That part of the assistance was then cut by the US Administration.

Other Governments have suspended or cut trade and aid to Indonesia on human rights grounds. The US Congress has suspended or cut funds for military education and training subject to improvement in human rights and it refused the sale of fighter jets on the same grounds. The Netherlands, Canada and Denmark have suspended development aid and Italy has ended all military transfers to Indonesia citing human rights concerns.

It is publicly stated by our Government that human rights are one of the factors that are considered in the procedure at official level to decide whether to issue an export licence. Other factors include the design and capability of the equipment, its past use and whether assurances are available from the receiving Government that the equipment will not be used for internal repression.

However, the problem is that the decision is not open to public or parliamentary scrutiny. There is no means of knowing the information and analysis on which the decision to issue a licence is taken. It is therefore very difficult for the Opposition to challenge the basis on which the decision was made.

Of course, our Government have frequently been criticised for their policy towards Indonesia. In 1992-93, we supplied more than £33 million in aid to Indonesia. In 1993-94, we supplied £35 million and in 1994-95 we supplied £40 million. So far as I am aware, none of that money was used in East Timor.

The argument about the use of Hawk aircraft has continued for some time. We receive a variety of responses from the Foreign Office whenever that matter is raised. According to the Foreign Office:

> "We are encouraging Indonesia to live up to its human rights obligations . . . There is no evidence to support allegations that Hawk aircraft are being used for repressive purposes against the people of East Timor . . . The Hawks that Indonesia has are two-seater trainers . . . Her Majesty's Government has an assurance from the Indonesian Government that the Hawks will not be used against civilians. We have no reason to doubt this. The Government would not license for export any defence equipment likely to be used for internal repression . . . The Hawks were delivered in the early to mid 1980s, too late to have been used in the bombing raids that followed the 1975 invasion . . . Under the UN charter, all sovereign states have the right to their own self-defence so there is nothing wrong with selling arms to friendly countries to allow them to defend themselves. Indonesia is no exception."

The most recent exchange with Ministers occurred on 14 December in oral questions when the Foreign Secretary said, in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn),

> "The hon. Gentleman cannot, and has not, produced evidence to support allegations that Hawks, already supplied to Indonesia . . . have been used for oppressive purposes in East Timor. We think not."

Again, other exchanges in letters and written questions make more or less the same assertions.

I shall quote the evidence of Jose Ramos-Horta, who is the special representative of the National Council of Naubere Resistance, which, since 1975, has been the umbrella organisation for the East Timorese at the United Nations. In his evidence, he said:

> "I want to make it clear that Hawk ground attack/'trainer' aircraft fitted with missiles have been used in East Timor regularly since 1983. Hawk aircraft were first used in East Timor in the Summer of 1983, more precisely in August 1983, when the then Indonesian armed forces chief, Gen. Benny Murdani, announced a new military offensive after a three-month cease-fire negotiated by Xanana Gusmao, Leader of the East Timorese Resistance, and the East Timor Indonesian army commander, Col. Purwanto. The cease-fire was unilaterally broken by the Indonesians who thought that they could wipe out the resistance with the new aircraft they acquired.
>
> The 1983 offensive involved 20,000 Indonesian troops according to AFP, quoted in the New York Times. Two Hawk aircraft were used daily for almost six months. Hundreds of civilians and guerrilla fighters were killed during that period. The Hawks, armed with missiles, were used in three main areas of East Timor: in the Same-Ainaro-Maubisse mountainous triangle in the centre of the country, in the Lauten-Lospalos-Tutuala corridor in the far east and in the Matebian mountain range between these two.
>
> In 1983 the resistance forces operated in company sized units numbering 100 each or more. The Hawk aircraft were decisive in forcing their dispersal into much smaller units between 1983 and 1986. Together with the Bronco aircraft and the French-supplied Allouette and Puma helicopters, Hawk aircraft were responsible for the death of hundreds of civilians between 1983 and 1986.
>
> During the months of August and September 1994, two Hawk aircraft carried out at least six bombing raids in the Eastern region of East Timor. Hawks and American supplied Broncos are stationed at the Baucau airport, built by the Portuguese in the 60's and capable of receiving commercial aircraft up to Boeing 707s. Since the invasion of East Timor in 1975, the civilian airport has been converted to a military base.
>
> In the last three months, Hawk aircraft have again been used extensively, mostly in the eastern region, with an average of six sorties a day, each bombing raid lasting 10 minutes with the launching of two missiles each.
>
> Some of these raids seemed to be almost random without the pilot aiming specifically at guerilla targets but at any remote hamlet. On September 23 1994, at precisely 11H15, in the area between Kelikai and Baguia, a missile hit a thatched roof house setting it on fire and destroying the whole group of six impoverished houses. There were no survivors observed amongst some 30 inhabitants, mainly women and children in this typical East Timorese hamlet.
>
> Because there are no large concentrations of Resistance forces (the resistance forces operate in very small groups of half a dozen or less and only really converge for a major attack which may involve formations of up to 50), the Hawks are used to intimidate villagers with low flying and targeting practice on poor villages."

That is what a representative of East Timor at the United Nations says is happening in that country. I believe that our Government have a responsibility to carry out a full investigation into Mr. Horta's allegations. It is no longer good enough to claim that there is no evidence, as the

Government have argued consistently, and that Hawks are used only for training purposes. On 14 December the Secretary of State reasserted:

> "The Hawks in Indonesia are two-seater trainers and we have no evidence that they have been reconfigured to carry live bombs since they were supplied".—[*Official Report*, 14 December 1994; Vol. 251, c. 910–11.]

It is not possible to argue that any more in light of Mr. Horta's evidence. I believe that the Government should agree this morning to carry out an investigation into the matter.

Some people argue that there are grounds to bring the United Kingdom before the International Court of Justice. Portugal will bring Australia before the International Court at the Hague in January 1995. There are those who argue that the UK Government are in violation of the UN charter and the relevant Security Council resolutions on East Timor by providing economic, financial and military assistance to Indonesia which enables it to pursue aggression in East Timor.

It is argued that British support of Indonesia hinders the exercise of the right of the people of East Timor to self-determination, which is explicitly recognised in Security Council resolutions 384 of 1975 and 389 of 1986. It will be interesting to see what happens in the case that Portugal is bringing against Australia.

We have witnessed fierce arguments in the Chamber between those hon. Members who have been on all-party parliamentary visits to Indonesia. The hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) has constantly argued that the human rights situation in Indonesia is improving. He said recently that the Indonesian Government, from the President down, have fully taken on board international concerns about their human rights record and have done their best to address them.

That claim simply does not bear scrutiny. When the United Nations special rapporteur on torture visited Indonesia in 1992, he found that torture was commonplace. As a consequence, he made 11 recommendations, 10 of which still have not been addressed. We get very angry when we hear the apologists for the Indonesian regime constantly making unsustainable assertions that its human rights record is improving.

I think that more and more people from the international community will ask why the Indonesian Government, who can achieve such impressive economic gains, are apparently unable or unwilling to stop the widespread use of torture against their own citizens. More and more people will look at the pictures of the palm-lined beaches on holiday brochures and think of peaceful critics of the Government who are in prison. They will look between the columns of figures showing returns on investments and remember that a young woman who went on strike in an attempt to secure a pay rise of 25c per day was kidnapped, raped and killed when she went to the local military barracks to ask after her friends. More and more people will wonder why those who raise questions about corruption or ask why soldiers fired on peaceful demonstrators may find themselves locked in prison cells. There will be more questions and concerns about a Government and a legal system that can sentence someone to 10 years in gaol for collecting information about human rights and trying to send it out of the country.

The Government of Indonesia may not like questions on human rights being asked and they may continue to try to stop them being discussed in this House and elsewhere, but human rights violations will blight Indonesia's international reputation until its Government have demonstrated a commitment to ending them.

There are several ways in which the Indonesian Government can improve the human rights situation. A few of the key ones are: to permit independent human rights monitors to conduct thorough investigations into all violations and ensure that the suspected perpetrators are brought to justice quickly in a civilian court; to prevent torture and ill treatment by giving detainees regular access to lawyers and ensuring that statements extracted under torture are not allowed in court; to release all prisoners of conscience; to repeal the notorious anti-subversion laws and all other legislation which can be used to gaol people for their peaceful activities and beliefs; and to permit regular and unhindered human rights monitoring by domestic and international non-governmental organisations, including Amnesty International.

Systematic human rights abuses have continued in Indonesia for nearly 30 years and in East Timor for almost 20 years. We owe it to the people of Indonesia and East Timor to make our voices heard and to insist that our Government listen and act on the evidence that I have presented tonight. They must put their commitment to human rights into action, so that the Government of Indonesia realise that we are serious when we say that the people of East Timor must be allowed to determine whom they wish to be governed by under the UN's decolonisation rules. We must show that we are serious about our commitment to those rules by looking again at the amount of aid that we give and military equipment that we export to Indonesia. We will be taken seriously only if our deeds match the words which we too frequently hear from Ministers.

6.32 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): I salute the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) for her long-standing interest in this very important subject and congratulate her on raising the matter at this late hour—or early hour, depending on one's point of view—during what may be the last ever Consolidated Fund Bill debate in the House. I believe that ours is the last debate before the Adjournment.

It is interesting that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the right hon. Member for Northampton, South, are presiding over our proceedings, along with the hon. Lady, my hon. Friends the Members for Havant (Mr. Willetts) and for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman)—he was formerly in his place—and my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley).

Proceedings on Consolidated Fund Bills have been used as opportunities for extended debates by Back Benchers since 1907. The modern practice became a regular feature of the House's proceedings in 1966, and the debate continued to be held on the Second Reading of the Bill until 1982. Following a recommendation by the Select Committee on Procedure, debates since have been on a motion for the Adjournment.

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

If the House agrees to the motions on the sittings of the House next Monday, today's sitting will mark the end of 30 years of Consolidated Fund debates as they now are. It is fitting that we end up on a serious and important subject.

I understand and share the concern felt by hon. Members and others outside the House about the human rights record in East Timor. It is the subject of regular debate and one on which I receive many representations from human rights groups and others.

We do not, of course, condone human rights violations in East Timor or anywhere else. Set against agreed international standards, the record on human rights in East Timor remains far from perfect. We continue to follow events there closely and to make our specific concerns clear to the Indonesian Government where appropriate.

The Indonesian Government are well aware of the importance that we attach to them living up to their human rights obligations. With our European partners, we have most recently expressed concern, as has the hon. Member for Cynon Valley, about the trial and sentencing of the Labour leader, Mr. Pakpahan, the ban imposed in June on three weekly magazines and the heightened tension in East Timor after clashes between the security forces and demonstrators in Dili in July.

We believe that the best way to persuade the Indonesians to make further improvements in their human rights record is through constructive dialogue within wider, co-operative relationships. We share many of the specific concerns set out in the recent report of Amnesty International. We have discussed them with the Indonesians as part of our regular dialogue on human rights. We recognise that a lot more needs to be done. Torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, and other forms of human rights abuses are unacceptable wherever, and on whatever scale, they occur. As the hon. Lady said, and as Amnesty International has acknowledged, such practices are already banned by law in Indonesia.

We continue to encourage the Indonesian authorities to ensure that their laws are respected in practice. We have encouraged the Indonesian Government to invite an Amnesty International delegation to see the situation on the ground. We understand that there have been exchanges, but without, so far, an agreement on dates.

It is equally important to recognise that the situation in East Timor has evolved considerably in recent years. It is natural that the media and critics of Indonesia's record in the territory focus exclusively on what more needs to be done, without acknowledging that progress has been made. I am not sure that one-sided criticism contributes to international efforts to find a long-term solution to the problem.

The House will be aware that this year's session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights commented favourably on the greater access granted by the Indonesian authorities to human rights and humanitarian organisations, as well as the international media. The Secretary-General has also welcomed the increase in visits to East Timor by East Timorese living abroad. Non-governmental organisations, too, have acknowledged that progress. In its September report, Amnesty International noted that East Timor was now more open to outsiders than at any time since 1975. In May, the Foreign Ministers of Indonesia and Portugal agreed that such access and visits should be further increased.

We hope that that will prove possible, and we look to the Indonesian authorities to live up to the other commitments that they have made to the Commission on Human Rights. We welcome their decision to allow a visit by the UN special rapporteur on extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions. That took place in July and we will consider carefully his report at the commission's next session.

The hon. Lady has drawn attention to the journalists who were expelled from Dili last month in apparent contradiction of the trend of greater openness to which I have referred. Although the circumstances surrounding their departure remain unclear, we none the less regret any move that is inconsistent with the Indonesians' stated commitment to greater openness.

The Indonesian authorities have denied placing any general ban. Our current understanding is that journalists remain free to visit East Timor, subject to the usual permissions.

The hon. Lady referred to eye-witness accounts of the use of Hawk aircraft to bomb villages in East Timor. I listened to her carefully. The points that she makes about the use of Hawks remain allegations and no more. No one has come forward with any evidence to substantiate the claims made recently by Mr. Ramos-Horta. It is certainly for those making the allegations to bring forward the evidence. We have had specific assurances that British-supplied defence equipment, including Hawks, has not been used for repressive purposes.

It is highly relevant that the Hawk aircraft that Indonesia has are two-seater trainer aircraft, the sale of which was approved by the Labour Government. There is no evidence to support allegations that Hawk aircraft or other British defence equipment is being used for oppressive purposes in East Timor. The aircraft are based at a flying training school at east Java over 900 miles from East Timor. Of course, they could be modified—for example, to carry live bombs—if the Indonesians had the will and the technology to do so. The fact is that there is no evidence that the aircraft have been so adapted since delivery.

Mrs. Clwyd: Will the Minister agree to investigate the claims made by Mr. Ramos-Horta? He is a witness, and there are others whose names I shall give the right hon. Gentleman. Another witness is Jose Amorin, who sighted the Hawks at an air force base at Baucau in 1984. They were then seen being used in the Matabian mountains. Another eye-witness last year, Koni Santana, said:

> "The British-made Hawks have been used against the population, often bombing on a daily basis."

There are additional witnesses. It would be good if the Minister agreed that some assessment should be made of these accounts by the people whom I have mentioned.

Mr. Goodlad: We would need to see evidence rather than unsubstantiated assertions. Our embassy staff visit East Timor, as do human rights representatives, including Asia Watch, the International Commission of Jurists and foreign journalists. We have no reports from these visitors of Hawk sightings, in the air or on the ground. As the hon. Lady is aware, the Labour party spokesman on defence matters, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr.

Clark), explicitly approved of the sale of Hawk aircraft to Indonesia in November 1993. I welcome the Labour party's support for the Government's policy of permitting the sale of British defence equipment overseas where that is compatible with our political, strategic and security interests. We defend ourselves and should not deny others the right to do the same without good cause. I do not know whether the hon. Lady, who has spoken from the Opposition Back Benches but is an Opposition spokesman on foreign affairs, has dissociated herself from the Labour party's position.

Contrary to the suggestion made by the hon. Lady, we are not aware of any country that is operating a total trade embargo against Indonesia. Nor would we agree to do so ourselves. Curbing Indonesia's prosperity would not advance the cause of human rights or improve the situation of the people of East Timor.

That is not to say that we are prepared to allow arms to be exported indiscriminately. We assess all applications for export licences case by case and do not license for export any equipment that we believe is likely to be used for repressive purposes against civilians. The Indonesian authorities have assured us that British-supplied defence equipment will not be used against civilians in East Timor or Indonesia, and we have no reason to doubt them.

I should also make it clear to the House that there is no arms embargo against Indonesia and no prospect of securing international agreement to impose one. The United Nations Security Council resolutions 384 of 1975 and 389 of 1976 condemned the invasion of East Timor, but they did not call for either an arms embargo or military intervention. We understand that Italy and Sweden apply national embargoes on the sale of defence equipment to Indonesia, and the United States Congress recently imposed a ban on the export of small arms, but the Indonesians have purchased, and continued to purchase, defence equipment from many western suppliers, in Europe and elsewhere.

The hon. Lady referred to the case against Australia. The Timor Gap treaty, signed by Indonesia and Australia in 1989, is a matter for those countries, and the legality of the treaty is currently before the International Court of Justice. The treaty in no way affects our stance on the recognition of Indonesia's annexation of East Timor: we do not recognise Indonesia's annexation of East Timor.

The hon. Lady mentioned aid. There is, I believe, a strong economic and social case for Britain to have a substantial aid programme in Indonesia. Aid from this country finances projects in power generation, forestry, education and other sectors that promote economic development. All the projects are subject to our normal process of appraisal.

Indonesia remains a relatively poor developing country. The annual gross national product per head is approximately $660. The country has a well-deserved reputation for good economic management and the use of aid. Between 1970 and 1990, the number of people living below the poverty line decreased by 43 million, but about 27 million people still live in poverty. As the hon. Lady said, British aid to Indonesia was £34 million in 1993-94; that is 18p per head of the recipient population, compared with £2.18 to Uganda and £4.41 per head to Zambia. As contrasted with £34 million from the United Kingdom, Japan's aid in 1992 was $1.356 billion.

Mrs. Clwyd: Can the right hon. Gentleman confirm that none of that aid goes to East Timor, one of the poorest areas in the world, and that in the past few years none of the aid that he has quoted has gone anywhere near that country?

Mr. Goodlad: I will write to the hon. Lady about the precise application of the aid funds, but, if I understand her correctly, not only does she dissociate herself from the Labour party's policy on the sale of defence equipment to Indonesia, but she is saying that that country should receive no aid. Perhaps she is also saying that there should be no aid to any other country whose human rights record is less than perfect. If so, I think that we need to be told that clearly, because it will make a substantial impact on the aid programme throughout the world.

I now turn to the events of the past month. Several demonstrations by East Timorese protesters took place around the time of the APEC summit, including a sit-in protest by 29 East Timorese in the United States embassy compound. The Indonesian authorities gave assurances that no action would be taken against them and that they were free to leave the country. As with previous assurances that we have received from the Indonesian authorities, those have been honoured and the group left for Portugal on 24 November.

A number of demonstrations also took place in East Timor. The first, on 12 November, appears to have been a spontaneous one, caused by the death of a Timorese trader in a street brawl with an immigrant worker. During that and other disturbances in Dili, about 72 people are reported to have been arrested. We understand that the International Committee of the Red Cross had immediate access to the people who were detained, most of whom have now been released. The reports that we have received suggest that the security forces acted with relative restraint in policing those demonstrations. Initial press reports of fatalities have not been confirmed.

The hon. Lady is right in drawing attention to the fact that the human rights situation in East Timor cannot be considered in isolation from the territory's history. The invasion of that territory in 1975, and the killings and famine which followed, were a tragedy for the East Timorese people. We have never recognised Indonesia's annexation of the territory and, with our EU partners, have consistently supported international efforts aimed at securing a long-term solution to the problem.

We believe that the continuing dialogue between Portugal and Indonesia, under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General, offers the best hope of progress. The aim of those talks is clear—to seek a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution.

That is no easy task. It requires a considerable effort by all those involved. It takes time to build up the necessary climate of confidence and trust which can allow progress to be made. We will give every encouragement to the process of dialogue, which is continuing.

Recent developments have been promising. In May, after the last round of talks between the Portuguese and Indonesian Foreign Ministers, the Secretary-General

[Mr. Goodlad]

stressed the importance of encouraging dialogue among East Timorese. He undertook to help bring about what he described as

"an all-inclusive intra-Timorese dialogue."

Since then, a number of meetings have taken place which have brought together those with often opposing points of view. At the end of September, a meeting was held in Wales between East Timorese still living in the territory and those now resident overseas. The Secretary-General sent a representative to those talks. On 4 October, the Portuguese Foreign Minister met a number of East Timorese representatives, including those supporting integration with Indonesia. Two days later, in New York, the Indonesian Foreign Minister met Mr. Ramos-Horta, one of the main opponents of integration who is now exiled in Australia. Both parties recognised the significance of the meeting.

No one expects there to be dramatic shifts of stance overnight. Positions are too far apart. But such contacts at least allow the parties to air their differences directly and go some way to creating a better atmosphere in which questions of substance can be addressed.

The hon. Lady referred to the United Nations and its decolonisation committee. The special committee last considered the question of East Timor in July. After hearing statements from petitioners and the Governments of Indonesia and Portugal, the committee decided to defer the question to its next session in 1995.

We now look towards the next meeting of the two Foreign Ministers, which is due to be held in Geneva on 9 January. Preparations for that meeting are well under way. The Secretary-General recently sent two of his staff to Jakarta and East Timor to help prepare the ground. We cannot know what progress will be made but we have made clear to all the importance that we attach to such talks and we will continue to encourage the Secretary-General in his difficult task.

We will also continue to raise our human rights concerns with the Indonesians in ways that we consider most likely to be effective. We believe that the best way to persuade them to make further improvements is through constructive dialogue within a wider co-operative relationship. Nothing that I have heard tonight has persuaded me that there is a better or more effective way forward.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Engineering Construction Board) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 17th November, be approved.

That the draft Industrial Training Levy (Construction Board) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 17th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Willetts.]*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

INCOME TAX

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Azerbaijan) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 24th November.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Malta) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 24th November.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Republic of Ireland) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 24th November.

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Spain) Order 1994 be made in the form of the draft laid before this House on 24th November.—*[Mr. Willetts.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

DRUGS AND PUBLIC HEALTH

That this House takes note of and welcomes European Community Documents Nos. 8077/94 and 8929/94, relating to drugs and public health; recognises the importance of effective action by the European Union against illicit drug trafficking and drug misuse; and supports the Government's view that the proposals should be refined and improved within the mechanisms set up under the Treaty on European Union.—*[Mr. Willetts.]*

Question agreed to.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Willetts.]*

6.53 am

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge and Malling): This promises to be the last Adjournment debate following an all-night sitting on the Consolidated Fund. At 6.53 am, I am sorry that I have to keep my hon. Friend the Minister of State from his beauty sleep. I only hope that at some point in the course of the night he got a rather longer forty winks than I did on the floor of my office.

I want to raise two important aspects of blight in relation to the channel tunnel trains, those that are now running and those that will run in the future.

The first is the issue of blight and the related question of compensation on the existing lines to the channel tunnel through Maidstone East and Tonbridge, in my constituency. The second is the issue of blight that is now being created as a result of the publication of the plans for the new channel tunnel rail link.

On the point about the existing lines, for almost four years I have been raising on the Floor of the House the issue of entitlement in law under the Land Compensation Act 1973 for those whose homes on the existing lines are now being depreciated in value with the commencement of the channel tunnel freight and passenger services.

I first raised the issue on 12 March 1991 on the Second Reading of the Planning and Compensation Bill. From then on, I have been arguing that injurious affection compensation was claimable under the Land Compensation Act because of the major reconstruction and alteration of the existing lines to enable them to take channel tunnel trains.

That same legal view was also taken by counsel in an opinion provided for the local authorities concerned and given by Mr. Gregory Stone. I set out the arguments fully in my last Adjournment debate on the subject on 13 January. What was significant was that at the end of my debate my right hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), the then Minister for Public Transport, agreed that compensation was, in principle, claimable. He said:

> "We accept my right hon. Friend's understanding and interpretation of the Land Compensation Act 1973 . . . British Rail and the Department acknowledge that under section 9(1)(b) it is open to individuals who believe that they are affected to apply for compensation. That is not the issue, because I certainly accept that as a point of principle. The question is to what extent that applies."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1994; Vol. 235, c. 434.]

My right hon. Friend also said that he wanted to study carefully both what I had said in the debate and Mr. Gregory Stone's opinion.

I sent Mr. Stone's opinion to my right hon. Friend who, of course, studied it closely with his legal advisers. Then, having studied it, he came back to me with the same view of the application of the Land Compensation Act. He did so in a written answer on 15 February, when he said:

> "Counsel made the point that it follows from these provisions that changes of use which are limited to intensification of the use of existing lines do not give rise to compensation, whereas reconstructions, extensions and other alterations may do so. The Government see no reason to dissent from this interpretation . . . I fully recognise that compensation may be payable where existing railway lines are reconstructed, extended or otherwise altered after they have first been used and where it can be shown that depreciation has resulted from physical factors, such as noise and vibration, caused by their use."—[*Official Report*, 15 February 1994; Vol. 237, c. *728-29*.]

A few weeks after that written answer was given, the ownership of the lines passed to Railtrack at the beginning of April this year. That was an unhappy event for my constituents, as it turned out, and perhaps in more ways than one. At that point I resumed my compensation quest with the chairman of Railtrack, Mr. Robert Horton. I saw Mr. Horton personally. I corresponded with him. On 19 September this year there arrived what I can only describe as Mr. Horton's final, in effect "go-and-get-lost" letter. It read as follows:

> "We could probably debate indefinitely the interpretation of the words that appear in Hansard. Railtrack's position is clear: even if the Minister was accepting on behalf of the Government that the Land Compensation Act 1973 does entitle those living near existing railway lines used by Channel Tunnel traffic to claim compensation (subject to proving diminution in value), Railtrack does not agree with that interpretation of the Act. I am afraid, therefore, that Railtrack will continue to resist these claims".

That is a deeply unsatisfactory position.

Railtrack has effectively said to me and to my constituents and, indeed, to many others up and down the line that they can forget what my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said in the House. Railtrack does not intend to pay compensation to anyone under any circumstances. That issue will clearly have to be resolved in the courts. My only comment at this point is that if the courts find that in some circumstances compensation is payable—I believe that they will so find—Railtrack will bear an extremely heavy responsibility. It will bear the responsibility of having denied people their legal rights and having done so when an entitlement to compensation in principle was stated to exist by a Minister in the House of Commons not once but twice.

I shall now deal with the new line—the channel tunnel rail link—and the performance on the issue of blight of another wholly owned subsidiary of British Rail, Union Railways Ltd. The voluntary purchase scheme for blighted homes was set out first by my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor), the then Secretary of State for Transport, in his statement on the channel tunnel rail link on 24 January 1994. It was then elaborated in the Union Railways paper of 23 February this year entitled, "Guide to property purchase procedures for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link."

I initiated an Adjournment debate on the voluntary purchase scheme on 31 March this year. I voiced considerable worries about the adequacy of the scheme. I am sorry to say that I still regard the voluntary purchase scheme as seriously inadequate in two key matters. It is inadequate in defining which properties are blighted and in producing a reasonable system whereby those who suffer acute hardship because they are unable to sell their blighted homes can do so.

It is demonstrable now that those who have homes which are clearly blighted in the eyes of prospective purchasers—that is the key factor—are unable to secure the purchase of their homes under the voluntary purchase scheme. A number of my constituents received letters from Union Railways stating that the subsoil to their properties may be affected as a result of the future construction of the tunnel under Blue Bell Hill. Anyone who receives such a letter, even if it is coupled with a statement saying that any damage will be put right, is effectively receiving the kiss of death on any likelihood of selling his home to a third party. Potential buyers would not take the risk.

[Sir John Stanley]

Many of the homeowners who have been trying to sell their properties since the proposal to tunnel beneath them was announced have a bundle of letters from surveyors, estate agents and others, making it clear that their homes are unsaleable as a result of the channel tunnel rail link proposals.

British Rail maintains that the properties are not blighted. A profoundly unsatisfactory feature of the voluntary purchase scheme is that the sole and exclusive arbiter of whether a home is blighted is Union Railways. That is not reasonable. I want to propose a way forward that would be reasonable for both sides.

The way is happily precedented—and I know that Government Departments always like precedents. Even more happily, it is precedented in the Department of Transport. I commend the procedure already adopted by the Department in relation to the voluntary acquisition of homes blighted by road schemes. One excellent piece of legislation from this Government is section 62 of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, which gives a voluntary acquisition power to highway authorities to purchase blighted homes that are beyond the geographical limits of statutory blight. I have substantial experience of the operation of section 62 in my constituency in connection with the widening of the M20 and the channel tunnel.

The Department has operated section 62 reasonably fairly and sensibly in the widening of the M20. In many cases, it said that a property should be independently valued by the district valuer and then marketed at that valuation for a given period—usually around three months—and that if at the end of that period the property was not sold, the Department would be willing to purchase it.

That procedure was set out in the letter of 27 August 1992 from my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London in the case of my constituents Mr. and Mrs. Martin. He wrote:

> "We need to be satisfied before agreeing to purchase the property that the asking price is reasonable. The District Valuer suggests without inspection of the property, that this is more likely to be in the region of £85,000 in current conditions. The Department have recently written to Mr. and Mrs. Martin pointing this out and asking them to arrange for the property to be marketed at a more realistic price level. If after 10 weeks they receive no reasonable offers, then we will agree to purchase their property."

That is a reasonable and fair procedure, which has worked well in the context of the widening of the M20. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to tell Union Railways to adopt the same procedure in dealing with homes where there is a dispute between the owners of the homes and Union Railways about whether they are blighted in the context of the channel tunnel rail link.

The second deficiency of the voluntary purchase scheme is that it is conspicuously failing to achieve purchase in cases of hardship when a house is blighted. To illustrate that point, I need not go further than the case of a house above the proposed tunnel under Blue Bell Hill owned by a married couple in my constituency to whom, for both medical and personal reasons, I shall refer as Mr. and Mrs. Y.

Mr. and Mrs. Y suffered last year the appalling experience of their son committing suicide by hanging himself in their home. His body was discovered by his mother and this experience has had a devastating effect on her mentally. Some indication of this can be gauged from the open letter I have received from her consultant psychiatrist. I shall quote two extracts. The first reads as follows:

> "The reason for her illness is the tragic death of her son, who hung himself in the house. Mrs. Y found her son's body hanging and she tried to untie the corpse in desperation to save him, but he was already dead . . . She cannot sleep and cries all the time. She cannot get over the death of her son, as long as the memory is there. Everything in the house reminds her of one image and one image only; her beloved son's corpse dangling from the ceiling."

The consultant psychiatrist concludes as follows:

> "I support any effort to help this unfortunate family find an alternative accommodation, but it seems that they are unable to sell their house because of the geography and plans to build the channel tunnel. It is essential that she is given all the help necessary, in order to leave that house as soon as possible, to enable her to heal her wound and come to terms with the loss of her son."

The consultant psychiatrist makes the plea that all help necessary is given to Mr. and Mrs. Y to help them move from their home. I am sorry to report to the House that that plea to Union Railways has, so far, fallen on totally stony ground. Mr. and Mrs. Y have been desperately trying to sell their home. They have been unable to do so because of the blight created by the tunnelling proposed under their home. Union Railways claims that they are not blighted and, therefore, refuses to buy them out on hardship grounds. I consider that for a public authority in these circumstances to refuse to buy a blighted house on hardship grounds is quite intolerable and unacceptable.

The voluntary purchase scheme is not working properly. It is not enabling blighted homes to be bought when those homes are demonstrably blighted in the view of surveyors and estate agents. It is not providing a means whereby blighted properties can be purchased in cases of conspicuous and clear personal hardship. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to deal with extreme seriousness with the issues I have raised and to use the utmost force at his disposal to ensure that Union Railways adopts a more reasonable and more humane voluntary purchase acquisition scheme at a very early date.

7.13 am

The Minister for Railways and Roads (Mr. John Watts): I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Sir J. Stanley) for returning to this important subject yet again. He last brought it to our attention on 31 March. He has campaigned consistently and vigorously on behalf of constituents who may be affected by existing channel tunnel rail services or by the future channel tunnel rail link, and I have no doubt that his energetic efforts on their behalf are very much appreciated.

My right hon. Friend referred to nuisance arising from existing lines, to an exchange in the House with my predecessor and to subsequent correspondence. He also referred to entitlements in law under the Land Compensation Act 1973. He acknowledged that these are matters to be settled by legal process if they cannot be settled by agreement between Railtrack and the parties involved.

My hon. Friend mentioned comments made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) when he had my current responsibilities. I wish neither to add to, nor to subtract from, anything that he said then, but clearly Railtrack has taken its own legal advice—advice that differs from the opinion of Mr. Stone, which was given to my right hon. Friend the Member for

Kettering by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling. I am sure that Railtrack will take careful note of what my right hon. Friend has said this morning about the consequences of the course on which it appears to be set.

My right hon. Friend is aware of the importance of the channel tunnel rail link project, and the great benefits that the Government expect to flow from it. Unfortunately, those substantial benefits are not unqualified good news for everyone, especially those who live on the route of the new link—and, indeed, those who live alongside existing lines that are currently being used for channel tunnel traffic.

The Government are keen to ensure that satisfactory arrangements exist for properties that are blighted as a result of the link. Compulsory purchase powers are, of course, being sought for property and land required for the construction of the new link by the Channel Tunnel Rail Link Bill, which received its First Reading on 23 November. Meanwhile, the approach of Union Railways has been based as far as possible on the existing statutory blight provisions, and on other purchase arrangements such as those used for road planning. They have been adapted to accommodate the differences between roads and railways.

My right hon. Friend has argued forcefully that the similarities between roads and railways are rather greater than is currently acknowledged by Union Railways. As the first Minister for Railways and Roads, I have a keen interest in achieving as much symmetry as possible in the correspondence between provisions applying to railways and those applying to roads. In all the work that is being done in my Department, I am seeking to ensure that we have a set of schemes that apply equally validly to both roads and railways, as there is a clear "read across" between the two. I shall certainly reflect carefully on my right hon. Friend's constructive suggestions—although I think he will appreciate that I cannot necessarily give him any further undertakings off the cuff at 7.17 am.

The present arrangements are based on the safeguarding directions issued to local authorities, which were initially published in February and recently reissued—although there are no substantial changes. Safeguarding is important in that it brings the statutory blight procedures into play, so that owner-occupiers of domestic properties within the safeguarded zone have a right to serve blight notices and to require Union Railways to purchase the blighted properties.

In advance of use of any of those compulsory powers, Union Railways has instituted a voluntary purchase scheme that simplifies the purchase arrangements, but really applies them as they would be applied if blight notices had been issued and accepted. The basis on which this is done is set out in pamphlets produced by Union Railways.

For residential owner-occupied properties outside the safeguarded areas, and which are not required for the construction of the railway, there is a separate discretionary or hardship purchase scheme. When assessing whether to purchase properties under this scheme, Union Railways has to be satisfied that there are legitimate hardship grounds and that enjoyment of the home will be seriously affected by the operation of the railway. It is in meeting those two requirements that most of the problems arise.

I listened carefully to what my right hon. Friend said about the case of Mr. and Mrs. Y. It is clearly a great personal tragedy and, on humanitarian grounds, one would wish to offer as much assistance as possible. I undertake to re-examine the case to ascertain whether there is anything that we could justifiably do to provide assistance but, as my right hon. Friend knows, it has been considered many times. The prime difficulty is that the tunnel under Blue Bell Hill is about 300 ft under the surface and, on technical grounds, it is not accepted that that would have a significant effect on the house.

However, I acknowledge my right hon. Friend's point that the technical argument about whether there will or will not be a serious effect does not matter; if someone needs to sell a home, what matters is whether prospective purchasers believe that there is a serious problem. There can often be a great gulf between the two perceptions. It is difficult to assist in this particular case because to do so would clearly have ramifications for other parts of the route where there is housing above deep tunnel. However, I undertake to have the case reconsidered carefully to see whether there is any way in which we can be of assistance.

Sir John Stanley: Does my hon. Friend agree that in cases of serious hardship it is intolerable on moral and ethical grounds that people should be locked into a home until 2002 which, unless they can be bought out voluntarily, will be their position before they can claim any compensation entitlement?

Mr. Watts: I would seek to achieve arrangements that can accommodate severe hardship and compassionate circumstances without creating a precedent which would require us to purchase hundreds of houses at substantial cost to the public purse and with some other undesirable consequences.

Widespread purchase of property in a given area can cause substantial disruption to a community. We had some experience of that with earlier routes for the channel tunnel rail link. British Rail operated a system whereby properties in a very broad band were purchased and, having bought many properties not needed for the link, it is having to dispose of them. Meanwhile, communities have been disrupted.

The intention is to design into the rail link measures to deal with the problems of noise and vibration at source. I am sure that everyone will agree that that is the preferable way to handle the matter.

I commend my right hon. Friend for his continuing interest in the subject. I know that it has been borne in on my predecessors and it has certainly been borne in on me this morning. I shall—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Before I call the final "Order", I think that it is appropriate to record that at 7.23 am it seems likely that the House ends the procedure on the Consolidated Fund, including all-night sittings, which has existed for some 30 years. Order.

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, Mr. Deputy Speaker *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes past Seven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 16 December 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILL PRESENTED

PREVENTION OF FRAUD (REGISTRATION)

Mr. Michael Stephen presented a Bill to make provision for the registration of certain interests in, and other information relating to, vehicles; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 10 February, and to be printed. [Bill 29.]

National Lottery

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

9.34 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): For the convenience of the House I thought that I would speak at not too great a length, and cover the facts and figures of the lottery so that we know exactly where we are officially. I have no doubt that many hon. Members will want to raise important issues during the debate. If I catch the eye of the occupant of the Chair I shall, with the leave of the House, seek to wind up the debate and cover any issues not mentioned in my opening remarks.

The national lottery was launched just over one month ago and has already gripped the public's imagination. The bare facts and statistics do not tell the whole story, but they are worth setting out at the beginning of the debate so that the House can appreciate the scale of what we are discussing today.

Camelot was informed that it would be running the national lottery at the end of May. By the launch date in mid-November, it had equipped, trained and established communications for 10,000 retailers. Since then, a further 1,250 outlets have been added to the retail network and, on average, 1,000 more will come on stream every month for the next two years. By the end of 1996, 40,000 retailers will be involved, either through on-line terminals for the main lotto game or as sellers of scratch cards and other instant games.

In the first month of the lottery, 206 million tickets have been sold and 3.5 million people have shared about £100 million in prizes. Some 35 people have won more than £100,000 each and five winners have become millionaires.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I know that my hon. Friend has only just started his speech, but the issue that I wish to raise is important for the country. When looking at the huge prize winnings, will my hon. Friend consider whether there could be a limit of, for example, £5 million on the top prize from now on? That would mean doing something about the roll-over effect, which has become horrendous and is tempting some people, particularly poor people, into buying more lottery tickets than they can possibly afford.

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend certainly makes an important point, which concerns many people. With that prescience which is so typical of my hon. Friend, he has foreseen a subject to which I shall refer later. If he will allow me, I shall deal with it at length later—it is an important point.

Of that turnover of £200 million—

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The Minister has almost conceded that there should be a ceiling on the amount of money gained by lottery winners. How does that stand with the Prime Minister's assertion yesterday, when we complained about the gas board chief receiving a mammoth salary, that the Government did not believe in ceilings for top people?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman's interesting interjection was based on a false premise. I apologise if I misled him, but I was not conceding that there should be

[Mr. Sproat]

a ceiling. I said that my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) had raised an important subject—to which I will return.

Of that £200 million, roughly one half has been paid back in prizes. Some £53.4 million has been paid into the national lottery distribution fund—the account in which proceeds are held for good causes. Some £25 million has been paid to the Exchequer in lottery duty. Some £10 million has been paid to the retailers—including many small, independent businesses—in commission on ticket sales. About £10 million has been retained by the operator, Camelot, to cover operating costs and contribute to its return on investment. Over the full seven years of Camelot's operating licence, some 27 per cent. to 28 per cent. of the turnover will go to good causes, which I shall come to in a moment.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): I wish that my hon. Friend would change his mind.

Mr. Sproat: I know my hon. Friend's views, particularly on one distributor. I imagine that he has in mind the Arts Council. The whole House is looking forward to his contribution, if he should catch your eye, Madam Speaker.

As I said, 50 per cent. will be returned to the players as prizes, and 12 per cent. will be paid in lottery duty to cover the retailers' commission and Camelot's operating costs and profit. For the sake of completeness, although I realise that most hon. Members are familiar with these aspects of the lottery, I should like to touch briefly on the arrangements for distributing its net proceeds.

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): The Minister talked about the £10 million that Camelot already has. Can he say when he expects the start-up costs to be paid back?

Mr. Sproat: Pretty soon, is the short answer. I do not know the exact date, but Camelot is very tightly tied down in what it can do with the money. I shall find the exact date for the hon. Lady and, I hope, let her know later in the debate. Camelot is not even allowed to keep the money—or is unlikely to be able to—on overnight deposit. It must pay the money that it receives from the retailers to the fund as soon as it gets it. Indeed, I think that I am right in saying—if I am wrong, I shall correct this later—that small retailers do not have to give Camelot their money for ticket sales until the Wednesday, yet Camelot must pay it in to the Government fund the previous Tuesday. So it is tightly controlled.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): The Minister has not answered my hon. Friend's point. I believe that my hon. Friend was saying that if Camelot will get back its initial capital investment "pretty soon", in the Minister's words, from then on it will be making a profit all the way. Some people estimate that those profits will be as much as £1.5 billion over the next seven years of its franchise. Does not the Minister have any concern about the credibility of the lottery, as people will become very sick of it and feel no confidence in it if Camelot, for very little work once it is up and running—it has done that well and I give it credit for that—will be getting enormous sums of money? I think that the public will become very disillusioned about that. Should not the Government look at their contract with Camelot a great deal more carefully?

Mr. Sproat: I am sorry if I misunderstood the point that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) was making. I thought that she was referring to the fact that Camelot gets money from the small shops and then hands it over. But it does that very quickly and it certainly is not able to make easy profits out of that by putting the money on deposit.

As for Camelot making a profit on the deal, I remind the House that Camelot is covering its investment, its current operating costs and its margins on only 5 per cent. That is very tight indeed. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] It is quite true that when the lottery is going well, 5 per cent. is worth more, but to go into business and say, "Without regard to what happens, we are going to operate on a fixed margin," is a considerable business risk. *[Interruption.]* We have all the time in the world, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I shall just, although I cannot promise to respond to every seated intervention—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We may have all the time in the world, but seated interventions are not practices of which I approve.

Mr. Skinner: Perhaps the Minister will explain something to me, because there might be a good explanation. It was broadcast that Virgin was prepared to do the lottery for nothing. If there is an alternative explanation, perhaps the Minister will give it to me.

Mr. Sproat: It is true that various versions, roughly approximate to what the hon. Gentleman said, were put out by the press, but they were based on something of a misunderstanding, because the contribution to good causes does not come out of what Camelot does or does not make in profit—I say "does not" make because its costs and profit are limited to 5 per cent. Whatever Camelot does, some 50 per cent. of the money paid by those who buy tickets goes in prizes. Once the prizes have been paid, the 12 per cent. to the Treasury has been paid, the 5 per cent. to the small shopkeepers, garages and supermarkets that sell the tickets has been paid and Camelot has its 5 per cent., whatever is left, which is roughly 27 per cent. to 28 per cent. of the total turnover—turnover being defined as the amount spent by punters buying tickets—is divided among the five good causes: the arts, sports, charities, the millennium fund and the national heritage memorial fund.

So I must tell the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that the good causes get their money from that 28 per cent., not from what goes to Camelot, or, as would have happened, Mr. Branson. Although the details of the company that won the franchise were decided by the Director General of the Office of the National Lottery, my understanding—I have not seen the papers—is that Camelot's offer was better because it was running it at 5 per cent. of turnover, which was lower than Mr. Branson's offer. So the Camelot deal is better than Mr. Branson's on a strict arithmetical basis.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): My hon. Friend mentioned that a 12 per cent. tax will be paid to the Government from the turnover of the lottery. Can he confirm that that return will not be confined to 12 per cent., because it is not only Camelot's profits that will be taxable, but those of garages and shops selling the tickets, and if substantial prize winners invest their winnings, any interest or dividends that they receive will also be subject to tax? The total return to the Government will be significantly higher in the end than the 12 per cent. that my hon. Friend announced.

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend is quite right. Of course, there are other sources, which he has not mentioned, through which the Government will benefit—such as the increase in jobs that will be generated. Those who have the jobs will pay income tax on their salaries. So the Government do pretty well out of it, as do the prize winners. I know that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), who speaks for the Opposition, will tell me how grateful he is and how well the arts will do out of it. That, no doubt, will provoke a response from my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks).

The five good causes are the arts, sports, heritage, charities and projects to mark the year 2000 and the beginning of a third millennium. The bodies responsible for distributing the funds available in the five beneficiary areas are the four national Arts Councils of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the four national Sports Councils and the national heritage memorial fund, all of which already exist, and the National Lottery Charities Board and Millennium Commission, which are newly set up distribution bodies.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Minister has been speaking of the good causes. Is he prepared to comment on Stephen Glover's article in last evening's edition of the *Evening Standard*, bearing in mind the casualties to the nation, who will not be good causes but heartbreaks?

Mr. Sproat: I did not read the article to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but if he can get me a copy during the debate—I very much doubt that any speeches will allow me to spend a minute looking at it—I shall gladly see whether I can answer him at the end of the debate.

I must make clear one important principle about the lottery. Lottery money is intended to be additional to and not a substitute for existing Government funding. That means that the proceeds paid into the national lottery distribution fund will not be considered alongside other Government expenditure during our annual discussions about resources. That money will not be taken away from the five good causes that the House agreed to support to finance other areas of Government spending, nor will it be used within those five areas as a substitute for existing Government provision. Lottery proceeds should not, therefore, be used to fund projects that would normally be funded from existing Government programmes.

For example, it would not be possible for the lottery to take on the running costs of one of our major art venues if it already obtains revenue support from the Arts Council, my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington will be glad to hear. Another example would be funding for the public lending library service, which local authorities have a statutory duty to support.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister says that there will be no substitution, but the Government seem already to have anticipated in the Budget the receipts that some of those organisations will get from the lottery. For example, the grant to the Sports Council was reduced this year and is expected to reduce further in 1996-97, down to £48.9 million from £50.6 million this year. That is a large cut, when one takes into account inflation over the four-year period, so it would appear from the Budget that the Government, or at least the Treasury, are anticipating those receipts and discounting them by squeezing the Sports Council's budget. If the Government are not doing so, the Minister must say why he is so hard on the Sports Council in the Budget.

Mr. Sproat: It is always a pleasure to hear the hon. Gentleman speak on sport as opposed to art for a change.

Mr. Fisher: I am keen on sport.

Mr. Sproat: I know that the hon. Gentleman is a keen sportsman. Sport comes out of the Budget better—

Mr. Fisher: Not true.

Mr. Sproat: I shall explain clearly to the hon. Gentleman. The Sports Council grant has been cut by a very small amount, but we increased the amount that we are giving to the sponsorship scheme. We are maintaining the money through the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. The Sports Council is going through an exercise to squeeze all the money that is spent on what some might say is unnecessary bureaucracy and to channel it into grassroots sports. Not only has the total amount of Government giving for sport increased, but we shall spend the money in a more targeted way.

Mr. Dicks: I would not wish the Minister to mislead the House or those listening to the debate. The Arts Council did not get roughly the same; it got an increase that was twice the level of inflation. I cannot think of any other Government Department that was allocated that much—certainly not the pensioners and the people—but his colleague the noble Lord Gowrie said that it was not quite enough and all the luvvies were up in arms about it.

Mr. Sproat: It is certainly true that, in their wisdom, the Government decided to give an extra £5 million or so to the Arts Council. It is hard for me. One minute I am being criticised—wrongly as it happens—for cutting the grant to the Sports Council and the next for increasing the Arts Council grant. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington has strong views on the matter and I look forward to his deploying them at greater length and no doubt with greater ferocity during the debate.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Leaving aside opera for a second, a serious problem faces many small groups that will want to have created capital assets by the millennium, for example secular monasteries for people who are roofless or need companionship and activity, so that they can find somewhere within 40 or 50 miles where they will be accepted. They might be people with a history of alcoholism, mental illness or whatever. Capital costs over the next five years are unpredictable, but if it is a part of the millennium project to ensure that such places exist—using the Emmaus project, St. Mungo's and others—is there someone on the National Lottery Charities Board or at the Department to whom a small

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

informal alliance of such groups can talk, who will give them guidance on the right way to structure a flexible programme with a millennium-type target?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I should certainly be glad to speak to my hon. Friend as a first step and to work something out. People at the charities board and the Millennium Commission would be able to advise on the best way to structure an application for funds from one or both. Projects can be funded jointly by more than one board. My hon. Friend mentioned the millennium fund, so this might be a suitable time to refer to that subject.

The fund is one aspect of the lottery that is less widely understood than some others. The Millennium Commission consists of nine members appointed by the Queen to consider the best way to utilise the share of the lottery proceeds allocated to support projects to mark the year 2000 and the beginning of the third millennium. The commission has said that its purpose is to assist communities to mark that event and it will use its lottery money to encourage projects throughout the nation that enjoy wide public support and will stand as lasting monuments to this country's achievements.

The commission will make grants to four main types of project: first, about a dozen major capital projects throughout the United Kingdom, which will become landmarks to the 21st century; secondly, smaller capital projects of local significance; thirdly, a millennium festival, which will become the focus of celebrations in the year 2000; and fourthly, a bursary scheme that could be used to develop the skills and abilities of individuals.

To ensure that the commission has the fullest and widest range of ideas to consider as suitable national and local projects, it has decided to hold a national competition. That will get under way next month. Project sponsors will be invited to submit their proposals in January. They will have until the end of March to submit them and must also submit a more detailed application by the end of April. The successful projects should be announced before the end of July. The competition will be repeated on an annual basis beginning in September, although the time taken to develop and build the landmark projects clearly means that they will have to be approved in the next year or two. The commission is consulting on the form that a millennium festival might take and will publish its conclusions in the spring of next year.

Although the lottery has, so far, been a huge success, people understandably have a number of legitimate concerns. I shall now deal with two of them and will deal with any other concerns that hon. Members mention during the debate in my reply.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I was trying to catch the Minister's eye before he went on to another subject. To return to the millennium festival and the proposals for it, what sort of input and suggestions can members of the public, interested organisations, Members of Parliament or anyone else make? From what the Minister said, it sounded as if only a small group of people—yet to be determined by the sound of it—will decide.

Mr. Sproat: I am sorry if I did not make the situation clear. It is complicated and I am conscious of the fact that, although I said that we have all the time in the world, we do not. The Millennium Commission has already been set up and has nine members. One is the Secretary of State for National Heritage, another the President of the Board of Trade and Mr. Michael Montague is a third. He was selected by the then Leader of the Opposition to represent an all-party balance on the commission. The six other members—*[Interruption.]* Is the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) saying that he does not approve? I may have misheard and I know your objections to answers to seated observations, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): The Minister of course deliberately misunderstands me. I was not objecting in the slightest to Mr. Montague. However, I was querying the balance on the commission, when the Opposition are represented by one member and the Government appoint all the rest.

Mr. Sproat: I am sorry. It was not a case of deliberately misleading the hon. Gentleman. I did not hear what he said. I thought when he began muttering when I mentioned Mr. Montague that he was objecting to Mr. Montague. If the hon. Gentleman was not objecting to him, I should be very happy to take the correction.

Madam Deputy Speaker: This illustrates perfectly my objections to seated interventions. Perhaps the Minister had better resist the temptation to answer what he thought he heard.

Mr. Sproat: You are very wise, Madam Deputy Speaker. I shall follow that sage advice throughout the rest of this powerful speech.

To return to the point made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), we thought that it was fair to have a member specifically selected by the Opposition. I quite see why the Opposition may say that they would like more members, but we are trying to make it a non-party political matter. The other members of the commission have been chosen to represent as broad a spectrum as possible. They have been deliberately chosen to represent, for want of a better word, Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland, the north-east of England, the south-east and so on. We have tried to get a balance. It is not easy with nine members, but I can promise the hon. Gentleman that it was not for want of trying. We went through every possible permutation of names and interests to try to find a reasonably balanced group.

That reasonably well-balanced group of nine commissioners will consider ideas from the public. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West asked whether any Member of Parliament or any member of the public could submit ideas. The answer is: yes, they can. They should send their ideas to the Secretary of State for National Heritage, as the chairman of the Millennium Commission. Rather than sending ideas to the Department at its address in Cockspur street, it may be wiser to send them to the Millennium Commission, whose address I cannot remember. But I shall find out for the hon. Gentleman and put it in the Library of the House, or do whatever else is suitable.

We are genuinely looking for ideas for a festival as well as other projects for the millennium fund, which can provide a focus. The festival that the Millennium Commission organises will clearly not be the only festival, but it will be a centre, which we hope will provide an example to the rest of the nation of how to celebrate the millennium.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I hesitate to make any suggestion in the light of the Minister's own proposal that we ought to contact the commission directly, but I hope that thought will be given to not having a single-centred venue for a festival that is supposed to represent the national and regional celebration of the millennium and that some thought will be given to having a decentralised festival.

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman makes a point with which I agree 100 per cent. I was trying to say, in perhaps an overly shorthand way because of the time and the way in which these debates are structured, that the Millennium Commission will organise, in a rather more hands-on way than other aspects of celebrating the millennium, a central festival. No doubt, it will look at the festival of Britain in 1951. It may decide to follow it or not. But I have no doubt that in Edinburgh, Cardiff, Belfast and, indeed, in Harwich and Caithness, people will have their own celebrations of the millennium. If the hon. Gentleman would like any further details on how it is proposed that the Millennium Commission should advise on what is done in Edinburgh and so on, I should be happy to pass them on.

I was coming to matters of concern which hon. Members have already raised in passing and which have certainly been raised by the public. I shall address a couple of them: the protection of the anonymity of jackpot winners and whether it is right to allow the prizes to roll over and amount to the levels such as that last weekend of almost £18 million. That latter point was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North earlier and by my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) in Question Time earlier in the week. They both voice the views of many people and it is quite right that we should direct our minds, such as they are, to what we ought to do about it.

With regard to the anonymity and privacy of winners, the Secretary of State issued directions to the Director General of the Office of the National Lottery under section 11 of the National Lottery etc. Act exactly one year ago today. One of those directions made it clear that the licence to run the lottery must include a condition to the effect that the identity of any person who has won any prize in a constituent lottery shall not be disclosed by the lottery operator without the consent of that person. That condition was duly incorporated in the licence issued to Camelot under section 5 of the Act.

The Director General of Oflot, with whom, obviously, my Department has been in close touch ever since the brouhaha over the winner of the jackpot arose last week, has assured me that he has no evidence to suggest that Camelot breached that condition. In its public statement, Camelot has made it clear that it did not release any information concerning the winner of last week's jackpot without that winner's express consent. However, given the serious allegations that have been made, the director general has decided that he will review what took place earlier this week and I shall ensure that the House of Commons is told of his conclusions.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I raised that issue in the House on Monday and it first came to my attention two or three weeks ago. Under what circumstances would Camelot seek the consent of the individual to release details of the winner and why should it think of doing so?

Mr. Sproat: I shall give my hon. Friend as straight an answer as I can, although he will understand that I cannot walk into the minds of members of Camelot as to why they may do something. I understood—I was not told this specifically by the director general of Camelot, so I may have been told wrongly—that Camelot felt that if it were able to give out a general fact or two about where the winner lived, it would satisfy the press. [*Laughter.*] I quickly absolve myself from such refreshing naivety on the part of those who felt that, if it were the case. That is what I have been told, but not by Camelot and not by the director general. But it was done, if it were done, with the best of intentions. If all that was done was done with the express consent of the person who won the lottery, there is therefore no reason, as I currently understand it, to think that Camelot breached the conditions under which it was awarded the lottery.

Mr. Greenway *rose—*

Mr. Sproat: I shall give way to my hon. Friend in a second. I emphasise that the director general is concerned enough about what has happened to say that he will review the matter. I shall let the House know the conclusions of that review.

Mr. Greenway: I am grateful to the Minister and I shall not interrupt again. Is not it clear that even to give that apparently innocent sort of clue is to give away the identity of an individual, because one could even say that the winner was someone in London and the press would find him or her if it were determined to do so? Should not that be suppressed in future? Does my hon. Friend agree that no clues whatever should be given?

Mr. Sproat: Camelot will have heard what my hon. Friend has said, and it will be looking at its own experience and at what happened in the media. No doubt it will take all that into account when it decides whether to give any clues next time. I understand what my hon. Friend has said and I have great sympathy with that view. I understand from the laughter in the House when I said that I had been told that Camelot thought that by giving a few bits of information it would satisfy the press, that those of us who have more daily dealings with the press than Camelot has had previously know that that was a forlorn hope. Anyway, it was done with the best of intentions.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): If someone has ticked a box marked "no publicity", why should Camelot go back to the person to ask for his consent if I understand the Minister correctly that it is a part of the Act that no publicity should be given if the person does not want to give that publicity? Will the Minister do anything about that lapse by Camelot?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman describes accurately the situation with regard to the pools; one ticks a box if one does not want publicity. In fact, in the national lottery,

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it is the other way round. If one says nothing, that is taken as meaning that one does not want any publicity. Therefore, in a sense, that is even stronger than the hon. Gentleman suggests.

The winner's identity should not have been revealed. I am told that Camelot was helping to protect the winner's identity by, as it were, buying the press off and saying—and there was no ill intent—"Here are a few details. Leave it at that." Alas, the press did not. Camelot will look seriously at the matter because I shall undertake that the debate and the hon. Gentleman's remarks are drawn to Camelot's attention.

Ms Hoey: The Minister implied that Camelot was almost naive, but that does not sit well with what he said earlier about it being a good business consortium. Camelot stands to gain from increased sales and will always have an interest in more publicity for the lottery. That is why the whole thing should have been organised and run by a charitable organisation from the beginning.

Mr. Sproat: No, I do not agree with the hon. Lady. Of course Camelot has a vested interest in the success of the lottery, but the Government and the nation have a vested interest in Camelot being successful. Its commission is 5 per cent. and, by definition, the more successful Camelot is, the more will go to the charities. That is a mathematical fact. I have no doubt that a charity would want to maximise its return in exactly the same way as a company.

Ms Hoey: It would not make a profit.

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Lady may say that, but a charity has to cover its costs like anybody else. The best way to maximise interest in the lottery is to give the company a personal interest so that it maximises the return on its investment, encouraging other investors to come in and increasing the lottery's efficiency and effectiveness.

Like all of us, Opposition Members have built-in prejudices. One of their historic prejudices is that they do not like the idea of private sector companies making too much profit. But in this case the more profit made by Camelot, the more money the good causes will receive. That is the best way to harness the dynamism of the private sector for the benefit of the public sector. That is my view and with my limited power over the English language, I can do no more to convince the hon. Lady.

Mr. Tony Banks: I suggest that this will be repeated time after time, particularly with large jackpots, because the press will continue to try to find out the name of anonymous winners. Would not it be better to remove that rule altogether so that those who win the jackpot will know that their names will be revealed? Why should anonymity be built in? After all, it is a national lottery and an absence of anonymity would enable us to know whether there had been any fraud. If the Secretary of State won the jackpot and claimed anonymity, we would probably be a little suspicious. If I had won £18 million, the whole country would have heard the start of the cheering in Forest Gate but they would not have heard the end, because it would have finished somewhere in Mustique from where, of course, I would have faxed my application for the Chiltern Hundreds.

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his view about the desirability of anonymity. My view is that anonymity is up to the individual, irrespective of whether the hon. Gentleman or I think that it is a good idea. There are a number of sides to the issue of anonymity, one of which is the badgering of winners. I understand that the winner has left his house. I have been told, although I do not know whether it is true, that he has even left the country because he was being harassed and badgered. That cannot be right.

Secondly, a family who won the lottery might be afraid of criminal activity such as a family kidnapping or burglary. Such factors, apart from personal preference, mean that we should rigorously protect anonymity. Clearly, it has not worked this week and we must look again at how to make it work. I do not have all the answers, but I am clear on the principle.

There is another aspect. What Camelot may or may not have done is one matter, but we must also look at the conduct of the press. I understand that some tabloids promised to pay people to inform on those whom they thought might have won a major lottery prize. The correct body to look into that behaviour is the Press Complaints Commission, and I welcome its announcement that it would consider a complaint from any winner or from any Member of Parliament who cared to take up the matter.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister agree that such actions are not contrary to the whole work ethic of the press, which regularly pays people for information?

Mr. Sproat: The House has a number of varied and legitimate views on press payments for information or articles. Many people find it extremely distasteful that convicted criminals, for instance, should be paid for newspaper articles. There are times when the press legitimately pays people for information, but in my view and in the view of most hon. Members, there are times when payments are not legitimate. It is distasteful that people are encouraged by large sums to snoop and spy and betray their neighbours. However, as we saw in the courts, it is not against the law. I hope that members of the press will at least look at themselves and ask, "Is this really the way that we want to continue?"

Rev. Martin Smyth: Has not the Minister put his finger on the fact that it is time that the Government introduced legislation to protect citizens and victims of crime who see people being paid for their crimes?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. At this moment, the Government are considering the Calcutt report and other views that we have received on the issue of press intrusion.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Does my hon. Friend accept that the media have a responsibility to respect the wishes of those who win large sums, especially in view of what my hon. Friend said about the pressures that such people could be under? Does he also agree that responsibility does not extend only to the name of the person? There were ridiculous antics this week. For instance, the winner's house was blacked out but the location of the neighbour's house could be seen. The person's workplace was given and there were interviews with family and friends. That all suggested who the person was.

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes a good point. We must remember that the lottery has been going for only a month and many situations, such as on-line machines in hon. Members' constituencies not working or the behaviour of the press vis-à-vis the winners, are bound to arise. There are many issues, big and small, which we must consider. Just as the Government and the Director General of Oflot will consider various aspects, Camelot will be asking itself, "Although we acted with the best of intentions, was what we did wise?" In the light of the new situation, all those involved have to see whether they might adapt and change what they do in future.

Another area of public concern has already been mentioned: the size of the jackpot. Some people have commented that a prize of almost £18 million is too high and that jackpots that are not won should be divided among the winners of other prizes and not rolled over to subsequent weeks. I understand that concern but, on balance, I do not accept it. First, the circumstances that led to one person winning such a large amount were extremely unusual—or so I am assured by those who have a sharper grip on mathematics and odds than I have. I have to be careful what I say because the nature of the lottery is that one cannot predict the outcome. It should be relatively rare, however, for a rolled-over jackpot to be won by only one person. I am reliably informed that, under the laws of probability, last week's jackpot should have been shared by five people.

Roll-over should happen only infrequently. Each week, the number of people buying tickets should comfortably exceed the number of chances available. To date, average ticket sales have totalled more than three times the number of different combinations available. More than 45 million attempts were made to guess the correct combination of the 14 million permutations available. Last week that rose to a factor of more than five.

Having said all that, I believe that on balance we probably got it about right. The jackpot can roll over only three times and thus hugely increase both the jackpot and public interest and excitement. It cannot roll over more than three times and thus we have limited the first prize within some sort of bounds. One must draw the line somewhere and, for the moment, a roll-over of three is not unreasonable. The major point, however, about rolling over the jackpot, and thus the jackpot's total, is that the excitement that the roll-over generates causes more people to buy tickets and thus increases the amount that goes to the good causes, which is the ultimate intention of the lottery. In effect, therefore, last week's jackpot was extremely successful in achieving what we hoped the lottery would achieve.

Mr. Tony Banks: That is true, so why have the limit of three roll-overs? Why not let the roll-over go on? In the United States of America, for example, prizes in the state lottery can amount to £100 million or $150 million. Why not let the jackpot roll over? That makes the fun of buying a ticket much more attractive.

Mr. Sproat: One of the most enjoyable things about the debate is that one never knows from where one will be attacked. The hon. Gentleman takes a sort of extreme capitalist, pro-American attitude whereas my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North takes the opposite view. That shows the House of Commons at its best.

We have taken into account the fact that two very differing views exist. Some people say that there should be no roll-over and that prizes should be distributed much more evenly. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West advances a hypothetical argument. I do not know whether it is his personal opinion, but the view that the lottery should be allowed to roll over for ever until it is won is an important hypothetical argument.

We have decided, rightly or wrongly, to have a compromise so that, if there is a roll-over, the prizes are different each week. The thought of becoming a millionaire 18 times over just like that is extremely exciting to the public. I dare say that the hon. Gentleman would say that that is better than being the chief executive of British Gas. We had to make a choice between no roll-over or a roll-over for ever. We have decided to compromise and have three roll-overs so that money is distributed reasonably fairly, given the luck of it, and so that, at the other end of scale, we do not have such gigantic prizes that people think that they will never win and stop buying tickets. It is therefore a compromise.

Mr. Dicks: Switching the subject a bit, why do we have prizes of £10? I have won three times and won a total of £30. I am very happy, but £10 is nothing. I got the first three numbers and I was saying, like the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), "Chiltern Hundreds, here I come," but then my luck ended. Perhaps the minimum prize should be £100 and not £10. That is an important point.

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend says that the minimum prize should be £100 and not £10. That is his view and almost nothing that has been done about the lottery is fixed in concrete. I should have thought that the House and the Government would want to return to the prizes issue in due course. Camelot decided in its offer to Oflot that £10 prizes were a good thing because more people could win and because more people would find that they were benefiting from the national lottery.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington won that money and that he has outed himself in that dramatic manner. At the same time, we shall consider the prize structure, although I think that the £10 prize is a good idea. We should not close our minds to any reasonable changes that experience may dictate.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): Due to the startling revelation by my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), will my hon. Friend the Minister please take the opportunity to congratulate him on his donation to the Arts Council?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend's comments remind me of the fact, of which I am sure many hon. Members have experience, that constituents write in and say that they object to the Government's policy on this, that or the other and that they are withholding a percentage of their income tax that would go towards things that they do not like. I suggest to my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and

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Harlington that he might consider symbolically deducting 20 per cent. of his prize and giving it to charity so that it does not go to the Arts Council.

Mr. Dicks: I should like to tell my hon. Friend in all honesty that I give something like £3,000 to £4,000 to charities, especially those supporting people with spinal injuries, which I am happy to talk about in this place, and children with leukaemia. The fact that a percentage of the £30 has gone to the luvvies and the arty-farty people does not worry me too much because most of the money, with qualification, goes to good causes.

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend's position is well known in the House, as is the fact that he gives extremely generously to charities and works hard for them. We greatly respect that.

The lottery turnover increased from its average of £48 million in the first three weeks to more than £61 million last week—a rise of almost 30 per cent. Thus the contribution to good causes increased by a similar percentage from £12.5 million to £16 million. Those are the hard figures. The excitement generated by so large a jackpot to be won gave that amount to the good causes and the prime purpose of the lottery is to help to fund them.

A third concern about the lottery has been that it represents unfair competition for charities, the pools companies, bookies and other people in the gambling industry. Research conducted before the introduction of the lottery suggested that money to buy lottery tickets would come from many sectors of consumer spending, including confectionary, magazines and soft drinks, rather than from within the gambling market or as an alternative to charitable donations.

After just four weeks of the lottery, it is far too early to say what exactly the effects have been on spending in other sectors. One early report suggested that income for the football pools had not declined in the wake of the lottery, but I understand that more recent figures may paint a different picture. Similarly, different charities have described different experiences since the lottery was launched. Some have seen their income fall; others have not. Even in the case of charities whose income has fallen in the past month since the lottery began, it is not proven that the lottery was the cause of the fall. Clearer patterns, however, may emerge over a longer period.

I should like to emphasise that it is inevitable, when so major an innovation as a national lottery is introduced, that details will go wrong. There may be elements that time will show need to be changed. The Government will monitor closely and carefully what happens and, after appropriate periods, if we are convinced that elements need changing, we shall not hesitate, with the agreement of the House, to change them.

Mr. Nigel Evans: My hon. Friend mentioned the pools industry. Many thousands of jobs are involved in that industry throughout the country and many of them are concentrated in the north-west. We are yet to have the exact figures, but there is a great fear of a drop in pools companies' income. Does he agree that those companies should be given the opportunity at least to advertise the pools on television in exactly the same way as the national lottery is advertised not only on ITV but on the BBC, where it is given plenty of free advertising? I hope that that is a forerunner for the BBC taking advertising to relieve pensioners and people on fixed incomes from having to pay the licence fee in the first place.

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes an important point and it is one that the Pools Promoters Association has put to the Government. The Government have considered it. During the lotteries debate, various concessions were made to the pools companies. The age of people who are allowed to take part in the pools has been reduced to 16; pools tickets are able to be sold in shops; and a roll-over in the pools jackpot has been allowed. The pools company can roll over its jackpot for the same length of time as the national lottery. For the first time, the pools companies are allowed to sponsor programmes on television.

Those are four major concessions that we have already given to the pools. I know that the pools companies appreciate that; I also know that they want more. My hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) makes an important case and we shall look at it. We really need to see what happens. We cannot start making major changes after just four weeks. We must let things settle down and if they turn out not to be right, we shall willingly look at them again.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): Some scare stories are being put around because the national lottery is such a great success. I do not expect my hon. Friend to give me an answer to this question from the Dispatch Box. Will he look at the extent of the gross national product deflator that the lottery may be producing in terms of taking money out of the system? That will have an effect on circulation and on the GNP multiplier. Will he give me an answer at an appropriate time?

Mr. Sproat: I undertake that as soon as I have looked at my hon. Friend's contribution in *Hansard* and understood it, I shall come back to the question.

Mr. Tony Banks: My question is a lot easier. Will the Minister also look at another area of activity that may be affected—the bingo industry? There are some fears that it, too, could be affected. Why not allow bingo organisers to offer prizes higher than those to which they are limited now? Bingo is a very working-class activity, certainly in my part of the world. The bingo organisers need to be protected as far as possible.

Mr. Sproat: I shall look at that point. In a speech the other day, I rashly said that the pools promoters had wanted their position to be improved and that I would, no doubt, be hearing from the bookies by the first post next morning. There turned out to be a bookie in the audience and he did, indeed, write to me the next day. I had the pleasure of speaking to a representative from the bookies and this week, I spoke to a representative from William Hill. The bookies put a strong case for why we should look at the impact of the lottery on them. Equally, I shall gladly look at the bingo industry, if one can call it such. If the hon. Member for Newham, North-West or any other hon. Member wants to bring a delegation to me, I shall gladly meet them.

I began by saying that I intended to speak relatively briefly.

Mr. Dicks: It has been an hour now.

Mr. Sproat: A very good hour, if I may say so. I intended to speak for 12 to 15 minutes, but the interest of the House has caused me to prolong my speech. I think that the time has now come to say farewell.

Some 3.5 million people have already won prizes. More than £53 million has already been deposited in the national lottery distribution fund. The proceeds for good causes are growing at approximately £2 million a day. The prospects of funding for the arts, sports and the heritage have never been better. In addition, the lottery has proved itself to be a huge success. The Government confidently expect it to remain so.

10.32 am

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): The Minister has spoken in his usual relaxed, friendly and even emollient style for a considerable time. As he says, that reflects the interest in the subject among hon. Members. He has, however, been verging on the bland and complacent when talking about the many problems that have arisen in the past month. We welcome his clarification on the millennium fund and his clarification of the impact on charities, pools and bingo. I shall come back to those points in a moment.

The Minister made some interesting but extremely unsatisfactory comments about anonymity and press ethics and about the roll-over and the problems of the size of the jackpot. We welcome Oflot's inquiry into anonymity and we hope that it will be concluded speedily. We certainly welcome the fact that the Press Complaints Commission will look into the matter at the request of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), the shadow Secretary of State for National Heritage. I hope that the Government too will look at the matter with some stringency.

There are things that the Government could do. We need a privacy Act, as the Government have known for some time. They have been thinking about it and saying that they will do something while several Secretaries of State have come and gone; we still have not got there. Generally, members of the public have no protection in law from harassment by the press. They should have that protection and the Government must respond quickly. If they do not, this new Department will not look on top of the job when it comes to dealing with the press. For the Minister to say that he is thinking about a response to Calcutt is ridiculous. The report was published about three years ago. It is about time that the Government responded because many of the problems need to be worked out quickly.

The Minister's comments about Camelot were surprising and bland. We must wait until the inquiry reports as there is no evidence yet that Camelot has leaked the identity of the winner. The inquiry will establish whether it did so. If, as the Minister says, Camelot has given out a few bits of information, it has been either very naive or very stupid. It is clear that the press is sufficiently bright that a few bits of information are enough, as the Minister has said, to identify the person who has sought anonymity. If that is true, the Government must take a strong line with Camelot. The mistake cannot be repeated.

The Minister said that he was advised that, mathematically, a roll-over was extremely unusual. We accept that it is difficult to get a compromise between the size of the jackpot and some restraint on it. The general way in which the Government sought to do that was correct. It is clear, however, that the limit to three roll-overs is not working. The Minister chewed over the problem, but he did not reach any conclusions. The Government must exercise themselves a good deal more energetically. The roll-over is a problem and I do not believe that this week is the last time we shall have an £18 million jackpot.

Some people, like my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), reckon that the roll-over is a good thing. Most people to whom I have spoken believe that it is a bit tacky. The jackpot's credibility will become slightly soiled when the sums are enormous. On both points, the Government must say something a good deal more definite. They must not just interestedly consider the matter, as the Minister has done today, but address the problems with a good deal more urgency. I do not believe that the Minister has satisfied the House on this. He has ignored many other major problems that have arisen in the first month. I hope that at the end of the debate the Minister will take a far stronger, more urgent and more energetic attitude to the problems.

Mr. Nigel Evans: If it could be proved that, with the roll-over, so many more people were participating in the lottery that extra money was earned for the good causes, would the hon. Gentleman still say that the top prize should be limited, thereby denying the good causes all the extra cash?

Mr. Fisher: It is arguable whether we should have huge prizes and pay-outs, as we had this week, or more large ones. After all, £1 million, £2 million or £3 million is a huge amount to any of us. The mathematics of happiness are ambiguous. Would more large pay-outs encourage more sales, or would sales be boosted more by an occasional mega win, as we have had this week? It is an arguable point that we could go on debating. I am not sure how the mathematics of happiness or incentive work on this.

The Government have chosen a strange topic for debate the day after—they knew that it was going to be the day after—their humiliating defeat in the Dudley, West by-election. Last week, the chairman of the Conservative party threw in the towel in an unprecedented way and said that he knew that the Conservatives had lost. The Government knew that they would face problems today and they chose this debate. They could have chosen anything. They could have chosen to debate Europe, for example, VAT on fuel or the behaviour of British Gas towards its chief executive. They could have chosen to debate the fact that while British Gas pays £200,000 extra to its chief executive, it is cutting its retail staff's wages and holidays. They did not choose those topics; they chose the national lottery, presumably because they reckoned that it was a safe and easy subject. The lottery is popular and has no political

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problems, so they thought that they could just sit there. The Minister's speech and his relaxed demeanour show that he thinks that he is in for an easy time.

Mr. Jessel: In that case, why did we not have the debate before the by-election?

Mr. Fisher: That is a very good point. If I understand the Government's psychology, I suspect that they would like to debate this subject indefinitely. The Minister's hour-long speech certainly suggested that they would like the debate to continue for ever.

The Government underestimated the issue, however, and when they chose the debate they certainly did not foresee this week's papers being full of injunctions, writs, inquiries and the Press Complaints Commission. More substantial problems may arise. It is perhaps a fact of life that when things go wrong for the Government, they do so on every subject, and they are even getting this one wrong.

As we emphasised on Second Reading and in Committee, we welcome the national lottery. The millions of people who enter it each week, the 15 million people who watch the draw on television and most of the press coverage—apart from this week's coverage—show that it is popular. The Minister's expression that it is gripping the public's imagination was slightly florid, but it is certainly popular, and in that sense it is a success.

Mr. Maclennan: I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman reassert that the Labour party fully supports the lottery. Is it happy about the redistributing effects of the lottery?

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point and I shall deal with exactly that problem in a moment.

The applications to the five boards that are likely to flow in from the beginning of next year certainly show that the money is needed. It is needed for the good causes because of Government neglect. Historic buildings are falling down, theatres are not being built or are in a bad state of repair and libraries, cinemas and sports grounds are not available in many cities because for 15 years the Government have done nothing about those issues. The good causes are needed to shore up the Government because, particularly in culture, sport and recreation, the Government have not done their job. The national lottery is band aid for their poor policies.

There are other problems. The scale of money, the fact that, although it is public money, it is the boards' money to all intents and purposes and the importance of the causes that will benefit emphasise that the lottery is not just a bit of fun, as much of the debate seems to suggest, but an important public issue that we have to get right. In many crucial ways, the Government have not got it right. They rushed into it and tried to get it running as quickly as possible because they saw that good things could come from it and, as has been shown in speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House, they have not thought out many of the problems. They have not got the administration right.

It is a matter of public accountability and credibility for the lottery and for the Government. If the public are not satisfied that the lottery is properly devised, set up and administered, confidence in it will wane and it will cease to be a success. None of us wants that to happen, so it has to be properly set up, and in many ways that is not so.

There are four basic tests by which we can assess what has happened. We need to ask whether the national lottery has been free of political interference and pressure as it needs to be seen to be independent. Secondly, its finance and administration need to be openly and efficiently run, and the finance should be fairly and properly divided on a decent basis. There should also be clear policies for the management and distribution of the receipts to those good causes, which should generally meet public approval.

The consequences and the effect on redistribution, on other aspects of public policy and on other bodies such as pools promoters, bingo and the media should have been carefully thought through and anticipated—or, if not anticipated, responded to. The Government have not done very well on any of those concerns and there are doubts about all four. Too many questions are unanswered, too many issues are unresolved and too many aspects are capable of going wrong.

It is not for nothing that the logo chosen for the national lottery is crossed fingers: those crossed fingers belong to the Government. They have their fingers crossed that it will all work out and it will be the popular success—for them—that they hoped it would be, but that attitude of "Let us hope for the best", symbolised by the crossed fingers, is not good enough for a Government and we need something a good deal sharper.

Let us look at what has happened. The Government clearly hoped that the lottery would be a weekly fairy tale of a nice family or person winning huge sums of money, good causes benefiting and everybody being happy. It should have been a wonderful thing, but the events of this week show that, in certain circumstances, it can turn into a weekly nightmare. It appears that there is a danger at least that the entire enterprise is beginning to crumble in the Government's hands. Writs and injunctions have been issued, Oflot is conducting an inquiry, the Press Complaints Commission is involved and complaints have been made about the quality of the BBC's coverage.

The first money that the charity paid out was £19,000 to sack and pay off an extremely distinguished person with a long record in charitable work who did not meet with the personal approval of the millennium commissioners. It is ridiculous that the first money paid to the lottery should have been for that purpose.

The National Lottery Charities Board is in a shambles and a state of unpreparedness. It is understandable that charity organisations all over the country are becoming increasingly disturbed and angry. There are reports that rural areas are being ignored in the number of outlets—I note that Conservative Members are nodding in agreement—and there is real concern that, despite the Government's protestations, because of how the boards have been set up, small organisations around the country will be squeezed out by the big, glamorous and well-prepared ones. They are all real problems that the Government have not considered.

In introducing the national lottery, the Prime Minister said:

> "Every man and woman in this country can be a direct beneficiary, not just the great and the good."

We all hope that that will be so, but the way in which the Government have set it up makes that less rather than more likely.

Let us consider the four tests that I mentioned. Has the national lottery been set up in a way that is politician proof? The 1978 Rothschild commission, which examined the potential of lotteries, emphasised that any lottery should be free from direct Government interference, but this lottery has the Government's hands all over it.

The Government will be the winner every week. They have a huge political and financial interest in the lottery, and to protect that interest they have an interest in it being a success and in their getting the credit for that. For that reason, the smallest, but perhaps most important of the boards—the Millennium Commission—is chaired by the Secretary of State for National Heritage and another Cabinet Minister, the President of the Board of Trade, is a member in a personal capacity. If we are to have a test of political interference and independence, why on earth are two Cabinet Ministers dominating the Millennium Commission?

When the Secretary of State answered a question on Mr. Hinton's sacking from his post as chief executive of the Millennium Commission, he behaved as though he had nothing to do with it. He said that the commission had made the decision. He was the chairman and all the press reports suggest that his falling out with Mr. Hinton led to his departure.

The Government have become far too enmeshed in the details. I am not sure whether it is appropriate that the Secretary of State should be chairing the Millennium Commission, nor that so many supporters and members of the Conservative party should be on it. The brother of the Secretary of State for the Environment chairs the arts board distribution body. He has a good reputation in the arts and is a member of the Arts Council, but his appointment certainly raises questions about so many active Conservatives being on boards.

The Minister spoke about political balance on the Millennium Commission, but it is a bit of a joke to describe one to nine as a political balance. I am not sure whether there should be any political balance; I think such matters should be independent of the Government and by talking about political balance the Minister is implicitly admitting that it is a political matter and that the Government have their sticky fingers all over it.

Mr. Sproat: I did not say that there was a political balance. There is a geographic balance and we had to try to get a proper balance of other interests. There are representatives from different parts of the United Kingdom. I should have thought that the Opposition would welcome the fact that at least one member of the body was specifically appointed by them, although I would not pretend that one representative from the Opposition would make a political balance. In fact, I have no idea how the other people on the board vote. We did not try to construct a political balance; we just wanted some Opposition input.

Mr. Fisher: I think that the record will show that the Minister did talk about a political balance when he referred to the fact that Mr. Michael Montague was nominated by the late John Smith, the former Leader of the Opposition. It is a bit of a nonsense for the Minister to say that he does not know how the rest of the board votes when one or two of them have been Tory councillors—elected members of the Tory party.

The test of political independence has not been passed. It is a very politicised organisation. The Minister shakes his head, but the Secretary of State chairs one of the key boards that distributes money. We could not get more political and less independent than that.

Mr. Tony Banks: When the millennium arrives, we shall be into the second or third year of a Labour Government. I hope that this question is not presumptuous, but what proposals do we have for changing the way in which we approach the millennium, how it will be celebrated and what sort of people will make the decisions?

Mr. Fisher: My hon. Friend makes a good point. My speech will show the sort of changes that we expect to make in a number of respects. It is not just a question of the membership of the boards. We will not replace Tory appointees with Labour ones, but I suspect that my hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State will need to step on to the Millennium Commission and inherit its chairmanship to put things right where they have gone wrong. The whole way in which it has been set up is quite suspect.

I come now to the second test of the quality of the financial set-up and management. There are already major question marks over the three-way split of receipts into prizes, good causes and profits. The profits go to both Camelot and the Government week after week. We have talked about the prizes in relation to this week's roll-over prize. Any gambler will tell the Minister that the lottery offers lousy gambling odds compared with any other form of gambling. It is interesting that the Government did not require some advice and warning about the odds at the point of sale. The size of the prizes in relation to the amount invested is very poor compared with other forms of betting, but it is with the profits that we are most concerned.

The Government have never answered our questions about why they thought that a private monopoly was the right way to handle the matter. What happens when Camelot recoups its initial investment in advertising and start-up costs? The Minister has only just begun to deal with that question. My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) made an extremely good intervention about that early in the debate.

The lottery will be a success and the public will support it—and as from next year Camelot will be making horrendously enormous profits, that will become an embarrassment and will not improve credibility. If the estimates are right, over the seven years of its franchise Camelot will make £1.5 billion profit because it was given a franchise and a monopoly. Conservative Members are very keen on competition—

Mr. Derek Conway (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): Camelot will pay tax on it.

Mr. Fisher: That was an intervention from a silent member of the Treasury Bench. Yes, Camelot will pay tax on the profits, but they will be 10 to 15 times higher than would normally be considered a successful return on a business investment. That raises questions. The Government should try to find a way of renegotiating some aspects of Camelot's contract. I am not sure whether that is possible, but it has certainly not been a good start.

[Mr. Fisher]

There are also question marks over some of the smaller details. ICL has the contract for servicing the 35,000 terminals. Over the seven years, it will get £100 million for fulfilling its contract. There are reports that that is £65 million more than other bids for the contract. The Minister must tell us whether the reports are true and whether ICL was the most expensive company bidding. If so, why did it get the contract? I suspect that servicing those new machines, which were installed only last week, will not be an onerous job. If that £100 million bid was larger than any other, it shows that it was a very ill-thought-out contract.

Too much money is going to the Government. If the lottery is to have credibility, it must not be seen as a form of indirect and regressive taxation, taking from the poor to give, as some commentators have said, to the interests of the well-off and the rich. The Government will benefit week after week, so they must convince the public—they have not yet done so—that it is not backdoor taxation.

Ms Hoey: Does my hon. Friend agree that one way of sorting out the problems, confusions or even misconceptions that the Minister may say we have about the operating costs and the ICL contract would have been to have made everything public? The competitive bids and the contracts should have been made public. We did not see them so there is no real feeling that this was the best deal. Some of us think that there may have been better bids.

Mr. Fisher: I agree with my hon. Friend. She implicitly makes our case that there should be a Freedom of Information Act in Britain. When the Government rejected and talked out my Right to Know Bill last year, they introduced a White Paper on so-called open government. They said that they would open up and improve procedures. There was a good code of practice. The information that we have been requesting is just the sort of information that should be in the public domain. The fact that it is not makes a mockery of the Government's claims about open government.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: The hon. Gentleman has made a strong plea for less political interference in the running of the national lottery, yet he now appears to be asserting that politicians should be able to probe and pry into the commercial contracts of the lottery operator, Camelot. Surely any commercial contract that it enters into is governed within the 5 per cent. that it takes and therefore does not seep through into the amount that charities, the good causes or even the tax man are getting.

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman will also recall that I said that this is public money and a very important public issue. When setting up such a major scheme, there is an absolute responsibility on the Government to ensure that that is done properly and fairly. There must be seen to be openness of procedures. The Government should have been more open about, for example, Oflot's scrutiny of all the constituent parts of Camelot, one of which is GTECH, an American company with a slightly questionable reputation. In 1991 it was involved in a corruption scandal by giving election donations to Senator Alan Robbins in relation to an interest in a lottery that was being set up. We never heard about that; the information came out by the back door.

There should have been a great deal more openness about who was involved in the organisation—there should have been a great deal more openness about all the aspects. This is a matter of public concern. If the Government are serious about open government, they should be open and serious about this matter.

Mr. Ainsworth: The hon. Gentleman may be right when he says that this is a matter of public concern, but there seems to be some misunderstanding. We are talking not about public money, but about private money. Is the money that people put into, for example, the pools industry, public money?

Mr. Fisher: The whole enterprise is in the public domain. The money that will go to good causes and to the Government will certainly be public money. The Government have set up the lottery as a public network of structures. It is right that the Government should be accountable and should be questioned on whether they have got it right. I believe that, in certain ways, they have not.

For example, the Government have not given enough thought to roll-overs. They have not given enough thought to the shambles of the millennium fund or the complete shambles of the National Lottery Charities Board, which the Minister ignored. The charities board will be the biggest area of activity. It says that more than 700,000 charities will be eligible to apply. It reckons that there will be 200,000 applications. It will probably pay out £100 million or £150 million a year. Charities are a key area and people are most concerned about it.

The board chairman was appointed four months ago, but the board has not yet published its guidelines. It says that it will not do so until the middle of next year. It will not invite applications until the middle of next year. Will the Minister give us a date by which the charities board will be operating? As yet, it has only temporary offices. Why is there such inefficiency and delay?

For more than a year, the Home Secretary has known that he, unlike the Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage, is responsible for the board. The Department of National Heritage has got its act together reasonably well, with some qualifications, in running the four boards for which it is responsible, but the Home Secretary has not got the board up and running. It is ridiculous that money will go to the board for the next six months but nothing will be paid out. No wonder that charities throughout the country are angry.

Blame does not lie with the chairman of the charities board, Mr. David Sieff. I suspect that the blame lies with the Home Secretary. He must make a statement to the House about when the board will operate and why it has not been appointed before. It simply is not good enough to allow such a delay when he has known about his responsibility for some time.

The Act does not appear to contain much restraint on the administration costs that anyone can charge, and that needs to be looked at, but the principles of distribution are agreed: both large and small projects should benefit and the whole of the United Kingdom should benefit. That sounds simple, but I do not believe that it is as simple as it sounds, not least because on Monday the Secretary of State said at column 595 of *Hansard* that each application to the Millennium Commission would be judged "on its merits". That sounds sensible.

The ambitions to judge projects on their merits and to achieve a mixture of large and small projects spread over the United Kingdom seem to contradict each other. What if most of the bids that merit attention are big bids? I understand that one of the criteria should be a balance between large and small. If the Secretary of State and the boards judge applications only on their merits, they will be unlikely to fulfil that criterion and the criterion of achieving a UK-wide spread, which hon. Members on both sides of the House want to see put into effect.

The Secretary of State needs to make it much clearer that small organisations and non-London organisations will be regarded as having merit. That is the only way to guarantee that projects will be spread around the country. In certain respects, the way in which the Government have set up the charities board is terrifically balanced against small organisations. The big organisations have already prepared their bids. They have sophisticated, well-thought-out, well-prepared bids. They have the partnership money and they are raring to go. The smaller organisations have not prepared their bids, regardless of what board they are applying to. That is wrong. There is a built-in bias against small organisations and the Government must do something to correct that.

The Minister has talked about the Millennium Commission. We have already discussed the personal involvement of the Secretary of State. The Millennium Commission should pay particular attention to the mix of large and small. The Minister said that there would be only 12 large projects. I suspect that he accepts that those projects need to be started now. They will have to be commissioned in the very first year if projects such as the Tate gallery at Bankside—if it is successful in its bid—are to have a chance of meeting the criterion set by the millennium fund that they must be ready by the millennium.

The big 12 projects will all be started next year. It will be difficult to keep the balance between big and small. The Minister must say something about that when he replies to the debate. He should also explain why Mr. Nicholas Hinton was sacked. The Government have failed to explain that. If it was because he fell out with the Secretary of State on a personal basis because he was too strong a character, that is worrying in terms of what it tells us about the Secretary of State's personal involvement in the Millennium Commission. The Secretary of State refused to give reasons to the House at Question Time recently. That was not to his credit. He should give the House some explanation of why someone who came with a great reputation from the charities sector should have so instantly fallen out with the commissioners.

The Minister also has some answers to give—if he will pay attention—on exactly who will be eligible for receipts. In some areas it is not clear. Will libraries be eligible? If so, for funds from which board? When my office rang the Secretary of State's office yesterday, it understood that the heritage board would be the right place for libraries to apply to. The library world has not been told that. It needs to be told. I am not convinced that the heritage board is the right place.

One of the most interesting developments in recent years in the work of libraries, apart from information technology, is their increasing tendency to become wider cultural centres in which many arts activities take place. The Minister will be well aware of that from his travels around the country. There is a good case for some new libraries that emphasise that role to apply to the arts board. The Minister must make clear to what boards, if any, public libraries should apply and for what reason. The reason should not be historic conservation. There is a pressing need for a new generation of public libraries in constituencies throughout the country. They need to know now to which board they should apply.

A question was asked about science at Question Time last Monday: to what board should scientific projects apply, apart from the Millennium Commission? Who is to judge that? Who will advise the Government? Will children's play projects be eligible and, if so, to which board should they apply? Every hon. Member knows from his or her constituency work how pressing is the need for children's play facilities. Children's play projects will be a constructive set of small projects, but it is not clear whether they should apply to any particular board. Will chess be eligible for funding from the sports board? The board has issued a list of eligible sports, but chess is not on it. Why? Chess is usually considered a sport. It is one in which Britain does well. Will the Minister comment on why it is not on the list?

Will the Minister also comment on the recent announcement by the Government and the Arts Council that film will be eligible for funds? What sort of film projects will be eligible? Will feature film production be eligible? Although the Opposition can see some case for increased funding for British screening, I am not sure that the millennium fund is the right pool of money for it to come from. If the basis of the Government's case is that film is a capital asset, that opens the door to investment in books, sculptures and other artefacts and products which could also be seen as capital assets. The Minister must think a great deal more carefully about the eligibility of film and what aspects of the film industry—buildings, archives or whatever—will be eligible.

Will English Heritage be eligible for heritage board pay-outs? If advisers are eligible, as they should be, they will be in the difficult position of advising the board that will make grants to them. The Minister must clarify English Heritage's position.

The Government say that in certain circumstances, commercial organisations should be eligible, and I agree. I can envisage circumstances in which that would be to the public good. West end theatres are a crucial part of London's cultural economy. Some are in beautiful condition and some in a poor state. There could be good, constructive applications from theatres, but clear criteria and checks must be devised if public money is to go to private organisations. The Government must be much clearer about the constraints and parameters. They could be opening a dangerous door.

There are many eligibility problems, and the Government should have addressed them long ago, but they failed to do so. They also failed to address multiple applications. Organisations have approached hon. Members saying that their projects appear to be eligible for several boards, and wanting to know the co-ordinating structure among boards. There cannot be co-ordination with the charities board because it is not paying out at the moment. Small projects as well as big will want to make multiple applications to several boards. The guidelines and ground rules are not clear.

[Mr. Fisher]

Small groups are in every board's remit and are a key, but they are already feeling marginalised. The speed and complexity of planning and the need for partnership funding biases the enterprise against small organisations.

The Government must say something today about the problems of section 26 and the balance between capital and revenue funding. The Government started by saying that funding should be solely for capital projects but did not anticipate the problems that they were letting loose. That premise may be fine for heritage, where £1 billion of decaying buildings identified by the last Arts Council chairman, Lord Palumbo, can be addressed solely as a capital project that does not have many revenue consequences, but for the arts and sports boards the revenue consequences are enormous.

I refer to not only the running but the programming costs of new buildings. Many have pointed out that there is a danger of a generation of wonderful new buildings such as concert halls and sports stadiums, in which no concerts or other activities are undertaken because there is inadequate funding to run such events. The Secretary of State has not thought it through.

It is interesting that the Secretary of State's comments in the past few weeks have been moving towards allowing revenue funding in exceptional circumstances. He must spell it out. That is not adequately done in section 26. Unless the right hon. Gentleman explains that, there will be confusion and unfairness.

Most of those organisations will not be able to show adequate revenue funding and will not be financially viable. They are the two criteria that the right hon. Gentleman gave in the House the other day. Public support will be needed for programming and activities in buildings. What will the Government do about that? They cannot sit there and talk vaguely about "exceptional circumstances". They must be a great deal more precise; otherwise, there will be real problems.

If the Government do not have the solution now, they should be leading a debate. We cannot have magnificent facilities in future years without activities being undertaken in them. The Government have not considered additionality, to which the Minister referred. Conservative Members are already talking about that matter. On "Westminster" with Nick Ross this week, one Tory Member said that when £200,000 is going to the Arts Council from the lottery, the Government should cut its grant. At present, the Government will not do that, but that has occurred in other countries that run a lottery. If the Government do not want that to happen, they must take action now.

Mr. Dicks: The hon. Gentleman misrepresents me. I have been calling for the total abolition of the Department of National Heritage. That would be much more effective.

Mr. Fisher: The hon. Gentleman's ravings on that subject are well known to the public. No doubt we will have to hear them yet again today. I am sure he will make his points well.

The Government say that they will be firm on additionality, but they must do much more to convince the public. The integrity and credibility of the Sports Council, Arts Council, English Heritage and national heritage memorial fund are at risk if, as happened with the Sports Council, grants are cut. The Minister did not address that point properly. The grant has been cut for each of the next four years. If that is not anticipating receipts from the Sports Council, I do not know what is.

The Minister said that the Foundation for Sport and the Arts will be well protected, but that is pools money and completely different. The Government should be investing in the Sports Council, which does excellent work.

The hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) said that the Arts Council did well this year, but he is wrong. It did not recover the £3.2 million cut made last year. To take account of inflation last year and this, the Government should have put £2.75 million more into the council than they did. They gave more than people expected, but the council is still behind on two years ago—and that figure was woefully inadequate.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: The hon. Gentleman has forgotten the substantial increase that the Arts Council enjoyed between 1990 and 1993.

Mr. Fisher: I remember it only too well. That increase did not make up for the terrible loss of grant over the previous 10 or 15 years. It has grown worse and worse in real terms. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the Arts Council did well that particular year, but he should ask his regional theatres whether they are able to stage as many productions, have casts as large and undertake as much education as they did. The answer from every theatre and arts organisation in the country would be no.

Mr. Sproat: Beyond a shadow of a doubt, spending on the arts has increased 40 per cent. in real terms since 1979. It did not go up that much under Labour. Whatever my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) may think, and I hear his complaints, it cannot be denied that the Government have given that increase.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister is comparatively new to debates that have continued several years, and he is completely wrong. He is saying that Government Department expenditure has increased, mainly inflated by the long, drawn-out agony of funding the British library. Let us consider the National theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company and regional theatres, which are £7 million in deficit. If one were to ask whether their grant was more or less than 10 years ago, whether they could stage more productions and commission new work and whether they could undertake more outreach work and education, the answer would be no. He knows that arts organisations have successively been cut. He should not blur the figures by talking about capital expenditure on the British library and other such schemes and the administrative costs of his own Department. We have had this debate many times before, and this is not the time to have it again. The Minister is right about the figures but wrong about arts organisations such as the regional arts boards and the Arts Council. He knows that that is the position, and he should accept it.

The Government have not thought through the consequences for the pools. Pools promoters do not have a level playing field on which to operate. The Minister referred to advertising but did not say that he would take action. Will he give an undertaking to introduce some change? It is wrong that pools promoters should be at such a disadvantage.

It makes no sense at all that betting shops should not be points of sale. Surely they would make admirable ones. It is probable that betting shops will suffer along with others. Why should they not sell lottery tickets? The bingo industry will undoubtedly suffer. The Minister should say something about that. His remarks about small charities were far too bland.

We have a real opportunity with the national lottery that is recognised by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. There is the opportunity to put right our historic buildings, which the Government have allowed to decay over the past 15 years. On Lord Palumbo's estimate, £1 billion is needed. We have the opportunity to put right our cultural buildings, such as libraries, concert halls, arts centres and theatres. We must get these projects right. I am talking of buildings that the Government have allowed to decline through their underfunding. We have a chance to mark and celebrate the millennium in a way that would make clear our pride in the British culture.

We have a chance to spread sport throughout the entire country. Support can be given to education, which has lost an enormous number of playing fields over the past few years. Quality can be improved. When we bear in mind the English cricket team's performance, it is clear that we need all the help and investment that we can get.

There is a chance to do the little things, which are the most interesting and important, in every community throughout the United Kingdom. We shall be able to restore communities that the Government, through a package of policies, have done so much to fracture and destroy over the past few years.

The potential of the lottery and the good-causes side of it is enormous. We all welcome and applaud that, even if much of the need for it is the result of the Government's neglect. It is not good enough for the Government to have, metaphorically, their fingers crossed, like the lottery logo. If they do not take on board the important points of additionality, anonymity, funding and separation of powers between the Arts Council and the arts boards, as well as many other issues, they will snatch if not defeat at least shambles from the jaws of what should be victory. They must uncross their fingers, stop hoping for the best with the lottery and ensure that it is the success that it should be and that we want it to be. It will be a success only if they approach the problems to which I have referred with much more urgency and produce some positive answers to them.

11.23 am

Mr. Peter Ainsworth (Surrey, East): I am grateful that I am able to contribute to the debate at a relatively early stage, but such was the fury generated by the two Front-Bench spokesmen that we are progressing more slowly than we expected. For the avoidance of doubt, I should say that I have an interest in so far as I act as a consultant with SG Warburg, which at one time, I think, advised Camelot. I have had no discussions about that relationship.

Sadly, I have no interest to declare in the sense of being a winner in the national lottery, unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), who seems to have had more than his fair share of winning over the past week or so. I do not know whether other hon. Members have shared the experience from which I have suffered since becoming a Member of this place. When I was not a Member, I used never to win raffle prizes, but as soon as I became a Member and found myself having to draw raffle prizes almost every weekend, I started to win with boring regularity. On that basis, I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage will shortly become a substantial winner in the national lottery.

I never thought that I would feel sorry for someone who won £17.8 million in a lottery. Like many other people, however, I have been made to feel sorry for that winner. My sorrow is not so much based on the fact that he has won the money, although some have expressed concern about that. That is especially so among those who have a vested interest in the growing activity of counselling. They seem to be leaping on the poor man and his family, and that is something that I would not wish on anyone. I am more sorry for him because of the way in which he has been treated by the press, which has behaved extraordinarily insensitively. I agree with much of what was said earlier about the press. Perhaps it was unrealistic, however, to assume that the press would not take an inordinate interest, especially bearing in mind the roll-over.

It is clear, however, that the winner has been hounded. Indeed, we have been told that he has been hounded out of the country, but probably not to Mustique, where the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) says he would go if he won the national lottery. We should not encourage such hounding. I am sure that the House would seek to express its disapproval of such activity.

I was not happy to hear Mr. David Banks on the "Today" programme earlier this week—he is a representative of the Mirror Group—justifying the prurience of the British press on the ground that national lottery money is public money. It is not. It is private individuals' money and the winning of private individuals' money. Mr. Banks talked also about accountability, as if hounding an individual winner and his family advanced the cause of accountability, which it certainly does not.

My hon. Friend the Minister has said—this must be right, but I am no mathematician—that roll-over wins of the sort that occurred last week will be extremely unusual. It is important for the House to bear that in mind when we are considering what could or should be done, or needs to be done, to meet the problem of roll-over.

There is no doubt that the individual who has benefited from the win has suffered an embarrassment on a grand scale. My only sorrow is that there are so many people who seem to see the win as the opportunity to have a whinge. Although the win will undoubtedly bring about a significant change in the individual's life style, we should not feel sad on his behalf. Surely it is something that we should celebrate. It is true that accumulation under the roll-over provisions will enable the lottery to go from strength to strength. There is nothing like seeing people win to encourage more people to play. As my hon. Friend the Minister said, that can be only good news for the good causes, for which £53 million has already been raised.

It is important to remember the age-old knowledge that money does not necessarily bring happiness. We do not have to look so very far back into folklore, or even contemporary history, to see the truth of that. Geoffrey Chaucer wrote, "Radix malorem est cupiditas"—the love of money is the root of all evil. While I do not go the whole way with Geoffrey Chaucer down that road, there

[Mr. Peter Ainsworth]

is no doubt that money does not solve anyone's problems and does not necessarily transform people's lives in the way that they would think. I have never met a genie from a lamp, but I am reliably told that anyone who has and was foolish enough, with the three choices that such people are invariably offered, to choose the bag of gold has always found that he has chosen the wrong way, and instead of becoming endlessly rich and happy he goes the other way and his life changes irredeemably for the worse. There is a lot of truth in that. It is important to see the subject in perspective.

The television programme that accompanies this great venture has come in for some stick. There is a sort of corny materialism about it, which is inescapable, but one must see it in context. The national lottery programme comes on immediately after "Bruce Forsyth's Generation Game" and "Noel's House Party"—neither of which could be considered highbrow, although I do not know what my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) thinks.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): He thinks it is highbrow.

Mr. Ainsworth: Yes, it is probably highbrow to him. Neither of those programmes is likely to go down well in Islington.

I agree with Alan Yentob, who has associated an undesirable snobbishness with criticism of the national lottery programme, which was not designed to be "Omnibus" or "World in Action". It serves a different market and, on the whole, I think that it is serving it well. Those who find it offensive have only to switch it off.

I have gained some pleasure in the past week from observing the activities of the killjoys, quite a few of whom have been airing their views in the national press. Their opening line tends to be, "I don't want to be a killjoy, but" and I have a wonderful example from *The Daily Telegraph* which this week ran a feature on the national lottery headlined:

> "Winning the lottery's jackpot: a joy or a burden . . .
>
> VIEW FROM THE EXPERTS"

The first expert to give his opinion was the Rev. Nigel McCulloch, the Bishop of Wakefield—since when have bishops been experts on lotteries? In the article he says:

> "I don't want to come over as a killjoy but"

and then states that he thinks that there are some problems with the lottery. He raises the problem—a fair one—that it will encourage people who cannot afford it to have more than a flutter. I well remember that subject, which we discussed at length in Committee. But, ultimately, in a free world, it must be left to individuals to decide how to spend their money.

The bishop mentioned another problem. He said:

> "There is also the serious issue of the raising of false hopes."

I thought that he was going to say that false hopes were raised because people who hoped to win were disappointed—but far from it. He says:

> "It was said that the lottery would be harmless entertainment but it cannot be when you present people with the possibility of winning so much."

False hopes, as the bishop sees them, seem to be associated with people who are successful, not unsuccessful, which seems to be a strange turn of events.

Mr. Dicks: It is interesting that the Church expects the very few churchgoers who are left to pay 10 per cent. of their income. The bishop should be joyful, especially at this time of year, about the national lottery—10 per cent. of £18 million would swell the coffers of the decrepit Church that he represents.

Mr. Ainsworth: I am sure that, on reflection, the bishop will come to see the benefits of the national lottery. I am sure that he would not for a moment agree with my hon. Friend's view of the Church of England.

Rev. Martin Smyth: The hon. Gentleman said that the bishop would not be an expert in lotteries, but does he agree that the bishop, as shepherd of a flock, may have an understanding of human nature—we are dealing with human responses?

Mr. Ainsworth: I do not deny for one minute that prelates of all denominations have complete freedom to comment, with some authority, on matters of human conduct.

I shall be interested to hear the views of the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who may seek to speak later, although he seems to have left the Chamber—no doubt, temporarily. He is on record as saying that he finds the national lottery morally repugnant—a strong and clear view. It is ironic and entirely in keeping with the consistency that the House and the country has come to expect from the Liberal Democrats that, in a parliamentary question on 29 November, the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) asked the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he could have more lottery terminals in his constituency. There seems to be confusion among the Liberals as to where they stand on this important subject—but that comes as no surprise to anybody.

Questions have been asked about the availability of lottery tickets. I wrote to Camelot asking whether it was possible to have a terminal in the Palace of Westminster. I have yet to receive a reply, and I note that other hon. Members have taken up the noble cause. It is not always easy for Members of Parliament to find the time to pop into the relatively limited number of outlets that currently exist. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will lend his weight to the cause and not listen to the blandishments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington.

Perfectly reasonable fears about the distributing organisations have also been expressed—the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) touched on them. I disagree with the hon. Gentleman over the revenue-capital argument, particularly in relation to the Arts Council. If he looks at what the Arts Council is saying he will see that it is particularly keen that emphasis is placed on capital spending. If the hon. Gentleman investigates I think that he will find that the Arts Council seems to have no problem with that. I accept that there may be greater difficulties for charitable bodies. In answer to a parliamentary question a little while ago the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat), stressed the need for flexibility on the revenue-capital split, particularly in relation to charities.

To return to the subject of distribution bodies and their competence, it seems that each of the bodies, which have made progress at varying rates, could learn a great deal from the Arts Council. Under the excellent chairmanship of Peter Gummer, who chairs the national lottery board, the Arts Council has come up with an exemplary package of information for people seeking to bid for lottery money. The Arts Council also addresses the problem raised by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central about smaller organisations. It goes out of its way to make it clear that applications from smaller organisations will be just as welcome as applications from larger ones. It has produced a very well-presented package, which I hope is being studied with care by the other distributing bodies.

Mr. Fisher: I absolutely agree that both the sports and the heritage boards have produced good and useful packs—the Arts Council's is outstanding. The appointment of Mr. Jeremy Newton as chief executive is welcome throughout the arts world—his reputation is enormous. I think that the hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) misunderstood my comments on revenue and capital.

The Arts Council recognises the enormous capital needs—huge areas of the country do not have regional theatres, concert halls or arts centres—but it is not blind to new problems that will arise. When new establishments are built they will want to become clients of the Arts Council, which will welcome them. But the Arts Council will need programme funding. The Government have not faced up to that. The Arts Council is aware of the problem and is right to place initial emphasis on capital, but we must also consider the long-term consequences of new buildings—the Government are ducking that problem.

Mr. Ainsworth: I agree with much of what the hon. Gentleman has said, but not his last sentence because it is simply not true. The Arts Council particularly stresses the aspect of dividing capital from revenue, which lends weight to the argument about additionality. It also enables greater clarity so that we can see more clearly where the money from the national lottery fund is being applied. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Treasury have repeatedly made it clear that the money raised by the national lottery for good causes will not be used to substitute money in existing budgets.

Another issue specifically related to the arts is that the bulk of money that goes to the arts is revenue. Although the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central is right to raise the issue, I do not believe that the problem is as great as he implies. Certainly, in the light of information that I have received, that view appears to be shared by the Arts Council.

This debate is very timely and welcome. We heard from the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central a guarded welcome for the national lottery. It has gone out of its way to look for problems and difficulties, to anticipate the problems and difficulties which may arise—in some cases I do not think that they are ever likely to arise.

We touched on roll-over and anonymity, and my hon. Friend the Minister will have more to say on those later. I am glad that the uncertainties that I had earlier today about those matters are being reviewed and that the whole matter will be kept constantly under review.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central admitted that the national lottery has proved popular. It strikes me that the real problem that Opposition Members have is its very popularity. The hon. Gentleman made it clear that he did not like the attempt, as he saw it, by the Government to claim credit for the national lottery. Quite frankly, if it had not been for the Government's determination to introduce a Bill to make the national lottery a reality—let us remember that many Labour Members voted against the Bill when it was passing through the House—we would not have the national lottery, the £53 million that is already going to good causes and the pleasure that winning the lottery as a result of a modest flutter brings to millions of people.

I suspect that although the hon. Gentleman protests that he does not want to see party politics coming into the matter, his entire position is based on opposition to anything that the Government do, and it sticks in his gullet that the national lottery has been such a great success. I think that it will continue to be a success for the arts, sport, charities, and heritage. It will be a success for Britain as a whole, for its culture and for its individuals. I warmly welcome it. I can add only that I hope that one day, if my children ever pick the right number, it may be a success for me as well.

11.42 am

Ms Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I must tell the hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) that many hon. Members supported the national lottery, but some of their criticisms about it when they did not support the Bill on Second Reading were dealt with when it went to Committee, to which many Labour Members contributed.

I have no doubt about my support for the national lottery. I speak as a long-time supporter of it, although at some stages in the debate it was not very popular—on both sides of the House. Many hon. Members who represent constituencies in which there are large numbers of football pools workers were rightly lobbied strongly by the Pools Promoters Association which had an interest. Some of its literature and rather extreme arguments and statistics were wrong and were not believed by many members of the public.

Nevertheless, as a long-time football pools participant, I want to place on record my belief that the pools companies should be able to compete on an equal footing with the national lottery. The important issues, for example, advertising on television and radio, could be cleared up quickly without any need for legislation. It really is not fair that football pools, although allowed to sponsor television programmes, have still additional restrictions on that. They may not sponsor programmes—the very programmes that would be of most benefit to them—in which the results of matches appearing on the pools coupons are announced. The national lottery has been allowed to advertise on both television and radio. The pools companies should be able to do the same. That is fair. The Minister could announce that change today. He does not need to look further into the matter.

I congratulate the Minister, as I know that his Department tried to get the Treasury to reduce the pools betting duty by 0.5 per cent. Perhaps the Minister hoped that the Chancellor would listen so that the proceeds, plus the diversion of an equivalent amount from the foundation, would go to the football trust, with the intention that that extra money could be used to allow

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grants to go to other sports, for example, safety work in rugby league, which is very necessary, rugby union and cricket as well as football. Those sports will probably not, at professional level, receive much from the national lottery. Unfortunately, the Chancellor did not agree to that and the remedy lies in the equalisation of the outtake between the pools and the lottery.

There is another aspect of the pools that should be made equitable, and which again does not need legislation but simply changes to section 56 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993. The Minister talked about the removal of the prohibition on the collection of football pools coupons and stake money through shops, but that relaxation is limited to pools competitions relating to football games played on Saturday, Sunday or public holidays. It means that football pools companies will not be able to run competitions based on mid-week matches and will be restricted to running one competition a week. In addition, it stops pools companies from selling tickets in shops for a competition based on the results of other sports, for example, cricket or rugby. There is no justification for that somewhat arbitrary restriction. It simply increases the pools' operational costs and compounds their competitive disadvantages.

Although I started by making it clear that I thought that some of the pools companies' lobbying about the national lottery was over the top, there are some points that the Minister could make quite easily which would ensure that the pools and the lottery were treated equally and fairly. They are rather modest proposals. I think that they would be in line with what Parliament would want to see—fair competition.

I shall now deal with the way in which the national lottery was set up. This is not whingeing, but it is important that Parliament understands that sometimes mistakes are made, and I believe that mistakes were made when the national lottery was set up.

Let us look at the issue of no direct competition. Camelot, the consortium that won the lottery bid, has the most experienced lottery operators in the world. The Minister mentioned earlier that he thought that they were, perhaps, a little naive. We must understand that the people running Camelot know everything that there is to know about running national lotteries. Anything that they do is not done because of some slip-up or mistake, but with properly calculated reason. The conditions under which they were engaged were far from competitive. It is no fault of theirs. I do not blame Camelot, as it is a business consortium and is obviously in it for whatever it can get out of it, and the lottery watchdog, Oflot, does have a responsibility.

Instead of each section competing directly, for example, one computer company against another, printers competing with printers, and the same applying to advertisers, banks, and PR companies, the bidders were asked to form a consortium. There was no direct comparison, like with like. No one knows the real cost of each section. There is no direct competition as there is in the marketplace. Monopolies are supposed to be against Tory ethics and I cannot understand why they allowed that to happen. Surely, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) said, all contract details should have been made public.

There was too much secrecy in the whole business. The way in which the Minister said that the 35,000 computer terminals would be serviced is a case in point. *The Sunday Times* reported that ICL, which owns 10 per cent. of the Camelot bid, will receive £100 million for servicing the terminals during the seven years, yet the three other companies that bid for the same job quoted only £35 million. Despite the size of other sums that have been mentioned today, £65 million is a huge difference and it could have done an enormous amount if it had been given to good causes. For example, it would have built many good-quality multi-sports centres, swimming pools and so forth. We must question how that was able to happen.

I raised with the Minister in an intervention the subject of start-up costs and when they would be repaid. That is important because the invitation to apply for the lottery was given without a stipulation that start-up costs should be repaid within the first year. To be an outstanding success, no other lottery needs profit on its equity capital. Why should we have allowed a structure in which five companies plan to make at least a 163 per cent. return on investment annually, which will bring at least £100 million a year to a few companies—that will increase to £200 million in profits in the peak years—when all the money could have gone in prizes and good causes?

On 3 November Peter Davis, the director of the Office of the National Lottery, wrote to me saying:

> "The operator could then, free from debt, commit a greater contribution to the National Lottery Distribution Fund."

In reply to my intervention, the Minister said that he thought that the start-up costs would be paid back soon. I would like much more precise details when he replies.

Mr. Sproat: It might be helpful if I gave the hon. Lady some information now. When she mentioned profits earlier, I misunderstood and thought that she was talking about the benefit that Camelot might get from putting the turnover in an overnight deposit account and getting a percentage. I accept that she did not mean that. Camelot does not expect to get any return on its investment until the fourth year of its seven-year franchise, which is a long time into any franchise.

Ms Hoey: I am surprised at those figures as Camelot invested £49.5 million and borrowed £75 million. On the basis of the first four weeks, it is estimated that by the end of this year it will receive £134 million. Together with what the Government are taking, that is a very large chunk. The reason for repaying Camelot's costs is clear—only when they are repaid can interest and dividend payments be avoided and the funds to the overall pool maximised.

Camelot must be pushed on that matter. The contract should never have been given without a date being set for paying back the start-up costs. As people realise what huge amounts of money the operators are making and the Government taking, they will certainly be suspicious, even if they are unable to prove the case, and if normal Government funding for sport and the arts is reduced, they will feel dissatisfied.

That did not need to happen. There was a formula. With a charitable foundation the costs would have had to come out of the fund—everything that needs to be done must be paid for—but the people would know that those running it were not doing so merely to make a profit, but in the interests of good causes and of giving them the maximum amount of money. That works elsewhere and we should have been able to do it that way, instead of simply giving the lottery to the company with the best bid when the costs were not disclosed. Seemingly, the Minister is not going to change any of those decisions.

There are a number of queries about how the lottery will work in practice and how money will go where it is supposed to go. I have always worried about the fact that the Arts Council and the Sports Council will distribute the money. There are dangers, especially for smaller groups. Some arts or sports projects may have had difficulty with the councils—perhaps for no reason and due to no blame on either side. The same organisations should not distribute the new money from the lottery, which will generate such public interest. I wanted a single national lottery distribution board with charitable status, as I said. No matter how much the Arts Council and the Sports Council try, they will have to be carefully monitored to see how the system works.

I am also concerned about the bureaucracy that is inherent in the way that the Arts Council and the Sports Council—probably for good reason—work. That bureaucracy will mean that some smaller groups will not be able to find their way through the system and the huge amount of form filling. Compare that with the much simpler way in which the Foundation for Sport and the Arts works. I hope that the Arts Council and the Sports Council will learn from that.

I do not want to comment on how good or bad television coverage of the lottery is—suffice it to say that if I am in on a Saturday night, I will turn over to watch the national lottery programme. I do not know what that says about my cultural aspirations. If the coverage is to continue, it will be useful if it shows the public how the money has been distributed, once that starts, and a little more about the ethos of the lottery, so that people view it not merely as a great opportunity—we all hoped that we were going to win the £17 million—but as a way of building support for the principles behind it, which are doing good and improving the quality of life.

The lottery is about investing in people and that is why the Government have been too concerned with the returns. A single national lottery distribution board with charitable status would have cleared away Government involvement in the politics of the lottery. Party politics should not be involved. Obviously we can all have an influence, but the lottery should not be seen as providing extra money for the Government to distribute. There is already concern that less Government money will go to the Sports Council because it is felt that more money will come from the great pot that is the lottery.

Mistakes have been made and there is no reason for anyone to be defensive about that. Obviously, when one sets up something new, mistakes will be made. I hope that the Minister will listen and talk to people who do not have a vested interest, but are interested because they genuinely want the best to be done for this country.

I congratulate Denis Vaughan, of the lottery promotion company, who has done most of the work to keep the flame of the national lottery alive and has continued to question some of the ways in which it has operated. If the Government had listened to some of the things that the national lottery promotion company said earlier, we might have avoided some of the mistakes that we are now encountering.

I am delighted that the national lottery has got off the ground. However, we need to keep a careful watch on it. I ask the Minister to stop being hung up on the idea of it having to be run by a private company, which will make more and more profit. We want to maximise the amount of money going to good causes and that can never happen when it is being run simply for the profit motive.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next hon. Member, may I point out that there is considerable interest in the subject and if we pursue the debate in the leisurely style in which we have pursued it so far, there will be some disappointed hon. Members.

11.59 am

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for deciding to call me now. I agree that the debate has been somewhat leisurely. Indeed, the speeches made by the two Front-Bench spokesmen, with which the debate began, took practically two hours. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary was interrupted many times. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) was not interrupted quite so much. Anyhow, I shall not speak for an hour, even if you, Madam Deputy Speaker, allow me, which you will not.

It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey), whose enthusiasm for sport is well known to the House. She said that the lottery was "about good things". I remind the House that when we enacted the National Lottery etc. Bill a year or two ago, the then Secretary of State for National Heritage, my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) predicted that the amount to be found for each of the five good causes would be about £80 million, totalling between the five causes £400 million per year. We heard today from the Under-Secretary that the amount for good causes that has come in each week was already £12 million, rising to £16 million due to the exceptional lottery last week with its enormous jackpot. That suggests that the amount coming in for the five good causes taken as a whole will be at least £600 million for the year and that each good cause will receive upwards of £120 million, which is half as much again as my right hon. Friend predicted.

Those figures appear to show, in the early stages at least, the tremendous strength of the national lottery. It suggests that it can and will do a lot of good. All of us in the House should see it as a brilliant national achievement. It gives a great deal of excitement and pleasure to a large number of people week after week. It produces—or should produce—a great deal of happiness in those who win prizes and those around them. It produces a substantial amount of tax yield, which, as my intervention implied earlier, is not confined only to the official figure of 12 per cent. It can be augmented indirectly by other sources of revenue to the Government, springing from corporation tax on Camelot and from tax on those who sell the lottery tickets or those whose work is related to the lottery who also pay income tax. In addition, of course, there is all the money that goes to good causes.

I am quite sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary was right to suggest that we should not rush into adjustments and corrections to the system all at once. With such a massive new enterprise, it is inevitable that we encounter some unforeseen consequences and problems that may be large or small. We need more time to see how it works out. For example, my hon. Friend has been advised that the very large jackpot last week of £17

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million was to some extent a freak chance and that the mathematical odds against that happening in any one week, pair of weeks or three weeks running are very high. We should have the experience of six, nine or 12 months before changing the system.

The size of that jackpot attracted more money, which will augment the money for the good causes. For example, at about 5 o'clock on Saturday, I went to my local garage and bought five more tickets than I had planned to buy—I had bought one ticket earlier in the week—because I was attracted by the idea of winning £17 million. I know that the odds were against my winning, but I spent that extra fiver, the Government will get 70p in tax and the good causes will get about £1.30. I took my chance; I had £5 in my pocket. The whole episode was not especially disastrous. I had 10 minutes to spare on that Saturday afternoon. We need an assessment of how much more the good causes receive as a result of the occasional freak jackpot because of the rolling on from one week to the next.

Other problems have become apparent, and one that occurs to me is that we ought to question the quality of counselling provided by Camelot to winners. One may say that that is purely a matter for the commercial judgment of Camelot and for it to see to, but it seems that the image, hence the success of the national lottery to some extent, relates to the position and problems of prize winners. Whether the top prize is £17 million, £5 million or £1 million, the winners ought to have access to first-class advice. Whoever wins such a large sum should be able to do a great deal of good, not only for his own satisfaction and pleasure from what he spends, but in what he can do for his family, friends and charitable causes. It seems very sad that someone who wins a very large sum says within a couple of days that he wished that it had not happened. It suggests the possibility that there is an inadequacy in the quality of counselling provided by Camelot.

The House and the Government should take an interest in that matter because it interacts with the success of the lottery. I would like my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to request the Director General of Oflot to ask Camelot about suggesting improvements in the counselling given. So far, all we have been told is that Camelot provides counselling, but we have been told no more. The word "counselling" makes me slightly uneasy because—

Mr. Dicks: If my hon. Friend is looking for a definition of counselling, it is another band-wagon on which some do-gooders come forward to make a fortune out of saying nothing.

Mr. Jessel: I do not mind if people are well paid for counselling, provided the advice that they are giving is good advice. The word "counselling" to me, connotes someone sympathetic and friendly who sits next to someone who is unburdening his problems and says, "There, there." The counsellor may have some knowledge, experience and qualifications, but possibly may not be a particularly distinguished and expert adviser.

Mr. Deva: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Jessel: May I finish my point? A person who has suddenly won £1 million, £5 million or £17 million ought instantly to be advised to go not to a run-of-the-mill solicitor, but to a top, distinguished solicitor from a top firm of solicitors who is highly experienced, who has a great deal of flair and expertise in advising on matters such as setting up family trusts, whether discretionary or otherwise, and setting up charitable trusts and the like, and who can advise big prize winners what to do to benefit their children and grandchildren, while ensuring that they are not too vulnerable to fortune hunters. The sort of advice that might be given at present by Camelot's advisers to people who come into large sums is inadequate. Perhaps the Minister will ask the Director General of Oflot to look into that to see how it can be improved.

There has clearly been something wrong over privacy and anonymity. There is an obvious temptation to Camelot, which wishes to boost the success of the lottery, to hope that large prize winners will allow their names to become public. Reports of successful winners provide more vivid publicity if those winners are not anonymous. The publicity and the adventures of the winners will promote the lottery. It would not be altogether surprising for Camelot to try gently to encourage winners to become public while at the same time reminding them of their legal right to remain anonymous.

Equally, it is not surprising when the press tries to find out who prize winners are because it makes a good story. The whole matter needs to be tightened or anonymity will not be real. The Minister is right to ask the Director General of Oflot to inquire whether the terms are being strictly adhered to.

I do not think that the Press Complaints Commission is a satisfactory body. It does not have enough teeth. I am a member of the Select Committee on National Heritage, which produced its report on privacy and the media 21 months ago. It appeared a month or two after Calcutt, to which the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central referred. He said that it was three or four years ago, but I remember almost precisely that it was two years ago.

Harassment and the whole issue of privacy, whether in relation to the lottery or to other matters, should be the subject of legislation. Ordinary people, whether they are lottery prize winners or witnesses who appeared before the Select Committee, who were the widows of soldiers who had been murdered in Northern Ireland and had been harassed without mercy by some sections of the media, ought to be better protected. There should be an offence of harassment. It is appalling when, for example, photographers climb trees on a neighbouring plot to take long-distance shots, which are then magnified to show the faces of relatives at funerals.

There should be an ombudsman to deal with privacy and he should have power to fine and apply to the court for an order to sequester the assets of those who engage in unjustified intrusion into privacy. The legislation should apply to lottery winners who are unjustly and unfairly harassed by the media when they wish to avail themselves of the right to anonymity. That right is included in the Act and in the terms of Camelot's contract.

I shall now refer to the five good causes. The hon. Member for Vauxhall spoke about sport. When the Select Committee on National Heritage, to which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary gave evidence, was considering the sponsorship of sport, it became apparent that some sports do not make good television because they do not give rise to good pictures on the screen. One such sport is squash, which it is difficult to portray on television because of the sudden changes of angle made by the ball and because of the indoor set-up and lighting.

As squash makes poor television, it cannot attract sponsors, and it should have particular help from the Sports Council and the lottery. If that does not happen, some very good sports, merely because they do not make good television and cannot attract commercial sponsorship, will begin to wane. The lottery can help to put that right.

I shall now refer to the millennium fund. There are to be 12 big imaginative schemes in different parts of the country. For example, there could be a big arts centre in a provincial city or an important project in Kensington linking the Albert hall, the Albert memorial and the great museums there. I can dimly remember as a child the festival of Britain, which the Attlee Government started in about 1948 on the south bank. That is analogous because that Government undoubtedly took an interest in it.

The Millennium Commission has such important and lasting work of national importance to do that it is entirely proper that whoever is Secretary of State should be actively involved. That is completely different from the other four good causes because the question of which arts, sports group or charity one supports should be argued and not be the subject of interference by Ministers. There is a choice to be made between different opera companies, sports bodies or charities—they are quite different from the millennium fund. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central on that.

The appointment of Miss Jenny Page as the director of the millennium fund should be warmly welcomed by the House. I was greatly impressed by her tremendous work as the director of English Heritage and her appointment augurs well for the millennium fund.

Finally, I should like briefly to mention three projects in my constituency: the Hampton swimming pool, the Teddington theatre club, which is setting up a theatre at Hampton Hill, and the new arts and music centre project in Twickenham. I shall not take up the time of the House by enlarging on those, but I should like the Under-Secretary to note my interest, and I give notice that I shall raise those matters elsewhere in more detail at a later stage.

12.17 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The debate is somewhat premature because lottery tickets went on sale only a month ago. As the Minister said, it would be unwise to make judgments on the evidence of so little experience. I am somewhat surprised that the Government chose this subject for debate because it clearly means that those of us who have anything to contribute will be told, "We had better wait to see the outcome."

We know that in the month during which the lottery has been in operation it has given the nation one multi-millionaire whose takings far surpass those of the richest magnate in the land for this year, a handful of millionaires, several column miles in the newspapers and the immortal catch phrase, "Activate the balls." Not long ago I noticed a jingle by Henry Fielding about lotteries. I think that it was written in about 1732. I do not know the tune.

Mr. Dicks: Sing it.

Mr. Maclennan: It would out of order to sing it, much as I should like to. The lyrics went:

> "A lottery is a taxation
> Upon all the fools in Creation
> And Heaven be praised
> It is easily raised
> Credulity is always in fashion".

I much enjoyed some parts of the speech of the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). That includes his venture into his local garage last week, when he showed perhaps a degree of credulity, but he is one of those people who would not be harmed by the modest expenditure that he made on that occasion.

In the first month, we have learned a number of things that are positive and interesting. We have a better idea of the amount of money that might be raised. By the middle of this week, I understand that the national lottery distribution fund had received £53.4 million from Camelot, which is to be distributed among the arts and heritage, sport, charities and the millennium fund. At that rate, as I think the hon. Member for Twickenham worked out, too, more than £600 million will be raised in the first year, if not more, depending on the popularity of the instant gain scheme to be introduced in 1995.

We know something about the operation of the broad criteria for applying for money from the lottery. The basic principles were set out in February this year by the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke). Capital projects are to be favoured over revenue support, and partnership money is to be secured from another source. Projects must be tangible to the community and viable in the long term. Apparently, some rethinking is going on about revenue funding, which is appropriate. I was interested and glad to hear the Secretary of State for National Heritage say earlier this week that it is recognised that capital expenditure has revenue implications and that there are occasions when it might be sensible to consider that source of funding for revenue reasons.

The Arts Council "Detailed Guidance for Applicants" states:

> "You cannot, at this stage, apply for 'revenue funding' or 'endowment funding'. We will only consider requests for grants for these purposes if we have already confirmed that we will provide a grant for capital expenditure. You should make sure that your project does not depend on either of these forms of funding".

With the exception of the National Lottery Charities Board, detailed guidelines to all other sorts of applicants have been issued. All that is welcome.

Even after four weeks, a number of problems are clearly apparent. One problem that has played a large part in the debate involves protecting the anonymity of winners. The regulator has a statutory duty to protect the interests of the players. The player code of practice established under the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 provides that the regulator must provide winners with an option of anonymity. It is clear that that system is not foolproof. Great difficulties are involved in making it foolproof.

I was interested in the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Twickenham that counselling on the receipt of substantial sums of money would be appropriate. I am

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sure that that is right. Any change in fortune that is so unexpected is dislocating, whether it is a change for the better or for the worse.

Mr. Jessel: I understand that counselling is already provided by Camelot, but we have not been told what quality of counselling it is. I wanted top-class counselling for those people.

Mr. Maclennan: I share the hon. Gentleman's view that that is desirable, although at one point he suggested that the trickle-down effect of lottery winnings might be spread over the great City firms of solicitors. It is difficult to suggest, other than in the broadest terms, that expert advice should be sought in dealing with such substantial sums of money.

There are risks. We know of them from the experience of other countries. Winners may be vulnerable to exploiters, fraudsters and even violent crime. It is not hard to understand, therefore, that people want to secure anonymity. If it is possible, that should be recognised as a legitimate objective.

I question the possibility of anonymity because, obviously, there is a great deal of interest in sudden changes of fortune. It is the stuff of drama. I do not hold the press or media guilty in seeking to feed that sense of excitement which flows from sudden changes in fortune. We look forward to the report that will be produced by the director following the review that I understand has been put in train.

The other major problem that appears to have developed involves the National Lottery Charities Board, the only disbursal body that has not so far issued guidelines for applicants, despite the fact that, by common consent, charities are at most risk of losing income to the lottery. It appears that the board will not be in a position to distribute its estimated £100 million until next autumn, almost a year after the lottery began. It has no permanent office; it has no chief executive; and its telephone number is not available from directory inquiries. Some public accusations have been made that that is the fault not of the Department of National Heritage but, perhaps unsurprisingly, the Home Office, which has been rather slow to back up the initiative of the other Department, particularly in relation to the appointment of the board's chairman Mr. David Sieff, who did not take up office until May this year.

It must be recognised that charities are far from enthusiastic about this development. Of all the interests involved, they are the least enthusiastic. The money arrives next autumn and the charities seem ungracious in their response. It is worth remembering that the charities receive among them about 5p in every pound spent on the lottery, while otherwise they receive 100 per cent. of their money directly.

It is balm to the consciences of people who buy lottery tickets that there is some side benefit for charities and good causes but that, of course, is not the reason why people buy lottery tickets. They do so for the reasons that the hon. Member for Twickenham described in his speech—the outside, remote possibility that one's fortune will be substantially enlarged.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. Does he accept that those who have had experience of the national lottery in the Republic of Ireland and of working in the charity sector have gone on record as saying that there has been a substantial adverse impact on charitable giving there?

Mr. Maclennan: I accept that. I made that point in my speech on the Second Reading of the National Lottery etc. Bill. I thought that we should recognise that charities in the Republic of Ireland had asked the Government there for a drastic change. We are advised, rightly, in this debate that it is too soon to seek substantial modification of the principle behind the lottery. It is also too soon to judge the scale of the losses that charities will suffer if their income is diverted to the lottery. I hope that the Minister will keep a close eye on the situation. Charities play an important role for which there is no other provision and they have an increasingly important role in providing services that have previously been provided more directly by the state.

The true measure of the lottery is not the number of millionaires that it creates. If it has value, it is the amount that is distributed to good causes and where that money goes. We must consider the effect of lottery spending on charitable giving and the pools, and the extent to which the Government substitute lottery cash for core funding of the arts from the public purse.

I do not think that the four weeks' experience we have had can provide us with any real indicator. I have noted what has been done in respect of the Art Council's allocations for this year. It is, of course, quite inconceivable that the Government would blatantly cut funding for the Arts Council in the first year of the lottery and thus prove all the gloomy predictions correct. That would be a political folly that not even this Government would embrace. We must watch the trends in expenditure on the arts, especially expenditure by the Department of National Heritage.

Mr. Deva: I am surprised by what the hon. Gentleman said. Was he not in the Chamber when the Minister explained that there was no cut in Arts Council funding because the money had been transferred?

Mr. Maclennan: I did not say that there had been a cut. I said that I had noticed that there had been a modest increase this year. I do not quite understand the hon. Gentleman's point.

There has been a great inflation of expectations about the benefits that the lottery moneys will bring. Among those who seem to have been the most gullible are those who are most aware of the need for expenditure. By September, it was already clear that the lottery moneys had been heavily over-subscribed before the first ticket had been sold. A number of projects, from the proposed Olympic stadium in Manchester to the Hartlepool indoor bowls club, had already laid claim to £752 million.

The predecessor of the present Secretary of State put in for money for the millennium festival, his pet project, to emulate the great exhibitions of 1851 and 1951. I rather favour that idea; we all have our pet projects. I have already made the point—I am glad that the Minister responded so positively—that a national festival should be celebrated at the millennium throughout our country. The festival of Britain was largely celebrated on the south bank in London.

We still need greater guidance about the prioritisation of funds because that is a key element in the success of the lottery. Is the priority to be opera houses or bowling greens, cinemas for rural areas or great stadiums in our metropolitan centres? The same arguments will rage over the choice of projects as already preoccupy those in the Arts Council, in English Heritage and in Scottish Heritage who are charged with making similar choices. An excess of elitism would be as damaging as an excess of populism in the allocation of funds.

The most important principle is that lottery projects do not produce a drain on otherwise limited resources, especially Arts Council and Sports Council resources. Nor should the lottery penalise those in the charity, arts and sports world who receive money from competing sources, such as the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, or directly in donations from the public. I believe that the Foundation for Sport and the Arts has been one of the most beneficial organisations set up in this country in recent years. There are already threats to its operation. I shall not repeat what others have said in the debate about the impact of the lottery on the football pools. That point was made by the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) and by other contributors to the debate. There is a serious risk of a big diversion of funds from the pools to the lottery. Although the odds on winning the lottery are longer than those on the pools, the money that the lottery provides far outstrips that of the pools.

The pools companies provide the resources for the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, which has a proven track record of backing small community-based projects. For every £1.05 spent on the pools, 5p goes to the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and in three years it has handed out £215 million. That is about one sixth of the amount that the lottery will target to projects in a similar period.

Those projects may not be supported by the lottery, which will have larger sums to spend, perhaps on more prestigious projects. If the pools are squeezed by the lottery, the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and those who benefit by it will also suffer. I am glad that the Government have given it another five years' lease of life, but it has been represented to me by the foundation, and must commend itself to the House, that the pools are disadvantaged in comparison with the lottery. They are debarred from advertising on national television and radio, they are not enjoying the promotion by the BBC, the betting duty that they pay is set at 37.5 per cent. whereas lottery income is taxed at 12 per cent., and the terms governing the roll-over of pools jackpots, although there have been some adjustments, are certainly not as advantageous as those of the lottery.

All those factors have to be examined specifically and carefully by the Minister, as I would regard it as a great tragedy if the Foundation for Sport and the Arts were to disappear. Its influence has been tangible—very significant indeed in a number of small communities—and it has been operating on a tight bureaucratic budget. One of its most attractive features has been how little has been spent on overheads.

The lottery will be judged by its impact upon the nation through the munificence of its large sums of money. Britain lacks a number of modern flagship institutions that other countries have. For example, our national stadium at Wembley is only slightly larger than some European metropolitan stadiums. We lack a theatre or dance house dedicated to dance, and for a long time I have felt that it was quite unsuitable to ask the Royal Ballet and the Royal Opera to share the same house. There is a growing interest in both opera and ballet and I would like a permanent venue established for dance in our capital city.

A potential beneficiary or a way of removing what is becoming an increasingly embarrassing problem from the Department of National Heritage would be to devote resources to the national library. I rather object to the way in which expenditure on the national library tends to be rolled up with expenditure on the arts. Quite frankly, it has been a disgraceful episode in our administrative history. It is not something that should be allowed to drag on for much longer. The lottery money could be directed to the national library, perhaps through the national heritage memorial fund, or the Millennium Commission.

In a press release on 22 June 1994, the Millennium Commission said that it was

"considering allocating funds in four areas",

one of which would be

"a small number of major projects of national or regional importance."

It also said that it was considering contributing

"around 50 per cent. of our estimated income"

to those projects and that

"these schemes are likely to cost tens of millions of pounds."

The House will remember that the project was first brought forward by Lady Williams of Crosby, the then Secretary of State for Education, as long ago as 1978, to cost £164 million. The library was originally intended to seat 3,440 readers and have sufficient storage space to last until the next century. Currently, there is no date for its opening. The cost is now estimated at £450 million, it is to seat 1,176 readers—only 76 more than it can seat at its present site—and it is estimated that the storage space will be full by the time it opens in a few years. That is the sort of project for which lottery money could be used. I draw particular attention to the desirability of enabling the library to hold on to adjacent empty land rather than it being disposed of, as has been proposed. For a cost of less than £2 million, it would provide much needed space for storage, reading and parking.

I hope that this experiment with a national lottery is not wholly bad. The Minister knows my reservations about it. I am sure that there will be benefits, but it is difficult to judge what the social consequences will be. However, within a year or two we shall be able to judge some of the economic consequences and the impact on the targets of the so-called good causes. Then, we shall want to rethink the matter.

This country has experimented with lotteries before. We built the British museum with lottery funds. We have also disposed of lotteries for good and sufficient reasons. I dare say that we shall turn full circle once again.

12.41 pm

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): Before you took the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was some talk about counselling. I think that most hon. Members have

[Mr. Terry Dicks]

been counselled to stay away—and quite sensibly in view of the elitist nonsense that we have heard. Indeed, I could do with some counselling—perhaps a double Scotch—after having had to sit here listening to it for three hours. Anyone who is daft enough to stay for my speech should have the same sort of counselling afterwards.

I must make it clear that I am not opposed to the lottery. I am opposed to the idea of so-called good causes—the arts, heritage, sport, charities and the millennium. The only one with a dollop of good sense and a dollop of good cause is charities. Who created good causes? From where did they come? I do not know, but I bet that it was the luvvies, the establishment and all the people who meet together wearing bow ties and frocks. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Eton—I am sorry, I mean the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), who went to Eton—is no longer here to nod his head because I am sure that he has made a contribution to a good cause.

Let us examine each of the so-called good causes. The House knows my views on the arts. The Arts Council's grant was raised by twice the rate of inflation—the forecast of £146 million became £191 million. It is what I call and what most people see—especially those whom I represent—as the luvvies' feeding trough. To give money to it now would be nothing more than a charitable confidence trick, a bit like people believing that Picasso could paint when he just scribbled all over the art paper.

What about the royal opera house? Why not have a royal bingo house? We could open a bingo place for my old-age pensioners in Hayes and Harlington. We could get royalty—as long as it is not the Duchess of York—to open it. A royal bingo house would be every bit as important as the royal opera house—an organisation so inept and incompetent that it spends money that it has not got on artists that it cannot afford. People call that the right thing to do. Why is it done? It is because it is what the luvvies want.

Mr. Maclennan *rose—*

Mr. Dicks: No, I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman had a long talk and, with great respect, I needed counselling to listen to him.

Now, the royal opera house wants money for its building projects. It cannot make any savings from revenue, despite a subsidy of almost £40 a seat. It is going out with begging bowl in hand to raise money.

The Arts Council—a so-called good cause to which some of the lottery money will go—is actually giving out money so that an artist can have a dead sheep stuck in a fish tank on display at the Serpentine gallery. I do not give a damn what two luvvies do with a dead sheep as long as the sheep is dead and the door is shut.

What I said in an article in May is most appropriate. I said:

> "I detest the way this network of luvvies cling together, feeding on flattery and false values, fawning on Arts Councils in pursuit of grants, and worming their way into the theatres and galleries with a wholly bogus elitism. Because they like opera, ballet, orchestral music and obscure dramatic works, they club together within the state, persuading successive governments to give more money to the arts—and then using it to subsidise their own leisure at the expense of the rest of us."

I could not have said it better than I did earlier this year. That is exactly what I think about the arts and everything connected with them.

I find it almost obnoxious to listen to my hon. Friend the Minister—he is a real friend, despite his views on cricket—justify the fact that the Government have given more to the arts and the throw-away of a mere £5 million more to the Arts Council. It is a shame. It is degrading and disgusting.

What bunkum we hear about heritage. Everything that is old and ancient must be used to grab money from the national lottery to keep it in being. One of the richest organisations in Britain is the Church Commissioners. That body has bags of money. It is one of the worst landlords for a long time, but never mind that. All that we see is appeals everywhere to keep churches up. If we go there on a Sunday we are lucky to get three people at 7 o'clock mass, perhaps 24 at 11 o'clock and perhaps one and a dog at 6.30 pm. Yet we have this drive to keep going a church with a broken spire and bits falling off.

Then we hear the Bishop of Wakefield say that a few bob on the horses or the lottery is wrong. If he wants £1 million or £18 million, the 10 per cent. that the Church pressurises its parishioners to give to the Church would be a tremendous improvement. Then he could do something useful instead of pontificating to empty churches and the rest of us about how people should spend their hard-earned money. I find that appalling.

Who benefits from stately homes? The chap whose family have lived there all their lives. Then the chap says that it is a stately home and it must not fall apart. So we give him money. Now we are to give him more for the upkeep of his house, which he charges people to look round while he lives in the luxury bit down the end. What nonsense. What absolute bunkum. What happens to my constituents? They have to apply for grants to insulate their homes to keep warm. I find it amazing that we give money to all this heritage nonsense. If a thing is not worth keeping or being paid for by the people who live there and benefit from it, why should my constituents have to make a contribution?

I am a sportsman. Someone has said that I am a daft one because I support Bristol Rovers and have done for 50 years. That is another leisure pursuit. Why should anyone subsidise or contribute to someone else's leisure pursuit? My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) made a lovely case for squash. I did not hear him make a case for ferrets up a trouser leg. That is a sport in some parts of this country, yet that issue is not raised. That is the problem. We all want some subsidy for our own sport. It ain't going to happen.

There are Opposition Members present who support Hartlepool United. The team kick a ball around, I think. They have to ensure that people who come to watch them pay the full economic cost of keeping the club open. There is no subsidy. So why should there be subsidy for other sports? The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) mentioned chess. That is another elitist game although it is perhaps not now so elitist as it used to be. Why should we subsidise it? Why should anything from the lottery go to any sport? The issue is mad, but no one wants to go along with me. I tend to be a lone voice ploughing a lonely field.

Let us consider the millennium fund. Could someone please tell me the difference between 31 December 1999 and 1 January 2000? It is probably 24 hours, half a minute or half a second. What is so important about that calendar change that we have to set money aside for all sorts of funny things? The briefing that has just arrived from not far away says that the projects

"will enhance the quality of the nation's life."

My God! The year 2000 will be marvellous—enhancing the quality of the nation's life just because the clock ticks past 11.59 pm. I have never heard so much nonsense as the idea of a millennium fund. For a change, words fail me. Members of Labour's Front-Bench team and the Liberals, when they are here, talk about whether the Secretary of State did not like the fund's director general, and whether his views did not fit in with those of the committee's other members. Now they are getting together to decide on another director, whether the national heritage man likes him, and whether the wife is sleeping with him— it is absolutely crazy.

More time should be spent running a simple lottery, in which all the winnings go to the people who buy tickets. Nobody has thought about that. If the truth were known, members of my own Front-Bench team, let alone those of the Opposition Front-Bench team, could not agree on one good cause. They talk about five good causes—it is madness. The only good cause is charities. We all, I am sure, involve ourselves in charities but we could never agree on them.

My concern is that the money does not go to a luvvies charity for the AIDS people, such as the Terrence Higgins Trust. Except for haemophiliacs, AIDS is a self-inflicted luvvies illness. It has decimated the arts world in the United States and has made a good contribution to decimating the arts world in this country. It is not a genuine charity. My Government, to their great discredit, have given about £10 billion to advertise and to tell silly stories to youngsters about the dangers of AIDS. The money given to help research into child leukaemia or into spinal injuries is tuppence ha'penny by comparison. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take that on board. If I find out that organisations such as the Terrence Higgins Trust connected with AIDS get a penny of this, I will kick up hell in here.

One of the two charities important to me is Children with Leukaemia, based at Great Ormond Street. It used to be called the O'Gorman foundation. A father who lost two children from leukaemia decided not to feel sorry for himself but to raise money for more research. He is working his socks off, along with many other people. That important charity should get a fair crack of the whip. So should the Spinal Injuries Association. I take this opportunity to say a few kind words about Coral, which supports that work, and Malcolm Palmer, a close friend of mine, who spearheads that work. Virtually no money comes from the public sector, and certainly not from the Government, for those genuine charities. They do an excellent job of research and support.

Mr. Jessel: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Dicks: No, I am running out of time. I ask my hon. Friend to sit down.

The £10 billion spent on AIDS in six years could have been used to help disabled people. What a difference that money could have made, instead of being spent on four nonsensical, so-called good causes.

I see that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central is creeping into the Chamber. I am sure that he has been out for some counselling before he winds up.

The lottery is good. Most ordinary, working-class people enjoy it. I have been lucky, winning three lots of £10. They are happy and I am happy. I cannot understand the concept of good causes. If my constituents managed to listen to this debate without counselling they would say, "What an elitist crowd, with all their pretensions and the sanctimonious nonsense that they talk."

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) made valid points about the lottery's organisation, but that was the only valid contribution I have heard so far.

I know this is not a day on which we can change legislation, but let us think about letting all the money, except that needed to fund the running of the lottery, go to winners. Let the people who win decide how to spend the money. Some will spend it on charitable works; some, if they are daft enough, will spend it on the arts. Some people will spend it on sport. No one with any sense would worry about the millennium. After all, many of those who win will not be around by then.

Please let us stop the pretentious nonsense about good causes. Let people enjoy the lottery. Let them keep more of the money than they are allowed to now. Let us stop bickering about technicalities. For God's sake, not a penny should go to the arty-farty crowd who walk around with their hands in someone else's back pocket.

12.54 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): It is always interesting to be called after a speech from the hon. Member from hell—the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks). He emerges from his constituency like a one-man horde of vandals to lay waste to the arts and the heritage. As ever, of course, he made some good points. I am with him in his remarks about the arts establishment and the way that "these people"—I still do not know who they are—have suddenly emerged from the drawers where lists are kept of the great and the good to decide what good causes will receive money from the proceeds of the national lottery, from moneys paid in by the hon. Gentleman's constituents in Hayes and Harlington and by mine in Newham, North-West. The hon. Gentleman made some good points about the arts establishment. I am critical of it myself.

The hon. Gentleman tends to lose some of his good points in the general brutality of his argument. He is eccentric, however, and unique; we must be grateful for that if for nothing else.

I supported the concept of the lottery and I participate in it each week. I would love to win the jackpot. We have heard about the enormous odds that one faces in trying to win it, but they cannot be as enormous as the odds that were facing the Conservative party last night at the by-election at Dudley. I welcome the piece of good news that came from Dudley. I suppose that if I were given a choice between winning the jackpot and the by-election, I would choose the by-election.

There have been references to anonymity. The lottery is national and there is a great deal of interest in it. If someone enters the lottery, he must be prepared to have his name and identity revealed. If everyone understood that on going in for the lottery, we would take much of the terror from winning the biggie. When the biggie is won, it is not surprising that everyone wants to know who has won it.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

We have talked about roll-over. I think that we should continue rolling over. Why should roll-over be limited? Why should someone decide that it should be restricted to three weeks? Why should the establishment say that someone might not be able to handle an enormous prize of £100 million, for example? Why not let roll-over continue until the money is won? We know that more people tend to be attracted into the lottery each week as the prize becomes greater and greater. If roll-over were allowed to continue, there would be more money to disburse to good causes. We should let that happen.

There are a few worries and problems about the national lottery so far. Some of them are fairly significant while some are quite small. Large amounts of money are being produced. I listened carefully to the Minister, who made a good speech. There were plenty of interventions because hon. Members on both sides of the House want to ask many questions about the lottery. I did not hear—perhaps I missed it—how much money is now available. More to the point, when will it be distributed? Many organisations would like to know the answer to that question. I assume that the interest that is being earned on it will remain within the kitty to add to the amount of money that will be distributed.

We understand that the arts—I shall take that sector as an example—might benefit by about £100 million a year. I have heard assurances from Ministers that there will be no substitution, and I accept their word. But, frankly, I do not think that it will happen—there will be substitution. The Treasury will consider the amount of money coming in from the lottery and the predictions. When it is conducting the annual spending round, it cannot ignore the money—in many ways, it would be irresponsible to do so. The only way to guarantee that there is no substitution is if Ministers are prepared to index the budgets of arts, sport and heritage for at least the next three years. We should then know that there was no substitution.

It might be a lottery for punters, but it is certainly not a lottery for the Government, who win the jackpot every week. The lottery should not be yet another tax-raising device—I strongly object to that. The lottery should be made a charitable foundation, which would allow an extra 12 per cent.—which the Government presently cream off—to be distributed to the good causes and the spheres of activity that we have been discussing.

As Opposition Members have said, Camelot is a privatised monopoly that has been given a licence to print money—that is objectionable. A monetary limit should be set on any profits made by Camelot—not a percentage, but a cash limit on its rake-off. Alternatively, there should be a windfall tax, although my objections to such a tax are the same as those that I have to the tax that the Government are taking from the lottery. There must be a way of ensuring that Camelot does not find itself with riches beyond the dreams of avarice without ever having to do anything significant for them. Camelot should not get money for old rope.

Another big concern is the impact that the lottery has on smaller charities, football pools and bingo. I hope that Ministers will closely monitor that impact. Clearly, the pools should be allowed to advertise. We should not start subsidising football pools or bingo, but we could take off some of the present limits on pools industry advertising and on the sizes of the prizes that the bingo industry can distribute. Ministers must closely monitor the lottery's impact on small charities and other sections of the betting industry, and report regularly to the House of Commons.

The national lottery is national, and it has broad support across the House. The Government can maintain that support only by being honest and open with the House—I admit that that will bring some problems for Ministers.

There are some smaller but significant problems. I went to my local ticket outlet in Woodgrange road in Forest Gate and asked what problems had been experienced by shopkeepers. The location of ticket outlets needs more careful consideration. Particularly on Saturdays, there are large queues outside ticket shops, which spread down the shop fronts and along the road. Other shopkeepers complain about the impact that those queues have on their business. We must acknowledge that and start to look more carefully at locations. That problem may gradually go away as people start to spread their spending more evenly during the week. But in a working-class district such as mine, someone usually has the money in his or her pocket or purse to buy a lottery ticket on a Friday or Saturday. We need to deal with such problems.

I was told by one ticket seller that he and others like him have experienced some cash flow problems over the sales of tickets. It appears that Camelot deducts receipts by direct debit from the seller's bank account, so the seller has no control over the way the money goes out. The ticket sellers are expected to pay out the smaller prizes and can run into difficulties over their cash flow on a Saturday and Monday. They have to pay large amounts into the bank, which attracts bank charges for deposits that are not refunded by Camelot. Those are small problems in terms of the global picture, but problems enough for those small shopkeepers who are making the lottery such a great national success.

I shall be having my weekly flutter on the lottery on Saturday, and if I am not in my place on Monday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will know that I have either been kidnapped or have won the lottery. It is more likely to be the former than the latter, as I do not have the same luck as the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington, but I will not need any therapy to get me over the trauma of winning oodles of cash. I am saving that therapy for the victory at the general election.

1.4 pm

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): It has been a rather interesting and, at times, exciting debate. We heard detailed explanations on the national lottery, and comments from my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks), who has just left the Chamber, on the value of the arts.

I shall concentrate my remarks on the speech that was made by the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who, I believe, is now coming to the view that perhaps a lottery is not so morally repugnant after all. I detected in his speech a grudging acceptance that the lottery may be a very good thing indeed. Perhaps he will correct me if I am wrong.

Chancing one's luck is in the nature of mankind. The history of the world is awash with people consulting the stars, reading horoscopes, determining auspicious times and conducting themselves in such a manner that their fortune or misfortune is left in the laps of the gods. One chances one's luck, even if the odds are calculated at a million to one because man is fundamentally always optimistic. Without that optimism—that tomorrow will be better than today—mankind would have made no progress whatever: progress from caves, woad and huts to the planets and the stars would not have been possible. It would not have been possible to move from subsistence living to the consumer society.

Without a sense of adventure, mankind would have stayed in his primeval state. No entrepreneurial opportunities would be possible. The underlying basis of our capitalist society would have been doomed from the start. The great merchant adventurers of the past, who chanced their luck and, more recklessly, their lives, in small, fragile sailing ships against the mighty oceans, would not have been possible. All of life has its moments of chance. Even politics, ultimately, are a gamble, as the Labour party knows only too well to its cost.

So let us have no humbug, and even less sanctimonious breast beating, that the national lottery is anything but a small expression of our people's hopes to do better for themselves by chancing their luck—and what fun it is. Since the only certainty in life is death, what happens between birth and death has a lot to do with luck. Even the act of birth itself is wrapped around the mother lode of luck. Some are born clever, some not so; some extremely intelligent, others less so; some advantaged, others disadvantaged or even, sadly, disabled. Some, particularly in Asia, call it karma: others of us in the west call it luck.

So let there be luck. Let it flourish and pour forth. Let us all enable as many as possible to be lucky. Let them empower themselves with optimism. Let them look forward to better things. Let them play the national lottery—and, so far, what a success it has been.

Lotteries in the UK are not new. In 1569 the Cinque ports were repaired by raising funds through a lottery. Even Westminster bridge and the British museum were funded by national lotteries.

The national lottery set up by this Conservative Government has all the hallmarks of being a permanent and resounding success. It is a success because it is generating huge sums of money for theatres, sports centres, swimming pools, the restoration of historic buildings and for charities, as we heard from my hon. Friend the Minister.

Between now and 2001, more than £10 billion will be made available, equally, to the arts, heritage, sports, charities and the millennium fund. That is £2 billion to each of those good causes. Can one imagine what £2 billion will do for the arts, for heritage, for sport, for charities and for the millennium fund? The mind reels at the possibilities and opportunities, especially in Brentford and Isleworth.

We now face another renaissance in Britain, which is due entirely to the imagination, innovation and drive of my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for National Heritage. That renaissance was nurtured, inculcated, enthused and brought into being by an imaginative Government in the teeth of opposition from the Liberal Democrat party—I notice that all its members have left the Chamber—and many Labour Members. Let us never again hear from the Liberals that theirs is the party of culture, the arts, heritage, sport and charitable projects. They have paused and they have been found wanting. They lacked the imagination, spirit and grit to further those great and good causes and have left the stage to the boring old Conservative party to create this renaissance in our cultural life. How ironic and ridiculous, but how poignant. Never again will we have the arty Liberal or the culturally sophisticated, articulate and all-things-to-all-men Liberal. As for the Labour Members who opposed the national lottery—as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some did—they will learn that they made a mistake.

The national lottery is a success because it is well managed: knowing how to manage things well is what the Conservative Government know best. That is why the Camelot group was chosen, after the most competitive tendering and bidding process, which drove down costs and maximised the money available to good causes. To instal 10,000 on-line, computer-based, real-time outlets, as it did by 19 November—with a projected 40,000 later—was a massive logistical undertaking. It was done, and at a huge cost to the operator, yet it will receive only up to 5 per cent. of turnover to cover those expenses and profits. As a business man, I can say that the Government did a brilliant deal. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on striking such a good deal, while enabling more than 50 per cent. of the turnover to go in prizes and between 28 per cent. and 33 per cent. to good causes and, to cap it all, reducing the burden on the taxpayer by having 12 per cent. go to the Exchequer. It almost sounds too good to be true, but true it is, no doubt much to the chagrin of the Opposition.

We are the party of good management, of which the national lottery is a prime example. The £10 billion that will be raised for good causes during the next seven or eight years will be managed well because the Arts Council will distribute the arts fund. The primary criteria for distribution will be the maximisation of benefit to the greatest number of people including, most important, providing maximum access for the disabled; the long-term viability of the project; quality of artistic activity planned; relevance of the project to local regional and national artistic life; and the quality of the educational and marketing proposals.

The Arts Council's lottery director said:

> "Not all grants will go to large scale projects. We can help a small touring company, or buy a van or a portable lighting rig. We can help to improve a village hall and help to improve the access of all arts facilities to disabled people."

The lottery is well managed because the heritage funds will be distributed by the national heritage memorial fund and the Sports Council will distribute funds for locally based sports projects. A new National Lottery Charities Board will be established to provide for charities.

Most exciting of all is the millennium fund, which will be run by the millennium commissioners, whose work will endure when we are all gone. Not only will the fabric of our great buildings and monuments be restored to their former glory, but the achievements will include an international trade fair to boast about Britain's innovations in design, millennium bursaries for young people undertaking special projects and studies, the endowment of chairs at universities to study the enhancement of the quality of life and special prestigious monuments to mark the third millennium. It will be a lasting and enduring one.

Today we have heard some excellent speeches—although I see that most of my hon. Friends have had to leave—especially from my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth). We also discussed another

[Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva]

important aspect: privacy. Privacy for lottery winners is important for the continued success of the lottery. It is important not only for the person who wins, but for the lottery as a whole. Winners do not want publicity because they wish to avoid being harassed and pestered. If there is no possibility of publicity, people will buy tickets. However, the feeling that they will be harassed and pestered if, on the off-chance, they win, is a disincentive to try the national lottery. It is time, therefore, that we strengthened our privacy laws, if only to protect the ordinary citizen.

Why be begrudging? Are the Opposition incapable of stating what is obvious? The national lottery is a success. Good causes will benefit enormously and the Government have done a very good job indeed.

1.15 pm

Mr. Joe Benton (Bootle): I am speaking as a kind of new boy to the heritage scene and to the lottery scene, although I must admit that I was one of the Opposition Members who voted against the lottery. My reasons for doing so were quite parochial: along with many other Merseyside Members of Parliament, I rightly feared for the future of the pools industry. I was pleased to hear my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) express concerns about the pools industry, with which I totally agree and support.

As a new boy, I found the debate most entertaining and most enlightening. Having given my reasons for voting against the lottery, I must say that the debate was enlightening in the sense that this morning—I want to make it clear as the hon. Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) misheard an awful lot—there was ready admission among Labour Members that the lottery has elements of great success. I say that although I opposed it. Labour Members are not really saying that it is not successful. We are approaching the matter from another angle.

I criticise the Government for many reasons, many of which have already been mentioned adequately by my hon. Friends. Hon. Members have referred to the area that most concerns me—charities. I am very disappointed. We have learned, for example, that there is no chief executive in place on the National Lottery Charities Board.

I want to emphasise my concern by reading to the House a letter that I received only this week. It exemplifies all our concerns about the future of charities. That concern was another reason why I voted against the lottery in the first place. My fears were not only for local employment but for the impact that the lottery would have on small charities.

I can do no better than quote the letter that I received from Mr. Kevin Hookham, the chief fund-raising manager at the Liverpool school of tropical medicine. I do not know whether hon. Members are aware of the function of that establishment. I can tell the House that it goes back almost a century. It has charitable status and has supplemented the health service on Merseyside and in the north of England. Indeed, it has a national and a worldwide reputation. The contribution that it has made to tropical science and diseases is renowned. Mr. Hookham says:

> "I telephoned the NLCB on 29 November. I was shocked and surprised to be informed that no moneys were yet available for distribution, even though at the time of writing at least four Lottery games will have been played with the result that, cumulatively, there must be now millions of pounds awaiting dispersal to charitable and needy causes. In addition, I was informed that no application form actually exists but the charities would be consulted 'early next year' (no specific date could be given). When I asked which specific charities would be consulted and which methodology would govern the consultation process, I was told, 'that had not yet been decided'.
>
> I was also aware that no announcement regarding the appointment of a Chief Executive to the NLCB has yet been made and was informed that 'interviews are being held in December'. This is totally unsatisfactory. It is reasonable to assume that the calibre required of a potential Chief Executive would require three months' notice and therefore it is unlikely that an incumbent could take up post prior to March 1995."

Mr. Deva: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that if the funds had been distributed too hastily, he or one of his hon. Friends would have said that the wrong criterion had been applied and the wrong methodology used? The Government are trying to take care in considering the distribution of funds. Is he saying that that is wrong?

Mr. Benton: Everything should be examined properly and correctly, but there is no reason why the Government should not be ready to deal with the fundamental aspect of the national lottery. The Government have been tardy and unprepared and that is quite unjustified. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman does not appreciate what I am trying to explain—that the continuing success of the lottery will depend on satisfying people, whose number has not been quantified, who have been inspired to spend money on it because of its identification with charitable and worthy causes. I am sure that my hon. Friends will agree that many people have bought lottery tickets for that reason. The Government and the charities board should be prepared to deal with the worthy aims of the lottery.

Although the Minister is not in his place, I must put pointed questions because my constituents and I and the Liverpool school of tropical science need satisfactory answers. When will a definite date be given for the appointment of the chief executive? When will charities be given the opportunity to apply for funds and what process will be used for distribution? Will the charities board assure us that interest on the millions of pounds already collected for distribution to charities and voluntary organisations will be made available to the charities fund?

Those are reasonable requests on matters that are causing concern throughout the country. At the risk of repeating myself, may I say that the charities angle will lead to increased success for the lottery?

Much of what I wanted to say has already been said by my hon. Friends who covered the issues exactly and precisely. All I want are assurances on those points. I should like the Minister to deal with them in reply because, at this stage, people who contribute to the national lottery in aid of good causes should be confident and assured about the points that I have raised.

1.24 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Unlike the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Benton), I am not burdened by a knowledge of the wonderful arguments and comments that have been made hitherto in the debate because I have only just been able to come into the Chamber. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will forgive me but I am afraid that I shall have to leave shortly after my few remarks. I know that his remarks will be of uplifting interest to all hon. Members.

I know that the House will forgive me for expressing some sense of pride in the success of the national lottery since, if I had not been able to present my private Member's Bill, I doubt very much whether we would have a lottery at this stage. It was inevitable that, at some time, some Government or other would have decided that a national lottery was a good thing because it is so self-evidently is. Apart from Albania, we were the last country in the civilised world to have a lottery. If we are the only country that is marching in the wrong direction, it is reasonable to suppose that we are wrong and that the others are right. I therefore have some considerable pride in having played perhaps a small but significant part in this outstanding success.

Mr. Tony Banks: Hear, hear.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who does not always give plaudits to Conservative Members. I am grateful also for his support during the debate on the private Member's Bill. One of its strengths was its all-party nature and the way in which party politics was subsumed. It is always a cheering matter when hon. Members forget their party political conflicts and unite, especially when they do so in a great cause, as the national lottery is becoming.

I congratulate Camelot on a most outstanding achievement. Before everything had been set up and was under way, we were, of course, apprehensive. I was concerned that we should not start or end up with a state lottery that was run, organised, led and funded in the early stages by the Government. We have not had that and we shall not have it as the private enterprise success develops.

The way in which the national lottery has been publicised, the way in which the public have been prepared for it and the public's response to Camelot's campaign have led to the lottery's outstanding success, with £53 million being raised for good causes in only four weeks. If only the Government could raise money as simply and as painlessly. The amount raised will be £9 billion by 2001. Already, fascinating signs exist of how the raising of the quality of life is beginning to permeate through society.

I know from experience that one or two small newsagent shops were having some difficulty prior to the lottery. One of them now takes 7,000 to 8,000 lottery tickets a week and its take has increased by £400 a week. It means that small shops all over Britain which are now outlets will be able to stay open when they might otherwise have closed, and others have become prosperous when they might not otherwise have prospered. That means jobs. It has been estimated that when all the outlets are operating and when all the benefits of the lottery are spread throughout society, the provision of building works for charities, the arts and sport will mean that many more building workers are employed. We can expect an addition of about 80,000 people in work as a result of the national lottery.

Mr. Banks: The hon. and learned Gentleman was here, I think, when I made my speech. The small shopkeepers who sell the tickets are having some problems. I know that the Minister was not in his place when I was speaking, but I hope that he will look at the problems. The profit margins are not particularly generous and there are cash flow problems. There is also the problem of interference with other people's trade because of the siting of the machines in certain locations. They are small matters, but they are significant to those selling the tickets.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am sure that the Minister and Camelot have taken a close interest in what the hon. Gentleman has said. I give an example. In the first week, there was one small outlet in Uttoxeter in my constituency. It was outside the centre of the town and everyone went there to buy lottery tickets. The owner of the shop said that the rest of his trade had fallen because there were such queues that people could not get in to carry out their normal business. That problem is resolved by siting the lottery machine away from the main till and the main operations of the shop. The queue becomes shorter, people proceed more quickly and there is then no interference with the shop's other work. The main solution to the problem is to have more than one outlet in Uttoxeter. I understand that Camelot is working on that.

I was privileged to be a guest at the table of Sir Ron Dearing, the chairman of Camelot, on the night of the launch. I somehow managed to be a winner in the first lottery, albeit that the £10 will not alter my life. The launch also enabled me to discuss various matters with Sir Ron. A point that I was especially anxious to get across to him—I think that he will respond positively to it—is that it is not just the newsagents and small shops in towns that should benefit.

Small village stores have been closing at a tremendous rate of knots, unfortunately, partly because of the attractions of the bigger towns and partly because they were the sub-post offices and it was impossible to find enough people to staff some of them. I thought that a new lease of life would be injected into village shops and that they would be kept alive and flourishing as a result of the lottery. That has not happened so far. The reason is, as I understand it, that Camelot places a threshold on the catchment area of the likely purchasers of tickets before it allows the machines in. I have asked Sir Ron Dearing—on asking, I got an encouraging response—that the matter be looked into. If we can lower the threshold of the available pool of players so that village shops can flourish, the lottery could make an even more substantial contribution to the quality of life.

The other matter that filled me with a great deal of pleasure was the sheer number of winners. I had my doubts about £10 prizes, but when a million people win in a week and when 800,000 win the following week, it is tremendously heartening. All right, they are not winning the big prizes, but to win something, to get one's money back plus and to feel that one has a real chance of getting some return is heartening. I know that that will go on.

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

Another great advantage has been the way in which the television programme has taken over a time that stops me from having to watch "Blind Date". For others who feel as I do about "Blind Date", it is a blessed relief to turn over to watch the lottery, even for 15 minutes.

Mr. Banks: I am glad that the hon. and learned Gentleman thinks that. Quite frankly, seeing Noel Edmonds playing around with a load of balls is not very appealing to me. May I take him back to the point that he was making about the small prizes? He missed some of the speeches this morning, but there is an argument about whether people want bigger prizes. The great incentive for ticket sales is that people know that there is a biggie at the end of the line. It is fine for there to be lots of £10 prizes, but people do not buy lottery tickets because they are looking for £10.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but there is a biggie; there is a too biggie and a medium biggie. The wooden spoon—the consolation prize of £10—is a substantial bonus to people who have bought tickets.

Success always breeds problems in life and the outstanding success of the national lottery has bred some problems. Perhaps the most notable is the problem of what to do when the top prize amounts to £18 million. Nearly everybody would agree that nobody needs £18 million and that £2 million, £3 million or £4 million might be all that a reasonable person might need for enjoying the best standard of life. I think there is a general feeling throughout the country at the moment that if someone can win £18 million because the previous week's winnings can roll over again for as many as three times, goodness knows what might happen. There is no reason to suppose that, if the jackpot has reached £18 million in four weeks, in another four or 40 weeks it might not be considerably in excess of that. I shall give way to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) as she was one of the most stalwart supporters of the private Member's Bill.

Ms Hoey: I am pleased that we have a national lottery. It is a pity that the hon. and learned Gentleman was not here earlier. He said that there was a general feeling that the very large prizes were too much, but I do not agree that that was the general feeling in the House and we discussed the point quite extensively this morning.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: The general feeling in the House is not necessarily the general feeling among the public. I am afraid that applies to too many issues and, certainly on Conservative Benches, we are learning that very fast.

Outside, people think that £18 million is a bit too much. It could be corrected so that, as one of my hon. Friends constructively said—I do not know whether it has been repeated this morning—the number of roll-overs is reduced and, if the fund builds up, one third of it is reallocated to the good causes, one third of it is spent in additional prizes and the remaining third rolled over. That would be a pretty sensible and fair breakdown to reduce the excesses of the No. 1 prize and perhaps, as the hon. Member for Vauxhall said, to increase the number of alternative high prizes which would be an attractive element in the lottery.

Mr. Deva: I have followed my hon. and learned Friend's career with great interest and I was surprised to hear him say that he considers one sum is too much and another sum is not too much. Will he spend a few minutes trying to explain the philosophy behind why one amount is too much and another quantity is not too much?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I shall not go down that line. I am not here to philosophise at large and to talk without considered thought because the time of the House is too precious. Although a company may make unlimited profits and use the money to expand its business, employ more people and produce more products, when we are talking about putting money into the pocket of an individual or family with a limited scope for expenditure, perhaps—I would not go to the stake on it—if we can spread the wealth of the lottery more widely, we may provide more benefits than by concentrating too much in the pockets of an individual or family. I do not want to spend any more time on that point. I think that it is a problem that we can resolve and it is certainly not the most important or serious problem currently facing the country.

The second problem that has arisen is the question of anonymity. Most people are appalled by the thought that having bought a ticket on the assurance that one's identity will not be revealed, it is then revealed. Even though it has not yet been blasted all over the tabloid newspapers, everyone in Blackburn knows who is the winner of the lottery. The consequences of suddenly visiting such wealth upon an unassuming, law-abiding citizen are potentially very grave and serious. We do not need to list the obvious problems, whether massive numbers of begging letters, desperate people camping outside the door, threats or criminal activity. All those possibilities have to be thought about and worried over and, quite apart from a person's right to keep himself to himself, they are reasons why anonymity should be respected. I am sure that that is what people throughout the country feel.

The immediate reaction to the judicial decision that the injunction upholding anonymity should be lifted was one of disgust. It was wrongly directed—it was not the judge's fault that the law did not enable anonymity to be secured by an injunction or by any other means. There is a privity of contract between the person who buys a lottery ticket and the provider of that ticket and it is binding between those parties. If Camelot says that it will guarantee anonymity, that is a contractual undertaking that can be protected by the law. However, a third, fourth or fifth party, the press, or anybody else, is not bound by somebody else's contractual undertaking. That is the law and at the moment it is inadequate to protect the anonymity of an individual in such circumstances.

There are three ways in which anonymity could be protected. First, the media could take a self-denying ordinance and not cause misery to the otherwise fortunate winner through the publication of his name. However, to expect the press to have a self-denying ordinance of any sort would be somewhat optimistic in the present climate. Obviously, people will buy more newspapers if an individual is exposed as a lottery winner. Even though this week the media have refrained from naming the winner, it is unrealistic to expect them to be able to control themselves indefinitely. Therefore, I do not think that that would be a practical way of guaranteeing anonymity.

Parliament could make it a criminal offence for someone to disclose the name and particulars of a winner. However, that is not the way to use the criminal law and, anyway, it would be almost impossible to prove that the offence had been committed by someone and it would take an inordinate amount of police time. It is not the sort of public wrong that the law should remedy, even if it were practicable to do so. The breaches of anonymity which are likely to happen will inevitably, however, hasten the day when we introduce a tort of privacy. I should welcome that. I regret that we do not have one already. As Sir David Calcutt said in his examination on two occasions of the abuses of press power, a tort of privacy is the sensible conclusion to which one must be driven.

Unfortunately, the press is so powerful in public life now that it can destroy individuals. I know of a former parliamentary colleague who was destroyed by the media for daring to introduce a Bill of privacy. Not only that, the press can, by implication, bring pressure to bear on entire political parties. If we come to consider whether going to war with the press is a good idea as we move towards the next general election, I should think that plenty of voices will, say that there are plenty of things that we need to do other than pick a fight with the press.

The effect is that the media—in particular the press, but not only the press—including the broadcasting media have always been set against permitting us to introduce a tort of privacy which might restrict the ambit of press activity. When Kelvin MacKenzie was the editor of *The Sun*, he did not make any secret of the fact that he intended to make life difficult for anyone who thought that the abuses of the press were so excessive that legislation ought to be introduced against them.

I cannot see any way of guaranteeing the anonymity of a very substantial winner other than a tort of privacy. A tort of privacy is inevitable and I look forward to its introduction in due course. Perhaps in due course, when the economy is more flourishing, the press might be able to obtain income from advertising, which has been in decline in recent years. When the press is able to expand along that line, perhaps it will be less determined to go in for the extravagance which has been a feature of its activity in recent times and, therefore, less strong in its objection to a tort of privacy, which would enhance the quality of life of individuals in our society, as the lottery is doing in a different arena and on a different scale.

The problems that I have outlined are the problems of success. To some degree they may be solved in the coming months and years. At any rate, this national charity has seen off the whiners, whingers, killjoys and the Liberal Democrats, who opposed the concept of a national lottery. I am delighted that some Opposition Members such as the hon. Member for Bootle, who were against the national lottery, now feel that its advantages have outweighed its disadvantages.

I know that there is anxiety about charities. There always was. We were told during the proceedings on my Bill that charities' income had fallen in Ireland since the introduction of the national lottery. That argument was not well sustained in the light of the fact that charities' income had fallen in Northern Ireland where there was not a national lottery. I never thought that charities would suffer as a result of the lottery. If someone knocks on the door and asks for a fiver for the church roof, the scout hut or some pet cause, people are unlikely to say, "I am sorry. I would have given, but I have bought a lottery ticket this week." I do not believe that sort of thing happens in ordinary life.

I appreciate that overall income might have reduced in some cases, but the Government were particularly careful to avoid that with steps to improve the position of charities. Prizes can increase to £25,000 or 10 per cent. of turnover, and the allowable turnover has increased to £500,000. Restrictions on preventing one body from running too many lotteries have been lifted. Given the small effect of the national lottery on charities that have total turnover of £15 billion, they will not suffer even if they are not to be lottery beneficiaries. It is not just that they have 20 per cent. of the 28 per cent. Arts, sport, heritage and the millennium are all charities, and charities will be substantially enhanced by the lottery.

I thank Camelot and Peter Davis, Director General of Oflot, for their activities in getting this great ship of quality of life launched. I thank also the Government—not only my hon. Friend the Minister who graces us with his presence today but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage, his predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) and a former Home Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker)—without whose driving force in the Cabinet the lottery would not have got off the ground.

We can all share pride, and perhaps the greatest pride of all is knowing that apart from obvious exceptions, the overwhelming feeling of all parties in the House is that the lottery was a good thing, is a good thing and will continue to be a good thing—and that it will raise the standard of living and quality of life of millions of people in Britain today.

1.52 pm

Mr. Fisher: This interesting debate has been notable for agreement in all parts of the House that the national lottery is a good project, has great potential for giving pleasure, and can address important social and cultural problems. There was also a measure of agreement on the need for scrutiny and on key issues such as anonymity. My hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) and for Bootle (Mr. Benton) all made good speeches and raised pertinent questions that need answering by the Minister when he replies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bootle asked questions about the National Lottery Charities Board to which the Minister must respond. Why has it not yet been established? Why is there no chief executive? Why will charity grant applications not be received until the middle of next year? Why will money not be paid to charities until the second half of next year at the earliest? That is sheer incompetence.

The Home Secretary—not Mr. David Sieff, chairman of the charities board—must be held responsible. He has known the requirements for more than a year. If the Department of National Heritage can get its boards right—and it is to be congratulated on doing that, and the Arts Council in particular is to be congratulated on its excellent documents—why cannot the Home Secretary do so? I suspect that it is a matter of considerable

[Mr. Fisher]

embarrassment to the Department of National Heritage. There is no reason for it. The Home Office must get started soon, and the Minister must say on behalf of the Home Secretary—why he should have to answer for the Home Secretary, I do not know—what steps will now be taken to put the matter right. It is not satisfactory.

Mr. Deva: Does the hon. Gentleman responsible for sports in the Labour party agree that the best possible criteria must be evolved to decide how moneys are distributed, and that that must be done before we distribute them?

Mr. Fisher: I agree entirely, but that is true also of the four other boards, which have their acts together. I am drawing attention to the fact that a board has not even been set up by the Home Secretary. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has been disgracefully incompetent and he should be called to account.

A problem that has not been raised is the distortion of the entire charity world. The guidelines that have been published so far specify that only charities that are concerned with the needs of people qualify. However, there are many other charitable bodies that focus on human rights, animals and a range of other subjects. If the guidelines are to be adhered to, such charities will not qualify.

If the National Council for Voluntary Organisations is correct and charity donations will be affected, to be offset by £100 million to £150 million a year, that offset will apply only to charities that deal with human needs. Only those charities will qualify. Other charitable sectors, such as animal welfare, will not benefit. Such charities will be doubly prejudiced and disadvantaged. The Minister should consider that and perhaps vary the guidelines.

I hope that the Minister will respond to my arguments. I hope also that he will give us up-to-date figures and details of the dates of distribution. I hope also that he will respond to the questions that I have asked about eligibility for science, libraries, children's play, English Heritage, film and one or two other matters. The hon. Gentleman needs to put the record straight. As the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) said, I hope that he will respond on the need for privacy law and also on the Calcutt report. We have waited too long for responses on both issues. The Minister should now get ready to present them.

I would like to think that the Minister will give reassurances on the other key issues that have been raised today. I refer to the status and future of small projects throughout the country, the problems between capital and revenue, those of additionality and those relating to the restraints on Camelot's profits, as well as others concerning anonymity and roll-over. I suspect that on those wider issues he will not be able to satisfy the House. He must, however, respond on the National Lottery Charities Board and give us some up-to-date figures so that we know where we are.

1.58 pm

Mr. Sproat: With the leave of the House, may I say that it is a great pleasure to be back at the Government Dispatch Box after such a long interval and after such a short contribution from the Opposition Front Bench in reply to the debate? I did not expect such brevity, but I would need the full half hour that is now at my disposal, if events so pan out, to answer the many extremely interesting questions that have been raised so far.

I shall start with a response to an intervention in my first speech this morning from the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth). The hon. Gentleman asked me if I had read an article in last night's *Evening Standard*. I said that I had not, and he kindly passed me the newspaper during the debate. So riveting were the speeches at that time that I found that although I read the article, I had not taken it in. I shall read it in privacy with concentration and in due course send the hon. Gentleman a letter setting out my responses.

The last shall be first in this instance, and I shall start with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and respond to his comments in his opening speech. First, I thank him for his kind words about certain aspects of the lottery. It is fair to say that there are worries, and I shall deal with each of them in due course. I hope that the House will agree that I have not sought to disguise that there are some legitimate concerns about what has happened. I believe that they are all minor and that the lottery has been an overwhelming success. I shall readily deal with issues such as anonymity and roll-over which were raised in the debate.

When the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central began his speech he offered kind words, as is his wont, but then gave some less kindly words about the Government's performance, as is also his wont. He used the word "complacent". I cannot remember whether he chucked it at me or the Government as a whole or spread it around the Chamber, but I can assure him that we are not complacent.

I shall not repeat all that I said earlier, but the national lottery is a massive innovation in our public life. It is inconceivable that such a major innovation could be introduced without a number of things going wrong. With the exception of the problem of privacy, other difficulties have, in the main, been small. I do not discount the disappointment of hon. Members whose constituencies have not received as many terminals as they would have wished, or in whose constituencies terminals have gone wrong. I do not underestimate those problems, but they are not enormous in the overall context of the national lottery.

The national lottery has been going for only four weeks—since 14 November, the day on which tickets could first be bought. It would be unreasonable to say, after the experience of four weeks, that we must change things immediately. I know that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central was not saying that. We shall look closely at a number of matters, notwithstanding the fact that the national lottery has been going for only four weeks. We shall continue to look carefully at the way in which the lottery proceeds.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central was buoyed up by his party's success last night, on which I congratulate him. We all have ups and downs in politics and I advise him to be happy while he can because the evil day followeth as surely as night followeth day. The hon. Gentleman said that everything was going wrong for the Government—what nonsense. I agree that last night's result was one of our less happy moments, but whatever may be going wrong, the lottery is not—it is an overwhelming success. While I am eager to investigate those aspects that can be improved, as I said at the beginning of the debate, the lottery is certainly a great success.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central set out three principles by which he thought that the lottery should be operated. He said that it should be free of undue political influence. Obviously, the House of Commons has an influence on the lottery. The principle that lay behind the choice of distributor bodies was to place at arm's length decisions on which projects should be supported and how much money should go to them from the Government of the day. We put such decisions in the hands of the Sports Council, the Arts Council, the national heritage memorial fund and the two new organisations, the charities board and the Millennium Commission.

I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was altogether serious—I detected a slight note of carping, criticism or even a lighter touch on the tiller—about having only one member chosen by the Opposition. We did not want the Millennium Commission to be politically dominated by the Government and thought it right for the Secretary of State for National Heritage, whoever he or she might be, to be its chairman. To show that it was not a party political decision, we deliberately said that one member should be chosen by the Opposition. They wisely chose a man of the calibre of Mr. Michael Montague. We did not intend the commission to be a political organisation and the fact that we invited the Opposition to nominate somebody shows that we were keen to adopt the fair principle that it was not to be a party political matter.

The hon. Gentleman said that the next principle that he would like to see applied would be open finance, which I took to mean accountability. I outlined the percentage figures earlier: 50 per cent. goes to prize winners, 12 per cent. to the Treasury, 5 per cent. to retailers, and 5 per cent. to Camelot—that is 5 per cent. over seven years; it may rise or fall a little. The rest, which amounts to some 27 or 28 per cent., should be divided between the various bodies. I think that that is a pretty fair and open system.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) suggested in her very interesting speech, as did the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), that one should put a monetary ceiling on what the company could earn. I understand why that might be thought, but that is getting on to dangerous ground, because the company would then say, "Well, wait a minute. We've invested £100 million up front. If it's a failure we would like a safety net beneath it." Whereas we said, "No, it will be 5 per cent. It is a risk. In some years you may do well and in some years you may do less well." That is a fair and open way to do it. It covers all the expenditure made by Camelot.

The question of ICL computers was raised, but whether the sum that is paid to ICL is high or low—personally I have no idea, as I know nothing about the computer sales market or about looking after computer terminal markets—it is coming out of the 5 per cent. already agreed. It is not a case of whether, if ICL had charged less, the money would have gone to charities.

Mr. Tony Banks: Surely the national lottery is a licence to print money. There was no doubt from the word go that it would be a success. A number of people wanted the franchise to organise the lottery. I ask the Minister to think on, because if—I am sure that it will—the lottery goes from strength to strength, enormous windfall gains will be coming to Camelot. It could be very embarrassing to the Minister in the end. Perhaps he should think of a formula now.

Mr. Sproat: No doubt when the franchise comes to an end in 2001, or in the run-up to 2001, those matters will be looked at. I emphasise to the hon. Gentleman—it has been said before, but it bears repeating—that the more money that Camelot makes as its percentage, by definition the more money goes to the charities. It was in the interest of whichever company ran the lottery to do extremely well, because that was the best way in which to ensure that charities did well. Perhaps Opposition Members have reservations about the role of the private sector, but I believe that this is the best way in which to do it.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall said that she would have liked to have seen a charitable trust run the lottery, rather than a private sector company. Charitable trusts could have applied, but none did. They would not have been ruled out if they had done so. On balance, the choice of a private sector company in general, and Camelot in particular, was well made.

As to Camelot's percentage to cover its operating costs and profits, I have looked around the world at the percentage taken by other bodies running lotteries, and have not been able to find a single body doing it on a leaner margin than Camelot. Camelot's margin was the leanest of all those who applied, and was leaner than Virgin. There was a misunderstanding about what Virgin wanted. I think that it is right that a private sector company is driving the lottery forward. In Camelot, with its lean percentage to cover operating costs and margins, we have the right company.

Ms Hoey: The Minister said that we will be able to consider the matter in 2001. Is he saying that no changes can be made to any of Camelot's operating costs and so forth between now and then?

Mr. Sproat: In the House, one is always under pressure to be a little more succinct and shorthand than one should be. I was trying to say that a new franchisee will be chosen in 2001. In the run-up, we will no doubt consider whether there were elements in the way in which Camelot was chosen on which we would want to improve for the new franchisee. I cannot think of any major ones off the top of my head. Camelot applied with all the other applicants on a level playing field, and won. In general and in particular it would not be fair to change the laws of the game and move the goal posts once it had got under way. That was all that I was trying to say.

The third principle that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central mentioned in his opening speech was that the proceeds should be fairly distributed. They are fairly distributed as far as sports, the arts, national heritage and the millennium fund are concerned, if only in the sense that each gets the same percentage—20 per cent. The proceeds include the prize money, and I will mention the roll-over later, without going into the arguments again. The main Government element, the tax of 12 per cent. to the Treasury and the 20 per cent. to each of the distributing boards, is fair.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central asked whether we would reconsider the effect on the football pools and charities. Yes, of course we will. I wrote to the Pools Promoters Association some weeks ago to tell it how grateful we were for its support for the Foundation

[Mr. Sproat]

for Sport and the Arts, which brings in about £60 million a year—£40 million to sport and £20 million to the arts—which is certainly not to be sniffed at, and for its support for the Football Trust.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall mentioned safety at sports grounds, which I will deal with in full when I deal with her speech, but we owe a great deal to the pools promoters and once the lottery has had fair time—it might be a year, nine months or 18 months—we will study the matter again and decide whether they have been fairly treated, which is what I told them. We made a number of concessions to them. We reduced to 16 the age at which people could participate, allowed coupons to be sold in shops, allowed a roll-over and allowed them to sponsor television programmes.

I heard what the hon. Members for Stoke-on-Trent, Central and for Vauxhall said—that the pool promoters should be allowed to advertise and not merely to sponsor and that is one of the issues that we shall consider. The House in its wisdom—before I was in charge of such matters—decided that that was the way that it should be.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central properly mentioned the departure of Mr. Hinton as the chief executive of the Millennium Commission. I can tell him all that I know, which is that Mr. Hinton is a man of very great abilities, who impressed very much at the initial interview. When he was nominated and it came to trying to work with the commissioners, however, they found that his and their ideas did not gel. Far from the first payment from the lottery funds going to pay off Mr. Hinton, I regret that I have only just discovered that that payment came not from the lottery but from my Department's funds, so that is a double blow for me. I give my word to the hon. Gentleman that, as far as I know, there is no more to it than that. He can always ask the commissioners and find out whether their view is different.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central mentioned a private sector monopoly, horrendous profits and so forth. I do not want to go over that again. We decided that private sector companies were the best way. Hon. Members may not agree, but the House so decided and what has since happened—in terms of the benefits to good causes—shows that that was a pretty good decision on balance.

We now come to the question of the National Lottery Charities Board, which several hon. Members raised. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central raised it in his opening remarks and again in his brief second speech. Most of the matters that he raised are, indeed, a matter for the Home Office and if he is concerned about those matters beyond what I shall say now—I shall answer directly the questions of the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Benton) as well—he may table questions to the Home Secretary.

However, this may be a suitable moment to answer the questions asked by the hon. Member for Bootle. He asked when a chief executive will be appointed. The answer is, as I understand it, that the members of the board had a chief executive in mind and they were about to appoint him when he was offered another job in the City. So now they are negotiating again to see whether they can consider another pay package for him. It is nothing to do with me, but the hon. Gentleman asked the fair question and the answer is that it is under negotiation and I expect the decision to be announced fairly shortly, in the next few weeks. That is why it has not been announced already.

The hon. Member for Bootle then asked when the charities could apply for funds—a point which was reinforced by the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central. I cannot tell him the exact answer to that because the structure of the way in which applications should be made by the charities to the board is currently being discussed between the board and Mr. Sieff. I hope that they will come up with an answer fairly shortly. All I can tell him is that the chairman of the board has said that the first sums of money handed out to the charities will be in September and that will certainly mean that applications will have to be in several months before that. So, we are probably talking about midsummer. The hon. Member for Bootle may not like the answer but he asked for it and that is it.

In response to the pertinent question of whether interest will be earned in the meantime on moneys in the distribution fund, the answer is yes. Interest will be earned and so the charities will get the benefit of that when applications are made and granted.

I shall now return to the question about the millennium fund which the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central asked. Yes, it is very important that the fund is nationwide. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) referred to that important point in his speech. It is essential that the millennium fund considers things on a United Kingdom basis and it will do so. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central asked whether it would be fairer to small bodies and smaller applications than the dozen major landmark projects. Yes, it will seek to do so.

The hon. Gentleman pointed out the difficulty. One says that one wants some smaller projects, but what happens if none of them is very good? The short answer if that one has a problem. The millennium commissioners will take into account the facts that the fund must be nationwide and that they want smaller projects; no doubt, they will find their way to solve that conundrum when they have the applications before them. It is not easy to discuss in principle. In practice, I do not think that it will be so difficult. If the hon. Gentleman feels in due course that the commissioners have got it wrong, no doubt he will say so. However, I promise him that I share entirely his view that small projects should get a fair crack of the whip.

The hon. Gentleman asked a list of questions on what will happen to various institutions such as libraries. They will be able to apply for funds from the national heritage memorial fund for new buildings and the refurbishment of existing buildings where facilities are needed for library collections that are important to the national heritage. They can also apply for projects which fall under the definition of capital, such as cataloguing. I cannot see another example in my notes, which just say that they can apply in some circumstances. Cataloguing is a good example of where libraries certainly could apply and could be granted funds.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister's voice dropped when he was describing the libraries' eligibility. He seemed to qualify the eligibility for libraries by saying that only those library projects which deal with the national heritage would be eligible. He will understand that there are very important library projects relating to new information technology, the super-highway, and community arts. Libraries do much more than conserve the national literary heritage. I am sure that the Minister's response was carefully worded. Is he saying that only library issues that relate to conserving the national heritage will qualify? If he is, that is a serious mistake and he should look at the matter again.

Mr. Sproat: If I did drop my voice it was due to weariness after four and a half hours in the Chamber, for one and a half hours of which I have been on my feet. The hon. Gentleman mentions many library projects that he would like to see supported. Support for most of those will come from Department of the Environment funds which go to local authorities, because it is up to local authorities to distribute those. I said that libraries would be eligible for NHMF funds but just in those areas for which that fund is responsible. Normal library expenses must be covered in the normal way, otherwise they would breach the additionality principle which states that no lottery money should be used for any project that is normally eligible for Government funding.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister is saying that a really imaginative library project that looked to the future of public libraries and had to do with new technologies such as CD-Rom would not be eligible because it was unconnected with national heritage. That is an extraordinary statement, and the Government seem to have missed an opportunity. They say that they are keen on the new generation of information technology, but the Minister's statement seems to deny that. Libraries will be at the centre of that technology and will be the point of contact for most people. As well as being good in their own right, these imaginative new projects are surely ideal millennium projects to celebrate going into the new information age. If what the Minister says is the last word, the Government are circumscribing libraries far too much and I urge them to think again.

Mr. Sproat: All I am saying is that libraries will not be eligible for lottery funds to cover aspects for which they would normally get funding from the local authority which was responsible for them. I agree that super-highways and the other matters that the hon. Gentleman mentions are important, but funds for them will not come from the national lottery. Perhaps a library can devise a millennium application that would cover them, in which case good luck to it. I am not knocking the importance of the matters that the hon. Gentleman mentions: I am just saying that they would not normally be eligible for lottery funding.

The hon. Gentleman told us to think again. I am glad to tell him that the Government are prescient in great things as in small, and we are currently conducting a public library review. All these matters will be given true consideration.

Organisers of children's play can apply to the Sports Council and if it thinks that a proposal is a good idea, it will cough up. I have another powerful piece of prose to read out on science. Science can benefit from funds from the Millennium Commission. The national heritage memorial fund will also make money available for projects to improve access to scientific collections and museums, which is an important way to introduce people to science.

The Arts Council will deal with film. Applications for the making of new films or the protection of archives can be made through the Arts Council, which will take the advice of the British Film Institute in arriving at a decision. The hon. Gentleman asked about English Heritage. It will be eligible for money from the lottery, but a series of Chinese walls will have to be constructed because English Heritage is also an adviser to the NHMF. In cases where English Heritage applies for lottery funds, the fund will take independent advice from an outside adviser who is not in English Heritage. This is a difficult issue. We must watch it closely and ensure that it does not become incestuous and that Chinese walls are not breached.

Commercial bodies, another important issue, are at perfect liberty to apply for lottery funds. The point is not the applicant's status but the project's status. A project is eligible if it is for the general public good. It cannot be for the benefit of the commercial body, notwithstanding the publicity that arises from sponsoring a good cause.

In considering putting together partnerships, let us take the classic example of someone wanting to build a new eight-lane, 50 m Olympic swimming pool in his constituency. He tries to raise 50 per cent. of the funds by going to the local authority, the local community and perhaps a local sponsor, who will become involved not for commercial reasons but to make a contribution to the community's life, which would be acceptable. That has dealt with that difficult list of points.

Capital versus revenue is an important and difficult issue. The Government wisely decided that financial prudence demanded that we should not give too much revenue funding. By definition, revenue funding would mean giving out revenue costs for a project that is five years away without having received a penny for that project. That is clearly dangerous. The Government said, therefore, that they would provide the money for capital projects where they knew exactly—the British library notwithstanding—how much they would pay at the end of the day.

In considering the matter, however, it became clear that revenue funding would form an important part of projects. There is a limit to the number of eight-lane, 50 m Olympic swimming pools that one can build. It is clear that one will have to maintain such a pool, pay the electricity bills and pay people to look after it. We have therefore modified our attitude to capital and revenue. We now say that there can be a revenue tail to a capital project and that revenue money can form part of an application as long as that money is entirely consequential on the capital project. I hope that that is clear. In my mind, there is no doubt as to what we are doing. We are saying that one can ask for money to run a new swimming pool at the same time as one applies for money to build that pool.

Mr. Fisher: Does that also apply to concert halls or arts centres? There is no point in building one of those if one does not have a programme for it. Will the running costs of the programme be eligible for the revenue tail?

Mr. Sproat: Ultimately that question must be answered by the Arts Council, just as the Sports Council must decide whether the revenue tail in the example that I gave is justifiable. The Arts Council will take account of the arguments. My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) mentioned the Arts Council package, which shows that there can be revenue funding.

[Mr. Sproat]

Since she is in her place, I shall deal with the remarks of the hon. Member for Vauxhall. She said that the pools should be placed on an equal footing with the lottery. That is a serious point and we are considering it. I have said to the pools promoters that we shall consider it again when the lottery has had a chance to bed down. I did not say—I apologise if I gave this impression—that the people running Camelot were naive as business men. I said that they would be naive to think that, by giving the press a few titbits on the identity of a lottery winner, they could buy the press off. We all know that people who are wise in some areas can be extremely foolish in others. I do not know if that is what the people at Camelot thought. I was told that that was what they thought. If so, they were naive in their belief, although their running of the business has been exemplary.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall said that we must continue to monitor the way in which the Sports Council, the Arts Council and the other distributor bodies do their job. That is very important. The Sports Council projects taking on 43 people specially to do the lottery work. We shall look closely at the financial openness—this was the second important point made by the hon. Member for Bootle—and the accountability of the Sports Council. We shall also look jolly carefully at the projects that it chooses. I cannot tell the council what to do, but I very much hope that its wisdom will tell it that it wants a strategic plan so that we do not have three 50 m, eight-track swimming pools within a 15-mile area. I am sure that the council would not do that. It will be wisely guided by the ministerial nominees and the sports councils in the regions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), as so often in the House, gave a speech full of common sense and authority. He raised the question of counselling. Counselling is done automatically by Camelot—

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With the leave of the House, I shall put motions Nos. 2 and 3 together.

Ordered,

That—

(1) at the sitting on Wednesday 11th January, the Speaker shall—

(i) put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Tony Newton relating to the Committee of Selection not later than Six o'clock; and

(ii) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business)—

(a) put the Question on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Gummer relating to the draft Cleveland (Structural Change) Order 1994 not later than one and a half hours after it has been made; and

(b) put the Questions on the Motions in the name of Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory relating to the Value Added Tax (Buildings and Land) and (Transport) Orders 1994 not later than one and a half hours after the first of them has been made,

and these Motions may be proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock; and

(2) at the sitting on Thursday 12th January the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister for the Adjournment of the House shall lapse one and half hours after it has been made, unless it has been disposed of earlier.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Resolved,

That—

(1) this House do meet on Tuesday 20th December at half-past Nine o'clock;

(2) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 17 (Time for taking questions), no Questions shall be taken, provided that at Eleven o'clock the Speaker may interrupt the proceedings in order to permit questions to be asked which are in her opinion of an urgent character and relate either to matters of public importance or to the arrangement of business, statements to be made by Ministers, or personal explanations to be made by Members; and

(3) at Three o'clock the Speaker do adjourn the House without putting any Question.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Act:

Consolidated Fund (No. 2) Act 1994.

Pensions (Miners)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Under the Coal Industry Act 1994, members of the mineworkers pensions scheme—the MPS—are given a legal right to transfer into its successor, the industry-wide mineworkers pension scheme. In small licensed mines, the transfer date is taken to be 24 December for members who are contributing to the MPS at that date. Under paragraph 3(3) of schedule 5 to the 1994 Act and in the Coal Industry (Protected Persons) Pensions Regulations 1994, statutory instrument No. 3070, contributing MPS members are granted the right to what is called "protected persons status". This means that contributing members of the MPS will have the statutory right to join the new industry-wide scheme and their employers will be obliged to participate and to pay contributions of about 10 per cent.

The secretary of the MPS, Mr. Paul Trickett, wrote in a letter on 1 November to one of my constituents who works in a licensed mine that protected persons status meant that

> "your new employer must give you the right to join the IWMPS".

He added:

> "For employees of small mine licensees 'new employer' means your employer after the transfer date of 24th December 1994".

Mr. Trickett has now confirmed to me, however, that a loophole in the legislation that none of us had anticipated—I was a member of the Committee that considered the Coal Industry Bill—means that some private mine owners are denying that right. Paragraph 27(e) of the Department of Trade and Industry consultation document "The Government's Proposals for British Coal Pensions after Privatisation" referred—admittedly briefly—to the rights of licensed miners. Those rights are now being betrayed.

Members of the MPS paying contributions are automatically eligible to join the new IWMPS, regardless of their employer's wishes, provided that they are members of the MPS at the transfer date. It appears that there is no formal right for employers to withdraw from the MPS, presumably because it was originally designed for the nationalised coal board and not for mines licensed under section 36 of the Coal Industry Act 1946, although the licensed mines had to maintain conditions equivalent to the nationalised industry until that stipulation was unilaterally withdrawn by British Coal in 1991, with the encouragement of the Government. Employers cannot renege on participation in the new IWMPS because of the very unusual legal right to protected persons status, which requires the employer to pay pension contributions to it. That is an admirable right.

The only way in which a private employer can circumvent the law and deny the right is to stop paying employee contributions. Apparently—though nobody seemed to be aware of it—the employer is legally able to withdraw paying employee contributions because there is no compulsion to provide a pension. No employer contributions have been made since the pensions holiday of April 1990, and it seems that some employers are determined to avoid paying the 10 per cent. employers' contribution to the new scheme because of the fierce pressures from the rigged market in coal in which they are competing.

Although my understanding is that under contract law employers cannot unilaterally alter an individual's contract, it appears that mine owners, simply by stopping employee contributions, can deny them their pension rights because they are not eligible members of the scheme at the transfer date.

It might be suggested that the miners concerned should enter into a voluntary arrangement, but voluntary contributions to maintain MPS membership are no good as they still need their employers' agreement to participate in the scheme and, clearly, that is not forthcoming.

At the end of last week, nine mine owners had given formal notice of withdrawal from the mineworkers pension scheme, but my information is that more are expected, especially in south Wales.

The two most devastating losses for the miners affected are, first, the continuance of life assurance, which produces a lump sum based on two years' average earnings to widows or dependants, together with the immediate payment of two thirds of pension. Instead of that excellent entitlement, miners who are blocked from joining the new scheme will get only a lump sum based on three times their deferred pension—a grossly inferior benefit, worth perhaps only half the current entitlement which, in any case, will erode over time because the old pension is effectively frozen, except for indexation.

The second loss—the incapacity pension, which was an important part of the old scheme—is perhaps more serious as it would assist injured or crippled miners. Members of the new industry-wide scheme would be able to carry over the rights under the MPS to trigger pension payments even if they were not aged 60. The amount would depend on length of service and grade. An injured miner would have received his pension immediately; he has now lost that right.

Injuries and deaths in licensed mines are frighteningly high. In my constituency alone, two licensed miners have died in the past two years and one has been paralysed from the waist down. Serious injuries occur weekly. According to the Health and Safety Executive, the fatality rate in private licensed mines is 23 times as high as in British Coal mines. Miners are vulnerable people, yet the Government are allowing two crucial benefits to be destroyed.

Separate insurance cover is supposed to be statutory and to provide some protection, but in practice it is not always provided. I quote, for example, the case of Mr. Huw Jenkins, who was injured after a roof fall at Nantyglo mine near Blaengwrach in the Neath valley on 26 April 1994. He suffered such severe injures that he will probably never go underground again, yet his employer, T. J. Slee Ltd., had defaulted on its insurance cover, so Mr. Jenkins is now being denied the right to claim damages and loss of earnings under that insurance scheme. After the transfer, a licensed mineworker will lose all his rights as he will no longer be a member of a pension scheme.

There are 1,400 men employed in 137 private underground licensed mines, 900 of whom are in Wales. About 400 are in the Neath constituency and are employed in 35 pits—the highest number anywhere in the United Kingdom.

[Mr. Peter Hain]

The Government have penalised a special category of people who are now without adequate life insurance cover or entitlement to incapacity pension. Those rights were fought and struggled for in the bitter pre-nationalisation years and they are now being swept away.

I ask the Government for three things. First, as the ultimate guarantor of the closed mineworkers pension scheme, the Government should make provision for existing life assurance and incapacity pension entitlement to be honoured, even though the miners are not able to transfer because of the manoeuvre into the new industry-wide scheme. If the Minister replies that there is no finance available, I shall tell him that there is plenty of money in the MPS because employers had a pension holiday from 1990, which, I am informed, was actuarially calculated to go on to the year 2001. So there is plenty of money—millions of pounds—and it would only be right to give the several hundred miners who are affected by the manoeuvre the protection that could be extended from the existing MPS, even when it is closed on 24 December.

The second proposal is that the Government should next week rush through amendments to the protected persons regulations to extend protection to licensed miners who have been penalised and affected. Thirdly, the Government should instruct the Coal Authority that when it issues new licences next in March, it must make them dependent on a company being a good employer. By that, I mean, as a minimum, providing decent pensions in the industry-wide scheme, with the insurance, incapacity pension cover and so on that goes with it.

Although I have focused on the problem of licensed miners because they are the worst affected, the problem goes much wider than them alone. After 24 December, all miners could be threatened in two ways. Either employers could simply default on membership of or participation in the industry-wide scheme because they might think it too expensive, or they could sack men and then re-employ them, but only on the basis that they withdraw from the industry-wide scheme.

The Minister might say that that is not the sort of thing that happens in Britain. He should let me take him around some of the small mines in my constituency where that happens regularly. Those are the sort of raw, almost cowboy-like conditions that the Government are bringing back to our mines. It will go well beyond the small private licensed pits into the ex-British Coal pits. Indeed Tower colliery, whose buy-out I strongly supported, will not be participating in the industry-wide scheme, probably because it is too expensive and because the miners did not have continuation of employment. They are not eligible for transfer from the MPS because they will not be members of it on 24 December as they are not working until next year.

I understand that in my area of south Wales, Betws colliery, which is under a management buy-out, will not participate in the scheme. I understand that management will contribute only 1 per cent. instead of 10 per cent. employers' contribution to a generous, decent pension. The problem could go well beyond the hundreds currently affected to hundreds and perhaps thousands more miners across the country, and not simply in south Wales.

It may be said that those miners should make their own private arrangements or depend on the state earnings-related pension scheme instead. Such an invitation would be an insult because they need the collective provision provided by an industry-wide scheme, with all its vast resources, which simply cannot be offered through personal pensions alone. Indeed, for personal pensions to compete with such protection and the benefits offered would require a contribution of at least 16 per cent. and possibly more to get anywhere near meeting the current provisions and protection offered by the MPS and its successor.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose—*

Mr. Hain: I shall give way to my hon. Friend, who, as a former miner, is very experienced in these matters.

Mr. Skinner: I thank my hon. Friend for allowing me to add to his comments about the miners who have been treated so shabbily, not only in his constituency but throughout the British coalfields. When Budge takes over with his shaky financial set-up, there are bound to be problems. It is a scandal that miners in Wales and elsewhere are being treated in this way when they have been digging coal from the bowels of the earth. When someone comes to the House from another job, as many of us do, we have the option of transferring into a very lush pension scheme, even though the pension scheme in our previous occupation was miserly by comparison. Why cannot the miners be treated in the same way as Members of Parliament?

Mr. Hain: My hon. Friend has a good point. As he knows from first experience of when he did a much more dangerous job than he now does, the miners do a dangerous job. They have made a contribution over the years. Members of Parliament get feather-bedded pensions. That goes to show that the Government are interested only in protecting those at the top of society and that they ignore those at the bottom, particularly the wealth creators who struggle, risking their own lives and limbs year in, year out to dig coal.

The Minister may say that miners should consider taking out their own personal pension. I pointed out earlier that that would require a contribution from the employee of at least 16 per cent. That is beyond the means of miners whose earnings are low and, more important, very uncertain. Many of them do not know almost from week to week whether they will be employed. The old British Coal circumstances, in which continuity of employment was relatively guaranteed—until the Tories took over—no longer apply. Many of the miners exist in a twilight world of casual, temporary and sometimes brutal employment.

I have already exposed in the House the way in which some unscrupulous mine owners have illegally exploited their work forces, illegally denying them proper payslips, making them work the Christmas break, sacking then re-employing them to avoid paying holiday and sickness benefits and so on. That attack is even invading pension rights now.

The Government are blatantly betraying the rights to a decent pension, to life assurance cover and to incapacity benefit for miners who work in some of the most dangerous conditions in Britain. This sordid episode is a dress rehearsal for what coal privatisation means in practice. The Government should be ashamed of themselves and of their dishonesty in failing to spell out the consequences for licensed mineworkers when they took the Bill through the House.

Coal privatisation clearly does not mean new opportunities, new hope and new prosperity, as Government rhetoric would have it. It means old misery, old tragedy, old bitterness returning to our mining communities: Victorian conditions with a vengeance.

2.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology (Mr. Ian Taylor): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) on obtaining this Adjournment debate on a matter that clearly is of great concern to him, particularly as there are 35 licensed mines in his constituency employing 400 people. Therefore, it is right that he should attempt to clarify some of the issues. I hope that I shall be able to satisfy him on many of the points that he raised. If I do not have time to cover all of them, I shall enter into correspondence with him to provide further explanations.

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was, as usual, in his place, making life dangerous for us even at the Dispatch Box. I do not want to get dragged into the pension schemes that are available to Members of Parliament.

Mr. Skinner: It is a fair comparison.

Mr. Taylor: It is not, for purely technical reasons of the nature of the transfers, but I shall not go into that now. I think that the hon. Gentleman was attempting to make a different point, not a technical point.

Clearly, the decline in numbers of people working in mines has been going on for decades, under whichever Government. It is always important to safeguard the interests of those who will no longer be employed in the industry as well as those who continue to be employed. Many of the licensed mines have had their own separate arrangements for pension schemes for a considerable period. It is not as if it is something that has just arisen.

The hon. Member for Neath raised three particular points. I shall endeavour to deal with them in my reply. The Government have always recognised that in drawing up new pension arrangements for members of the mineworkers pension scheme and the British Coal staff superannuation scheme after privatisation we should, above all, safeguard the benefits that the schemes confer on their members and their dependants.

The new arrangements for the British Coal pension schemes will achieve that in the first place by ensuring that accrued entitlements from past contributions are guaranteed within the existing schemes. An absolute guarantee from the Government will ensure that there is always enough money in the funds of the existing schemes to pay accrued entitlements. The guarantee improves previously existing provisions by guaranteeing full RPI-linked increases in pensions. In addition, members will be able to benefit from valuation surpluses. The Government have also undertaken to honour in full British Coal's obligation to make "additional contributions" in respect of early and enhanced pensions awarded from the schemes.

I will make it clear, because there has been concern over this point among scheme members, that the level of provision subject to the Government guarantee of index linking is the amount of an individual member's pension entitlement at privatisation, including previous cost-of-living increases and improvements out of surpluses awarded before privatisation.

Members of the mineworkers pension scheme and British Coal staff superannuation scheme can leave their pension entitlements from past contributions in the existing schemes if they choose. Those entitlements will be secure and will benefit from the Government guarantee.

The arrangements for new industry-wide schemes will safeguard benefits from future employment by ensuring that British Coal employees who are transferred to new employers as a result of privatisation will be able to continue to accrue pension benefits equal to those available in the existing schemes. Employee contribution rates will remain unchanged.

The privatisation legislation gives "protected person status" to employees contributing to the existing schemes at the date of their move to the new industry-wide schemes. That obliges the new employer to give transferred employees a right to join the new scheme and ensures that benefit provisions cannot be worsened.

The new pension arrangements were established after lengthy consultations, including the issue of a consultation paper. There has been extensive parliamentary scrutiny by the House and by the Lords. The hon. Member for Neath mentioned that he played a part in that scrutiny. The arrangements were agreed down to the finest detail over several months of negotiations with the trustees of the existing pension schemes. The Government have endeavoured to keep Parliament and industry informed throughout.

The new arrangements have been welcomed in Parliament and by the existing scheme trustees as safeguarding the pension entitlements of past and present British Coal employees. The main concern expressed by the hon. Gentleman relates to the position of employees of small-mine licensees. I repeat that I fully understand his constituency interest in that matter.

Employees of small-mine licensees will be entitled to join the industry-wide scheme only if they are members of the mineworkers pension scheme at the time that British Coal is privatised in late December. In practice, many small-mine employees are unlikely to have that entitlement.

Small-mine licensees are already operating in the private sector. If they participate in the MPS, it is likely to be because until the 1980s licensees were required by British Coal to participate in the scheme. More than 120 licensed operators participated in the past, but the number has fallen to 18 through withdrawals. That is the current figure—not one that might apply between now and the date that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Taylor: I must try to answer the hon. Member for Neath, given that the Adjournment debate was in his name.

Small-mine licensees are not, of course, being privatised—and their employees, in contrast to British Coal employees, are not being transferred to successor owners due to privatisation. As existing private sector operators, those companies have the right to consider withdrawing from the mineworkers pension scheme, as in

[Mr. Taylor]

the past. Their participation is not pursuant to any statutory obligation, although they must take due account of the terms and conditions of employment of their employees. There is no basis for the Government to force them to participate.

There has been a suggestion that the fact that small-mine licensees can choose to stop participating in the MPS represents a loophole in the new arrangements for the industry after privatisation. The hon. Member for Neath used that word, but it is not a loophole. It is only a continuation of the existing position for licensees already in the private sector. Participation in the new industry-wide scheme could not be made an obligation for the existing small-mine licensees.

A key factor underlying the issues debated today is that at present licensed operators make no contributions to the MPS because, like British Coal, they enjoy the benefits of a contributions holiday. Again, that is a point that the hon. Gentleman made. They will be obliged, however, to make employers' contributions of about 10 per cent. of employees' pensionable earnings to the industry-wide MPS if they participate in that scheme. That fact has undoubtedly contributed to recent withdrawals. I acknowledge that the hon. Gentleman mentioned a contributions holiday. I cannot go into the actuarial calculations, but he will know why it is that the contributions holiday in the MPS is not to be carried over to the new industry-wide scheme. That issue was widely discussed in the House.

The present contributions holiday is funded out of the most recent actuarial surplus of assets over liabilities in the MPS. The trustees of the scheme wanted the owners of the coal industry after privatisation to have no connection with it and for there to be no transfer of surplus out of the scheme to the owners. I believe that those wishes have commanded widespread support, not least in Parliament. The new arrangements comply with those wishes. It is inevitable, however, that if there is no transfer of surplus into the new industry-wide scheme, there is no basis for an initial employers' contributions holiday.

I should mention that under the original proposals put forward for discussion in the Government's original paper, the assets of the MPS would have been divided between the closed scheme for pensioners and deferred pensioners and the new industry-wide scheme for continuing employees. There would have been a bulk transfer of assets, including a share of the final surplus to the industry-wide scheme to fund the past-service entitlements of continuing employees. That would probably have enabled the new scheme to offer at least some reduction in employer contributions initially, perhaps attracting greater participation by small-mine licensees. There was, however, strong opposition to that aspect of the consultation paper proposals, from the trustees and British Coal among others. No voices were raised in support. I think that it is true to say that there has been relative silence from Opposition Members on that part of the consultation proposals during the process of discussion.

The House should not hide from the central fact that participation in the industry-wide scheme will be costly for most small-mine operators. In reality they have therefore had no choice but to consider their position. The hon. Gentleman will accept that if we forcibly imposed a burden on them—in fact, we would not be able to do that because they are private operators—they would probably find that it would be possible to employ fewer people in the industry.

Mr. Hain: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Taylor: I shall not give way because I want to answer some more of the hon. Gentleman's questions.

The benefit structure of the MPS has improved over time and has become relatively generous over recent years. I take the opportunity of the debate to urge small-mine operators, if they have withdrawn from the MPS, to make or facilitate satisfactory pension arrangements. I understand that many of them are considering alternative pension arrangements that seem more appropriate to their operations than the new industry-wide scheme. I am told that Betwys Anthracite Ltd., for instance, has set up pension arrangements independent of the MPS.

We hope that small-mine licensees will remain in the MPS, but we understand from the scheme administrators that more of them may wish to withdraw, and we note that fact. As I said, they should ensure that there are proper pension arrangements in place. The industry-wide MPS is likely to have between 5,000 and 6,000 members. There are only about 100 members of the MPS who are currently saying that they may not participate. The proportion may not be as great in the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

The main participants in the industry-wide MPS will be the privatised regional coal companies. They are better placed to take on the contribution requirements of the industry-wide scheme because they were able to factor the cost of the scheme into their financing calculations when constructing their purchase bids. The hon. Gentleman must take carefully into account the differences in size and traditions between licensed mineworkers and the regional coal companies.

Given the time that is left to me in the debate, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman in detail about the various points on linkages and the disability payments that he mentioned. We understand his concerns and I also understand the specific issue that he raised about the Coal Authority. I take those points on board and shall write to the hon. Gentleman. We are concerned about those who work in the small licensed mines outside the British Coal scheme. We hope that the pension benefits will be put in place.

We accept that the hon. Gentleman has a strong constituency concern, but, overall, the pension arrangements for those who are transferring from British Coal to the new privatised companies have been made sound. The Government's proposals for guaranteeing the scheme have met with widespread support. I hope that the hon. Gentleman feels that, in the circumstances, he will put pressure on the individual mine owners to ensure that they make proper provision for his constituents who work in the mines.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 19 December 1994

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Airedale Route

1. **Mr. Sutcliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he intends to take to bring about the speedy completion of the Airedale route through Bingley and Saltaire.

The Minister for Railways and Roads (Mr. John Watts): Excellent progress has been made on the preparation of the A650 Bingley relief road scheme.

The proposed A650 Saltair relief road is at a very early stage of development. The Highways Agency is currently pressing ahead with surveys which will facilitate the development of detailed proposals.

Mr. Sutcliffe: This road is vital to the people of Bradford and Keighley and to their economic success. Will the Minister today guarantee that the road will be completed, after £12 million has already been spent progressing the work thus far? Everyone in the area, of whatever party—including those who drew up the economic strategy of the district—depends on the road. We have read in this morning's press that the Government will need to take transport off the road and put it on to rail. I accept that, but the road is vital to our area and we need guarantees from the Minister today.

Mr. Watts: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that this series of seven schemes is intended to bring a raft of environmental and economic benefits to the communities in the area. He will be aware that two have been completed; five are in preparation. I am pleased to note the hon. Gentleman's support for these schemes, by contrast with the stance of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who reiterated yet again today that the Labour party would impose a moratorium on all road schemes.

Mr. Waller: Is my hon. Friend aware that people find it difficult to understand why the Bingley bypass has only priority 2 status? Some very expensive preliminary works, including the diversion of the Leeds and Liverpool canal, have already been completed. I emphasise to my hon. Friend that the completion of the Airedale route, as soon as humanly possible, is essential to large numbers of businesses in Keighley and the Aire valley, and hence to much employment.

Mr. Watts: My hon. Friend's point is well made. There was, however, a thorough review of the road programme in March this year. As a result of that review, this scheme was placed in the priority 2 category—but I note what he has said, and what my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Sir M. Fox) has said. The latter has already impressed on me the importance of these schemes to his constituency.

Network SouthEast

2. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been invested in the Network SouthEast rail area over the last three years.

Mr. Watts: To March 1994, £1.4 billion at today's prices has been invested in the former Network SouthEast over the three years ended March 1994.

Mr. Merchant: Is my hon. Friend aware that the 15,000 commuters in my constituency have in the past three years seen the biggest investment in their local lines in living memory? Is he aware that that has meant whole new fleets of Networkers being brought in to run the services, a major modernisation of track, improvements to signalling, and a refurbishment programme for local stations? All this has considerably increased the quality of local services.

Mr. Watts: My hon. Friend has almost answered his own question extremely well. I can confirm that investment in 1992-93, which was £558 million, was the highest since Network SouthEast was created in 1985. I am pleased to learn from my hon. Friend that his constituents are benefiting so much from the substantial and worthwhile investment of the past three years.

Ms Glenda Jackson: How long will such investment via subsidy continue for lines that are having difficulty becoming economically viable, to use the Secretary of State's words? It is Railtrack's stated policy that it will not support every route, and that it cannot and should not take into consideration social issues. Just who will be defining policy for the railways in future—or is this another example of the Government not only failing to communicate but failing to think things through?

Mr. Watts: No. The hon. Lady confuses two things. Railtrack and the rolling stock leasing companies will make investments on business grounds. It is the franchising director who commands a substantial budget to be spent on ensuring that socially necessary services continue to be secured for the benefit of the travelling public.

Mr. Haselhurst: On the day when the case for a fifth terminal at Heathrow has been published, is it worth reminding my hon. Friend of the need to think ahead to ensure adequate capacity on the railway line out of Liverpool Street station to Stansted airport and stations in my constituency, because a third track and resignalling will be needed in the next few years?

Mr. Watts: I had the pleasure of travelling on that service when I returned from Stansted airport recently. I note what my hon. Friend says. He will be aware, in the context of airports generally, that the British Airports Authority has commissioned a half a million pound study of rail links to airports. We await that with great interest.

Mr. McLeish: Despite the Minister's complacency about investment in the south-east, can he confirm today that this is the first year since 1940 in which British Rail, or any of the 25 train operating units, has placed no new orders for rolling stock? Will he acknowledge that privatisation is tearing the heart out of the railways? It is affecting morale, service and routes and, of course, it will affect investment in every part of the country. Surely we have a right to expect, after the drubbing of Dudley, to see some humility and sanity from Transport Ministers on the Front Bench *[Interruption.]* The Minister is responding. I enjoy that. Or are they content just to sit back and wait until they see the humiliation of the poll tax, Post Office privatisation and VAT on fuel revisited on Ministers? Will they take action now to protect our railways well into the next century?

Mr. Watts: Neither I nor my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is complacent about investment in the railways. In the past five years, there has been more than £6 billion-worth of investment in the railway as a whole. The hon. Gentleman will know that the financing plans announced at the time of my right hon. and learned Friend's Budget provide for investment to continue at around £1 billion a year—three quarters of a billion pounds funded from taxpayer's resources and one quarter of a billion from the private sector. That is a very substantial and continuing investment programme.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Bearing in mind that the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) told my constituents at the previous general election that the Conservative Government would not bring Networker trains to the north Kent line, may I congratulate my hon. Friends on the massive introduction of Networkers that has taken place over the past two years on that line? Can we be told something of the further extension of Networker trains to the Kent coast line?

Mr. Watts: We hear from my hon. Friends the real benefits that are coming from the substantial investment that has been undertaken and which will continue, in contrast to the empty rhetoric and scaremongering by hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench.

Rural Travel

3. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision he has made to ensure that the vulnerable and elderly can still meet essential travel needs in rural areas following petrol price increases.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Local authorities already have sufficient powers to subsidise the running of additional bus services in rural areas where they see a need. In considering provision of those services, they are required to take into account the transport needs of elderly and disabled people.

Sir David Steel: Is the Minister aware that, following the recent petrol price increases, the local bus company in the Scottish borders has announced fare increases of 8 per cent.—well above the rate for either wage or pension increases? Does he accept that many people in areas that do not have bus services run vehicles that cost less than the annual road fund tax? When will he stop using petrol pricing as a mechanism to check the interests of the environment, and introduce road pricing policies in the cities, where the private car is a luxury not a necessity?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am happy to tell the people of Scotland that the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues made a significant contribution to the increase in petrol prices announced last week when they voted as they did for VAT on fuel. Everybody understands that. It may be an embarrassment to them now, but it was my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor who drew attention to the consequences for the rural areas of the vote that the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues cast.

Mr. Robathan: Has my right hon. Friend seen a report- *[Interruption.]* I am sorry, Madam Speaker, I cannot hear what is being shrieked at me by Opposition Members.

Madam Speaker: I can hear very well. Other hon. Members are suggesting that the hon. Gentleman removes his hands from his pockets when he stands to ask a question.

Mr. Robathan: Thank you for your assistance, Madam Speaker. Should I require any advice on deportment or sartorial elegance I shall come to you because you are an example to us all, but I will not take advice from the scruffy yobbos on the Labour Benches.

Madam Speaker: I have no pockets in which to put my hands. That is why my deportment is so good.

Mr. Robathan: Has my right hon. Friend read the recent report from the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, which recommends large increases in fuel prices? Does he think that that is one means, together with better public transport, by which to encourage a shift away from private cars? Does he think it curious that those who bleat about energy conservation and make political points about it do nothing about implementing measures that will conserve energy?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the Royal Commission's report and some of its consequences. One reason why we want a debate on transport in general and the proposals in particular is that the implementation of some of the proposals and recommendations would have a significant effect on the lives of literally millions of people and would focus in particular on those who live in rural areas. Unlike the Liberal Democrats, we do not have a commitment to a carbon tax, which would make their position even worse.

Public Transport (Greater Manchester)

4. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about improvements to public transport in Greater Manchester.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): Subject to the availability of resources, the Government are ready to fund worthwhile improvements to all forms of transport in Greater Manchester.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Minister realise that the people of Greater Manchester have suffered a decline in the frequency of their train and bus services and a decline in safety standards at stations because of the removal of staff, while the only minor improvement has been the restoration of trams in the centre of the town? If people in Greater Manchester are to enjoy good public transport, that requires substantial investment in at least five or six more lines for the Metrolink.

Mr. Norris: I am not entirely surprised to hear the hon. Gentleman spraying around yet more hundreds of millions of pounds in spending commitments, as the Labour party is prone to do on every occasion. He has an extraordinarily partial view of public transport in Greater Manchester. To describe the Metro as a minor improvement is to turn churlishness into an art form. It is a superb piece of public transport infrastructure, which serves its purpose extremely well. The Passenger Transport Authority has spoken to us about further extensions and when those are ready to be considered in detail, we stand ready to do so.

Mr. Sumberg: Would not one way of providing more money for public transport in Greater Manchester be to abandon the disastrous proposal for the M62 relief road? That would not only generate resources, but ensure a feeling of great relief in my constituency and end the planning blight that presently exists as a result of the proposals.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend makes his point in his own way.

Mr. Meacher: As the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment report published today makes it clear that the economics of many road building schemes are unviable—that includes not only the M25, but the M62 road widening—will the Minister answer the question that he has just dodged and tell us whether he will now call a halt to any further work on the M62 road widening?

As the logic of the SACTRA report is that any cut in road building will only increase congestion unless investment is shifted into alternative public transport systems, will the hon. Gentleman now concentrate instead on extending the excellent Metrolink in Manchester and on financing the trans-Pennine rail link, which would be far cheaper than the road works on the M62, would be far more popular and would do far more to relieve congestion?

Mr. Norris: On the hon. Gentleman's latter point, as I told his hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett), the Manchester authorities have—unfortunately, at a late stage—brought forward plans for the second extension to the Metro system. We have said that we will be perfectly happy to examine those in detail, although no allocation has been made in respect of 1995-96 because it is not anticipated that work would start by that time, so to that extent the application is somewhat premature.

On the hon. Gentleman's more general point, my right hon. Friend has made it perfectly clear that the advice contained in the SACTRA report is valuable and entirely consistent with a number of the principles that the Department has been utilising for many years.

If I may say so, the real difficulty that has emerged from the matter is the extraordinary commitment of the hon. Gentleman, and indeed his hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish, to a complete moratorium on road building. That has already got the hon. Gentleman into trouble with his hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Sutcliffe), who has just told the House how much he wants a road scheme. If the hon. Gentleman looks around him, he will find that every one of his hon. Friends favours abandoning the road programme in general—but not when it relates to their own constituencies.

Fenchurch Street Line

5. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects that the Fenchurch Street line will be privatised; and which authority will have responsibility for reviewing fare levels.

Mr. Watts: In 1995. The franchising director may include provisions in franchise agreements to ensure the reasonableness of fares.

Sir Teddy Taylor: For many years, commuters from Southend-on-Sea have enjoyed a rather inadequate and erratic service; the line has become known as the misery line. Will the Minister do all in his power to ensure that privatisation brings real benefits to the commuters of Southend? In particular, will the Government ensure that the financial arrangements are published shortly, so that we can attract a wide range of bidders?

Mr. Watts: The franchising director will publish further details of the first eight franchises early in the new year. My hon. Friend will know that £83 million has been spent on major signalling works on the line; I hope that, after years of misery, his constituents will now start to notice some improvement in the standard of service.

Mr. Mackinlay: Will the Secretary of State make it a condition of the franchises that no intermediate stations are closed, that the same volume of trains travel along the lines each week and that the length of trains is not shortened? Will the Minister give an undertaking that that will be a condition of the franchise for the Fenchurch Street line?

Mr. Watts: The hon. Gentleman will be interested to note that, for the first time ever, the franchises let by the franchising director will include provisions concerning passenger comfort. As has been made clear many times in the House and elsewhere, the franchises will be based broadly on existing timetables. That cannot mean, however, that they will replicate those timetables in every detail, because that would not provide scope for the private-sector franchise operator to improve the service that is offered.

Mr. Channon: Does my hon. Friend agree that the privatisation of the line will give travellers the opportunity to benefit from a more punctual service, with reasonable rolling stock and reasonable fares? Is that not a great step forward?

Mr. Watts: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right.

M11 Link Road

6. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the treatment by the Highways Agency and its agents of residents and other individuals along the route of the M11 link road.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am confident that the Highways Agency has treated residents with every consideration and everyone in accordance with the law.

Mr. Cohen: Has not the cost of policing and security on the MII link road now reached £6 million, and is not the amount rising at a rate of more than £500,000 a month? During a recent week-long operation in Claremont road, which cost more than £2 million, were not many of my constituents bullied—including vulnerable people, and others whose only crime was living on the line of route? Should not the Minister give an early Christmas present to the long-suffering residents of Leyton, and many others in this country, by promising that there will never again be another rotten road scheme like this in Britain?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not stand up and say thank you to the police, who carried out an operation—on behalf of the people whom he represents—against those who decided unilaterally to break the law. May I remind him that three public inquiries about the route have taken place, and that what the Highways Agency did was entirely in line with statutory provisions that had been democratically confirmed three times?

Let me tell the hon. Gentleman that £4 million of Highways Agency money—Department of Transport money—that could have been better used to provide safety schemes and bypasses has been used up in this operation, along with £2 million of police money, including hundreds of man hours, which could have been better used to provide security on the streets in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. And he has not even had the decency to say thank you to the police.

Mr. Cash: Although my right hon. Friend makes a good point about the M11, does he accept that the Highways Agency should deal with a national problem: the gridlock that is emerging in regions such as that covered by the M6 near my constituency of Stafford and that is causing massive congestion, not only in Stafford but on the M6? Does he agree that we should have electronically operated signs on approaches to motorways such as the M11 and M6 to ensure that people do not go on to motorways in the first place and proper diversionary roads in constituencies that are affected by people who wish to get off the motorway, as Michael Carey of Stafford borough council recommended recently?

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has abused the question on the Order Paper. I allowed him to proceed because he mentioned the Highways Agency and he kept mentioning the M11. But it was a total abuse of today's Question Time. If the Secretary of State could answer the question in half the time that the hon. Gentleman took to ask it, I should be extremely grateful.

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is right to point out the need to provide drivers with more information than is available when they are in their cars and on motorways. I hope that he will be encouraged to know that I have increased the budget for that next year by about 20 per cent.

Ms Walley: Considering all the figures again—all the millions of pounds that have been spent on security—is not the real issue that the money for the roads programme is being spent on the basis of a formula that is rigged towards roads and that is not part of an integrated transport policy? Will the Secretary of State justify this road and all the other roads in the programme on the basis of the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment report published today? Why does he not come to the House and allow us debate its contents with him?

Dr. Mawhinney: The hon. Lady will have to decide on which side of the road she wishes to walk. Last week, she condemned us because we did not spend £1.5 billion more on local road schemes. Today, she wants a moratorium on all road building. She has to make up her mind on which side of the street she wants to walk.

Cowden Inquiry

7. **Mr. Wolfson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make public the findings of the inquiry which has recently opened into the Cowden train crash.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Health and Safety Executive expects to publish the inspector's report in the spring.

Mr. Wolfson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the frequency of service on the Cowden line is only just over one half of what it was before the accident and that that is due to drivers' lack of confidence in the system? The provision of cab secure radios could go a long way to restoring that confidence. Will provision for them be made?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that both British Rail and Railtrack committed themselves at the public inquiry to putting cab secure radios on the Uckfield line. I shall encourage them to do so as soon as possible.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the Minister give hon. Members an undertaking that if the report makes it clear that, because of the cost of privatisation, safety measures are not being put in place either in the Cowden region or elsewhere, he will make money available to ensure that all safety measures are implemented as soon as possible? Some of evidence at the inquiry shows that British Rail is resiling from original decisions that it took some time ago.

Dr. Mawhinney: Clearly, as a member of the Select Committee on Transport, the hon. Lady will understand that I shall not comment on evidence that has been presented to the Committee, not least because the report will come to me in due course. I am happy to assure her, however, that my commitment to safety being paramount is unchanged.

London River Crossings

8. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for an additional river crossing between Dartford and Blackwall; and if he will make a statement.

9. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will decide on the new route for the east London river crossing.

Mr. Norris: Several proposals have been made, including alternatives to the previously planned east London river crossing. I am still considering how those proposals should be taken forward.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware of the considerable congestion at the Blackwall tunnel every day and of the fact that my constituents are getting rather cross because their journey to work is bad? Furthermore, does he agree that the development and regeneration of the riverside, including the Thamesmead, Erith and Belvedere areas of my constituency, desperately require another crossing point to make it feasible for industry to relocate there?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend makes two very important points. First, he draws attention to the Blackwall tunnel, about which I can sympathise with him. He will be aware of our efforts, which mean that vehicles do not now collide with traffic from the north-bound tunnel. Nevertheless, we still have a problem trying to avoid the stoppages that occur too frequently. I can promise my hon. Friend that I am considering the problem urgently to see what more we can do.

Secondly, I endorse the general principle that he outlined which is that, essentially, the river crossings are about the economic regeneration of areas north and south of the river, areas that are represented by him and by other hon. Members. I am sure that he will agree that the appropriate outcome of our consultation on the various options will be a solution that local authorities themselves accept as being in their best interests in getting the right balance between any environmental impact and the economic regeneration which we all agree is so urgently needed.

Mr. Townsend: Number 9, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: It has been called. The supplementary question is now required.

Mr. Townsend: When deciding the future of the east London river crossing, will my hon. Friend persuade the Secretary of State to pay far more attention to the crucial environmental aspects of the route and, in particular, will he ensure that Oxleas wood is not damaged in any way? May I invite my hon. Friend and his dog to walk the route with me on new year's day?

Mr. Norris: His hon. Friend does not have a dog but I am sure that I could hire one for the day. Were I not otherwise committed, my hon. Friend's offer would not be unattractive. I have, in fact, walked that route a number of times. My hon. Friend will know that some time ago—nearly two years ago, I think—I made it clear that we would not be proceeding with the Oxleas wood scheme, for precisely the reasons that he has outlined. I did not think that it was an appropriate way to proceed but, as he knows, what remains at issue is the strategic objective that the east London river crossing was planned to deliver—that is, a link between the A13 and the A2, which remains of considerable importance for the economic regeneration of the region, as I said earlier.

Mr. Spearing: Is the Minister aware that I have opposed the east London river crossing unless an extension of the docklands light railway were to run across it? As for the objective that he has just outlined—joining two trunk roads—would it not be good value for money, in the light of today's report, to extend the DLR by a single line tunnel under the Thames to relieve the congestion at Blackwall and on the other road crossings, which are a second priority for east London at the moment?

Mr. Norris: Without speculating on how the crossing might be achieved, I acknowledge the appropriateness of the hon. Gentleman's observation. Clearly, if the DLR were to be extended on whatever crossing were provided for the road, the value, certainly in terms of value for money, would be in attaching the rail crossing to the road crossing. If the consequence of that were, for example, the ability to revitalise Thamesmead, which I know is of concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett), to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) and to others, that would clearly commend it as an option. However, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that local authorities in the area, especially Bexley, Greenwich and others, have been concerned about the impact of locally generated traffic on such a crossing, and it will be necessary to take their concern into account. That is what the consultation process is for.

Mr. Austin-Walker: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) for inviting the Minister to my constituency. Does the Minister agree that today's report by the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment casts severe doubt on the supposed economic advantages of the east London river crossing? What about the environmental damage that would be caused in an area where pollution already exceeds European guideline levels? Does the Minister not think that now is the time to put some resources into the railway crossing at Woolwich and into the provision of a Woolwich metro, which would do so much to regenerate the Thames gateway north and south of the river?

Mr. Norris: On the first point, I do not believe that the SACTRA report has a significant implication for the scheme about which the hon. Gentleman is talking. On the second point about the environmental consequences of the scheme, which is a slightly different issue, I remind him of what I said earlier. No one doubts that infrastructure of any sort will have some environmental implications. The decision for him, for his constituents, for his local authority and the local authorities on the other side of the river, given that there is widespread agreement that we need more crossings of the river to facilitate economic regeneration, is how to balance the environmental consequences of the scheme and the economic consequences, and the job mobility that goes with that, of not providing the scheme.

The Woolwich metro is a good scheme. It is one of the options at which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I will look in the context of London river crossings. At this stage, it remains a good scheme, on which we are working.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Perhaps my hon. Friend would like to meet a cross-party deputation to discuss the Woolwich rail link, which would make a great deal of difference to all. Does he accept that about four fifths of extra traffic growth comes from increased economic prosperity and not from building new roads? If we want east London, north and south of the river, to share in that prosperity, we must have the crossings that we are contemplating. Will my hon. Friend try to ensure that whatever comes across the Thames does not turn south-west towards Brighton, but goes towards Dover, as that would meet the crossing's published purpose?

Mr. Norris: I will, of course, meet a delegation if my hon. Friend cares to bring one. If it is an all-party delegation, it will be so much the better for that. I note his other observations, and I believe that there is a great deal in what he says.

Public Transport (London)

10. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on public transport fare prices in London.

Mr. Norris: Public transport fares in London strike a reasonable balance between the farepayer and the taxpayer in meeting the costs of improving and maintaining the system. It is right that those who use the services and benefit directly from them pay their share of the system's costs.

Mrs. Roche: What does the Minister have to say to all the Londoners who, because of cuts in the Budget will, in January, face fare increases of, on average, three times the rate of inflation? Is it not about time that the people who use the transport system in London get some benefit from it and do not get clobbered, yet again, by this Government?

Mr. Norris: That is the most extraordinary economic analysis I have ever heard. I am delighted to be able to confirm that, such is the low level of inflation, as a result of the policies of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor, any increase in real terms looks like a sizeable multiple of the rate of inflation. I am delighted to put it on record that in reality—I note the hon. Lady's amnesia on this point—this is the lowest increase in cash terms in eight years. People in London understand clearly how important it is to have a reliable service, and they know that that relies on investment. Given the record levels of investment already coming from the taxpayer, it is not unreasonable that farepayers should make their contribution.

Mr. Ottaway: Inasmuch as fares affect my hon. Friend's budget, may I congratulate him on finding room in his budget for funding the Croydon light railway—the tram link in Croydon? It will do much to enhance Croydon's prosperity and to regenerate the area.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those remarks. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was delighted to be able to say that funds had been reserved in our budget this year for that scheme to go ahead, subject to satisfactory bids being received from the private sector.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Would London farepayers not be happier about paying their fares if the Government had kept their promises on investment, which last year was £130 million short of what was promised in 1991 and which next year will be one third down on what London Underground has asked for? The money saved on the road-building programme in the budget has not been transferred to public transport, which is what the public have asked for and what today's report has confirmed as useful and necessary.

Mr. Norris: I am entirely satisfied that the public transport services in London have received record levels of investment over the past four years under this Government, in stark contrast to the pitiful levels of investment available during the 1970s under the Labour Government. It is really quite staggering to see that, in today's money, the Labour party was investing under £100 million a year in London Transport services, in contrast to nearly half a billion pounds on LT alone and another half a billion pounds on Network SouthEast today.

Mr. Meacher: When will the Minister stop being so self-satisfied and wake up to the fact that London is now the most expensive capital in the European Union for commuters—more expensive even than Paris, Brussels or Rome—and that London fares are now almost twice the European average? What sense does it make to push up London's rail, bus and tube fares next month for the second year running by more than double the rate of inflation, since all that will do is force more commuters into cars and increase the levels of pollution and congestion? When will he call a halt to what is really at the root of this action—the Government's plans to remove all operating subsidy from rail services to the south-east, which an independent report recently predicted will increase fares by a further massive 65 per cent. over the next decade?

Mr. Norris: The one thing on which I will take no lessons from the hon. Gentleman is smugness and self-satisfaction. If there is one person who epitomises that on the Opposition Benches, it is the hon. Gentleman. As for his ludicrous scaremongering about fares and public transport services in the south-east, he really should know better. But then, we have come to expect no better from the hon. Gentleman. Perhaps the only important statistic he appears to have overlooked is that when the Transport Research Laboratory looked exactly at what would happen if, for example, fares were reduced, it concluded:

> "cutting fares by 50 per cent. reduces traffic and emissions by only 1 per cent. to 2 per cent."

That is the reality and it is a reality which, of course, the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues conveniently ignore, as they do on so many subjects where the facts contradict their own ludicrous assertions.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

Accounts (Department of Transport)

30. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission what resources are made available by the Public Accounts Commission for the National Audit Office to audit the accounts of the Department of Transport.

Sir Peter Hordern (Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission): The National Audit Office budget of £36.5 million for 1994-95 includes provision for financial audit of the Department of Transport, its executive agencies and its sponsored bodies and for value-for-money investigations. The forward investigation programme of the NAO is a matter for the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Cohen: I thank the Chairman for that answer. May I ask him to have a look at the audit procedures in relation to the Department of Transport's spending on private detectives to spy on anti-road protestors? As far as I understand it, it initially thought that that spending was ultra vires, then subsequently allowed the Treasury to approve it retrospectively. Surely, no one else in the public sector—for example, councillors—would be allowed to approve retrospectively expenditure which was regarded as ultra vires. Surely that is dubious audit practice, which should be looked at.

Sir Peter Hordern: I will ask the Comptroller and Auditor General to have a look at the point that the hon. Gentleman raises, but, as I understand it, the Department of Transport has introduced revised contract procedures and the Treasury Solicitor will be approached and asked for advice as to whether detective agencies should be hired and who would be responsible for appointment of such agencies. I understand that that is the position. If the hon. Gentleman would care to write to me, I shall try to let him have further information.

National Audit Office

31. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission if he will make more funds available for the National Audit Office to extend its oversight of bodies falling within the ambit of the Department for Education.

Sir Peter Hordern: The National Audit Office budget of £36.5 million for 1994-95 includes provisions for financial and value-for-money audits at the Department for Education. The Comptroller and Auditor General has access rights to all universities. He is also the auditor of the funding councils established in 1993 for higher education and for further education in England, Scotland and Wales. A report on the financial health of higher education institutions in England was published earlier this month. Under the Education Act 1993, the Comptroller and Auditor General has access rights to grant-maintained schools and is required to report on his work annually to Parliament. The first report under those arrangements was published in August.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that reply, speedy though it was, perhaps of necessity. Will he ask the National Audit Office to provide more funds so that grant-maintained schools can be audited more effectively? Under the present arrangements—it is made clear in the report to which the right hon. Gentleman referred—19 out of 20 grant-maintained schools were noted to have financial weaknesses. Three of them had qualified opinions from their own auditors. In Wales, serious reservations have been expressed about the book keeping of about half a dozen grant-maintained schools. Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the NAO provides more money, or perhaps gets the Audit Commission involved, as it is in so many aspects of local government?

Sir Peter Hordern: As for the NAO and the Comptroller and Auditor General, the Public Accounts Committee is satisfied with the forward programme and with its budgets. I understand that the PAC has a forward programme for the investigation of several topics. Perhaps I might write to the Chairman of the PAC, who I see in his place, to draw his attention to the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Westminster Hall

32. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what financial provision has been made by the Commission, to improve the access into Westminster Hall for disabled people via St. Stephen's entrance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. A. J. Beith (on behalf of the House of Commons Commission): No financial provision has been made to improve access to Westminster Hall for disabled people via St. Stephen's entrance because arrangements are made for access via Carriage Gates and New Palace Yard. A stairlift gives access to the Grand Committee Room, and other levels in the Palace can be reached via Star Chamber Court and the No. 1 lift. The Accommodation and Works Committee is currently considering schemes to improve access for the disabled, and a number of schemes have been included in the programme of works for next year.

Mr. Cox: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that that reply will be received with utter disgust in the House and throughout the country? Does the right hon. Gentleman understand that there are many people who have problems with walking, irrespective of age, who make their way into Westminster Hall via St. Stephen's entrance? Is he further aware that there are 24 extremely steep steps either to climb down or to climb up, which present enormous problems to many people? It is unbelievable, as we approach the 1995, that the Mother of Parliament cannot afford to provide proper access for disabled people. Will the right hon. Gentleman discuss the importance of such provision with his colleagues?

Mr. Beith: I understand that what has persuaded the hon. Gentleman's colleagues and others who are members of the Accommodation and Works Committee to make access for disabled people—it is not available for other members of the public—via Carriage Gates is the practical difficulty of providing good access for the disabled through St. Stephen's entrance, for the very reason that he has given. If the hon. Gentleman has thought of a solution to the problem, I suggest that he directs it to the members of the Accommodation and Works Committee.

Mr. Cormack: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), the said Committee has spent hours discussing the matter? One of the problems that we must face is that, when this historic building was built, it was not equipped, obviously, for access for the disabled. We must reconcile keeping the building and allowing proper access to it.

Mr. Beith: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making the point clear. The Commission has shown no hesitation in making financial provision for whatever improvements to assist access for the disabled which its Committees recommend to it.

Live Feed of Proceedings

34. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee when financial provision will be made for a live feed of proceedings to be provided to hon. Members in their offices.

Mr. Paul Channon (Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee): Provision for cabling the Palace and outbuildings for the live feed of proceedings is already in the works services estimates. By the end of the 1995 summer recess, I estimate that about 550 Members will be able to receive the live feed.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No supplementary question.

Madam Speaker: Brilliant.

Christmas Trees

35. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed representing the House of Commons Commission, what further plans he has for expenditure on additional Christmas trees in the vicinity of Parliament.

Mr. Channon: I have been asked to reply. None.

Mr. Banks: Merry Christmas, Scrooge. I am very disappointed with that reply.

I am grateful to whoever was responsible for the tasteful tree in Westminster Hall, with its multi-coloured twinkling lights. I must tell the right hon. Gentleman, however, that it is not properly dressed. There is no fairy at the top and there are no balls on it, although the Government have dropped so many this year that the tree could have been covered with them from top to bottom.

We could also have a Santa Claus grotto in Westminster Hall, with the Prime Minister sitting in it saying, "Ho, ho, ho" and handing out peerages, knighthoods and places on quangos to his friends in the City. If we are going to go down the pan in this country, let us at least go down the pan with a bit of fun and in the appropriate festive mood.

Mr. Channon: It is abundantly clear that the hon. Gentleman is in an extremely festive mood. If he has some serious suggestions about where there should be more Christmas trees, naturally I will ask my Committee to consider them.

Staffing

37. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will list the staffing levels in (a) security, (b) health and safety and (c) works in each of the last three years.

Mr. Beith: The figures for staffing levels for the three years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94 requested by the hon. Gentleman are as follows: security staff 421, 415 and 407 respectively; health and safety two, two and two and the works directorate 184, 181 and 103. In addition, there are a number of other staff whose duties involve aspects of security or health and safety.

Mr. Steen: Is it not true that there are now three buzz words—safety, security and hygiene? If one mentions any of those words in the Palace of Westminster, the people with the public purse get glazed eyes, reach for their wallet and are immediately prepared to shell out whatever money is asked for under those three heads. Should we look into the working practices in the Palace of Westminster and consider bringing in one of the better management consultant firms to examine whether this place is overmanned, whether there are too many people in security and administration and whether we could save money in the Palace of Westminster to show that we set standards in this place which others can follow?

Mr. Beith: Whenever accidents occur in any of the three sectors to which the hon. Gentleman refers, the form of questioning to which those who are responsible in any organisation are subjected is quite different from the question that the hon. Gentleman has asked today. The House of Commons Commission, as an employer, must have regard to the safety of its employees in all those respects. However, at the same time, it seeks to pursue cost-effectiveness, and the staff inspector's work assisted in that. Where appropriate, it takes outside advice.

Parliamentary Data And Video Network

38. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee what plans he has to finance the expansion of the parliamentary data and video network; and when hon. Members will be able to input data on to the network.

Mr. Channon: Following approval by the House of the Information Committee's report on the parliamentary data and video network on 30 June, the Finance and Services Committee and the House of Commons Commission have approved the necessary funding for the installation of the full PDVN. Members can input data into the network immediately they become users.

Mr. Bruce: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Will any finance be available to provide inputting devices on to the network and to allow the use of the network for parliamentary papers and other information, which would cut down on the enormous printing bills in this place and, perhaps, save a few Christmas trees for the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has raised an important and interesting point, about which I think that I had better write to him. The whole question of printing needs careful study and I shall consider my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mr. Waller: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is helpful to my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) that the House has endorsed the report of the Information Committee, which allows any hon. Member who has a modem to have access to the network, whether or not that person is in a building which is directly linked to it?

Mr. Channon: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that very helpful point.

Disabled Facilities

39. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee what new proposals he has for expenditure to improve facilities for the disabled in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Channon: The Finance and Services Committee has approved expenditure of £220,000 in 1995-96 on improvements to facilities for the disabled in the Palace of Westminster. Further sums will be available in subsequent years.

Mr. Flynn: What progress has been made in providing facilities for wheelchair users who work in this place, including catering staff, civil servants who cannot gain access to the Box, which limits their chances of promotion, and hon. Members who are wheelchair bound?

Mr. Channon: As the hon. Gentleman is probably aware, a special report by a firm of architects who are specialists in this work was produced to deal with the whole question of disabled people in the Palace of Westminster. I understand that the Accommodation and Works Committee has recently considered the report and it will come forward with recommendations. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Finance and Services Committee has never been backward in providing money to help disabled people.

Mr. Jessel: How about facilities for the mentally disabled?

Mr. Channon: I shall consider my hon. Friend's suggestion with the seriousness that it deserves.

Mr. Barnes: The failure to offer access to the Palace of Westminster for disabled people was revealed at no time more sharply than during the debates on the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, when many disabled people wanted to be in the Gallery to listen to the debates. As a private Member's Bill, the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, will be debated on 10 February and as the Government are planning to produce their own Bill, can special arrangements, which could be built on in the future, be made to enable the disabled to have access to the House, because the paradox is that that legislation calls for access to buildings? The disabled should also have access to the House.

Mr. Channon: I have a great deal of sympathy for that point of view. Perhaps the hon. Member will address his remarks to the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell), whose Committee is considering the disabled. We would certainly be only too anxious to advance reasonable sums of finance for that important cause.

Christmas Decorations

40. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee what plans he has for further Christmas decorations in the Palace of Westminster; at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: I am sorry to tell my hon. Friend that there are no plans to put up further Christmas decorations in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Greenway: I share the pleasure of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) at the Christmas trees that you, Madam Speaker, arranged for New Palace Yard and Westminster Hall. I respectfully remind the hon. Gentleman that at the top of a Christmas tree there should be a star—

Mr. Tony Banks: A red star!

Mr. Greenway: The Bethlehem star should be at the top of a Christmas tree, rather than a doll.

Perhaps funds could run to providing the hon. Member for Newham, North-West with a bow tie for Christmas, with flashing coloured lights on it, as that would be a permanent pleasure to him and to visitors to the House.

Mr. Channon: I am not sure that I can say anything further.

Members' Staff

41. **Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy to extend parliamentary allowances to allow the full-time employment, at standard rates of pay, of at least one personal assistant, one research assistant and one constituency case worker for each hon. Member on the basis of direct payment of such salaries, national insurance and pension.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have no plans to introduce such a system. I believe that the majority of hon. Members would prefer the flexibility of the existing office costs allowance.

Mr. MacShane: Dear, oh dear! I had hoped that the Lord President would act as Father Christmas to us today.

Since I was elected to the House six months ago, I have been amazed by the third-world working conditions and staffing arrangements for hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber. I have to operate in an office in which one could not swing a dead mouse. I am pleased to see that the Minister for Transport in London agrees with me. I believe that those conditions are a deliberate means of preventing scrutiny of the Executive. All I am asking for is what an ordinary person in our job should have: a secretary, a researcher and someone to help with the constituency case work.

Mr. Winnick: A press officer.

Mr. MacShane: No, I do not need a press officer.

The Lord President and a small number of his colleagues will shortly be sitting on the Opposition Benches and I suggest that they should make preparations now for that eventuality.

Mr. Newton: I had some difficulty in discerning all of the hon. Gentleman's points because of the Christmas background noise, but perhaps I can make three points. First, if the hon. Gentleman thinks that the conditions in the House are, to use his words, "third world", he should have seen what it was like when I came here 20 years ago. Secondly, it was decided recently—I cannot honestly claim as much credit for it as I would like since the House defeated me on the subject—to increase significantly the office costs allowance of hon. Members. Thirdly, to echo what I said in my original answer, it was made very clear in the debate on that increase that hon. Members value the flexibility of the existing arrangements.

In the spirit of the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I cannot offer him very much for Christmas, although at the moment there appears to be a vacant space at the top of a tree.

Mr. Dunn: Does my right hon. Friend agree that parliamentary allowances should also reflect the number of electors in the constituency of each hon. Member?

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Newton: I sense some support for my hon. Friend's suggestion—presumably it comes from those hon. Members who have constituencies like mine where the population has risen dramatically. I would not want to be the Leader of the House who attempted to justify that distinction in a clear-cut manner.

Sitting Days

42. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what has been the number of sitting days in the Commons for the Session 1993-94.

Mr. Newton: The number of sitting days in 1993-94 was 154.

Mr. Skinner: Set against the background that most people who have a job outside this place probably work more than 220 days in a given year, why should Members of Parliament discuss later today a four-day week for themselves? If we could argue for a four-day week for all those workers outside, we could mop up the 4 million people on the dole. Let us get our priorities right and look after our constituents, not ourselves.

Mr. Newton: We seem to have moved a long way from the Christmas spirit that was shown when the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) spoke. My answer is not very different from what I have said to the hon. Gentleman before: he may have his way of working—that is a matter for him—but others have theirs, which includes doing an enormous amount away from Westminster. Most Members of Parliament work a six or seven-day week.

Members' Workload

43. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what studies have been made comparing the workload of hon. Members of the House with members of the legislatures within the United States of America, Canada, Australia and Germany; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The evidence of the Select Committee on the sittings of the House made some comparisons between the sittings of this House and those of some other legislatures. I am not aware of other studies.

Mr. Mackinlay: While the House sits more than most other legislatures in the democratic western world, is it not a fact that they do half the work that we do because they are parts of federal systems? Does the Lord President agree that, although we try to do a lot more, we do it badly because we are overloaded when compared to Congress, the German Länder, and our Canadian and Australian counterparts?

Mr. Newton: Despite his attempt to justify the thrust of his question, the hon. Gentleman makes the key point. He has obviously looked at the work and found that this House sits more than almost any other. It certainly does not sit less.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the House of Commons has more Members of Parliament in relation to population than most other countries? Did we not miss an opportunity to reduce the number when we introduced the boundary changes?

Mr. Newton: I do not know whether my hon. Friend will be the first in the line of volunteers. That is a matter for him.

Prison Security

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about prison security.

I am today publishing the report of Sir John Woodcock's inquiry into recent events at Her Majesty's Prison Whitemoor, and the report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons, His Honour Judge Tumim, of his inspection there earlier in the year.

Sir John Woodcock's report reveals a dreadful state of affairs at Whitemoor. I shall tell the House this afternoon what happened, the extent of the problems that exist, and the radical action which I believe needs to be taken to remedy them.

I turn first to what happened. On Friday, 9 September six prisoners attempted to escape from Whitemoor. The six prisoners were category A inmates who were held in the special secure unit. Shortly after eight o'clock in the evening, the prisoners, who were in possession of two guns, got out of the special secure unit and scaled the perimeter wall of the prison. A prison officer was injured by a gunshot during the escape.

All six prisoners were recaptured speedily. Four were apprehended almost immediately they got over the wall. The other two prisoners were arrested by the police about half a mile away from the prison. I pay tribute to the actions of the prison staff and police officers who apprehended these armed and dangerous men.

The following day, I appointed Sir John Woodcock, formerly Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, to conduct an inquiry. His terms of reference were: to inquire into all the circumstances surrounding the escape of six prisoners from the special secure unit of Whitemoor prison on the evening of Friday 9 September 1994; to report his conclusions to the Home Secretary; and to make recommendations on any action that should be taken to avoid a recurrence.

On 22 September, police officers conducting comprehensive searches at the prison discovered about one pound of Semtex explosive and three detonators. The find was made within a sealed storage container, which was within the perimeter of the prison but outside the special secure unit and other prison accommodation. Sir John Woodcock agreed that his inquiry should consider how those materials came into the prison.

There was an immediate need to reinforce security at Whitemoor and throughout the Prison Service. The following steps were taken for that purpose.

The special secure unit at Whitemoor was closed. An extensive programme to improve physical security at the prison was instituted, including reinforcement of the prison perimeter fence and provision of additional closed circuit cameras. That programme also includes the strengthening of the perimeter of the special secure unit itself, with additional alarm and detection devices. Additional searching facilities are being installed in the special secure unit, with an X-ray machine and metal detecting portal. The unit will not reopen until the full programme has been completed in the spring.

Full searches of all dispersal prisons holding high security prisoners were undertaken. Detailed specialist security audits were carried out at all special secure units. All prisons holding category A prisoners were instructed to ensure strict enforcement of the searching procedures that are set out in the Prison Service manual on security.

Security was reviewed at all dispersal prisons, local prisons and category B training prisons, using each establishment's security audit; and all prison governors were instructed to re-examine their physical and procedural security measures.

I turn now to the conclusions reached by Sir John Woodcock. I am extremely grateful to him, especially for the speed and thoroughness with which he conducted the inquiry.

The report conveys a devastating picture of the regime in the special secure unit at Whitemoor. Sir John concludes in paragraph 9.30:

> "everything which could have gone wrong has in fact done so".

Sir John found that tension was high at the unit from its opening in 1991. He says at paragraph 9.7:

> "The Special Secure Unit lasted only three days from its opening before it suffered the first of many challenges from the inmates".

That confrontation was about the searching of visitors, following which prisoners were allowed to get what they wanted, and that, in Sir John's words,

> "set the tone of ensuing prison officer-inmate relationships".

He went on in paragraph 9.8:

> "The episode represented a victory for inmate power which was the foundation of more to follow".

The inquiry found many loopholes in the practices and procedures adopted at the prison. Paragraph 9.4 states:

> "At times it was difficult to find something being done in accordance with the Manuals."

Sir John also found that the amount of property allowed to prisoners made the searching of cells impractical, but statistical returns purported to show that searches had been fully carried out as required by the Prison Service security manual.

The report also highlights significant management failures. Managers in the prison should have known what was going on. The report also identifies a number of instances when Prison Service headquarters failed to provide the governors with the clarity and strength of support that they had a right to expect.

My first and overriding aim is to put right that which has gone so badly wrong. The Woodcock report makes 64 recommendations under 13 headings. I accept all of them. They cover the need to improve surveillance and observation; to improve the control of prisoners' property and the searching of their cells; to tighten up security procedures for visits and the searching of staff; to improve arrangements for the transfer of inmates' property; to improve security arrangements for new prison construction; to strengthen physical security measures at Whitemoor; to use dogs more effectively; to review the procedure for opening new prisons; to review inmate privileges; to improve staff selection and training; and to improve the effectiveness of management and supervision.

Many of those recommendations either have been or are being implemented. I have asked the Prison Service to prepare by the end of January a detailed timetable for each recommendation and the Prison Service has undertaken to provide that. I intend to publish that timetable except where there are security implications.

[Mr. Michael Howard]

I have also considered whether more can be done. I have concluded that it is necessary to go beyond the security recommendations contained in the report. Three additional specific measures will be taken.

First, a more systematic method of recording and evaluating intelligence and security information on staff who might present a security risk will be introduced. Advance warning is clearly one of the most effective means of preventing escape attempts. Secondly, staff in high-security units will be equipped with personal alarms. Thirdly, the walls and fences of high-security units will be reinforced further with additional alarm, detection and anti-climbing devices.

Those measures are designed to address immediately the weaknesses identified by Sir John Woodcock. But I believe that, if public confidence is to be restored, it is essential to go further. An independent assessment is needed to create that confidence. That needs to examine thoroughly every aspect of security, identify any remaining deficiencies, and ensure that they are dealt with.

I am therefore appointing General Sir John Learmont, formerly Quartermaster General for the Army, to conduct a comprehensive, independent and authoritative review of security throughout the Prison Service. His terms of reference will be, in the light of the report of the inquiry into the attempted escape from Her Majesty's Prison Whitemoor on 9 September 1994, to review physical security and security procedures in the Prison Service in England and Wales, and to make recommendations.

Sir John will start work immediately. I shall publish his findings, subject to the overriding need not to publish anything which might compromise security. He will be assisted by two expert assessors. One will be Sir John Woodcock. The other will be someone with operational experience in the Prison Service.

Sir John Woodcock's report states that only closed visits would provide completely secure conditions, but he also acknowledges that there are other factors to be taken into account. I propose to ask Sir John Learmont to consider the need for closed visits in special secure units as part of his inquiry. I am also asking Sir John to report to me in 12 months on how far the recommendations of the Woodcock report have been implemented, as Sir John Woodcock suggests should be done.

In addition to security, Sir John Woodcock's report also identifies certain practices which were part of the prison regime, but which I and most hon. Members will consider unacceptable. Those have now ceased. The abuse of telephones identified in the report has now stopped. Controls on the keeping of possessions by prisoners in special secure units have been made more rigorous. The practice of prison officers going shopping at the behest of prisoners has also stopped. Purchases will take place only through the prison canteen. Luxury items will not be allowed.

The House will recall that I am already on record as saying that prisoners must not enjoy privileges as a matter of right, but should have to earn them. The Prison Service corporate plan, which was published in April 1994, already commits the service to put such a system in place. Idle or disruptive prisoners should not enjoy exactly the same conditions as those who are diligent and co-operative. Privileges such as additional visits or extra time out of cells should be earned by good behaviour and lost by misbehaviour. The new system will be fully in place by the end of next year.

As part of that new approach, the amounts of private cash that prisoners are permitted to spend will be reduced, and in time the use of unearned private cash will be eliminated altogether.

The measures that I have announced today will deal with the problems identified in the Woodcock report—that is, those relating to security procedures in our prisons. But it is clear from the report that many, if not most, of the problems at Whitemoor arose not because procedures and instructions were not in place, but because they were not obeyed. As paragraph 9.27 of the report points out:

> "It could be said that what the Prison Service needs to do most of all is to comply with its own written instructions."

Sir John Woodcock's inquiry was not a disciplinary inquiry. Staff whom he interviewed were given an undertaking that their responses would not be used in any disciplinary proceedings. Accordingly, I now need to appoint an investigating officer to carry out a disciplinary investigation. The investigation will consider all levels of the service.

The scope of the investigation and the importance of ensuring fairness and impartiality require the appointment of a person unconnected with the Prison Service. I intend to appoint Sir David Yardley, the former local government ombudsman, to conduct the inquiry, and have today informed the unions of my intention. This inquiry will determine whether evidence exists to institute disciplinary proceedings or any other action against any member of the Prison Service.

In the light of events at Whitemoor, I have considered whether any change is necessary in the arrangements for the supervision of the Prison Service. [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes: resign."] I intend to set up a new unit outside the Prison Service to strengthen Ministers' ability to supervise the performance of the Prison Service in accordance with the framework document. *[Interruption.]* The country will see the frivolous way in which the Labour party is reacting to these serious matters, and will reach a judgment on the fitness of the Labour party even to debate these matters.

I am also publishing today the report of the inspection of Whitemoor by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons. The inspection took place in March, and the inspection report was submitted at the end of July. The chief inspector, Judge Tumim, and Sir John Woodcock agreed that the inspection report should not be published while the inquiry was in progress.

The inspection report makes recommendations to the director general, the area manager and the governor, but none to me. When the chief inspector submitted the report, he made three points to me in a covering note. I quote from that note. He said:

> "The prison is developing satisfactory regimes despite the difficulty of having to manage two population groups which have to be kept apart. The quality of throughcare needs to be improved. Parts of the prison are very dirty."

The overall conclusion in the report is that Whitemoor had opened successfully. The regime was undergoing severe testing, but its potential to become an effective prison was clear from the enthusiasm and commitment of managers and staff.

The Prison Service is today publishing its response to the inspection report. I am placing a copy in the Library. The majority of its recommendations have been accepted and are already in hand.

What happened at Whitemoor was wholly unacceptable. No one can read Sir John Woodcock's report without being shocked by the catalogue of errors which occurred. The measures I have announced today are designed to ensure effective security in our prisons. They will make the lives of the most dangerous prisoners less comfortable, but they will help to fulfil what must be the first duty of the Prison Service: to keep prisoners in secure custody. I commend them to the House.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): We fully support the recommendations that Sir John Woodcock makes in his report.

Will the Secretary of State accept that the report describes the most serious breach of prison security for over three decades? Will he also accept that, the breach having occurred, the public owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the prison officers of Whitemoor and to the police, who showed such personal courage and dedication in tackling some of the most dangerous men in Britain?

Will the Secretary of State agree that the first and most fundamental duty of a top security prison such as Whitemoor is to keep the public safe from Britain's most violent criminals; and that the Woodcock report shows that the Prison Service failed in that most basic duty?

Does the Secretary of State accept that the report lists a series of failures which simply beggar belief? They include placing staff in a position where they were manipulated and intimidated by prisoners, so that the prisoners ran the prison. They further include allowing prisoners an inordinate number of possessions which were then used to conceal hacksaw blades, knives, razor blades and a screwdriver, and which prevented prison cells from being properly searched. Inmates in the regime accumulated so much material that it took the police four days to search and log just one inmate's property during the criminal inquiry which followed the prison escape.

Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the Prison Service failed to provide adequate monitoring and surveillance of visits, exercise and the hobbies room, which was described as

"an Aladdin's cave of equipment"?

Will he acknowledge that the Prison Service gave prisoners the chance to make their getaway equipment behind net curtains in the hobby room? The report describes it as

"by far the most disturbing and frankly quite bizarre"

aspect of this sorry situation? Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that, most disturbing of all, the service allowed the highly dangerous bomb-making explosive, Semtex, to be smuggled into the prison?

Against the background of this damning report, does not the Secretary of State understand that, after 15 years of the Conservatives posing as the party of law and order, the truth about this Government is that, while they are strong on words, they are extremely weak on action?

Surely the whole House must share my utter astonishment that, in all 46 paragraphs of the statement this afternoon, there was not a single indication that the Secretary of State was willing to accept any personal responsibility whatever for this monumental failure. [HON. MEMBERS: "How could he?"] Let me explain how he could. Will the Secretary of State accept that two different people have claimed that he was warned in advance about the situation at Whitemoor—the former chairman of the board of visitors, Mrs. Paddy Seligman, and his hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland)? Why did he not mention either of those claims in his statement?

Let us deal first with the allegations by Mrs. Seligman, who complains in her 1992 and 1993 annual reports of the extremely lax security at the prison, and of an

"apparent disregard by the Home Secretary of recommendations in our Annual Reports."

Where those reports drawn to the attention of the Home Secretary or to any other Minister, as Mrs. Seligman claims, and what action was taken in respect of them?

Secondly, there are the even more grave allegations by the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam. There is no doubt that, so important did she regard the allegations, that she personally wrote to the right hon. and learned Gentleman and saw him. Does the Secretary of State now accept that he made a serious error of judgment when he wrote back to the hon. Lady, dismissing her complaint in a letter in which he justified the lavish surroundings of that high-security unit as ones

"which were designed to compensate to some extent for the regime inside the unit"?

Did the Home Secretary not compound that error of judgment in the same letter, when he denied that the prisoners had access to a workshop, when the hobbies room was the very workshop in which the getaway equipment was made? Did he take any action following those representations, and does he now accept the claim reportedly made by the hon. Lady in *The Observer* of 4 December that, had the Home Secretary

"acted on her warnings, the breakout might never have happened"?

Will the Home Secretary concede that the delphic wording of his proposal at the end of the statement, which caused much mocking laughter a moment ago, to set up a new unit outside the Prison Service, to strengthen Ministers' ability to supervise the service, amounts to an extraordinary admission that existing arrangements for holding the director of the Prison Service and himself to account have all but broken down? Is that not confirmed by paragraph 9.19 of the report, which says that the so-called "changed agenda", which is all about privatisation and performance indicators, has meant:

"There was no space—

no time—

"for senior people to spend time checking compliance with basic procedures."?

Is not this breakdown in accountability right up to Ministers also confirmed by paragraphs 9.28 and 9.29? At paragraph 9.28, Sir John Woodcock writes:

"There exists at all levels within the Service some confusion as to the respective roles of Ministers, the Agency Headquarters, and individual Prison Governors.

In particular, the Enquiry has identified the difficulty of determining what is an operational matter and what is policy, leading to confusion as to where responsibility lies."

Is not the truth that, far from the report exonerating the Home Secretary, as he implied throughout his 46 paragraphs, it simply says that the issue of his accountability is

"beyond the remit of the Enquiry to comment further"?

[Mr. Jack Straw]

Against that background, and given all the other disasters over which the right hon. and learned Gentleman has presided, will he now begin to acknowledge that his position is becoming increasingly untenable? Is not the truth of the situation that the report reveals a catalogue of incompetence and negligence on a truly monumental scale, which has been compounded today by buck passing by the Secretary of State, and by his failure properly to recognise his responsibility for this appalling state of affairs, in which the safety of many prison officers and the public was put at risk? Because of the Home Secretary's failure and that of the Prison Service, public confidence in the prison system has been woefully undermined.

Mr. Howard: Of course I entirely agree that we owe a debt to the prison officers and the police who apprehended the six men who attempted to escape from Whitemoor on 9 September. I acknowledged that debt in my statement, and I pay tribute again to them for their actions.

Of course I agree, as I made plain in my statement, that the state of affairs at Whitemoor which is disclosed in the report is wholly and completely unacceptable. The hon. Gentleman suggested that I was warned in advance of that state of affairs, and he relied on two reports to support that allegation. I shall deal with each of them in turn.

On the point about the 1992 and 1993 reports from the boards of visitors, I did not see them— *[Interruption.]* I shall tell the House what the reports contained. The 1992 report made no reference to security whatsoever. The 1993 report made a reference to the fact that the large amount of possessions in cells at Whitemoor—not in the special secure unit, but in the rest of the prison—did impede searching. However, that report was accompanied by an addendum, which was submitted later that year, saying that the position had considerably improved. There was therefore no basis in either of the reports for a warning of the sort to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the correspondence I had with my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland). Indeed, the relevant part of that correspondence is included as an appendix to the Woodcock report. My hon. Friend will, I know, be the first to acknowledge that there is no reference to security in her letter, and that her concerns did not raise the question of security. She has indicated to me that the report in *The Observer* to which the hon. Gentleman referred was not an accurate report of what she had said.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the changed agenda in the Prison Service. There is indeed a changed agenda in the Prison Service: everything in the report—which is the product of a culture that has existed in the Prison Service for a very long time—underlines and reinforces the need for change. I am determined to ensure that the necessary changes in the Prison Service are made, and that steps to put right what went wrong are implemented; that is the task to which I intend to address myself.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the public will be appalled and astonished at what he has had to tell us today, but will equally feel that his immediate response when these matters were brought to his attention was perfectly adequate? Is he aware that the account he has given today of the fuller response that will be delivered in the fulness of time, following Sir John Woodcock's report, will be welcomed by all?

There is obviously a temptation for Opposition Members to scoff and to demand my right hon. and learned Friend's resignation, but that is silly. What we need to do is improve the functioning and operation of the Prison Service, so that surveillance and supervision are better than they have ever been.

As for the list of recommendations for the future, does my right hon. and learned Friend not consider that the time has come to consider dividing visitors from prisoners far more effectively than they have been divided in the past? Is it not time to adopt the glass partitions used in other countries? It is clear that most of the material got into the prison from outside; it ought to have been stopped, and it must be stopped in the future.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for his introductory remarks.

Sir John Woodcock considered the possibility of making all visits to special secure units closed visits. It is dealt with in his report, which states that that is the only way in which complete security can be achieved. Sir John acknowledges that other factors must be taken into account. I have decided that the appropriate course is to refer the matter to Sir John Learmont, as part of his general review of prison security.

My hon. and learned Friend has raised an important point that merits serious attention. It will receive that attention from Sir John Learmont.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Will the Home Secretary confirm that it is clear from the report that a previous Minister of State sanctioned the temporary abandoning of thorough searching; that it is clear that dedicated search teams were not used because of a lack of resources set aside for the purpose; and that it is clear that recommendations of previous security inquiries simply were not implemented? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that Ministers were not asking the most obvious questions about security in prisons with which they were supposed to be familiar?

How is it possible that, after all this—and after the sight of a prison being run according to the convenience of its inmates—no one is resigning, the Home Secretary refuses to take responsibility and the director general of the Prison Service is awarded a substantial bonus?

Mr. Howard: Let me deal with those three points in turn.

First, the retrospective sanctioning of the temporary abandonment of rubdown searches was put to my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold)—on, I believe, the very day on which the 1992 general election was called—in the context of a review of search and security measures in special secure units. As the right hon. Gentleman will know, having had an opportunity to read the report, instructions were given for rubdown searching to be recommenced at Whitemoor and other special secure units before the Whitemoor unit was reopened.

Secondly, it is not true that the recommendation for dedicated search teams was not implemented because of resource implications or anything of that nature. Governors were consulted about it, and were left to decide the extent to which priority should be given to specialist search teams in that context. The decision, however, was not taken on resource grounds.

On the right hon. Gentleman's third point, it is true that I am responsible for all the Home Office's activities and for the Prison Service. I am accountable to Parliament for the Prison Service. The director general is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Prison Service.

The bonus to which the right hon. Gentleman referred was paid in respect of the year that ended in March 1994. It was paid in accordance with particular indicators that were specified in the director general's contract, including the number of escapes, and that year saw a considerable reduction in the number of escapes. The director general has agreed that there is no question of a bonus during the current year—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Peter Lloyd (Fareham): The report reveals a shocking story, and no one who has been connected with the Prison Service at any level can feel anything other than shame at the position that it reveals. I am sure from what my right hon. and learned Friend said, however, that he will agree that the energy, effectiveness and sheer personal courage of the officers on the spot who recaptured four of the escapees show a different but equally revealing picture of prison staff.

Will he also accept from me, as the Minister who oversaw the transition from department to agency, that he is wise to establish a new unit to keep him more systematically informed of developments in the prison system? Will he, however, take especial care to ensure that the unit works in a way that clarifies and promotes the sensible division and devolution of responsibility for operational matters in what is an extremely complex service, where the reins can never be kept in a single pair of hands effectively, however much Opposition Members pretend that they can?

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend is right to pay tribute to the prison officers who were responsible for the speedy apprehension of four of the six inmates who attempted to escape from Whitemoor on 9 September. In considering the basis on which the unit is to work, I shall carefully bear in mind the remarks that he has made, coming as they do from someone with considerable experience in these matters.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I deprecate introductory remarks during questions. We are here to question the statement and the Home Secretary. As the House saw, a number of hon. Members rose to ask questions. It will be impossible for me to call all of them if they make long statements and introductory remarks. I must now have brisk questions and brisk answers.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does the Home Secretary accept that his statement sounds more like scenes from a "Carry On" film on prisons than a statement on a high security prison? Having accepted that a Minister was responsible for scaling down searches, will the Home Secretary tell us why searches were not reintroduced until after the prisoners had escaped? What was the cost of the phone bill? Having considered everything, will he tell us why he did not consider resigning from his position?

Mr. Howard: I told the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) that instructions were given that rubdown searches should be resumed before the Whitemoor special secure unit was reopened. It was not until the publication of the Woodcock report that it became clear that they had not been resumed, in contravention of those instructions, which were clear, specific and absolutely explicit.

They were no doubt one of the things that Sir John Woodcock had in mind when he concluded, in the passage that I read out, that

> "what the Prison Service needs to do most of all is to comply with its own written instructions."

That is the truth about the searches. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I set out in my statement the steps that I took in the immediate aftermath of the attempt to escape on 9 September as to the need to implement all instructions relating to searches and other security measures across the prison system.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): Does my right hon. and learned Friend believe that Sir John Woodcock's conclusion would have been substantially different had he been asked to produce his report a year earlier? Is not the most disturbing part about the report the fact that it reveals a culture in our prisons where everything is done for the benefit of the prisoners—or, if not for them, for the benefit of the prison officers?

Is my right hon. and learned Friend saying that there is a real distinction between what the report reveals and what happens in all other prisons throughout the country? If that is not the case, what is my right hon. and learned Friend going to do about the conduct of the Prison Service and responsibility for it?

Mr. Howard: There is a great deal of truth in my right hon. Friend's sombre analysis. The extent to which the regime and the failures at Whitemoor exist in other prisons is precisely what Sir John Learmont's review will examine. That review will indicate what action needs to be taken beyond the 64 recommendations of the Woodcock report which I have accepted, and the three further measures beyond that which I said that I have put in hand. It is precisely the analysis behind my right hon. Friend's question that has led me to establish Sir John Learmont's review.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Has the Home Secretary considered resigning?

Mr. Howard: I have looked very carefully at what others in my position have done in this type of situation. In 1983, a number of terrorist prisoners escaped from the Maze prison in Northern Ireland. Many of them got away. At the time, my noble Friend Lord Prior said:

> "If I had felt that ministerial responsibility was such that in this case I should have resigned, I certainly should have done so. It would be a matter for resignation if the . . . inquiry showed that what happened was the result of some act of policy that was my responsibility, or that I failed to implement something that I had been asked to implement, or should have implemented. In that case, I should resign."—*[Official Report*, 24 October 1983; Vol. 47, c.23-4.]

[Mr. Howard]

I have carefully considered Lord Prior's observations. I think that he set out the right approach. I have endeavoured to follow that approach and I have reached the same conclusion that he reached and, indeed, the conclusion reached by the right hon. and noble Gentleman Lord Jenkins of Hillhead after the escape of George Blake from Wormwood Scrubs.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): My right hon. and learned Friend will understand that, like all hon. Members, I am concerned about the report, especially following my own visit to Whitemoor. Nevertheless, does he agree that the report makes it clear that it is the Prison Service which is to blame, not him?

Mr. Howard: I have announced to the House that I am setting up a disciplinary inquiry to see what evidence exists that would enable disciplinary proceedings or other action to be taken at all levels in the Prison Service so that those who were responsible on a day-to-day basis for the appalling state of affairs at Whitemoor can be brought to account.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Did the Home Secretary share my difficulty when reading the two reports in deciding whether they were talking about the same prison? In other words, why did Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons say that he considered the prison to be "virtually impregnable"? Why did he decide that he would make "no recommendations" whatever to the Home Secretary? Why did he recommend the scaling down of certain key security measures, such as searching visitors, and terminating the use of guard dogs?

Mr. Howard: The right hon. Gentleman will understand my difficulty in answering that question. I can tell him that the recommendations in the chief inspector's report on the scaling down of staff in the secure unit and the elimination of the use of dogs will not be implemented. The view that Whitemoor was virtually impregnable was widely held within the Prison Service and widely held by the prison officers at Whitemoor. It contributed substantially to the regime that the Woodcock report makes clear existed there.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that, although there may be a cessation of violence at present in Northern Ireland, there will be no cessation of the attempts by IRA terrorists to try to break out of prisons wherever they may be? As it is a well-established practice of the IRA to seek psychological domination over prison officers, whether by intimidation or by "honey traps" outside the prison, which is also a well established practice in Northern Ireland, will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that every prison governor concerned sees the importance of one particular recommendation in the report, especially for the safety of prison officers themselves, which is the frequent rotation of prison officers in their duties?

Mr. Howard: Yes, I certainly will. My right hon. Friend, with all his experience of these matters, is absolutely right to draw attention to that especially dangerous feature of the situation at Whitemoor and elsewhere. He is absolutely right to say that it is essential that that recommendation is drawn to the attention of all governors.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): When the Home Secretary re-examines security measures, will he look at the disgraceful overcrowding in prisons, which results in prison officers having to look after prisoners in impossible circumstances? At Leicester prison, the number of people certified as the normal accounting level is 194. I am told that today, the prison has 345 inmates, and that there have been seven suicides in the past year or so. What does the Home Secretary intend to do about the overcrowding which results from his Government's scandalous failure to deal with prison conditions all these years?

Mr. Howard: There is no suggestion that there was any connection between overcrowding and what happened at Whitemoor. Moreover, there has been a substantial reduction in overcrowding in the prison system in recent years. At the beginning of 1987, there were 5,000 prisoners in our prison system who were three to a cell designed for one. Now there is none. There has been a substantial reduction in overcrowding in our system. There is no basis for any suggestion that there was a connection between that and Whitemoor.

Mr. Peter Brooke (City of London and Westminster, South): Given what is obviously a bad business, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the Learmont inquiry, which he has set up with admirable promptness, is the largest inquiry of its kind since the Mountbatten inquiry, which was set up with equally admirable promptness by Lord Jenkins of Hillhead? Contrary to the arithmetic of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), that inquiry was less than 30 years ago.

Mr. Howard: I can confirm that point to my right hon. Friend. I emphasise that the Learmont inquiry will have two purposes. First, it will look at security across the prison system generally and secondly, it will specifically report in a year's time on the progress that has been made in implementing the recommendations of the Woodcock report. I have undertaken, subject only to security considerations, to publish the report of Sir John Learmont's committee in a year's time.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the Home Secretary agree that he has been warned time and time again by the Home Affairs Select Committee and various other bodies of the necessity of installing appropriate electronic search equipment at Brixton, for example, where it was installed after the gun had arrived, and at other places throughout the prison system? That, coupled with the continuing deterioration in conditions and standards for prison officers through decreasing training, overwork, over-hours and decreasing numbers, has contributed to the appalling state that we now see in our prison system.

Mr. Howard: No, I do not accept that. There was equipment at Whitemoor, although the report criticises the way in which it was used. As to the hours worked by prison officers, there has been an enormous reduction in the number of hours worked on average by every prison officer in recent years.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that an overwhelming majority of the public cannot understand why hardened villains should have any contact with visitors other than through bars and under supervision? Does he agree that, if drugs or weapons of any sort should be discovered in a prison, all visits should be stopped until the matter is cleared up? Will the Learmont inquiry be able to address those matters?

Mr. Howard: The Learmont inquiry will certainly be able to address those aspects to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention which deal with security. Certainly with regard to dangerous prisoners, I am specifically asking for Sir John Learmont's view and certainly, the inquiry will address the possibility of identifying guns in prison. Indeed, it is now the case that the kind of investigation which takes place in the few instances when guns are found in prisons involves the suspension of visits.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Can the Minister recall any event about which a statement was made to the House which was bizarre as this, other than the Canadian mailbag fiasco at Wandsworth prison? Is there no honour left in politics at all? Does he accept no responsibility whatever? Will he tell us something about the shopping that prisoners have been doing? Was it with their Barclaycards? If he is refusing to resign, will he at least claim to be guilty but insane?

Mr. Howard: I have already dealt with the question of responsibility. It is perhaps an interesting reflection on standards—a charge made by the Opposition very frequently—and perhaps relevant that, when there was the escape from the Maze to which I referred earlier, the Labour shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland did not call for the resignation of my right hon. Friend Lord Prior, and when there was the escape from Wormwood Scrubs, the Conservative shadow Home Secretary did not call for the resignation of Lord Jenkins of Hillhead. And on both those occasions, the prisoners actually got away.

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): May I take the opportunity to thank my right hon. and learned Friend for setting the record straight on my behalf? May I also urge him, in the light of my experience as a Minister with responsibility for prisons, to look very closely at determining the roles of Ministers, the agency headquarters and the prison governors, even before his special unit is set up? It seems from what Sir John Woodcock has said that clarification is urgently needed, so that people who are at the grass roots—the prison governors and prison officers—know precisely to whom they should be responsible.

Mr. Howard: I am not entirely certain that I agree with my right hon. Friend about that. I am not under any confusion as to the line of command and the allocation of responsibility. It is set out very clearly in the framework document. The director general is not under any confusion either about the relationship, which is set out very clearly in the framework document. It is the duty of those in the Prison Service to comply with the instructions which they are given. So I do not entirely go along with my right hon. Friend on that point.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Is the Home Secretary aware that Wandsworth prison is in my constituency, and therefore I have close association with boards of visitors in many prisons? Is he aware that the reply that he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) about the role of the former chairlady of Whitemoor board of visitors and the concerns that she expressed will not been accepted by her and will not be accepted by that board of visitors? Nor will it be accepted by boards of visitors throughout the country, because the right hon. and learned Gentleman was repeatedly told by those boards of visitors of the very deep—

Mr. Howard *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Cox: It is no good the right hon. and learned Gentleman shaking his head. He was told repeatedly of the deep concern of the board of visitors. Will he give the House an assurance that any prison governor who is concerned about security will have whatever funding he or she needs to bring security up to standard?

Mr. Howard: I dealt earlier, and rather fully, with the contents of the reports from the board of visitors. That is the basis on which such allegations should be tested. I can tell the House that the implementation of the 64 recommendations in the Woodcock report will not be inhibited by any resource constraint.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the principal conclusion of the Woodcock report was that the Prison Service failed systematically to observe its own rules? Is he able to give me, the House and constituents throughout the country a categorical assurance that the Learmont inquiry will address itself to the problems of running our prisons, that he will ensure in future that there is no further intimidation of prison officers by dangerous category A prisoners, and that, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) has recommended, officers will be rotated regularly?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is entirely right to draw attention to those features. The purpose of the 64 recommendations in the Woodcock report is to achieve the objectives to which my hon. Friend referred. The Learmont inquiry will consider what more needs to be done across the Prison Service. The purpose of the these exercises will be to ensure that there is never again a recurrence of the events and the situation at Whitemoor.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): The problem for the Home Secretary is the scale of the scandal. Does he not have responsibility for putting in place policies and procedures to ensure that scandals in prisons on such a scale cannot happen, and has he not failed in that responsibility? He should accept the consequences of that.

Mr. Howard: If there were any evidence that my policies were in any way responsible for what happened, the hon. Gentleman would be right. But there is not a word of criticism of policy in the Woodcock report. Nor is there any basis for the suggestion that my policies were in any way responsible for what happened.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): May I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his frank statement? I ask him to assure the House that nothing said to the Woodcock inquiry will inhibit the bringing of criminal,

[Mr. Edward Garnier]

civil or disciplinary proceedings, should the Yardley inquiry or anyone else find that there is evidence that makes it appropriate to bring such charges.

Mr. Howard: Yes. I think that it was right of Sir John Woodcock, whose principal objective was to get at the truth of what happened, to say that the evidence which was given to him would not be used as the basis of disciplinary proceedings. That does not mean that the disciplinary investigation that I have set in hand will be unable to pursue these matters. It will pursue them, and if evidence is revealed that would justify disciplinary proceedings or other action against anyone at any level in the Prison Service, that action will ensue.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): If the Home Secretary is as eager as he claims to change the culture of the Prison Service, will he, as a guarantee of good faith, demand that the director general of the Prison Service pays back the £35,000 performance bonus which he granted him last year?

Mr. Howard: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the record of the Prison Service during that year, and especially the substantial reduction in the number of escapes that took place during that year, he will have cause to reflect on his question.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): My right hon. and learned Friend is clearly right to opt for a tougher and harder internal regime in the category A prisons. In so far as this induces among resourceful but violent and desperate prisoners the attitude of "death or glory", is not the implementation of his tough regime something of an exercise in sophistication as well as determination? Does he agree that the subtleties of constraining those desperate men are scarcely appreciated in respect of the comments that we have heard from Labour Members?

Mr. Howard: I agree with my right hon. Friend's last point. In addition, I agree that one should never underestimate the difficulty of having in place an effective regime. The task on which the Prison Service is engaged is very difficult. It was described in a previous inquiry as one of particular complexity. My right hon. Friend is quite right to draw attention to those aspects of it.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): Will the Home Secretary confirm that the reason why he has not been directly criticised in the report is that, as the report implies in paragraph 9.29, it was beyond the inquiry's remit? Is it not true that the Home Secretary himself determined the inquiry's remit? It is therefore hardly surprising that he was not directly criticised. Will the Home Secretary address the criticism in paragraph 9.28—

> "There exists at all levels within the Service some confusion as to the respective roles of Ministers, the Agency Headquarters and individual Prison Governors. In particular, the Enquiry has identified the difficulty of determining what is an operational matter and what is policy, leading to confusion as to where responsibility lies"?

Surely, as Home Secretary in a Government who have been in power for 15 years, it lacks credibility to say that the Home Secretary was not responsible for what happened. Has not the confusion in responsibility arisen directly from arrangements which the Home Secretary put in place, or is he not now even responsible for his own mistakes?

Mr. Howard: I have already dealt very fully with paragraph 9.28 of the report. I am not under any confusion about the respective roles of Ministers, the agency headquarters or individual prison governors, and nor is the director general. As for individual prison governors and others in the service, it is their responsibility to comply with the instructions that they are given.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) is entirely wrong about the report's remit. It was not in any way beyond Sir John Woodcock's remit to criticise me were he of a mind to do so.

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): Look at paragraph 9.29.

Mr. Howard: Paragraph 9.29 says nothing of the kind. If the hon. Lady, who is mouthing inanities from a sedentary position, were to read the report, she would understand that paragraph 9.29 says nothing of the kind. Sir John Woodcock's report was very wide in its terms of reference and very wide in its remit. It was entirely within his remit, if he wished to do so, to make criticisms of me. The fact is that he did not do so, and the Opposition cannot bring themselves to accept that.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Order. We will now move on.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath:

Ian Phares Pearson Esq., for Dudley, West.

Orders of the Day

Adjournment (Christmas)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Tuesday 20th December, do adjourn until Tuesday 10th January.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

4.34 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): I should like to detain the House for a few moments to put to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House some of the problems arising from the provisional revenue support grant for the county of Shropshire. The matter will be taken further forward on 3 January when a delegation from the county council, which I will accompany, will discuss the matter with a Minister from the Department of the Environment.

The provisional standard spending assessment and the level of rate capping that has been proposed is causing great anxiety in the county. I recently had the opportunity to meet senior officials of the county to discuss the matter, accompanied by the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott). I have also been in touch with my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill), who has naturally taken a keen interest in developments which will as acutely affect his area of Shropshire as my own.

The Shropshire problem has a certain unique characteristic because it compounded by previous difficulties, in that between 1990 and 1991 and 1994 and 1995, Shropshire had the lowest increase of all counties in SSA and between 1991 and 1992 and 1994 and 1995 it had the next lowest capping increase. To that inherited pattern of difficulty has been added the current stringent proposal for the 1995-96 settlement.

The figures at the heart of the problem will be discussed in detail on 3 January and I do not wish to detain the House by arguing about them now. At heart, the issue is a proposed permitted spending increase of about £0.8 million or less than 0.5 per cent. when the county judges that to maintain its current spending would require an increase of £14.8 million. The shortfall of £14 million is equivalent to 5.8 per cent. of the budget.

Those are formidable figures and I would greatly appreciate it if my right hon. Friend would relay to the Department of the Environment my great anxiety that they represent a gap—as judged by the DOE and the county council—which cannot be reconciled, with any degree of equity, with the services provided in Shropshire.

Education will be first in line for cuts, of course, given the enormous difference in the budget, but it goes much further than the services covered by statutory obligation. Those where the county council spending is to some extent discretionary are the subject of the greatest anxiety, because the providers see themselves without any statutory protection for their work. That is particularly true of youth services, and officials in those areas have made their views known to me in the most compelling fashion at my weekend surgeries.

I appreciate that according to the conventions of the House contributions to the Adjournment debate are the more welcome—and, I hope, the more persuasive—the briefer they are. I see my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House nodding in agreement, but I am not sure to which part of my proposition.

My speech is made ahead of the meeting on 3 January and I make an appeal that that occasion should not be used to rehearse the time-honoured positions of the combatants across the fiscal field, but to discuss the hard practicalities of public spending and the protective and legitimate role that public spending performs.

4.39 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Before we adjourn for the Christmas recess, I am sure that many right hon. and hon. Members would like to see issues that affect their constituencies resolved.

It is proposed substantially to increase tolls on the Severn bridge from 1 January next year. They will rise to £3.70 for a car, by 60p to £7.40 for small goods vehicles and by £1 to £11.10 for lorries. Those figures represent an increase of 177 per cent. since the bridge was privatised in 1992 and are a blatant example of the unacceptable face of privatisation.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): My hon. Friend may be surprised that I wish to intervene, but I am grateful to him for allowing me to do so. Is he aware that if the amendment in the next debate is not carried—it may not be called—this will be the last debate when Members will be able to raise matters on the motion for the Adjournment? Perhaps Members will bear that in mind. When they realise how important this debate is, they may wish to stay in the Chamber and ensure that such debates continue.

Mr. Hughes: I appreciate the relevance of my hon. Friend's remarks.

Severn bridge tolls are a scandal. The so-called Anglo-French consortium is simply bleeding Wales dry. South Wales still suffers from heavy unemployment. Black spots have been caused through closures and redundancies—Ebbw Vale, Merthyr and Cynon Valley spring to mind, but even Newport on the eastern seaboard with favourable geographical advantages is put at a distinct disadvantage by toll charges in its quest for new jobs.

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that one reason why the tolls are so high is that they are charged only for traffic going in one direction?

Mr. Hughes: That is an irrelevant intervention. They must still be paid, whether they are paid only by vehicles coming into Wales, as is currently the case. It still amounts to doubling the charge.

In a recent survey of companies, Bristol came out as the most attractive area for new enterprises to relocate. Newport, just 20 miles further along the M4 motorway, came 28th. The toll charges are a barrier to industrial development. We have the labour, prime land and some kind of grants available, yet the Government have sold south Wales short. When will the Secretary of State for Wales speak up against the iniquitous toll system?

I received a letter dated 5 December from Mr. Sandy Blair, chief executive of Newport borough council, who wrote to me in his capacity as secretary of Gwent District Councils Association. He said that concern had been expressed about yet further increases in Severn bridge toll charges and asked me to make the strongest possible representations in Parliament regarding them. That is what I am trying to do this afternoon.

[Mr. Hughes]

Mr. D.B.H. Colley, director-general of the Road Haulage Association, wrote to me on 23 November saying that road hauliers were incensed by the electronic tag system introduced in October 1993. He said that the Anglo-French Consortium had infringed the Severn Bridges Act 1992 by abolishing

> "the discount of between 10 and 20 per cent. which applied to the pre-payment tickets. Under the tag scheme, savings will only accrue when more than 20 crossings per vehicle are made monthly by using a season pass. In addition, a refundable deposit of £30 is to be made for each tag, which is not transferable between vehicles."

Mr. Colley tells me that the new system, too, was introduced without consultation and that the following major issues detrimentally affect road hauliers: first, a requirement for a £30 deposit on each tag; secondly, the need for each vehicle to have its own individual tag; thirdly, the replacement of the discounted ticket system by a non-discounted electronic tag, except where that is used as a season pass by the same vehicle.

By comparison, the Dartford River Crossing Company Ltd. has no tag charge. Its tags are interchangeable between vehicles of a similar classification and there is also a substantial discount of 7.5 per cent. for tag holders. Under the Dartford-Thurrock Crossing Act 1988, tolls increased by less than 10 per cent., and since privatisation in 1989 they have increased by approximately 33 per cent. When we compare those figures with the 177 per cent. increase in toll charges on the Severn bridge since privatisation in 1992, we must ask why there is so much discrimination against Wales and why the Secretary of State for Wales is not speaking up for Welsh economic interests.

The Severn bridge is the key access point linking England and Wales. It is only a short stretch of the M4 motorway. A constituent of mine in Redwick, Mr. Jerry Jones, a major road haulage contractor, pointed out that it is normally a criminal offence to stop on a motorway, and I understand the point that he made. There is now persistent protest in the Gloucester area about heavy lorries travelling through villages to avoid paying tolls. Public meetings have been held and civil disobedience has been openly advocated. What I fail to understand, however, is where the west country Conservative Members were when the pernicious Severn Bridges Bill was being pushed through Parliament two or three years ago. Labour Members opposed the legislation, but there are fewer than a handful of them in the west country—although I venture to suggest that after the next general election there are likely to be considerably more.

The regular defence of Severn bridge tolls is that the money is needed to build a second crossing, but that is just a load of eyewash when we consider the massive motoring taxation revenue that the Government receive. Some of that could surely be used to ease the burden of Severn bridge toll charges.

On 2 March this year I introduced a Bill to amend sections 9 and 10 of the Severn Bridges Act 1992. Had that proposal passed through Parliament, it would have had the effect of freezing tolls at the then existing level. The Government should now introduce such a measure.

Contracts that are negotiated can also be renegotiated, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), when he was deputy Leader of the Opposition, said in south Wales at the time of the Monmouth by-election.

I warn the Government that the issue of Severn bridge tolls will not go away: it is a running sore, and privatisation of the Severn bridge was a madcap scheme that south Wales could well have done without.

4.49 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): The House might forgive me for not following the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) over the Severn bridge, but I should like to say how much I support the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). Staffordshire is in a similar position to Shropshire, and I wish my right hon. Friend every success on 3 January because, in battling for neglected shire counties, he will do a service to hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I was tempted to speak about the apparent inadequacy of the inspection system in prisons and the apparent incompetence of the Director General of the Prison Service. Many similar subjects tempt me, but I have an opportunity to discuss once again a subject that I have brought to the notice of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House many times—the continually deteriorating position in the former Yugoslavia.

It is not to our credit as a House that we have devoted so little time to debating the most serious crisis in Europe since the second world war. I shall not weary the House by repeating arguments that I have previously advanced, save to say that I have, for more than three years, sought whenever possible to mention that issue, and I believe that, if the powers that be had heeded the call for effective action at the time that Vukovar was being razed to the ground and Dubrovnik bombarded, we might not have had to witness the appalling tragedy of Bosnia.

When the history of the past three years comes to be written, no one will emerge from it with any great credit. There has been an apparent unwillingness to grasp the seriousness of the situation. Most of all, there has been an inability to bring home to the Serbs the fact that territorial aggrandisement by conquest, and ethnic cleansing and all the barbarities and bestialities that go with that, are unacceptable in a civilised world. That they should be taking place at a time when we are about to commemorate 50 years since the end of the second world war is an indictment of us all.

I wholly exonerate my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, who has been courtesy itself, and who has met me and my fellow officers of the all-party group on many occasions, from anything other than the most honourable of motives. However, it is a great pity that the western powers especially have not been able to demonstrate a greater coherence of resolve and a more forceful determination in the past three years.

It would be tragic for the present and an appalling portent for the future if a gang of hoodlums, under the direction of some of the most evil men who have strutted the political stage in modern times, were to be able to destroy the credibility of the United Nations and of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. I therefore urge my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to pass on my words to my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, and to give them the following message.

Of course we recognise the conspicuous bravery and skill of British troops, and we are all proud of what they have achieved in appallingly difficult circumstances. Of course we do not call in question the motives or the honour of the people who lead our nation or the nations of the west. However, time is running out, and it is essential that, now that even Milosevic, who began this appalling adventure three years ago, accepts the contact group's peace plan, every possible effort is made to ensure that the Bosnian Serbs are brought to heel. It would be tragic, disgraceful and disgusting if the Bosnian Serbs got away with their ill and brutally gotten gains. I do not think that there is a Member in the House who could not agree with that sentiment.

Time and again, people talk and the BBC talks—I have had occasion to write to Mr. Birt about it this week—about the Bosnian Muslims. The Bosnian Muslims are about as fanatical, as someone said on the radio this morning, as most people who identify their religion as "C of E" on their passports in this country. However, the legitimate Bosnian Government are not wholly Muslim. They are supported by Croats and by many Serbs. Not so long ago, the House received a deputation of Bosnian Serbs who support their legitimately recognised Government.

We are witnessing the extinction of a state that we willingly recognised, which has a seat at the United Nations, and which is therefore a member of the community of nations. The United Nations resolutions have been flagrantly flouted and violated time without number, first by the Serbs under Milosevic and the Bosnian Serbs, and more latterly almost exclusively by the Bosnian Serbs. It would be an appalling end to the year and beginning of a new one if they were now allowed to flout the Contact group's resolution.

I urge one or two courses of action. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will feel able to pass on my words to my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary.

I have said many times that it would be sensible for this country to take an initiative by summoning a summit meeting of the leaders of the four nations principally involved—Britain, France and the United States, all key members of NATO and of the United Nations Security Council, and Russia, which has many problems of its own, as we are reminded daily, but which also has a significant part to play in that part of the world and which is, after all, a member of the contact group. The situation in the former Yugoslavia is so serious as to merit the calling of a special summit meeting, rather than the addition of the subject to the agenda of a prefixed summit.

It is important that the message should go out from any such meeting that, if there is any further violation of safe areas—what a hollow concept that has proved to be in the past few months—the full might of the United Nations agency NATO, which is the way in which NATO is acting at the moment, should be directed at those people who are violating. After all, the Bosnian Government have accepted the plan. I agree that they perhaps behaved rashly and foolishly in Bihac—although I understand why—a few weeks ago, and I would not exonerate anyone from the type of resolution that I now advocate. I should like a surrender of all heavy weapons into international control.

I would like to see the exercise of the United Nations mandate for a period of 12 months while the final details of the contact plan and the map are sorted out. I would like us to behave as an international community with the same resolution to any violation during that 12 months as we behaved toward Saddam Hussein. Would that we had finished him off, but that is another story.

The matter is extremely serious and time is short. As we move towards 1995, we are in a situation that is in many ways strangely reminiscent of 1914-15. Of course history does not repeat itself, but it teaches us lessons. We could be within not just months but weeks of a full-scale Balkan war, with all the horrors that that implies and would entail—a Balkan war that would have on one side Turkey and, on another side, Greece, two NATO members. There could be a Balkan war that could suck into the centre of Europe—the heart of Europe; a phrase that is often used in other contexts—Muslim fundamentalist fighters to fill any vacuum left by those who might withdraw.

My final word to my right hon. Friend is this: there should be an absolute declaration and a total commitment not to withdraw the forces that are there at the moment. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has expressed commendable reluctance to contemplate such a course, and I applaud and admire him for that, but one must go even further than that. To withdraw, leaving our baggage, our weaponry and a vacuum would be the most ignominious of retreats and defeats for the principles of honesty and decency which have been so trampled upon so frequently over the past three years.

I am sorry to have to direct the attention of the House to such a sombre matter in a season of good will, but good will is a commodity that has been conspicuously lacking in the former Yugoslavia, particularly in Bosnia. When we return to our families to enjoy, I hope, our Christmases and to prepare for a new year, we should spare a thought for the desolation in that land and for the ruined hopes and the shattered futures. We should recognise that, if we are going to commemorate the events of 1945 with any real credibility next year, we cannot have our commemorations accompanied by a pall of smoke over a country in Europe.

5.2 pm

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the House, because, earlier this afternoon, the people of Newbury were betrayed once again. There is no other way of describing the appalling news that the A34 bypass around Newbury, or at best, has been postponed for at least a year or, at worst, will never be built. Yet again, Newbury is left suffering from the horrendous traffic problems which have been our lot for years and years.

Of course, I welcome the Government's announcement today that they have at last recognised that it is fatuous to go on building more new roads instead of investing in public transport and doing up the present structure, but, if ever there was a case of throwing out the baby with the bath water, this must be that case.

Why have the Government failed to realise that there is all the difference in the world between, on the one hand, creating entirely new roads and thus encouraging entirely

[Mr. David Rendel]

new journeys to be undertaken by car, and, on the other hand, removing already existing roads from the centre of some of Britain's loveliest old towns and villages? Interestingly, there are some signs that the Government have recognised that very point.

The Secretary of State, in his announcement today, said:

> "Our priority now must be to make the most effective use of the existing network."

But that is exactly what the Newbury by-pass is intended to do. The Secretary of State announced:

> "Our priority is road-building to remove congestion and pollution blackspots."

But that is exactly what the Newbury by-pass is intended to do. He announced that he wants to remove major bottlenecks because, as he says:

> "They cause congestion and pollution, and damage the economic well-being of the country. They also cause frustration and diversion on to smaller more unsuitable roads."

Of course he is right, and that is exactly why he should have authorised the earliest possible start to the building of the Newbury by-pass.

Newbury is being destroyed by traffic. The problem is that Newbury contains the one remaining section of the country's main north-south route between Southampton and Glasgow which, so far, has not been built up to well-nigh motorway standard. Because the rest of the route is so good, traffic is attracted to that route, even if drivers know that they are guaranteed to be held up in Newbury.

Delaying the Newbury by-pass will do nothing to reduce the traffic load on that road. Instead, it will simply mean more deaths on what is already a notoriously dangerous stretch, and many more children suffering from asthma, with all the attendant problems that that brings. Recent figures have shown that children living near the A34 suffer three times the level of noxious gases and other pollutants compared with children living further away. Businesses, too, will suffer as fewer shoppers are prepared to use Newbury because of the traffic queues.

It is not a new problem. It is not something for which the Government could use the excuse that they did not really know why the by-pass is necessary. It has been going on for years and years. Even if we discount the proposals that were made as far back as 1936 and again in 1965, even the modern proposals date from the early 1980s. Indeed, following traffic studies and public consultation over a number of years, the Department of Transport published its preferred route as early as 1985—almost 10 years ago.

It has now been shown that the A34 through Newbury, linking as it does the M3 at Winchester with the M40 north of Oxford, carries nearly double the percentage of heavy goods vehicles carried by the average trunk road in our country, and it carries them straight through the centre of Newbury. Traffic volumes in Newbury have already reached a level which, in the 1988 public inquiry, were not expected until 2009. Newbury has become a notorious bottleneck, with queues which can extend miles in each direction, and lorries and cars spewing out their fumes and noxious gases all over the gardens, schools and parks where our children play.

Local businesses, not to mention the emergency services, find that it can take an hour or more to travel just a mile or two across Newbury. That is just not acceptable. The environment in our lovely old market town is being wilfully destroyed.

Let me remind the Minister for Railways and Roads what he and his colleagues have said. In a letter to me of 27 October this year, the Minister said:

> "I recently visited Newbury and saw for myself the pressing need for a bypass. The tail back of traffic was nearly back to the M4 . . . a bypass is needed to remove the noisy smelly traffic from the town."

That is what the Minister himself said. The Highways Agency, in a letter dated 4 August, wrote:

> "The need for an improvement of this stretch of the trunk road, which carries a high percentage of goods vehicles, was identified as long ago as 1971 and the requirement is now urgent."

The Minister for Transport in London, in a letter as recently as 28 November, said:

> "By-passes often bring considerable environmental benefits to the villages, towns and cities from where traffic is removed."

The Highways Agency, again in a letter dated 28 October, wrote:

> "Without this much needed new road, delay and congestion in Newbury will continue to increase."

It is not just the destruction of Newbury which will make the people of Newbury so angry about this decision; it is also the way they have been promised again and again that the by-pass is on the point of being built. The Highways Agency wrote to me on 1 November to say:

> "Your constituent will be pleased to know that tenders for the construction of the bypass have now been received and are currently being assessed. We expect to be in a position to appoint a contractor very shortly for a start of construction as soon as possible this winter."

On 19 October, the Department of Transport confirmed to a local newspaper:

> "There is no change in the road priority programme that was set out in April and Newbury is at the top and already has funding. It is going ahead as planned."

During the by-election in May of last year, the Conservative party literature argued that local Conservatives, led by Judith Chaplin and Sir Michael McNair-Wilson, my predecessors, had already won the A34 by-pass, and that it would

> "substantially reduce congestion through our towns and villages. It will be a major boost for West Berkshire businesses and local people alike. Building it is a great step toward solving traffic problems in Newbury. The Conservative Government has given the go-ahead and found the money."

So much for the Conservative claim. As I said at the beginning, Newbury has been betrayed by this Government, according to whose arguments the A34 by-pass should have been given the highest priority. Instead, it has been cut out of the programme, overturning all the promises made by the Conservatives over many years.

In Newbury we have grown used to Conservatives who break promises, but seldom can so many promises made over so many years by so many different members of that party have been broken so suddenly and recklessly. The people of Newbury will be furious at this cynical betrayal of their hopes.

5.11 pm

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): A week ago I attended, as I do every year, the carol service arranged and presented by the pupils and staff of Clifton special school, in my constituency. Parents and relatives of pupils of different religions come together each year in one of the major churches of Bangor to celebrate the birth of Christ.

This year, the service was held in St. Comgall's church, and the Salvation Army junior band led the praise. It was a touching and emotional event, because the pupils at the school, all of whom participated in the service, either have profound and multiple learning difficulties or exhibit challenging behaviour. I pay tribute to the principal and staff of the school, who are completely dedicated to their pupils, some of whom suffer from grave mental and physical handicaps.

I am also deeply affected by the manifest dedication of the parents, who shower their love, time and efforts on their handicapped children. For me, this annual carol service, organised by Clifton special school, signals the start of the Christmas season. For that season, if it is about anything, is about the misfortunes of others and about giving without restraint.

It would be natural to assume in such poignant and dire circumstances that every help would be given to the school and parents and especially to the boys and girls. Unfortunately, it is not. In recent years it has become increasingly difficult to find places for the school's leavers in training and resource centres or in intensive support units. Failure to find a place for a student, or finding one only at the last moment, causes unnecessary and terrible stress for the school and the parents. Yet it seems that this intolerable situation is set to worsen.

The school received a letter in October from the North Down and Ards community trust. In it the manager apologised and assured the principal of the school that he had

> "done everything possible to keep his line management informed of the shortages with regard to day care places, particularly the Intensive Support Unit."

In a letter sent recently by the principal of the special school, Mrs. Ray Cunningham, to the chief executive of the health and care centre, Newtonards, she informed him that the officer in charge of the Ards training and resources centre had confirmed that no place was available in an intensive support unit for an 18 year-old pupil who was due to leave the school. She stated:

> "Needless to say, both the parents and members of staff at Clifton special school were devastated at this news, particularly as the boy has very special needs."

She added:

> "It is essential that a place be available for him as soon as he leaves the school."

I believe that, as a result of all the pressure that that lady brought to bear, and after lengthy deliberation, a temporary place will be found for the boy. That is all wholly unacceptable. The principal of the school has told me that social services have been given, by the school, a minimum five-year projected list of needs, together with a simple profile of each student, including the dates when each boy or girl will be leaving the school. Management can thus anticipate the number of places required and know whether any special needs attach to each place. The principal of the school has emphasised that the situation is so serious that all plans for induction courses for pupils have had to be abandoned, as the school has not been guaranteed places early enough to set such courses in motion.

Apparently the board has in mind a project that entails building another intensive support unit in the Bangor area. I say "in mind" because I have had no assurance when or even if it will be built. The places are desperately needed now, even if it is to be built in a year or two.

All decent people will be scandalised by what is going on. They will feel that the parents of children with special needs or with mental or physical handicaps should be given special attention by those responsible for their children's further care. I therefore demand that the Government intervene to ensure that the trust provides the places that are vital for these students and for their loving, hard-pressed parents.

5.17 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I believe that the House should not adjourn for the Christmas recess until we have had the opportunity to discuss county hall on the other side of the river. It was built as a home for the London county council and paid for by Londoners. It was built for the local and strategic governance of London. Following the abolition of the Greater London Council in 1986—an act that still smacks far more of political spite and personal malice on the part of the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, than of a respect for the needs and wishes of Londoners—county hall was used by a number of bodies, including the Inner London education authority. On the abolition of ILEA in 1990, county hall became empty, and so it has remained ever since.

What worries me is how the building has become the centre of what one can only describe as a fiasco bordering on the scandalous. As I have suggested in the House before, the scandal is now moving in the direction of some form of criminal conspiracy.

The facts are fairly straightforward. In 1989, there was a bid from a consortium—the County Hall Development Group—for the site, of around £200 million. It was, of course, made to the London residuary body, the body set up by the Government to administer the disposal of the assets of the Greater London council and to disperse the receipts across the London boroughs. That deal hit the deck, as one suspected that it would because of the dive in the property market in London and around the world. Because it was impossible to renegotiate the terms of the original deal, the £20 million deposit, which was put up as a bond by the development group, was forfeited.

We then move on to another proposal. One of the partners was the Shiryama hotel group from Japan, the owner being Mr. Takashi Shiryama, who made a bid for a 600-bedroom hotel at county hall. That bid, for £60 million I understand, was accepted by the LRB and the Government. At that point, a number of hon. Members, on a cross-party basis, went to see the then Secretary of State for the Environment, now the Home Secretary—the man with such a wondrous record in terms of carrying out his departmental responsibilities—and suggested that the bid from the London School of Economics would be far more appropriate to county hall, given its previous use and, indeed, to the wishes of Londoners as a whole. It seemed far more appropriate that one of the great international seats of learning should sit in county hall than some second-rate Japanese hotel group.

The then Environment Secretary, now the Home Secretary, turned it down. I think that that was a mistake. I warned him at the time that he could, if it went wrong,

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end up with the equivalent of another Battersea power station, but this time right opposite the Houses of Parliament. That is the way in which we still seem to be going. The development came from an organisation with big ideas and, it turns out, rather small pockets.

It is scandalous—I know that that word has been used a number of times this evening, and I make no apology for using it again—that county hall still remains empty. The 600-bedroom hotel proposal has suddenly been dropped by the Shiryama group. It is now talking about an Asia-Pacific centre and an aquarium. It has not even sought a change of planning use. What sort of fiasco is taking place just a few yards across the river opposite the Houses of Parliament? It is amazing that Ministers should allow that to happen. I do not believe that Ministers or the LRB ever looked carefully at the proposal of the Shiryama organisation, because ideology, as ever, was ruling the roost.

The Secretary of State just wanted to get rid of county hall. His attitude was, "Just get it away from me. I don't care what it is, as long as it has nothing to do with the public sector. Oh, a Japanese hotel group? Okay, give it to them. I don't care whether it has any money. Of course we have never heard of these people. Who cares? Get rid of it."

Because that particular proposal was so badly examined by the LRB and the Government, a whole series of bizarre events is taking place over at county hall. Richard Branson of Virgin Atlantic, which was inveigled into the group, now proposes to take legal action against Shiryama because he has suddenly been dumped in mid-course. He does not want to get involved in an Asia-Pacific trade centre and aquarium. He has enough problems as it is. He wanted to be involved with a hotel.

We have a ridiculous situation: Mr. Takashi Shiryama's London representative is apparently called Mr. Makota Okamoto, but every time that someone gets hold of him and asks questions, he goes under another name. He has been called Mr. Toyota, when one gets in touch with him, and Mr. Honda. God knows what other Japanese motor car he will be named after next.

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, even from his point of view as a member of the Labour party, it is an offence against the spirit of the idea of civic conservatism that an important public building in an important public location should have been treated in that fashion, and that it is highly desirable that the Government think again and find a way in which to ensure that that important public building be given an important public civic use?

Mr. Banks: I could not agree more. Indeed, when we went to see the then Secretary of State for the Environment, I made it quite clear. Everyone knows my political prejudices in respect of the abolition of the GLC and the use of county hall. I said to the then Secretary of State, "Look. I am prepared to give up the campaign, as it were, provided you are prepared to let county hall be used for something that conforms with the dignity of that building, and the bid from the LSE seems to be the most appropriate." It was an all-party bid and the offer still remains on the table. I suspect that that bid can be revived now.

I do not believe, as I warned the then Secretary of State for the Environment, that the proposal from Shiryama will come through to a conclusion. I do not believe that the Shiryama group ever had the funds in this country to carry out its proposed development of county hall. Indeed, I say that it was an entirely inappropriate application in the first place.

I know that many hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to speak. I do not wish to delay the House. May I leave a series of questions with the Leader of the House for passing on? I am concerned about the terms of the sale struck between Shiryama and the LRB. I understand that £50 million has so far been paid. I am still trying to find out whether that sum included any of the £20 million deposit, which, as I mentioned earlier, was forfeited from the 1989 consortium bid by the county hall development group. That is very important, as not all of it was Shiryama's money.

Secondly, since the 999-year lease—the terms of the sale—was for £60 million, when will the balance of £10 million, which has been deferred, be paid? Thirdly, what is the total development cost of the 600-bedroom hotel? As I have said, I do not believe that Shiryama ever had the resources to complete the development. Fourthly, has there been any application for a change of planning consent? Lastly, what examination did the Government or the LRB make of the original Shiryama proposal?

It is a scandalous situation. It is still not too late for us to rectify it.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. Does he agree that the possibility of a first-class university occupying that building would be a fitting use for it, as our university education is one of the very best areas of British activity today and is much used by foreigners?

Mr. Banks: Again, I could not agree more. All that I would say to the hon. Members for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) and for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson), who have made such positive interventions, is: please do not direct those points at me; direct them to Ministers, because they are the people who need to be persuaded. We will give whatever support we are able to give and are asked to give in terms of the LSE getting hold of county hall, because that proposal seems to meet with the agreement and consent of both sides of the House.

Even at this late stage, I say to the Government: for heaven's sake do not make the terrible error of allowing this half-baked proposal to dribble gradually towards some totally unsatisfactory conclusion, leaving county hall resembling the terrible sight of that other wonderful building a bit further down the river—Battersea power station.

5.28 pm

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I hope that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will not worry too much if I do not follow on from that point.

I watched with interest the arrival this afternoon of the new hon. Member for Dudley, West (Mr. Pearson). He has a good chance of going into the Guinness book of records for having said more during his victory speech after his election than he did during the whole of the election campaign. He held no public meetings during the campaign and, I think, refused every opportunity to debate with his opponents. I see that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), who was one of his minders, is in his place. I hope that we shall get a response from him when he winds up.

I want to talk about affordable housing, but before I do so I should like to say one thing about my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. I agree entirely with his decision not to give parole to Myra Hindley. I was horrified when I read in *The Sunday Times* yesterday the in-depth interview that she gave. I find it difficult to understand how somebody like Myra Hindley can have such an in-depth interview with a journalist when the prison governor of Cookham Wood claimed that she played no part in arranging the interview.

There is a great campaign by the friends of Hindley to push for her to be granted parole. From what I have read, accordingly to Hindley all the blame attaches to Ian Brady and that her crime was that she lured the children: she lured them to their deaths, and I do not think that she has shown much remorse.

It is almost 30 years since those terrible crimes were committed, yet they are still fresh in the memories of many people. At least five children were sexually abused and then murdered. Anyone who could commit such a crime must be either mad or evil, or both. Myra Hindley must recognise that there can be no hiding place for her. If she were paroled, she could have plastic surgery, dye her hair, move to a part of the country or another country where she would not be known, but somebody, somewhere, would discover that she was there. We have only to hear what is being said by the relatives of the children who were murdered to realise that the only safe place for Hindley is in prison—for the good of everybody.

If this country cannot have capital punishment for the particularly vicious and evil crimes that Hindley committed, a life sentence must mean a life sentence. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was absolutely right in what he said, and I believe that he has the support of the overwhelming majority of people in this country.

I want now to raise the question of affordable housing—

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Although I am interested in hearing what my hon. Friend has to say about affordable housing, may I first ask whether he agrees that it is right that the Home Secretary should take responsibility for sentencing matters? Is it not offensive to people both in the House and outside that the European Court of Human Rights should intervene to prevent the Home Secretary from making decisions about parole or incarceration?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: My hon. Friend will not be surprised to learn that I agree with him entirely.

I have raised the issue of affordable housing previously, but I do not seem to have made any impact on the Department of the Environment or the Treasury—which, after all, holds the purse strings. Nevertheless, I persevere.

I declare an interest, as my wife is chairman of a housing association and also a member of the Housing Corporation. We have come to accept that housing associations are now the main providers of new rented accommodation. Much as I believe in home ownership, there will always be a need for rented housing. I am worried because the housing association grant rate has fallen dramatically. That leads to a growth in benefit dependency and work disincentive. If the grants are lower, the rents must be higher. People then fall into the poverty trap and find that they are better off under the benefit system than by taking a lower-paid job. I cannot see any sense in perpetuating that sort of situation.

As I said, I have raised the issue before, but to no avail. The position is worsening and the recent Budget did not make matters any better—in fact, it made them worse. There has been a huge cut in the new social housing capital programme for 1995-96. It is the second year running that it has been cut. I am saddened because the funding of social housing is one of the Government's major social policy success stories. Since 1988, more than 250,000 homes have been provided under the system. It has proved wonderful value for money, because 50 per cent. more homes have been provided for every £1 of taxpayers' money than was the case in 1988.

We must remember that more than £5 billion of unguaranteed private sector funds have been injected into social housing. Also, the bad debt record of housing associations is far better than any other part of the property sector. The success of housing associations must be seen in the context of a change in attitude among people who need to find somewhere to live and who, initially, were attracted to owner-occupation. They see people in negative equity, which is a terrible problem for many people. At one time, if someone bought a house the chances were that its value would rocket. Not any more—house prices today are not rising. Some people have difficulty in affording the deposit; others worry about long-term job security.

All those factors must be taken into account and it is against that background that I cannot understand why the Government chose to single out the new social housing for rent programme for some of the biggest cuts of any expenditure programme. Just before the April 1993 Budget, I believed that taxpayers' investment in new social housing would be £1,800 for the year 1995-96. In fact, the figure is only £1,200 million, a shortfall of £600 million. If we add to that the private finance going into the programme, it makes a cut of more than £1 billion a year. That is a serious situation. In allocations for new homes for rent, the year-on-year reduction will be an unbelievable 59 per cent.

I think that we owe an explanation to all those people whose problem is that they cannot afford to buy their own homes and need to live in rented accommodation. I need an explanation of why there was a doubling in investment in social housing in the three years up to 1992-93, followed by a halving in the three years up to 1995-96. How does my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House on anyone else expect any housing association to plan in such a climate?

Of course I appreciate that public expenditure must be contained. All Conservative Members accept that. What I fail to understand is why the social housing budget should have been cut so drastically. I should like answers to certain questions. Where is the evidence to support the huge cuts in new social housing provision for 1995-96? Why have Ministers shifted the goalposts by referring to lettings and not to homes? The manifesto commitment specifically referred to homes. Why did Ministers increase the share for the much smaller social housing programme

[Sir Fergus Montgomery]

for shared ownership? I should have thought that the emphasis would be on trying to help those people who have no choice other than to rent.

I shall repeat what I have said on previous occasions—that I get depressed when I see people sleeping rough in certain parts of London. Of course I know that there are reasons for that: young people today tend to leave home much earlier and the magnet of the big city attracts them, irrespective of the consequences; the number of divorces has increased enormously, so that where previously one home was sufficient for two people, after a divorce two homes are needed; and, of course, we must accept that for some people it is the sort of life that they choose for themselves.

I feel sorry for the genuine homeless who have nowhere else to go. I realise that homelessness is happening not just in this country, but throughout the world, but when we see it in this country it should strike at people's social conscience. If there were more affordable housing for rent, that would help in the fight against homelessness. Therefore, I hope that before we rise for the Christmas recess my right hon. Friend can give me some replies to the questions that I have posed today.

5.38 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): It is a measure of how much the Dudley, West by-election result has affected the Conservative party that the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) felt the need to attack a new hon. Member who has not even made his maiden speech. It is so unlike the hon. Gentleman to make such an attack that I was very surprised.

I was also surprised that he did not find time to mention the performance of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) in dealing with David Dimbleby on the "Newsnight" programme when he was asked what Labour's policies were. When my hon. Friend catalogued the policies that had been stated during the general election, Mr. Dimbleby had to beat a quick retreat. My hon. Friend fairly sorted out the BBC on that occasion.

I want to devote most of my speech to the flooding in my constituency 10 days ago, which caused quite a lot of damage. Unfortunately, although the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland specifically said in the Scottish Grand Committee that my constituency had been badly affected, I did not have the chance to question him.

More than 140 people had to be evacuated from their homes in the Farme Cross area of Rutherglen. Baronald street was particularly badly affected: dinghies had to be used to transfer householders to safe quarters. Even now, eight days later, the Dalmarnock road bridge is still unusable, and we do not when it will be usable again. At this stage no one is prepared to estimate the cost of the damage, for which Strathclyde regional council will be responsible.

In the east Greenlees area of Cambuslang, a large estate was cut off from its entrance road because of flooding—a problem which recurs every time the area is flooded. In the Bankhead ward of my constituency the Quigleys estate, which has a burn running through it—what the English would describe as a large stream—is subject to flooding at times of heavy rainfall; the burn overflowed during last week's flooding, and it was only thanks to the valiant efforts of volunteers on the estate that the overflow did not reach the houses.

Tenants and home owners living on that estate have told me that when they telephoned Glasgow district council to ask for assistance they were asked whether they were tenants or whether they had bought their council houses. I do not consider that relevant, and I shall pursue the matter. Fortunately my brother Eddie, who takes a good deal of case work from that ward, will be able to discuss the response to the flooding with the authorities involved.

Other parts of Rutherglen are also susceptible to flooding. At Burnhill in the west end of Rutherglen, for instance, part of the local burn has been culverted, but other parts have not and can flood at any time.

At last week's meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee, the Under-Secretary of State was asked how much support the Government would give Strathclyde regional council so that it could cope with the disaster. The Bellwin formula was cited; in effect, Strathclyde must spend £3.5 million before the system is triggered, and even then it will not be compensated for the full amount that it spends. It is all down to Government judgment. I do not consider that an adequate response.

In response to pressure from Scottish Members, the Secretary of State for Social Security has allocated £120,000 to some local Benefits Agency offices to help people whose houses have been flooded. Some of the money is supposed to take the form of loans, and that too is unsatisfactory. The Government have been reluctant to advance money to help people whose homes have been horrendously affected.

For various reasons, many people who have been forced out of their homes do not have adequate home insurance. The Government may say that that is their own affair, but the insurance premium tax that the Government have imposed helps to dissuade people from insuring themselves against disasters of this kind. The Government's response has not been good enough, in my constituency or in Scotland as a whole.

I am not a Scottish nationalist by any means; I believe that the United Kingdom constitutes the best way of dealing with the needs of all four home countries, and I strongly support the Union. Nevertheless—I know that I risk upsetting some hon. Members by saying this—I am struck by the disparity between the treatment of Scotland and that of England in cases such as this. If a similar disaster had occurred in the south-east of England, the media would have been full of Ministers dashing forward to help—especially in Conservative-controlled areas.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Outside London.

Mr. McAvoy: Outside London, as my hon. Friend says.

The continuing bias against Scotland will only help the Scottish nationalists and others like them who are trying to drive a wedge between the two sides of the Union. I hope that Conservative Members will eventually realise that.

The Government have told Strathclyde regional council—the main council trying to deal with the disaster—that there are to be cuts in grant aid. That will mean massive cuts in council services, as well as an estimated council tax rise of between 20 and 25 per cent. The Government maintain that this is a case of crying wolf, but I know that many Conservative councils in both England and Scotland are also affected.

It is disgraceful that the Government should cut the grant of councils such as Strathclyde, which is dealing admirably with a national disaster. Many local people are also trying to alleviate the problems, and I am especially proud of the way in which Strathclyde regional councillors Eddie Thompson and Hugh McKenna have responded to the needs of their wards, and made sure that the council as a whole responds reasonably.

Strathclyde's problems have been compounded by Sunday night's fire at Trinity high school, which has imposed further pressure on the council's budget. Within a couple of weeks Strathclyde has experienced the flood and the fire, and been told by the Government that its grant will be cut. That does not constitute responsible government. Strathclyde's parliamentary Labour group is currently considering the council's request for a parliamentary delegation to ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to review his attitude to the support of Scottish local authorities, particularly Strathclyde.

I am sorry to be sombre, especially at Christmas, but I am thinking of my constituents. More than 140 are staying in temporary accommodation. They do not know where the insurance money will come from—if, indeed, they are insured—and they do not know where their Christmas presents are, many of which will have been damaged in the floods.

5.47 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Last Saturday, after the one o'clock news on the BBC, Northern Ireland listeners were regaled by Albert Reynolds, the former Prime Minister of the Irish republic, telling them what the framework document negotiations were about and describing the amount of agreement already reached between himself and the British Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland have repeatedly told the House and the people of Northern Ireland that Northern Ireland's position within the Union cannot be changed until a majority of the people ask for a change, and that no such majority exists now or can be foreseen in the near future. Now Mr. Reynolds asserts that the two Acts which in law constitute the title deeds of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom—the Government of Ireland Act 1920 and Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973—have both been renegotiated in the talks, and that changes in them will be made in the House of Commons. Mr. Reynolds went on to reinforce his remarks, stating that that was the position and the agreement at the framework document discussions before he was removed from office.

Two parties were at those talks—Mr. Reynolds and the Prime Minister. Mr. Reynolds has declared that the title deeds of the Union are to be tampered with and, what is more, that articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution will not now be deleted: article 2 will stay in its place and only a slight change will be made to article 3. Surely the time has come for the Prime Minister to make a clear statement in reply to Mr. Reynolds' assertions. The statement by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland satisfied no one but is causing ever more outrage among Ulster people. He claims that confidentiality forbids him to reply, but the confidentiality has been shattered completely by Mr. Reynolds. It is surely the duty of the Prime Minister to put the record straight publicly.

The people of Northern Ireland must hear the Prime Minister's answer to certain questions. Are the title deeds of Northern Ireland's place in the Union—the 1920 Act and the 1973 Act—on the table, as Mr. Reynolds asserts? Have those legal documents been placed on a par with articles 2 and 3—which make criminal, illegal and immoral claims to jurisdiction over Northern Ireland—as Mr. Reynolds asserts?

Has the Prime Minister made a promise to Mr. Reynolds that he will advise the House of Commons to change both those Acts? Has he given up the demand that he said he would make, that articles 2 and 3 must go? According to Mr. Reynolds, that would be unfair. I am not passing judgment: I am asking the Prime Minister to answer those vital questions. The majority of the people of Northern Ireland have a right to an answer to now.

The shadow of the still armed IRA murder thugs continues to darken the scene in Northern Ireland. Over the weekend, they beat a man—one of their own co-religionists—almost to death. They broke both his arms and his legs and many other bones in his body. He now lies in an intensive care ward in the local hospital. Another man was similarly beaten up. In Enniskillen today they planted a semtex bomb, but fortunately it was dealt with before it exploded. The security forces have discovered that both the detonator and the semtex were of IRA origin.

With that dark backcloth, it is imperative that the Prime Minister should publicly reply to Albert Reynolds. If he does not respond, the people of Northern Ireland can conclude only that Mr. Reynolds was speaking the truth and that the Union is very much in danger because its title deeds are being tampered with by people who, by fair means or foul, have declared that Northern Ireland must be prised out of the United Kingdom, annexed to the Irish Republic and put under Dublin rule. I say to the Prime Minister: respond immediately and answer those questions urgently.

5.53 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): All hon. Members receive in their post reports from national and local housing associations. All tell the same story: the continuing problems of many people seeking to find satisfactory housing and at a rent that they can afford. As we all know, the number of low-cost housing developments being built or converted throughout the country is inadequate. The recent Budget failed to give any hope either to the building industry or to people seeking somewhere to live. I wish to make my comments against that background.

In July this year, the Latham report was published. It was named after a widely respected former hon. Member, Sir Michael Latham. He was asked to consider what were and are major problems in the building industry. He was asked to do so not by the building and construction industry, although it fully supported his inquiry, but by the Government and the Secretary of State for the Environment. One can expect the Government, therefore, to support the proposals in the Latham report.

[Mr. Tom Cox]

My reason for taking part in the debate is to ask when the Government will respond to the proposals that Sir Michael made in the report. The report shows the size and involvement of the building and construction industry in the economy of this country. Well over 200,000 companies operate in either building or construction. Well over 750,000 people from the industry are employed in the work force. When the industry starts to take off again, I am sure that many more people who worked in it previously but who lost their jobs in recent years will return to it. The industry produces about 10 per cent. of the United Kingdom's gross national product. Those facts are an indication of the industry's important and valuable role.

Sadly, in recent years thousands of small and large companies have gone into liquidation. As all the published reports into the reasons for that have clearly shown, one of the major problems has been the late payment or, indeed, non-payment of contracts. That leads to what is called the domino effect. One party to a contract becomes insolvent, which causes the insolvencies of other groups in the building industry. Money is lost, debts are not paid and jobs are lost.

The Latham committee considered the matter. The main cause of the problem has undoubtedly been the increasing number of disputes between clients—the main contractors and subcontractors. Disputes over contracts have caused delays in work and in payments for work that has been completed. That has done nothing to stop the increasing cost of building and construction work. It can and does lead to less investment in the industry. The amount of training undertaken by companies has fallen significantly in recent years because of those problems. That is the background to the position today and the industry has been in that position for some considerable time.

The Latham committee considered that background. All people agree that its report was one of the most detailed studies of the building and construction industry undertaken for many years. Sir Michael Latham's report made some 30 recommendations for improvements across the structure of the industry which would lead to a construction contracts Act. Everyone in the industry agrees that such an Act would provide greater certainty of cash flow and greater payment security.

One of the most important recommendations was that there should be an adjudication procedure to examine disputes between clients and companies. The building and construction industry has great scope for disputes over payments and, sadly, such disputes often arise. They can centre on the standard of work done or on delays in completion. That in turn gives rise to the domino effect I mentioned, whereby major companies tell smaller companies and subcontractors that they—the smaller companies—will get paid when they—the major companies—have been paid.

When the Latham report was published in July it was greatly welcomed by everyone in the industry. As I said, it calls for legislation in the form of a construction contracts Act. That would mean the setting up of secure trust funds to avoid the problems of non-payment. Once a contract with payment provision had been entered into it could not be invalidated by actions taken by individuals in the industry who do not want to pay and who thus create all manner of problems for others.

My reason for mentioning the report is to emphasise its importance to a major sector of the British economy. The report cannot be allowed to gather dust while someone somewhere in some Government office decides what the next step should be. I was privileged to attend a meeting that Sir Michael addressed in September. He called clearly for positive Government action on his report's proposals. I again remind the Leader of the House that the Latham Committee was set up by the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Everyone in the industry supports Sir Michael's proposals and his call for legislation. I am sure that all hon. Members recognise the importance of an industry which builds homes and creates employment and that they will be looking to the Government for a clear statement of their thinking on the Latham report. The report was published last July and we should like to know what discussions are now taking place with representatives of the industry. I have already pointed out that more than 200,000 companies are involved in the industry and employ more than 750,000 people.

I realise that the Leader of the House is not responsible for the Department of the Environment, but I know from previous experience of Adjournment debates that he is courteous enough always to forward to the relevant Department any comments made by me or any other hon. Member. In view of the fact that many people are interested in this subject, may I ask the Leader of the House when he thinks that the Government will introduce legislation based on the report of the Latham committee?

6.4 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will recall that during business questions on Thursday I suggested to him that we should have a debate on the future of the railway manufacturing industry. There is to be an Adjournment debate on this subject tomorrow, but the matter that I want to raise and to which I alluded in my question on Thursday specifically concerns the future of the Asea Brown Boveri carriage works in York.

The carriage works is not situated in my constituency, although many of my constituents work there. In fairness to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley), I must point out that he and I have together raised this matter with Ministers many times, and the position is now extremely serious. It requires action by Ministers during the Christmas recess, which is why it is especially relevant to raise it now, before the House adjourns.

Earlier today, in Transport Questions, several of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), who has remained in his place all afternoon, mentioned the improved service on Network SouthEast since the introduction of the Networker 465 trains which are manufactured at the ABB carriage works.

The third tranche of 465s is currently under construction, and that follows ABB's success in winning the competition for £150 million leasing of new rolling stock for British Rail which was awarded in 1993. The contract for the third tranche provided an option for British Rail to take up a fourth tranche. It is especially interesting that the idea of the fourth tranche being met through the option was suggested by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), when he was Minister for Public Transport, at a meeting of the York Railway Forum, which I chair jointly with the hon. Member for York.

The point is that the £150 million leasing order, which involved public funds, could not be repeated, or could not be guaranteed to be repeated in future years, but that any further financing of Networker trains would in all probability have to be accomplished through the private finance initiative. With that encouragement, ABB put in an offer to British Rail in June or July in relation to the option. The tragedy is that, some six months later, British Rail has not approached my hon. Friend the Minister for Railways and Roads, or his predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kettering, with any firm proposal.

I must point out to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that, unless a firm proposal is put to the Secretary of State and advanced sufficiently for British Rail to signify its intention to take up the option by 15 January, the option will be lost. That is why it is urgent that the House consider the matter now.

There is no question in my mind but that British Rail has been dragging its feet. What has caused the greatest concern to many people in the York area, and especially to the hon. Member for York and me, the ABB work force and the York area economic development unit which has been monitoring the proceedings, is that it now seems that British Rail could be considering another tendering process and not exercising the option put into the contract for the third tranche.

That would be tragic news for the ABB work force in York, because it would inevitably mean a six-month tendering process and readvertising on a European basis through the *Official Journal of the European Communities*. In addition, ABB would not be able to offer the savings on the fourth tranche that it is able to offer now under the option arrangements.

The ABB works in York is the only carriage works in the United Kingdom that manufactures a complete carriage. That may have something to do with the fact that ABB recently lost the contract for the Northern line trains to GEC, which will import material from Spain. I cannot claim to be an expert on the matter, but I believe that a carriage works that manufactures a complete train is rather like a shipyard, although the process is shorter. Certain parts of the work take place in March or April, and the completed train is not ready until October or November.

The third tranche of 465 Networker trains is likely to be delivered by October next year so from March or April onwards, ABB will have no option but to lay off staff, unless it is certain that it will get the fourth tranche, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Kettering always said was in the mind of the Department of Transport.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham and other south-east Members agree that there are still too many old trains running on Network SouthEast. There is undoubtedly a need for further 465 orders. It is clear—

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Dangerous trains.

Mr. Greenway: As the hon. Gentleman says, there are dangerous trains; it is interesting that he mentions that. There was a question earlier today about the dreadful accident at Cowden. I understand that one of the problems with the old-style trains, which were built 25 or 30 years ago, is that the carriage is just bolted on to a platform on wheels. If the train hits an immovable object or a train coming in the other direction, the carriage completely shears off the base.

The 465 train is a complete-build body and does not have that weakness. With the new trains, passengers on Network SouthEast would be considerably more comfortable. They would be likely to be attracted back to travel on the railways after the dreadful signalmen's strike last year, when many of them found other ways to get to work. They would also be considerably safer on their journey.

This is a complex matter, which involves negotiations and delicate commercial considerations. It must be clear, however, that, unless the option is exercised, there is every likelihood that the ABB carriage works will close, because there simply will not be any work for the work force to do. I regard that as the most perverse crime that the Government could commit on the people of the York area.

Until I heard one of the answers in Transport Questions today, I did not know that this was the first year since 1948 that British Rail had not ordered any rolling stock. I fully support the privatisation process, because I believe that the lack of investment is due to a lack of money. From what has happened with the airlines or with coaches, it is clear that the private sector is likely to produce considerably more investment. We were told during the privatisation process, however, that there would be no hiatus in investment. All the present investment seems to be directed towards infrastructure and rail track.

I am not suggesting to the Leader of the House that the Government should consider the only option to be to persuade the Chancellor to release some of the money that may well be saved on the road-building programme after what we have heard today, and to spend it on public transport. I do not suggest that the fourth tranche should be a publicly funded proposal.

What I am saying to my right hon. Friend is that ABB has done all that Ministers suggested it should. There is a PFI scheme for funding the fourth tranche of Networker trains. We should encourage British Rail and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to make it clear that the option must be exercised by 15 January—or at least the intention to exercise it should be announced—so that we can reassure the ABB work force and secure here in the United Kingdom a carriage works that is capable of building all the new trains that a privatised railway will require.

From what the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said earlier, it seems that, if we agree with all the Jopling proposals, there may be no more three-hour debates on the Christmas Adjournment. That would be a great pity. I often think that these are the best three hours in the entire Session. An amendment has been tabled on the matter, and I hope that it will be selected, because I want to vote for it.

I do not relish the thought that if, however, we have a debate on the Christmas Adjournment next year—I have made it a habit to speak in such debates during my seven or eight years in this place—I shall have to remind the House of what I have said this evening about the future of the ABB carriage works.

6.15 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I hope that this is not the last time that we have a debate on the Christmas Adjournment. It is an important opportunity for hon. Members to raise particular concerns. If the Leader of the House ever returns, he may make a note of those concerns—

Mr. Mackinlay: There is no Minister here.

Mr. Corbyn: The right hon. Gentleman's oppo, the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), is here as his deputy; it is all right. He has got his pen out and he is writing things down. As long as he ensures that he writes it all down and sends it to the Minister concerned, I am quite happy.

I want to raise a number of matters concerning poverty and health in London. Christmas is often a time of deep conservatism and synthetic concern for many outside. Everyone else retreats to the bosom of the family and forgets about those outside who are begging, sleeping rough, living desperately overcrowded lives in other people's homes or waiting for hospital operations and surgery. The position of health care and poverty in London is desperate and complex. The number of people sleeping on the streets is still going up and hostel accommodation is no substitute for proper housing for people who desperately need it.

Many factors affect the health of people in London. Ill health is in part due to poverty, in part due to air pollution, in part due to stress and in part due to unemployment; there is a whole series of factors. We live in a country that still claims to have a national health service that is universal and free at the point of use. Opposition Members cherish that deeply and I look forward to the day when a Labour Government are elected who can ensure that that principle is carried through in all circumstances.

In that setting, I refer with real anger to a copy of a circular that I have just been given. It is from the surgical directorate of Whittington hospital in my constituency. It is dated 5 December and has been sent to all consultant surgeons and anaesthetists. It says:

> "The Executive Management Group have directed us to curtail all non-urgent elective surgery *with immediate effect*.
>
> I have instructed Bed Bureau to cancel *all* non-urgent patients with the following exceptions: Day Cases, ECRs, GP Fund Holder's Patients, 18 month plus waiters . . . and Waiting List Initiative Patients."

Those patients are mainly from other boroughs. The circular continues:

> "Please note that 'Urgent' should be taken to mean where there is a real risk to life, or real probability of serious deterioration, if an operation is not performed before April 1995."

Taken at face value, the circular says that those who think that they have a right to health care in my borough or in Camden—the area covered by Camden and Islington health authority—have no access to anything other than emergency treatment for a life-threatening condition before April 1995. That is happening at the same time as wards are being closed, beds are unused and staff have nothing to do in some hospitals. It is nonsense. It is a travesty of justice and many people are in serious pain while waiting for a hospital bed to be made available for them.

I believe that that circular is a direct consequence of the operation of the internal market in the national health service. It is also flies in the face of all the assurances that my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson), for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) and I have been given at numerous meetings, that there was to be no prejudice in favour of patients of fundholding GPs. Yet the circular says that if one happens to be a patient of a fundholding GP, one is okay and can get treatment. If one is not a patient of a fundholding GP—43 out of 44 GPs in my constituency are not fundholders—one has to wait until April next year before one can get an appointment.

I have also read very carefully the finance report given at the most recent full meeting of Camden and Islington health authority. Very strange language is used in those reports. They talk of over-activity in the hospitals—over-activity in Whittington hospital, which, apparently, is working a little too quickly and therefore doing more than was expected of it at the start of the financial year. That, apparently, is a reason not to carry on treating patients who need treatment, but to stop doing anything until the end of the financial year.

The report goes on to complain of the very large increase in the number of emergency admissions in hospitals in the Camden and Islington area. The reason for that, I hazard to say, is that many people, out of desperation, present themselves at the casualty unit because they know that they will have to be seen, whereas if they go to a GP, they know that the GP, however hard he or she may try, will not be able to get them a bed or refer them to the hospital. Also, the increase in the number of emergency admissions is because of a large increase in bronchial conditions being referred to the hospital, which is a serious problem throughout London.

With respect to the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel), the large number of asthma cases referred to hospitals at present is to do with cars, with the building of roads, and with air pollution. Asthma and other bronchial illnesses are now of epidemic proportions in this capital city and it is up to the Government particularly to do something about air pollution and promoting public transport, rather than private, polluting motoring. Those issues can be ignored no longer.

Further on in the report, I found that waiting lists for operations in the hospitals in the community that I represent, at 30 September 1994, showed that 1,200 people were waiting for appointments at Whittington hospital, a similar number at London Royal Free hospital, an even larger number at the University College of London hospital and a slightly smaller number at St. Bartholomew's. Indeed, 40 per cent. of those people have been waiting more than six months for an appointment. I believe that those figures will be considerably higher in future.

I have serious criticisms of the circular and, indeed, of the information that has been given to many people in the past about the way in which the internal market will operate in regard to the health service in London. The internal market is a recipe for disaster; it is impossible to plan within it; and it means that each hospital has to try to fend for itself, to win contracts if it can. It means that if the health authority does not have the money to pay for the treatment of patients, the patients have to wait longer and longer for operations, with consequent loss of earnings, loss of jobs and loss of employment prospects, and problems for the social services, carers, families, friends and everybody else. It is a completely mad way in which to run any kind of health service in this capital city.

Even further afield, I see the closures that are planned. On Saturday I went to Bart's to visit a very close friend of mine, who has been a patient there for the past six months. As I was walking through the hospital, looking at the buildings, feeling the sense of history and witnessing the absolute dedication and care of the staff there, who look after people in very serious conditions and do their best to make those patients' lives comfortable, I thought to myself that it was a criminal act to close that building. It is an act of lunacy, it is vandalism and it is fundamentally wrong.

I would hope that the Secretary of State for Health would go to Bart's and have the courage to look every patient and member of staff in the face and say, "You are surplus to requirements and we intend to go ahead with the closure of this hospital." To close that 800-year-old hospital is an act of the most crass vandalism imaginable, knowing full well that that hospital's patients will have to go on to the waiting lists of the UCL, of Whittington hospital, of the Royal Free and all the others; knowing full well that the closure of its casualty unit will mean that the already overstretched casualty units at UCL, the Whittington, the Royal Free and the North Middlesex will not be able to cope; and knowing fell well that the Secretary of State is also planning the closure of yet another casualty unit somewhere in north-east London. Frankly, it is appalling.

Even at this late hour, I hope that the Secretary of State will recognise that she has been thrown a lifeline in the NHS management executive report last week which, at last, says that non-market considerations can be taken into account in the future of particular hospitals. I also hope, while she is on the subject, that the Secretary of State will look at the future of the Royal Northern hospital, which is also in my constituency, on the Holloway road. Its casualty unit was built as the borough's war memorial by public subscription—there is a large plaque to say so. Inside the hospital, there is an arch and an inscription for every one of those people who died in both world wars.

There is a huge local campaign to retain the building and use it as a nurse-managed bed facility, so that people coming out of long-stay or acute surgery will at least have somewhere to go for supportive care before they go home and can be looked after in the normal way. It would be a very cost-effective, good and sensible use of that building. I hope that the hon. Member who is reporting back to Ministers will relay that information to the Secretary of State and convey the concerns that many of us have expressed.

One hundred years ago, people in London hoped that their standard of living would start to improve, and that there would be more hospitals and better-quality housing, and the possibility at some point in the future of decent health care for them. All those people, who linked together the problems of poverty, unemployment, air pollution, bad housing and dangerous working conditions, recognised that health had to be taken as a whole. Yet here we are at the end of the 20th century, and all those problems are coming back to address us. It is time that we had a Secretary of State and a Government who were prepared to recognise that there is a link between debt, poverty, air pollution and homelessness and ill health. The greatest cause of ill health is poverty and all its aspects have to be treated as one.

I hope that the Secretary of State recognises that it is time that she got a grip on the way in which the health service is run in London, lifted the nonsense circular that affects my constituency and also lifted the axe that is hanging over one casualty unit and Bart's hospital. At least, then, people who were desperate for treatment would get the treatment for which they had paid through taxation and national insurance contributions and could sleep securely in their beds knowing that they would be treated over this Christmas period.

6.27 pm

Mr. Michael Carttiss (Great Yarmouth): Before the House agrees to the motion to adjourn tomorrow, I should like to press on the Leader of the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant), in his absence, the need for a debate on the pros and cons of a national referendum being held before—not after—the 1996 intergovernmental conference. We need to consider not only the issue of a referendum itself, but the questions or question that may be asked.

The BBC "East at Westminster" programme in my region yesterday referred to the recent Gallup poll, which asked whether the public wanted a referendum on having a common currency in the European Union and closer ties with Europe—more rather than less integration with the EU—and in which 81 per cent. of the public responded yes. My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West was on that programme and may have seen—

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I was not asked.

Mr. Carttiss: I know that my hon. Friend was not asked that question. However, 81 per cent. of the public responded yes, they wanted a referendum, and 13 per cent. said no.

A Sunday newspaper reported on 11 December that it had polled 100 constituency Conservative association chairmen on the same question. Over half those asked supported having a referendum.

With your great grasp of events and impressive memory, Madam Deputy Speaker, you will recall that I tabled an amendment to the Government's paving motion for the debate on what was to become Maastricht legislation. I argued that we should not proceed until after a referendum, either before or after the Edinburgh intergovernmental conference. I was unable to support either the Government or the Opposition. My right hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench, as they were then—I cannot call the Prime Minister my right hon. Friend now because he has crossed me off his Christmas card list—persuaded me to join them in the Lobby to vote for the Government's motion, which I did.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): They conned the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Carttiss: No, they did not con me. My then right hon. Friend the Prime Minister promised me that there would be no Third Reading and no conclusion to the debate on Maastricht legislation until the Danes had had their second referendum. On that basis, I was happy to support him.

[Mr. Carttiss]

During the debate on 4 November—I apologise for detaining the House by regurgitating my words on that date—I referred to the American presidential election. The debate took place the following day. I said:

> "The message that came from the United States via our televisions screens last night was clear and strong: President Bush had not addressed the jobs problem; he had seemed to leave the recession to sort itself out and had had no coherent economic programme; and he had lost touch with the people of America. I have to say to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that, if he does not address the problem of jobs, establish a coherent economic programme and regain touch with the people of this country, he will go the same way as George Bush."—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1992, Vol. 213; c. 337.]

Happily, the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) has addressed the "jobs problem". There has been a continuous improvement in employment prospects. The right hon. Gentleman has established an almost "coherent economic programme", with the one blip of value added tax at 17.5 per cent. Happily, I and some of my hon. Friends saved the Government from that dreadful mistake.

The Prime Minister was dead against a referendum two years ago, when I tabled my amendment, and before that. There was recently a reference to "another Whipless Tory". In fact, I am not whipless outside this place even if I am within it. *[Interruption.]* Read the *News of the World*. Although the Prime Minister was opposed to a referendum two years ago, as I said, last week he showed some movement towards recognising that the majority of the public want a referendum, and that is what the majority of the Conservative party wants.

I am not asking for a referendum on whether we stay in or leave the European Union. That decision has been taken. It is nonsense to pretend that there is any future for Great Britain outside the European Union. However, the way in which the EU develops in the remaining years of the century, and Great Britain's place in determining its future structure and the dimensions of the Union, should be debated more widely and more thoroughly before the Prime Minister goes to the IGC in 1996.

It is alleged that the Foreign Secretary is willing to have the issues debated. That is what we read in the newspapers.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Never say never.

Mr. Carttiss: Indeed, never say never.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer—I cannot refer to him as my right hon. and learned Friend—is said to be dead against that course. He got it wrong on VAT and he has got it wrong on that.

Mr. Mackinlay: With friends like the hon. Gentleman—

Mr. Carttiss: But I am not the right hon. and learned Gentleman's Friend.

During the weekend, one of my constituents drew my attention to an article that had appeared in *The Mail on Sunday* of the previous weekend, on 11 December. It purported to have been written by the Prime Minister. Before I refer to the specific quotation in the article that my constituent was querying, I shall quote the sentence allegedly written by the Prime Minister when he spoke of my hon. Friends who lost the Whip on 28 November. The Prime Minister is alleged to have written:

> "For some, Europe is anathema. They are appalled by all it has to offer and they seek—in their more extreme moments—a complete withdrawal."

"No, no, no" was said in the Chamber on a memorable occasion by Lady Thatcher, as she now is, when, happily, she was Prime Minister. I say "No, no, no" to any thought of debating in this place or wherever a move out of Europe.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman has lost me now.

Mr. Carttiss: Never mind.

I was referring to an article that appeared in *The Mail on Sunday* on 11 December. It contained the following statement under the Prime Minister's name:

> "Some Conservative Members voted against the Government. They did so knowing that, if we had lost, there would have been a General Election."

That is what he said. The name "John Major" appears over the article.

No Conservative Members voted against the Government on the night in question. Seven of my hon. Friends abstained when it came to the Labour amendment, which aimed to block European finance legislation, of which the majority of Labour Members are much in favour. I voted against the Labour amendment. I was one of 330 Members who voted with the Government to oppose that amendment. We gave the Prime Minister his vote of confidence with a majority of 27. I did not vote against the Government. I did not, as the Prime Minister claimed in the article, risk a general election.

The Prime Minister, if he did write the article, continued:

> "So it is no use their pretending that their vote did not matter or that they did not know what the result would be. . . . That sort of self-indulgence is neither understood nor accepted by the vast majority of their colleagues in Parliament, or by the country."

I resent being told that adhering to the Conservative party manifesto, on which right hon. Members on the Government Front Bench and I were elected, is self-indulgent. In Essen, the Prime Minister said:

> "I hope over the months to come they will show they are Conservatives".

That is a reference to those who were expelled from the Conservative party. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that

> "they will support the Conservative Government, they will defend Conservative policy, they will defend the manifesto on which they and I were elected."

I shall remind the House of promises that were made in the Conservative party's manifesto. It reads:

> "We will insist on more effective control over community spending".

That appears on page 4 of "The Best Future for Britain". That is the document on which I and all Conservative Members were elected, including, of course, those who now sit on the Government Front Bench. I repeat:

> "We will insist on more effective control over community spending".

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): That is precisely what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is doing.

Mr. Carttiss: That is what my ex-hon. Friend says from a sedentary position. I know that he wants to speak in the debate, and the sooner I finish, the better will be his chance of making a contribution. I hope that he will not interrupt me to talk nonsense.

Over the past two years, nothing has been done to deal with the problem of fraud within the Community. That fraud has siphoned off £6 billion of European money. The Prime Minister and his colleagues have done nothing to address that problem. The EC budget is set to rise from £55 billion to £65 billion by 1999. We make an annual net contribution of £2 billion, and I could not vote for that—

Mr. Arnold: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Carttiss: No, I will not. The hon. Gentleman has a long speech to make.

I could not vote for increasing our contribution in the light of the promise that I made to my electorate. That is why I did not support the Second Reading of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill although I voted against the Labour amendment, which made good sense. In our manifesto, we pledged:

> "We will redouble our efforts to reform the common agricultural policy, and we will stoutly defend the interests of British farmers and consumers."

In addition, we said:

> "all member states must live up to their obligations under Community law . . . we secured agreement that the European Court will be able to fine any member state which fails to do so."

Those are not my words; they are quoted from page 3 of the party manifesto.

Earlier this year, the European Commission fined Italy £2 billion for producing 1.5 million tonnes of milk a year in excess of its agreed quota for 1989 to 1993. Spain was fined £1.4 billion. Italy and Spain refused to pay. The United Kingdom, Holland and Denmark then lodged a case against the Italian and Spanish Governments at the European Court of Justice. However, on 21 October, the Chancellor of the Exchequer withdrew the United Kingdom complaint to the ECJ, much to the disgust of the Danes and the Dutch, who were outvoted. So much for our pledge in the manifesto in respect of which my right hon. and hon. former Friends were elected in 1992.

So much for our pledge to make the European Community states live up to their obligations under Community law. The EC backdated an increase in the Italian and Spanish milk quotas to 1989, so they escaped penalties of £800 million, which is about the sum that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was seeking to raise from taxing old-age pensioners' heat and light.

Meanwhile, dairy farmers in this country, including those whom I represent in Norfolk, have had to reduce milk production. Some have gone out of business. The cost of a pint of milk has risen and doorstep deliveries are said to be at risk. So much for the Government promising in our manifesto stoutly to defend British farmers and consumers.

When someone to whom one tells the truth in their front room throws one out, one does not walk up the garden path next morning, knock on the door and say, "Please let me in." It is up to the person who has thrown one out, and to whom one has told the truth, to recognise the truth and say, "Please come back in." There should be cries not for party unity, but for sticking to the pledges upon which we were all elected in 1992.

6.42 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): It would be inappropriate of me to make my speech without acknowledging the courage of the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) in the way that he spoke in such forthright terms. In a sense, it was a parliamentary occasion. It is very rare for someone to speak so frankly on the Floor of the House about the deep divisions in the Government and clearly indicate the extent of the bitterness in the Government ranks. The hon. Member for Great Yarmouth should be congratulated on speaking in such frank and trenchant terms.

I do not believe that the House should adjourn, and I want to explain why. I want to reiterate a point that I have made in the House before. It is ludicrous that decisions about when this House should sit should be a matter for the Government and the Executive. Time and again, it seems that the House sits only if there is legislation for us to pass. The other important aspects of our parliamentary job, of scrutinising the Executive and of probing, cajoling and exposing, are deemed secondary to the role and interests of Government.

I look forward to the day—I believe that it will come one day, although perhaps not in my time here—when the House of Commons will be the arbiter of when the House sits and not the Executive.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): It is.

Mr. Mackinlay: My hon. Friend says that it is, but because of the payroll vote and the traditions of this place, the Government always get their way. I would like to see—

Mr. Spearing: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Winnick: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Mackinlay: I will give way in a moment, after I have completed my train of thought. The Government Front Bench and the Opposition Front Bench agree through parliamentary choreography between themselves, and that is not in the interests of hon. Members in respect of their job of criticising and cajoling.

Mr. Winnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that the courageous speech which we have just heard from the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth—it was a very courageous speech and I, like all my Labour colleagues, speak as a stern and never-ending opponent of Toryism—would not be possible if the proposals are passed tonight? Under the proposals, debates like the one we are having now would disappear for good.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): That is not so.

Mr. Winnick: Yes, it is so. My hon. Friend should read the Order Paper and my amendments.

Mr. Mackinlay: I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). I do not want to prejudge the debate that will take place later this evening, but there is a real danger that, far from us being able to assert the rights and powers of Back-Bench

[Mr. Mackinlay]

Members, we might allow them to be further eroded. The Adjournment of the House tomorrow, on the effective diktat of the Government, is bad on this occasion as it has been on other occasions.

During this debate, I have received notice from the Minister for Transport in London, as have other hon. Members, about the trunk road programme and the announcement of the new starts. In a letter to me, the Minister said that the A13 Wennington-Mar Dyke improvement scheme, which was previously an approved start for this year, has been postponed indefinitely.

I do not want to trespass into the debate about the roads programme, other than to say that it is indicative of how clumsy the Government are and how they are not running the country properly, because, during the debate, I have had a message bleeped to me which states that £2 million has already been spent on preparatory work for the A13 scheme which was due to start in January. That is not the way to run the country.

Had the document to which I have referred appeared a few days ago, or if we had had a few more parliamentary sitting days, we might have been able to explore the Minister's thinking behind the decisions which, on the face of it, appear not to have been thought through. I guess that that view is replicated by other hon. Members who have received similar letters about road schemes in the their constituencies.

Before the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) rushes over to bend the Lord President's ear, I want to make it clear that I am talking about the fact that the announcement—if that is the correct term—has been made at the fag end of a parliamentary sitting when there is little or no opportunity for us to probe the thinking behind it, particularly bearing in mind the fact that, in respect of the scheme to which I have referred, public money has been spent—perhaps abortively—in preparatory work. I would like to be able to probe the Minister further.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Did the hon. Gentleman's Labour-led Essex county council downgrade the bid concerned and put other projects ahead of it in its application for transport supplementary grant?

Mr. Mackinlay: My point is that the matter is now under way. Decisions about our trunk road programme are not being made in a planned way. They are being taken by way of crisis government. There is a major revenue problem, and foolish decisions are being taken.

The issue to which I have just referred arose during this debate. It was not one of the issues to which I originally intended to refer. However, the House is to adjourn tomorrow, but a major issue which affects my constituency—and an issue which affects other hon. Members who have received similar letters about road programmes in their areas—has arisen, and we are unable to probe or examine the Minister's ludicrous decisions. In short, the Minister gets away with it, because Parliament will not be sitting after tomorrow.

The issue which should be raised, and which is an overriding case why the House should not adjourn, relates to Gibraltar. A week and a half ago, I asked the Leader of the House for an urgent statement from the Foreign Secretary about the reprehensible and unreasonable way in which the Spanish authorities were behaving towards the colony. Of course, no such statement was made. That demonstrates how the House is failing in its obligations to scrutinise the Executive, particularly the Foreign Secretary. In the absence of that statement, it is fair for me to conclude that right hon. Gentleman is behaving dilatorily towards Gibraltar. He is a thundering disgrace to the cause of the colony.

This country has a proud and historic association with Gibraltar. The fiction, although it should be true, is that the Gibraltarians are British people, who have European Union citizenship. They are being denied the right to protection from Her Majesty's Government—protection that is extended to people from Grantham, Grampian, Huntingdon or Thurrock.

We have learnt from newspapers, however, that the Gibraltarians are suffering great disadvantages because of the actions of the Spanish authorities. In fact, people from Grampian, Grantham or Thurrock who visit Spain and who wish to visit the British colony are also being frustrated. That is outrageous. One would have expected that such problems would prompt one hell of a row in the House, but no anger has been shown, except by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and me, when I raised the issue a week and a half ago.

Mr. Winnick: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way to me a second time. Does he agree that the issue of Gibraltar is germane to the motion that we are debating, because we simply do not know what might happen before we come back in January? In view of some of the accusations that may be made abroad or even in the House and elsewhere, it is important to make it clear that far from Britain wanting to keep Gibraltar as a colony because of our colonial heritage, the overwhelming majority of Gibraltarians—more than 90 per cent.—do not want to be part of Spain. If Spain wants Gibraltar, it is up to the Spanish authorities to persuade the Gibraltarians accordingly. I hope that we will not see any further appeasement from our Government on that important issue.

Mr. Mackinlay: My hon. Friend has always impressed me—even when he was the Member for Croydon, South a long time ago—because of the important principle of national self-determination to which he has always adhered. That principle should be vested in the people. There is no doubt that the Gibraltarians have demonstrated time and time again their wish to maintain their association with the United Kingdom. They are proud to be British, as well as embracing their Gibraltarian identity.

I was extremely proud to accompany a number of hon. Members from both sides of the House to Gibraltar this summer, at the invitation of the Chief Minister, to celebrate the Gibraltar national day. We saw with our own eyes the desire of the Gibraltarians to maintain their association with Britain, and to be full British citizens. In reality, they are also citizens of the European Union, but they are currently being denied the rights of that citizenship because of the unreasonable actions of the Spanish authorities.

The hon. Members who made that visit smelt that something was up when the Governor of Gibraltar failed to receive our delegation—we were told that he was otherwise detained at a family wedding. It was somewhat surprising that the Governor, who is no doubt a fine former military man with a brace of medals, felt that it was inappropriate for him to join in the celebration of the existence of the colony of Gibraltar.

At that time, we also heard that the Attorney-General of Gibraltar had been eased out of office. According to today's edition of *The Daily Telegraph*, it is suggested that that was part of a pattern of skulduggery, emanating not a million miles from the Foreign Office. It appears that the Foreign Office is attempting to appease the Spanish authorities and to undermine Gibraltar Ministers. That is outrageous.

Should the Leader of the House say in reply to the debate that I am scaremongering and embroidering the facts, that is his fault, because I legitimately asked for a statement from the Foreign Office a week and a half ago, but was denied it. That was wrong.

I have every confidence in and support the Administration of the Chief Minister, Joe Bossano, and his colleagues. They have done a great deal to maintain the economy of the colony at a time when it faced a major crisis through the swift withdrawal of funding from the Ministry of Defence, which had been given because the colony was used as a port. The Administration had to find other means of maintaining the economy, and they have done very well. I accept that mistakes might have been made, but the colony has not had much support from the United Kingdom Government. That, too, is disgraceful.

The Spanish Government are now turning on the screws by making spurious suggestions about major irregularities in the customs arrangements between Gibraltar and Spain. They have claimed widespread smuggling of drugs, cigarettes and other contraband. The implication behind those suggestions is that the Gibraltarian authorities are acquiescing in those irregularities. I do not believe that that is so, but, were it so, one would expect Her Majesty's Government to tackle it and to make a statement to the House. They have failed to do so.

I challenge the Leader of the House to arrange for a Minister from the Foreign Office to make a statement to the House on Gibraltar before we adjourn. The Government, for all their boasts about their prowess and their apparent macho diplomacy, have once more demonstrated their weakness when it comes to protecting and promoting the best interests of British people, albeit those who live in Gibraltar. The Government are appeasing Spain, and it is about time that something was done.

I notice that, by coincidence, a meeting is planned at the Foreign Office tomorrow with Spanish Foreign Ministers. That means, of course, that it will be too late for a statement to be made to the House about the outcome of those talks. By the time the House returns, things will have moved on and gone off the boil. We will be faced with a backlog of other issues that hon. Members will want to raise. The problems faced by Gibraltar will be ignored.

It is not unreasonable for me to accuse the Government of behaving dilatorily towards Gibraltar and to demand a statement. I hope that the good sense of the majority of hon. Members will persuade them to join me in arguing that we should not adjourn until such a statement is made.

6.57 pm

Mr. Douglas French (Gloucester): I was surprised when the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) was so suspicious of my brief intervention in his speech, when I pointed out that charges on the Severn bridge were levied in one direction only.

I support the line that the hon. Gentleman has taken. One reason that the charges are so high is that they are only imposed in one direction. They could certainly be reduced if they were charged in both directions. He will be pleased to know that a delegation of Conservative Members and local councillors from the area recently met the Minister for Railways and Roads to discuss the future tariff arrangements for the bridge. I hope that that meeting will produce some constructive results.

During the Christmas period, there will, sadly, be many road accidents, as usual, and many will involve uninsured motorists. That is a serious matter, on which the time for action has arrived. Effective and practical measures could be taken to reduce the problem significantly in the United Kingdom as it has been overcome in other countries. One such measure is the mandatory display of windscreen insurance discs.

Through my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, I urge the Secretary of State for Transport to re-examine that policy to see whether a way could be found to implement it. The idea has a long history. I raised it in the House as long ago as the Christmas Adjournment debate in 1991. Since then, organisations like the Motor Accident Solicitors Society have declared themselves much in favour, and the Association of British Insurers has also made positive comments. Admittedly, some leading insurance companies have been more sceptical.

It is a serious problem. The best estimate is that, of 23 million motorists in this country at present, approximately a million drive with no insurance. Rising premiums have caused a growing number of people to think that it is better to drive while uninsured and face a slim chance of being caught than pay a yearly premium that is likely to be more expensive than a fine imposed by a magistrates court.

To counter the problem of uninsured drivers, the Government have increased the maximum penalty for driving while uninsured from £1,000 to £5,000. But that scarcely touches the heart of the problem. In 1990, only five drivers in the entire country were fined more than £1,000 for driving without insurance. In 1991 there were six, and in 1992 there were 25, but only one was given the maximum penalty of £5,000. That is one driver out of a total estimated number of 1 million.

The failure to tackle the problem vigorously is expensive, because uninsured motorists give rise to claims bills of some £250 million a year. Thus, a £250 million subsidy is paid by honest motorists to dishonest motorists. The Motor Insurance Bureau is funded by a 2.5 per cent. levy on motor insurance policies, which is not much different from the insurance premium tax, on which so much objection has been expressed. The Motor Insurance Bureau operates on a restrictive basis—a last resort—so that, in many cases, it will not meet claims, which then fall on the insurance policy of the driver who was insured, even though no culpability can be demonstrated.

Whenever this subject is raised, there are said to be insuperable obstacles. Windscreen insurance discs are said to be incompatible with a system based on insuring the

[Mr. Douglas French]

driver rather than the vehicle. It is said that WIDs do not prove that the person driving the vehicle is insured to drive it—some insurance policies cover an insured person and his spouse or a named driver only. It is also said that WIDs cannot accommodate the different uses to which a vehicle may be put—some policies restrict a vehicle's use to social, domestic and pleasure purposes, while others cover business.

The Department of Transport accepted all those objections when it made its last major statement on the matter in a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan). The then Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), said:

"we have decided not to require evidence of insurance to be displayed on a vehicle windscreen. Under our present driver-related insurance system the enforcement benefit would be little more than is already provided by the check on insurance which is made when renewing vehicle excise duty."

That explanation did not do the Minister credit, because it amounts to a massive understatement. Everybody knows that vehicle excise duty provides no check whatever, because it can be obtained for a year with insurance that is valid for only 24 hours.

The Minister's answer went on:

"The display of an insurance disc would provide no assurance that the driver was covered by an insurance policy or complying with policy conditions".

Of course it would not. Its advocates do not suggest that it would. But it provides more information than would otherwise be available if it were not displayed and, as such, must be helpful.

The Minister continued:

"nor would it protect against the insurance being cancelled once the disc has been issued."— [*Official Report*, 23 June 1993; Vol. 227, c. 171.]

But it would protect against cancellation if, to get the premium refund, the policy holder was required to return the disc. None of those arguments carries any weight, except for those looking for reasons not to take that action.

A windscreen insurance disc system would provide tangible evidence that some kind of insurance cover was in place in relation to a particular vehicle. It would be evidence of the existence of an insurance policy but not proof of its adequacy, which would still be provided by supporting policy documents. The disc could provide much valuable information, such as the name and age of the driver, the classification of use, the date of expiry, whether the policy is for any vehicle or, if it is for only one vehicle, and the make and registration number of the vehicle.

For people insured to drive more than one vehicle—in practice, the vast majority of people drive only one or, at most, two vehicles—individuals could display their personal disc on the windscreen before starting out on a journey. That would become as automatic as clicking on a seat belt.

Some important parallels can be drawn with vehicle excise duty, for which the display of valid cover is mandatory. There are 140,000 convictions a year for failing to display a road fund licence. They are not displayed because they have not been bought; but the chances of identifying 140,000 evaders without a requirement to display would be minimal. So the need to display enhances compliance. I submit that, were not the tax disc required to be displayed, the level of evasion would be much higher. It therefore follows that, if an insurance disc were required to be displayed, the number of uninsured motorists would be likely to decrease or the number of evaders apprehended would increase.

I have heard it said that the policy that I am urging on the Secretary of State would cause administrative burdens. With up-to-date technology, however, it is simple for an insurance company to provide a disc in the form of a tear-off section on the certificate issued when the cover is taken out. For insurance companies whose systems are up to date, that would present no difficulty whatever.

There is even an opportunity for a go-ahead insurance company to blaze a trail and introduce windscreen insurance discs voluntarily. It could be done in conjunction with an advertising campaign. Indeed, the disc could promote the brand name of the insurer. More generally, the industry could require display to meet the terms of the policy. It might even provide a small discount for doing so.

Such a system would meet with the significant approval of the police. All my exchanges with the police on the subject have shown that they are extremely enthusiastic about it. Discs would provide on-the-spot information which the police often have difficulty in extracting. They would save police time in checking insurance details, as well as the costly and totally unnecessary procedure of producing documents at another police station some days later, which is said to cost the police some £20 million a year, the majority of which could be saved.

Most important, that would increase the chances of catching uninsured drivers, many of whom are to be found around Christmas time. The present system catches only those who are stopped by the police and required to produce their insurance documents. It fails to catch about 750,000 people who fall into that category.

The windscreen insurance disc system has worked successfully in other countries, such as France, Ireland and Italy. It is well known by those who have looked at the subject that, before Ireland introduced WIDs in 1986, as many as 20 per cent. of drivers were uninsured. Within a year, that number had fallen to 8 per cent. The Irish Government estimated that every uninsured driver cost those drivers who were insured an extra £70 in premium. That Irish system is driver-based, and generally uses the insurance companies that operate in the United Kingdom and in Jersey, where the system has also been introduced with success.

Finally, the implementation of this proposal should be accompanied by the requirement that drivers be able to produce driving licences and insurance documents on the spot—that is to say, that those documents should be carried at all times. A combination of those two proposals would bring down the number of uninsured motorists, would help the police, and would greatly reduce insurance premiums for the many honest motorists.

7.10 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I shall speak briefly because other people want to speak. The main reason why I should like this debate to take place before the Christmas Adjournment is that today I received a letter from the Secretary of State for Education, in reply to my request that a deputation be allowed to meet her with a view to getting a single site for the Bolsover school. I had raised the matter previously on the Floor of the House, and I took it for granted that a deputation comprising Bolsover school governors, the Derbyshire education committee and myself would be able to meet her; yet, for some strange reason, the Secretary of State refused.

I hope that the Leader of the House will convey that information to the Secretary of State. As a result of raising the matter in that fashion, we might be able to arrange that meeting.

I think that it was at this time last year that I mentioned the Bolsover landslip in this Adjournment debate. The Leader of the House conveyed the relevant information, and we obtained a meeting with the Department of the Environment at that time. Although we did not get everything we asked for—we did not get the £1 million—we were able to arrange for a survey to be undertaken with a view to stabilising that dangerous landslip. I hope that the Leader of the House can do the same again in respect of the matter that I have mentioned today.

The only other matter that I shall mention is the dioxin at Bolsover Coalite, which I have mentioned many times in similar Adjournment debates and on other occasions. Greenpeace recently tested the dioxin level of the blood of many workers at Bolsover Coalite—testing that had never been undertaken by the Department of Health. Greenpeace found some alarming results. Some of the tests showed dioxin levels four or five times worse than what were supposed to be normal levels; whereupon the workers at Coalite decided to send me a petition, asking whether the Secretary of State for Health would arrange for proper blood tests of dioxin levels to be taken for all workers that wanted them. I sent on the information. Sadly, the Secretary of State for Health has refused to allow those tests to take place.

I make that request to the Leader of the House, bearing in mind the fact that this type of Adjournment debate has been valuable in the past for many of us to raise matters of a constituency nature, however briefly, and that on some occasions we have managed to get the wheels of government turning in our direction. I hope that that occurs on this occasion as well.

7.13 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) was the 16th speaker in the debate and, having listened to all the speeches, I have to say that they have all been models of their type. Some have been short and effective, as was that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover; some have been longer, but nevertheless models of their type. They prove that this type of setpiece debate before a recess is justified to enable hon. Members to raise various issues. No one wants to snuff out such debates.

Speeches such as those that were made tonight will be able to be made before the recess next Christmas, but on a Wednesday morning instead of late at night. It is inconceivable that, as three or four of the speakers said—for example, the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn)—we will not be able to hold this type of debate in the future. The debate will simply move to a different part of the week.

I confess some astonishment, as it is one of my few visits to the House in recent weeks, having been occupied in the midlands, that no hon. Member mentioned—as I suspect that hon. Members have in the past couple of weeks, and after last Thursday as well—the need for an urgent debate on the scandalous goings-on in the gas industry and the drop in morale among employees of that world-class company.

If I had been a Back Bencher, I should have wanted to hold a debate on the public funding of political parties in view of the exposé in the *Financial Times* today of the funding of the Conservative party by British business. I should also have wanted to debate one of the other issues mentioned in relation to the health service by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North—the proposed closure of Bart's. However, I should have wanted to widen the debate, to encompass the climate of fear that exists in the national health service and employees in that service—the fear to speak out about the truth about what is going on in the national health service. That issue demands the attention of the House.

I suspect that other hon. Members might have wanted to mention the gross invasion of privacy by the press in recent days.

I cannot mention all the speeches that were made tonight, but I support that made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) about the crazy situation that has arisen regarding the Severn bridge. I probably use it no more than half a dozen times a year, but I also use the roads in Gloucestershire, and what has happened there as a result of the abuse of effective privatisation is crazy. The sufferers are not only the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East, but the, believe it or not, tens of thousands of people who live in the Gloucestershire area, where the roads are being damaged again by people who seek to abuse the toll system.

I did not know, I confess, that there are differences between the arrangements for the tracking through of commercial vehicles at Dartford and on the Severn bridge. My hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East was absolutely right to mention that.

The hon. Member for Staffordshire, or part of Staffordshire—I always forget which—

Mr. Cormack: South.

Mr. Rooker: The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) mentioned the important subject of the neglect by the House of the situation in Bosnia, but his speech went wider than that, because it is an issue as the House breaks for Christmas.

British troops are in many parts of the world, but our service personnel are on call in Bosnia. Their lives are at risk during the recess and in the new year—a vulnerable part of the year. We know that they will not relax as everyone else relaxes, as they seek to ensure that the convoys of food and other aids get through to that troubled part of Europe. That is the scandal. It is a troubled part of Europe, and the trouble should not have been allowed to exist anywhere in the way that it has in the past three years. The hon. Gentleman was absolutely right to say that to the House in this short debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who has apologised because he cannot be present, mentioned the county hall saga, which is

[Mr. Rooker]

becoming nothing short of a catastrophe for the Government. The building is now an eyesore. People, especially tourists, stop while walking across the road and ask, "What is that building over there?"—draped as it is with banners and scaffolding, and allowed to decay.

The building is a national asset. Only political spite and bile have not allowed it to be used for a major public sector facility, such as the London School of Economics or some other provision. It cannot be allowed to decline further. The cost of putting it right will be more in the long term, as everyone knows.

The hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery), wearing his hat as the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale, but, I suspect, in some ways wearing his previous hat as the Member for Brierley Hill from 1967 to 1974, made an astonishing attack on a new Member of the House, who had taken his seat and been sworn in as recently as one hour before, and who is powerless at the moment to defend himself.

It is outrageous to argue that my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West (Mr. Pearson)—what a phrase, eh—my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West?—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"]—did not seek to engage in any debate during the by-election. He accepted every invitation that was offered to him by everyone who wanted to put all the candidates on one platform or wanted to put the Conservative and Liberal Democrat candidates on the platform with a Labour candidate. One of the reasons that that did not come about was the abuse of the Representation of the People Acts by minor parties who are not seriously interested in exercising political power, and who abuse the electoral process.

All responsible political parties which are represented in the House are serious contenders for political power and should put their programmes and policies before the people at elections. That matter should be addressed so that we are not prevented from putting forward our case at by-elections or general elections by minor parties who have no interest in the outcome of the results. It is an abuse. I do not wish to snuff out minor parties—far from it. Parties should be registered. I am in favour of all other aspects of modernising our political process.

There is consensus among the responsible parties represented in the House to ensure that we are not deprived of the opportunity to put forward our proposals on television and radio in elections. That matter should be addressed. That process was behind the comments of the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale, which were somewhat unkind, but I understand the spirit in which they were made, with a 29 per cent. almost English all-comers' record for the Labour party. I can understand why not a single paid Government Whip has been present for the debate. They are attending not a celebration party but a wake.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman on a separate issue, which is concern about the press interview given by Myra Hindley. This is a matter for personal views, and I speak for myself. I have always been an abolitionist. One of the planks that I have always used, even when I debated the issue at school, is that, in respect of some of the most heinous crimes, life should mean life. That costs the taxpayer more, I understand, but it is part of the quid pro quo of being an abolitionist—that is, in some cases, life must mean life. Frankly, in that case, it is absolutely certain that life should mean life. I respect the hon. Gentleman for what he said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) spoke about the collapse of the social housing programme and the effect on homelessness. He is absolutely right. My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting raised the long-delayed Government response to the Latham report. In one of my previous incarnations, I spoke on housing and construction on behalf of my party. Michael Latham's work makes a major contribution to renewing and reforming an industry upon which the country depends. That industry does not have a large import content. It is home-grown; it is labour-intensive in terms of creating jobs. My hon. Friend listed a host of proposals which deserve serious and, what is more, urgent Government consideration. I do not regard such legislation as politically contentious. There would be good will on both sides.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) deployed a case for flood victims. Like others, I have seen the effects only on television. Astonishing new rivers were created in a major city overnight, leaving many constituents homeless during this festive time. My hon. Friend's call for extra help for victims should not be unheard.

The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) made a powerful intervention, and I respect the way in which he made it. He shared with my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) a call for the urgent need to return to the railway building industry. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. Because I was not present at Question Time, I did not know that it has been disclosed that this is the first year since 1948 that British Rail has not ordered any rolling stock. In one of my previous incarnations before I came to the House, I worked briefly for Metro-Camell Ltd, the carriage and wagon works in Birmingham. I understand something of the nature of that industry.

It beggars belief that York—to many people, it is the home of the railway industry and of our fine national railway museum, which I have visited on a couple of occasions—will be left without capacity to build railway vehicles and carriages. If we do not invest in the industry, the result will be fewer British jobs, less capacity to build and design, and less potential for export. One industry after another has gone down the plughole. Because of the 15 January deadline, the option should be addressed urgently by the Government. I hope that the Leader of the House will ensure that that matter is addressed.

I pay tribute to the brave and courageous speech by the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss). I mean that most sincerely. I understand the position in which he and some of his colleagues find themselves. One of them is my pair, and I want him back with the Whip as soon as possible. I certainly respect the way in which the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth put his case.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) made a case for Gibraltar. I have visited Gibraltar a couple of times. I have no interest to declare; they were private holidays in 1977 and 1979. At that time, Joe Bossano was the organiser of the Transport and General Workers Union in the colony. From my three weeks in the colony and from listening to Gibraltarians talking in the streets, cafes and pubs about their feelings then—they have not changed—I know that in no circumstances would they be prepared to be ruled by Madrid. There is no question about it. I suspect that the hype has probably been raised so that the British Government can sell out on the fishing negotiations regarding the Irish box. That will pacify the Spaniards to keep the heat off Gibraltar. I hope that that is not the case, but I am naturally a suspicious person.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said that the Secretary of State for Education declined to meet him regarding the Bolsover school. From my experience, the Secretary of State for Education would be well advised to meet my hon. Friend, or she will have a very uncomfortable 1995.

7.25 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I welcome the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker). More and more it feels like an occasion for a certain kind of groupie, as I have now had to reply to seven or eight recess Adjournment debates, and there is a certain repetition in those who appear on such occasions. I can hardly remember one without the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox). I emphasise that that is no criticism, before anybody attacks me. I do not think that I can remember a single one without my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery), not many without my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), and indeed very few without either my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) or the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I must at least pay tribute to their assiduity in attending such occasions.

I was grateful for the remarks of the hon. Member for Perry Bar about suggestions that such opportunities are about to disappear for ever. Such suggestions do not seem to stand up. That matter will be the focus of attention in the next debate.

Mr. Spearing *rose—*

Mr. Newton: I have little time. If the hon. Gentleman's point relates to the procedure motions, I suggest that he might sensibly make his comments it when we reach them.

As ever, I will not be able to refer to all speeches with a substantial comment. However, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) always takes me by surprise when he asks for something nicely rather than beating me about the ears, I will certainly communicate his requests—

Mr. Skinner: I am here to oppose the Government.

Mr. Newton: There was no sign of the Christmas spirit in the hon. Gentleman earlier, but no doubt it has overtaken him in the intervening period. I welcome that. I will certainly draw his request to the attention of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Health.

Similarly, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) made only the modest request that I pass on his comments about the local government settlement and the meeting that he hopes to have, and of course I will do that.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr made an additional comment about the points raised by the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) on the Severn bridge tolls. The toll levels were debated when Parliament considered what is now the Severn Bridges Act 1992. The hon. Gentleman took a leading part in those debates. As I understand it, the toll levels are based on a formula which is set out in the Act, so there is nothing mysterious in the matter. It is fair that bridge users, rather than the general taxpayer should finance a crossing—the new crossing, that is—which is exceptionally expensive and offers exceptional time savings to those who benefit from its construction.

My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South will know that there is not much that I can add to what I have said on previous occasions, but he knows also that the British Government very much want UNPROFOR to stay as long as it can fulfil its mandate without unacceptable risks. I shall bring to the attention of the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister the comments that he made and the questions that he asked.

I think that the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) conveyed less than the full flavour of what my colleague said today about the Newbury by-pass—although I understand why he wished to raise the matter. As I understand it, it has been announced that work on the A34 Newbury by-pass is on hold for about a year. My right hon. Friend has made it clear that he will examine each road scheme decision as it is put to him, and he has concluded that the Highways Agency should be asked to look again at the plans for the bypass and to explore other options as a matter of urgency.

So, while I understand the hon. Gentleman's point of view and the desire of those who want early relief, we also need to ensure that we find the right solution. The same applies to a number of other road schemes referred to today—Oxleas Wood and the east Thames crossing, for instance.

As the hon. Gentleman said, my right hon. Friend has today announced an initiative to refocus the road programme to make the most effective use of the existing network. In the light of the strong objections that have been expressed about the environmental impact of the new Newbury by-pass route, my right hon. Friend has insisted that the Highways Agency report to him on the consistency of the Newbury proposals with the new direction that he is giving to the road programme. The hon. Gentleman may still have reservations—I do not suggest that it would be unreasonable if he did—but that is rather different from the flavour of his speech, in which he suggested that the road had just been ruthlessly cancelled.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Will the Leader of the House tell us, therefore, whether all the Government's road programme schemes will be subjected to road assessment, in line with the details announced in the SACTRA report?

Mr. Newton: I am not in a position to add to what the Secretary of State said today, nor will I—except in respect of the points made by the hon. Member for Newbury, on which I sought further information during the debate.

As for the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder), I have already arranged that my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram) will look into the matter and will write to him. I trust that will be helpful.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West was in good form earlier, but I thought that he went a fraction over the top. If there is to be a significant change to the

[Mr. Newton]

plans for county hall, a new planning application will be needed, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment would carefully consider whether to call in any such application for his determination.

I suspect that I will be able to say very little more about the remaining speeches if I am to achieve the requirement under the Orders of the House to finish by 7.34 pm. I have, however, carefully noted, and will draw to my right hon. Friend's attention, both the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale about housing matters and the comments of the hon. Member for Tooting about the Latham report. I understand that the Government are considering a progress report from the Latham review implementation forum during the next few weeks, and the Environment Secretary proposes to respond to it in early February.

I well understand why the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) felt it right to discuss the flooding in Scotland, if only because I happen to have been born and brought up in the Essex port of Harwich, where eight people were drowned on the occasion of the North sea floods in 1952 or 1953. I therefore have a clear impression of the difficulties that floods can cause for communities. I know that my right hon. and hon. Friends will want to examine carefully what the hon. Gentleman said.

The same goes for what my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said about transport orders. I know that my right hon. Friend has asked British Rail to reach its conclusions as soon as possible. I do feel, however, that the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) might have paid some tribute to the investment in one tube station in his constituency and to the amount spent on new Northern line trains in recent times. Instead, he simply reiterated his list of complaints—

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that Foreign Office Ministers will look carefully at what has been said about Gibraltar. Finally, I pass by the interesting speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss).

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That this House, at its rising on Tuesday 20th December, do adjourn until Tuesday 10th January.

Jopling Report

Madam Speaker: I must inform the House that I have selected amendment (b), standing in the name of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), to motion No. 5. If he wants to move it formally at the end of the debate for Division purposes, I shall look to him at that time. Members may of course speak to all the other amendments on the Order Paper.

7.34 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That, during the present Session of Parliament, the Standing Orders and practice of the House shall have effect subject to the modifications set out below.

(1) In this Order 'a consolidation bill' means a public bill such as is defined in paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 123 (Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills).

(2) Notices of amendments, new clauses and new schedules to be moved in committee in respect of a consolidation bill may be received by the Clerks at the Table before the bill has been read a second time.

(3) If a motion that a consolidation bill be not committed is made by a Minister of the Crown immediately after the bill has been read a second time, the motion shall not require notice and the question thereon shall be put forthwith and may be decided, though opposed, at any hour.

(4) The question for the third reading of a consolidation bill shall be put forthwith.

(5) Any public bill, the main purpose of which is to give effect to proposals contained in a report by either of the Law Commissions, other than a private Member's bill or a consolidation bill, shall, when it is set down for second reading, stand referred to a second reading committee, unless—

(a) the House otherwise orders, or

(b) the bill is referred to the Scottish Grand Committee.

(6) If a motion that a bill such as is referred to in paragraph (5) above shall not stand referred to a second reading committee is made by a Minister of the Crown at the commencement of public business, the question thereon shall be put forthwith.

(7) The provisions of paragraphs (3) to (6) of Standing Order No. 90 (Second reading committees) shall apply to any bill referred to a second reading committee under paragraph (5) above.

It may be for the convenience of the House if I also refer to the other four motions before us. The first is:

That, during the present Session of Parliament, the Standing Orders and practice of the House shall have effect subject to the modifications set out below.

(1) The Speaker shall put the questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on motions authorising expenditure in connection with a bill and on ways and means motions in connection with a bill—

(i) forthwith, if such a motion is made at the same sitting as that at which the bill has been read a second time; or

(ii) not later than three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of those proceedings, if the motion is made otherwise.

(2) Business under paragraph (1) above may be proceeded with at any hour, though opposed.

(3) In Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) paragraph (1) (d) and the proviso thereto shall be omitted.

The second is:

That, during the present Session of Parliament, the Standing Orders and practice of the House shall have effect subject to the modifications set out below.

(1) The following paragraphs shall be inserted after paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.):

'(2A) Where a Minister of the Crown has given notice of a motion to the effect that a statutory instrument or draft statutory instrument be approved, the instrument or draft instrument shall stand referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c., unless—

(a) notice has been given by a Minister of the Crown of a motion that the instrument or draft instrument shall not so stand referred, or

(b) the instrument or draft instrument is referred to the Scottish Grand Committee.'

(2) In paragraph (3) of the said Standing Order, for lines 18 to 20 there shall be substituted the words 'that a measure under the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919 be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent, or of a motion relating to an instrument made under such a measure'; in paragraph (5) for the words 'paragraph (3) (a) or (3) (b)' there shall be substituted the words 'paragraphs (2A) or (3)'; and in paragraph (6) the words from 'instruments' in line 54 to the end of the paragraph shall be omitted.

(3) Except as provided in Standing Order No. 14A (Consideration of draft deregulation orders), the Speaker shall put the questions necessary to dispose of proceedings under any Act of Parliament or on European Community documents not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of such proceedings; and Standing Orders No. 14 (Exempted business) and No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)) shall have effect accordingly.

The third is:

That, during the present Session of Parliament, the Standing Orders and practice of the House shall have effect subject to the modifications set out below:

Provided that paragraphs (3) to (8) below shall come into effect on the third Wednesday on which the House shall sit after the making of this Order.

(1) The House shall not sit on eight Fridays to be appointed by the House.

(2) The Fridays so appointed shall be treated as sitting days for the purpose of calculating any period under any order of the House and for the purposes of paragraph (8) of Standing Order No. 18 (Notices of questions, motions and amendments) and of Standing Order No. 62 (Notices of amendments, &c., to bills); and on such Fridays—

(i) notices of questions may be given by Members to the Table Office, and

(ii) notices of amendments to bills, new clauses and new schedules and of amendments to Lords amendments may be received by the Public Bill Office,

between Eleven o'clock and Three o'clock.

(3) The House shall meet on Wednesdays at Ten o'clock and shall between that hour and half-past Two o'clock proceed with a motion for the adjournment of the House made by a Minister of the Crown.

(4) The subjects for debates on that motion shall be chosen by ballot under informal arrangements made by the Speaker analogous to those which apply to the motion for the adjournment of the House under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 9 (Sittings of the House); and no subject shall be raised without notice.

(5) Not more than two subjects shall be raised between Ten o'clock and One o'clock on a Wednesday, and not more than three between One o'clock and Half-past Two o'clock.

(6) A motion for the adjournment of the House not disposed of at half-past Two o'clock on a Wednesday shall lapse; the House will then proceed with private business, motions for unopposed returns and questions; no subsequent motion for the adjournment of the House shall be made until all the questions asked at the commencement of public business have been disposed of; and, save as provided in paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration), no Member other than a Minister of the Crown may make such a motion before the orders of the day or notices of motions shall have been entered upon.

(7) In paragraphs (1) and (2) of Standing Order No. 9 (Sittings of the House) the words "Wednesdays" and "Wednesday" respectively shall be omitted.

(8) Standing Order No. 10 (Sittings of the House (suspended sittings)) shall not have effect; the reference to the said Standing Order in paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 9 (Sittings of the House) shall be omitted; and in paragraph (1)(a) of Standing Order No. 133 (Time and manner of presenting petitions) the words from "conclusion" in line 10 to "and" in line 14 shall be omitted.

(9) In Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) paragraphs (7), (8) and (9) shall be omitted; in paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 9 (Sittings of the House) for the words from "returns" in line 4 to the end of the paragraph there shall be substituted the words "and questions"; in Standing Order No. 15A (New writs) the words "or notices of motion" shall be omitted; in paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 90 (Second reading committees) the words "or notices of motions" in line 15 shall be omitted; and in paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 133 (Time and manner of presenting petitions) the words "or motions" in line 18 shall be omitted.

(10) In Standing Order No. 22 (Periodic adjournments) for the words from "periods" in line 3 to the end there shall be substituted the words "the question thereon shall be put forthwith".

(11) In Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills) paragraph (2) shall be omitted.

The fourth is:

That, during the present Session of Parliament, the following provision shall have effect in place of Standing Order No. 45A (Short speeches):

"The Speaker may announce at the commencement of proceedings on any motion or order of the day relating to public business that she intends to call Members to speak for not more than ten minutes in the debate thereon, or between certain hours during that debate, and whenever the Speaker has made such an announcement she may direct any Member (other than a Minister of the Crown, a Member speaking on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, or not more than one Member nominated by the leader of the second largest opposition party) who has spoken for ten minutes to resume his seat forthwith.".

I should like also to refer to the wider package of reforms that the Government and the official Opposition have agreed to recommend to the House. I set it out in answer to a parliamentary question last Thursday; it appeared in *Hansard* on Friday; and I hope that hon. Members have found it helpful.

The proposals arise from the report of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House, under the chairmanship of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling)—a report that the House has already debated twice on the Adjournment. I pay tribute to him for his labours, which I hope will tonight finally bear the fruit that he has urged on us for some time. I shall not attempt to rehearse everything in his report, as one of his proposals—and hence one of my aims—is to keep speeches reasonably brief. I would not want to breach that.

Following much diplomacy through the usual channels, involving, first, the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), then the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), and more recently the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), who is with us tonight, we have agreed on a set of proposals which, as I told the House at the end of the debate on the Loyal Address, implements nearly all the changes proposed by my right hon. Friend's Committee. They also achieve its main strategic objectives, although not necessarily in precisely the way proposed.

I should like—this is more than a mere formality—to express my thanks to all involved in the discussions for their constructive approach. I hope that the hon. Member for Dewsbury will understand if I particularly mention the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, who was in

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the hot seat during a key period. That is in no way to detract from the helpful discussions that I have had with the hon. Lady, who has shown a rapid grasp of these points in the few weeks that she has been doing the job.

The proposals, if the House approves the motions this evening, will be put into operation as an experiment—an important point—for the remainder of this Session, with a view to reviewing experience towards the end of it. There will thus be no permanent changes to our Standing Orders—as distinct from Sessional Orders applying to the remainder of this Session—without another debate and another vote in the House. For those who harbour some doubts about some aspects, I hope that that gives them an element of reassurance.

The Select Committee's main aim was to get rid of late sittings. There is not much doubt that most, if not all, Members would agree with that objective, which the Government fully share. I hope, though, that it will be recognised that, over the past two Sessions, in what one might call the spirit of Jopling, we have made every effort to organise the business in such a way as to reduce the number of late sittings. We have had a considerable amount of success in that, for which I pay tribute to the Opposition "usual channels". Certainly, hon. Members who, like me, have been in the House since the mid-1970s or earlier will recognise that there has been a huge reduction in the number of late sittings compared with what was taken for granted only 15 or 20 years ago.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I should like the right hon. Gentleman to distinguish between the usual channels and the usual channels. The most recent time he used the expression, I could agree with it. But the first time he used it, he may have been taken to refer to the Whips Office, and I should like to stress that the Whips Office had nothing to do with this agreement.

Mr. Newton: I do not know whether I can say that the thought had never crossed my mind, but I do, of course, understand why the hon. Gentleman made that point. I hope that he in turn will understand that, if I refer to the usual channels, it is in the spirit of the conventions of the House and not an attempt to convict the hon. Gentleman of any particular sin. Indeed, I would not regard it as a sin to have been involved in putting together this package, which I regard as rather good.

To achieve its aims in respect of getting rid of late sittings, the Committee recognised clearly that, if the number of sitting hours is to be restrained, it is necessary also to reduce the amount of business to be taken on the Floor, and to ensure that the Government remain able to secure a reasonable programme of legislation. That was therefore the focus of a large number of its recommendations.

Before coming to the various specific suggestions that the Committee made for easing the weight of business on the Floor, virtually all of which are implemented in the motions, I should first say a word about the Committee's proposal that is normally described as the automatic timetabling of Government Bills, which it saw as an important ingredient in the package to allow greater certainty of finishing at 10 o'clock.

After a good deal of reflection, and I mean a good deal, the Government and the Opposition concluded that the most sensible approach to the two linked issues—the timetabling of Bills and restrictions on the hours of sitting—is to rely on voluntary agreements reached through the usual channels, the people most closely concerned—I say this without prejudice to the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), and perhaps as a compliment to him—with making any agreement work in this place. In other words, we think that it is better to continue to operate on that basis rather than devise some new mechanistic solution.

Having searched long and hard for a form of timetable motion that would ensure that the agreed rate of progress was made with each Bill, without resorting to the rigidity and inflexibility of the conventional guillotine—Standing Order No. 80—we concluded that such a mechanism did not exist. We were forced to conclude that, in effect, any mechanism that could be put formally as a timetabling mechanism for Government Bills would end up being a guillotine, and that that would present many difficulties, certainly for the Opposition and possibly also for the House in terms of the flexible arrangement of its business.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Surely the Leader of the House must recognise that what has tended to happen in recent years is that the Government have guillotined more and more Bills under procedures that allow no input from the official Opposition, or for that matter from other groups in the House, including his own Back Benchers. Does he not recognise that the Committee was seeking to provide a way in which timetabling could be achieved, but which nevertheless gave opportunities to those in the House with legitimate concerns about Bills? We risk getting the worst of both worlds—easy guillotines for the Government to introduce and no safeguards for anybody else.

Mr. Newton: If the right hon. Gentleman looks at the statistics, he will see that his assumption that the number of guillotines has been steadily rising in recent years is not founded. The number did not enlarge in the Session that we have just completed; on the contrary, there were relatively few guillotines. I cleave to the point that I made. In practice, a timetable motion that would achieve, with or without the involvement of other parties, the security of the handling of business that the right hon. Gentleman probably has in mind, would look so much like a guillotine as to be, effectively, a guillotine under another name. I believe that that would present real difficulties.

It follows from our approach to timetabling that we also thought it right to adopt a similar, if one likes, "usual channels" approach to sittings. During the debate on 13 July 1992, I expressed the Government's support for the principle of a 10 o'clock finish as the norm, but expressed doubts about the rigidity of the solution that the Select Committee had proposed. I also made it clear that the Government accepted the Committee's aim that completely new business should not be scheduled to start after 10 o'clock. That remains our position.

Accordingly, rather than have new arrangements entrenched in Standing Orders, or for that matter Sessional Orders, the Government are undertaking this evening, as part of the agreement, to use their best endeavours to avoid late sittings whenever possible and to avoid taking highly contentious business on Thursday evenings, particularly on the Thursdays before the Fridays that are to be designated under the fourth motion on the Order Paper. It would not be practicable to guarantee a 7 o'clock end to all business on those Thursdays, as that would bring us very close to a three-day week for Government business for 10 weeks of the year; but I emphasise that we shall none the less do our best to ensure that parliamentary demands on Members on Thursday evenings are kept within reasonable bounds, so that their other commitments on Fridays can be given some protection.

In the same spirit, the Government will use their best endeavours, as I have perhaps shown already, to give early notification of the dates of recesses. The House will understand that particular difficulty is attached to the timing of the summer recess; it may not be possible to give as much notice of the dates of the summer recess as of other recesses, or to rise for the summer as early as we might wish. Again, my hopes are to move as far as possible in the direction of that which the Jopling Committee, and no doubt the House, would like.

The House is, of course, also concerned, as was the report, to see earlier notification of business generally. Some of the difficulties are obvious, certainly to anybody who has been involved, and perhaps to anybody who simply observes. They include the need to accommodate Opposition and European Scrutiny Committee requests for debates on the Floor, which may arise at short notice, uncertainty about the timing of business arising from proceedings in another place, and indeed the value that the House itself places on the capacity to reflect in the business, without too much delay, new issues that arise or developments that take place on existing issues.

Nevertheless—I hope that the House will accept the good faith with which I assure it of this—I am genuinely anxious to move as far as I possibly can to meet those wishes and will seek to do so in relation to advance notification of major debates. I must emphasise, however, that the more we move to meet that desire of the House, the more the House will need to give greater weight to such words as "provisional" and to phrases such as "subject to the progress of business", than it has hitherto been inclined to do, because there is undoubtedly a tendency to regard that as just going through the motions. The more we attempt to give advance notice of business, the more meaning will have to be attached to those phrases, and people would need to be willing to accommodate change in certain circumstances.

Before I come to the motions on the Order Paper, I shall refer briefly to a few other elements of the proposed reforms. We shall seek to take uncontentious business off the Floor of the House, by making greater use, by agreement, of Second Reading Committees. We also think that there is a case for considering whether we can reduce the quantity of parliamentary time that is consumed by what can be called set-piece debates, such as the debate on the Loyal Address and a number of other regular events during the year. But because of the wide range of interests in the House that would be affected by any proposed reduction, I suggest that the right course would be to ask my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) and his colleagues on the Procedure Committee to advise on how the demands made by set-piece debates might be slimmed down. Clearly, any proposals there would require widespread consultation going rather beyond the usual channels.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if the amount of time for scrutiny by way of formal parliamentary procedures were to be reduced, or if that were to be the assumption, if democratic accountability is not to suffer excessively, assistance should be given to scrutiny in other ways? Does he accept that the corollary of shorter hours, or fewer sitting days, should be a greater commitment by the Government to freedom of information as well as to more extensive consultation on Green Papers and draft clauses, and earlier exposure of Bills?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend raises a number of points. The Government have, of course, sought to improve access to information, although I understand that there are still issues that remain controversial. We have manifestly moved down the path of improving, as I would judge, consultation, not least in respect of consultation on draft clauses on Bills, which has been done within the relatively recent past on the Shops Bill and the environment agency part of the environment Bill. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence recently made it clear that he will publish an entire proposed reserve forces Act in draft within the next few months. While there may well be areas in which my hon. Friend would wish to see us move still further, I can point to a number of developments of which he should approve.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Newton: I will, but I am trying to keep my speech within the parameters requested of me.

Mr. Cormack: Surely all that is needed is for the Government to practise a self-denying ordinance and introduce less legislation.

Mr. Newton: If my hon. Friend examines the Queen's Speech with care, he will realise that he has seen heavier Queen's Speeches in terms of the number of Bills. They are substantial Bills, but a considerable amount of time and effort was rightly given to presenting the House with a programme which, while large and important, takes account of the sort of pressures that my hon. Friend has just further exerted upon me.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): I apologise for interrupting the right hon. Gentleman, but the changes will undoubtedly remove a great deal of private Members' time, which usually means private Members' Bills.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Rubbish.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The point made by some hon. Members is of great importance. If there is to be real scrutiny of Government legislation, it is important that we have not only access to a great deal of the information on which the legislation is based, but the right, if need be, to ask the Government to give evidence on it to the House at an early stage.

Mr. Newton: That is clearly a point on which, from the nature of his interjection, my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale may wish to comment. What the hon. Lady said about a reduction in time usually occupied by private Members is simply not true. In the Session that has just finished, the time used by private Members—this is a shorthand description—that is to be discontinued took up 123 hours, while regular

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Wednesday morning sittings in the same period would have provided 144 hours. That is a gain of 21 hours over the Session.

I want to conclude my remarks, as it is clear that many hon. Members are interested in taking part in the debate. The five motions on the Order Paper give effect to those elements of the agreed package of reforms that involve varying the Standing Orders for the duration of the experiment. As I said, those are Sessional Orders that will apply for the remainder of the present Session.

The first motion deals with a matter which, although not discussed in the Select Committee's report, will nevertheless make a modest contribution to improved working hours. It provides an expedited procedure for the consideration of uncontroversial law reform Bills, which I hope will be welcomed in all parts of the House. There has been a good deal of pressure, both here and in another place, for getting on with law reform measures.

For Bills that merely consolidate the existing law, it will be possible to omit the Committee stage altogether and the Third Reading will be taken without debate. Bills that reform the law in line with Law Commission recommendations will be automatically referred to a Second Reading Committee for consideration, unless a reasonable request is made that any particular Law Commission Bill should have its Second Reading debate on the Floor.

The second motion provides that a money or Ways and Means resolution taken immediately after the Second Reading of the Bill to which it relates will be decided forthwith. Free-standing money or Ways and Means resolutions will be debatable for 45 minutes. None of that, of course, affects the Budget resolutions, because they are not at that stage

"motions . . . in connection with a bill".

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I wonder whether, even at this stage, the Leader of the House would consider making that proposal voluntary. It would reduce substantially the rights of Back Benchers, especially those who are squeezed in a Second Reading debate. The safety valve is that one can always threaten to speak on the money resolution. My experience is that if we do that, it is surprising how the Whips manage to negotiate just a little bit of time to allow us Members to get in on the main debate. Why cannot the proposal be a voluntary restraint rather than an enforced one?

Mr. Newton: I can say only that, as far as is possible, we have sought to adopt the specific proposals of the Select Committee, which were endorsed in all parts of the House. That proposal was one of them and I think that it is reasonable to include it in the package.

The third motion provides in paragraph (1) that all affirmative statutory instruments will be automatically referred to a Standing Committee unless the Government table a motion to de-refer them. I assure the hon. Member for Dewsbury and her colleagues that the Government will accede to any reasonable request from the Opposition that an affirmative instrument be debated on the Floor. Paragraph (2) preserves the existing treatment of Church of England Measures. It also contains consequential provisions.

Paragraph (3) provides for a limit of one and a half hours on statutory instruments or European Community documents debated on the Floor, even if the debate begins before 10 o'clock. The special arrangements for deregulation orders, which the House approved on 24 November, are not affected by this change. As at present, debates on prayers that begin at or after 10 o'clock will finish at 11.30 pm.

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Does my right hon. Friend recognise that while I warmly welcome the proposal, there is a strong feeling that not enough orders are debated? As they are to be sent automatically to Standing Committee, will he give some thought to the possibility that we can have better debates on more orders when there are sufficient names on the Order Paper?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly give thought to my hon. Friend's point, but I hope that he will understand if I do not go further than that at this stage.

The two proposals taken together, that is, the normal referral of statutory instruments to Standing Committee and the fact that they can be debated for an hour and a half on the Floor at whatever time of day the debate starts—whereas at present if the debate starts at 4.30 pm, it can continue until 11.30 pm—will probably do more than any other to make a 10 o'clock finish to business the norm rather than the exception.

From time to time, it may be necessary to vary those arrangements by means of a business motion, for example, to allow a longer debate for a particularly important instrument, to provide for a joint debate on a group of related instruments, or to apply a time limit to a motion that was not covered by this provision. However, I say to the hon. Member for Jarrow that our aim will be to ensure that any such motion is agreed through the usual channels before being tabled, as we would always seek to do.

The fourth motion gives effect to the Jopling recommendation that time normally used by private Members—except private Members' Bills—should be transferred to Wednesday morning sittings. Paragraphs (1) and (2) provide for the designation of a number of Fridays on which the House will not sit. On those Fridays, the Table Office and the Public Bill Office—this may help some hon. Members—will be open and Members will be able to table questions and amendments. In a full Session—should the House decide to make the experiment permanent—there would be 10 such Fridays, as the report recommended, but as the period of the experiment is somewhat shorter than a full Session, the motion proposes that for the remainder of the present Session there should be eight.

For the benefit of those outside the House, those inside would like me to emphasise that those are in no sense Fridays off; they are days kept clear of specific duties here at Westminster to enable hon. Members to discharge equally important duties in their constituencies and elsewhere.

Paragraph (3) and the succeeding paragraphs provide for the House to meet at 10 o'clock on Wednesdays for a series of balloted Adjournment debates. Arrangements for those debates will be made informally under the kindly authority of you, Madam Speaker—at least, I hope that it will be kindly. It is envisaged that there should be one or two general debates in the three hours between 10 o'clock and 1 o'clock and three half-hour debates between 1 o'clock and 2.30 pm, when questions would begin. Those provisions will come into force early in the next parliamentary term, on the third Wednesday on which the House sits, that is, 25 January. That will allow enough time for the new arrangements to be put into operation.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Newton: I will give way, but I have now slightly exceeded my original allotted time and I want to bring my speech to a close fairly rapidly.

Mr. Spearing: I want to clear up an anomaly that may not have occurred to hon. Members. Paragraph (10) transfers motions on the Adjournment—and we had a very useful three hours of that this evening—to a Wednesday. What is wrong with transferring the motion for the Adjournment for the appropriate recess to the Wednesday before the Adjournment, to keep together grievances before Adjournment and debate and decision, and the principle that a motion that is amendable should also be debatable? Otherwise, the separation of voice and vote is surely against parliamentary principle.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman is making a point which may be raised by his hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) and which is also, in a sense, related to an amendment, which was not selected, that was tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton. It might be sensible for me to reserve further comment until the hon. Member for Walsall, North and my right hon. Friend have had an opportunity to make their points.

Paragraph (8) does away with the obsolete Standing Order that enables a late sitting to be suspended until 10 o'clock the following morning, which is clearly incompatible with regular morning sittings. Incidentally, I was barely aware of that provision myself until recently, and to my recollection it has never been used.

Paragraphs (9) to (11) dispense with the existing time available to private Members—for private Members' motions, Adjournment debates following the Consolidated Fund Bill and debates on motions fixing the dates of recesses—which is being transferred to Wednesday mornings. As a transitional measure, the "end of term" Adjournment debates that I announced in Thursday's business statement, which are not governed by any of the Standing Orders, will go ahead as planned.

Mrs. Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham): Will my right hon. Friend take up a request from many of us, relating to the giving of notice to the Table Office? Would it be possible for the Table Office, and other such departments, to accept questions by fax? Can we allow modern technology to be introduced into our offices?

Mr. Newton: The debate seems to be being used as a sort of Christmas tree—appropriately enough—on which to hang a variety of interesting suggestions. A possible use of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 would be to allow the Patent Office to take in material by electronic means rather than on pieces of paper; perhaps the House authorities will also consider my hon. Friend's suggestion. I would be rash to give her a snap yes, but I shall certainly ensure that what she has said is given careful consideration.

The final motion gives you, Madam Speaker, wider discretion to apply the 10-minute limit to speeches. It will be possible to apply the limit to any kind of public business and to all or any part of a debate, rather than just to two hours in the middle as at present. Inevitably—not least because of the interventions problem that has been demonstrated in the past few minutes—there will be exemptions for Front Benchers and for a minority party spokesman, but Front Benchers will strive to keep their opening speeches to a maximum of 30 minutes and their closing speeches to 20 minutes. I stress that that is more than just a formula. In practice, by agreement, most winding-up speeches have recently been limited to 20 minutes; we shall try to make that arrangement more formal.

I emphasise that the five motions—together with the other points agreed between Government and Opposition, which I described earlier—are designed, like the Select Committee's report on which they are based, as a balanced package to protect the legitimate interests of Government, Opposition, minority parties and Back Benchers. As with all proposals of that kind, their success will depend to a significant extent on the good will of all involved. I do not mean just Front Benchers, but I do refer to them particularly—again, I am looking hard in a certain direction.

Provided we have that good will, we shall have taken a significant step forward in assisting the more sensible management of our affairs. I commend the proposals to the House.

8.3 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I welcome the debate, and the general thrust of the package proposed by the Leader of the House. My right hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) was right in saying that it did not bear his fingerprints; I know that he, and a few other hon. Members on both sides of the House, are very concerned about the possibility of any change in our procedures. In my view, however, the changes that we are discussing do not constitute a dramatic revolution. I believe that they are no more than a useful step forward, making Parliament more efficient and, we hope, more effective.

Let me echo the tribute paid by the Leader of the House to the work of my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown), both of whom played a considerable part in agreeing the package through the usual channels. As the Leader of the House said, it is both a package and an experiment from which the whole House should expect to learn in the forthcoming year.

The Leader of the House has agreed that the procedures in the package will be reviewed in October. I think that we shall need some flexibility during the year to allow modification of practice; indeed, I suspect that over that time conventions of which we are not yet aware will develop, as that is how our procedures have always come about.

I do not believe that these proposals are the last word in terms of making the Government more accountable, scrutinising the Executive or any of our other functions. We all know that the press tends to see the workings of the House as the Government trying to put their business through and the Opposition trying to frustrate that objective; no doubt many people consider that the be-all and end-all of Parliament.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): That is the point.

Mrs. Taylor: It is one point, but we have wider responsibilities to scrutinise and even try to improve legislation, although we may disagree with its basic objective.

One of our responsibilities today is to ensure that any proposed procedural changes do not damage the opportunities that are available not only to the Opposition officially, but to all Back Benchers, to scrutinise what the Executive does. There are legitimate concerns that we shall have to consider in the coming year. I know some of my hon. Friends believe that the interests of Front Benchers and those of Back Benchers are not always the same. We must be conscious of the need to ensure that Back Benchers' rights are a reality, and not to undermine their long-term position—although I would argue that it is still extremely difficult for Back Benchers to scrutinise in the way that we would like.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said, and the spirit in which she has said it. Does she agree, however, that there is no need to balance the opportunities of Back Benchers to debate amendable motions—or, indeed, to contribute in any way—with the sitting hours of the House? Surely the two are not connected. The House can sit when it decides to do so; surely the procedures for private Members are separate.

Mrs. Taylor: My point is that if we are changing our procedures and our sitting hours we should be careful not to take any action that would detract from Back Benchers' rights. I do not think that the package damages those rights.

We must remember that change in one area will always have a knock-on effect in another. That is why it is important for us to conduct an experiment rather than changing the Standing Orders themselves. The Jopling report may be a starting point, but I do not accept every dot and comma in it, and I know few hon. Members who do; nor do I think that we should pursue the question of our working hours simply to try to enable Members of Parliament to work fewer hours. I do not believe that that is the objective of the report, or of today's proposals.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I therefore hope that my hon. Friend will make it clear that some of us sit in Committee on Wednesday mornings. The idea that moving work from Friday to Wednesday will somehow improve the position may turn out not to be the case. Many of us are minded to vote against the amendments simply because we are old fashioned enough not to believe that we came here to improve the Government's legislation, which we believe in most instances to be beyond redemption.

Mrs. Taylor: The legislation that my hon. Friend and I would agree is beyond redemption is the sort of legislation that we shall repeal and replace after the next election. In the meantime, however, we have a duty and responsibility to protect our constituents' interests as much as possible by minimising the damage done by legislation with which we disagree. Select Committees sit on Wednesday mornings, but there are always different calls on the time of Members of Parliament. Standing Committees frequently sit on a Tuesday and Thursday afternoon while the House sits. Select Committees sit almost every afternoon while the House is sitting. All hon. Members have problems in terms of balancing their time.

Mr. Skinner: What about Fridays?

Mrs. Taylor: Many hon. Members need to use Fridays, as far as possible, for constituency work. That is not always the case for London-based Members, who can get to their constituencies during the week, but it is extremely important for northern or non-London-based Members to use Fridays as a constituency day.

I shall deal briefly with the specific proposals because, as the Leader of the House said, I do not think that Front-Bench Members should hog the debate. The remit of the Jopling Committee was not to revolutionise the workings of the House of Commons. Its remit was narrow.

On changes to the time provided for private Members' legislation, I emphasise to my right hon. and hon. Friends the points that were made earlier. The total time available for private Member's Bills will be no less than it is now. Hon. Members who took part in the debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill, which yet again went through the night, must acknowledge that they would not lose anything if that sort of debate took place on a Wednesday morning. It is important for non-London Members, in particular, to be able to use Fridays with some certainty and to be able to plan ahead, which is not always possible now.

My hon. Friends are somewhat too concerned about the loss of end of term Adjournment debates such as the one that we had earlier. It is important that the House should have safety valves and that hon. Members have the opportunity to raise subjects and urgent issues that they have not be able to raise in other ways. The suggestion in the amendment tabled by the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure, the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), is important. I put that suggestion to the Leader of the House following discussions with my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett). There is no reason why the last Wednesday of any term could not be used for the same sort of debate as we had earlier.

Mr. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the important things is that such debates are a right? Under present procedure, any Back Bencher who wants to raise an issue has almost a guarantee that, on an Adjournment motion, he can get up and make a fuss. If one takes that right away from Back Benchers, they will have to consider actions outside Standing Orders, such as standing by the Mace and generally disrupting the place. That is not in anyone's interests. We should therefore keep the safety valves.

Mrs. Taylor: I agree that having safety valves is far preferable to people standing by the Mace or using other procedures. That is why it is worth considering the possibility—I do not see why this should not happen—of using the last Wednesday in the way that I explained. We could do so this year as an experiment. If it worked, we could consider ways of writing it into Sessional Orders or even Standing Orders. I hope that that is one issue from which we shall learn something and on which we shall make progress this year.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I know that my hon. Friend has done a great deal of work on this—although I disagree with some of the conclusions, I would not want to take that away from her—does she not realise that, if we abolish the sort of debate that we had before the present debate, it will take away an important right and, moreover, the ability to vote against the motion, as hon. Members have done on many occasions?

If my hon. Friend did not hear the courageous speech made an hour or so ago by the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss), I am sure that she will read it. Such a speech may be out of order if the amendment, which has not been selected, is accepted. The Chair would have to consider what was and was not relevant. It would be an unfortunate step if we took away the basic right to debate matters before we agreed to go into recess and the right to vote on the matter. I hope that my hon. Friend, for whom I have a great regard, will think seriously about that.

Mrs. Taylor: I have said that I am concerned that safety valves should not be lost and that we should learn during this year whether having the final Wednesday for that sort of debate would be practical. We might be able to make progress on that through discussion. That is one of the reasons why it is important that the proposals are experimental. We can learn what works, where hon. Members feel frustration about things that have changed, and where we need modification of the proposals. I emphasise to my hon. Friend that we are changing not the Standing Orders but the sessional orders of the House. On that basis, I hope that he will consider that the changes are not so dramatic as some people may have suggested.

I know that some of my hon. Friends are worried about the changes to statutory instruments, but the assurances given again today by the Leader of the House are extremely helpful. The rights of Back Benchers are again an issue of genuine concern. It is one thing for Back Benchers to influence what their political party says through the usual channels in terms of asking for a debate on the Floor of the House, but it would be a loss to exclude all mechanisms for Back Benchers to force a debate on a statutory instrument on to the Floor of the House.

I have had discussions, but we have not yet developed a mechanism that would be an adequate trigger. I know that previous discussions were held on the matter. We shall have to monitor the issue during the experimental period. We do not want to build discontent among Back Benchers by excluding statutory instruments about which they are concerned but which Front-Bench Members do not think are so important.

We should use the rest of this parliamentary Session to experiment in more positive ways of scrutinising statutory instruments in Committee. I have been impressed by the changes that have taken place in some Committees. In the European Scrutiny Committee, for example, Ministers can be questioned before a short debate. I know that that position is not ideal. My hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) raised a valid point last Wednesday, I believe, about the coincidence of a debate in Committee and a debate on the Floor of the House. Problems of that sort must be avoided. The Standing Orders of the House must be considered again to deal with that sort of problem, which should not have arisen as it did last week. We should be looking to give hon. Members better opportunities for better quality scrutiny of statutory instruments in Committee.

On Ways and Means resolutions and money resolutions, I have no concerns in relation to the proposals to take money resolutions on the nod immediately after Second Reading, so long as any separate money resolution can be debated in the normal way. That is important. However, the suggestions relating to Ways and Means resolutions will be rather more in need of monitoring during the year.

I do not see how anyone could object to a voluntary timetable for Standing Committees. My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow, the Deputy Chief Whip, said that such a system has operated for the past couple of years, and often successfully. If there is a breakdown, it is often because positions are entrenched. That problem could still arise. I have serious reservations about any move towards automatic guillotines. Although some hon. Members want us to move in that direction, I do not regard this agreement as a precursor for such a move.

As for the other matters under discussion, such as Law Commission Bills and consolidation Bills, I do not know of anyone who objects to the proposals, so I hope that they will not be contentious. I regard the increased discretion that it is suggested should be available to you, Madam Speaker, as definitely a move in the right direction, especially if it means that limitations will be placed on the time that Front-Bench spokesmen are allowed.

The amendments examining mechanisms by which injury time could be given to any hon. Member who accepts and responds to interventions are especially important. If, in a full day's debate, hon. Members spoke for 10 minutes in set-piece mode and refused interventions which would reduce their speaking time, it would reduce the spontaneity of our debates and create a wholly different atmosphere, which would not be conducive to good scrutiny of legislation or good debate. Whether or not the amendments are discussed specifically this evening, I hope that it will be possible for the issue of injury time to be considered, because it would benefit the House.

Mr. Bennett: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mrs. Taylor: This is the last intervention that I shall accept.

Mr. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is especially important that Ministers give way because the more their allotted time is reduced, the greater the temptation for them to refuse to do so? As we know, it is when Ministers give way that we often obtain important information.

Mrs. Taylor: I agree, and I believe that limiting Ministers to 30 minutes is at least better than the original suggestion of 20 minutes, which would certainly have been an excuse for them to refuse to give way. We should still expect Ministers to give way, and such important conventions are worth protecting.

The Leader of the House and I have had several discussions about the announcement of future business. Clearly, if the changes are accepted, some of the House's business will become more obvious in advance. We shall know, for example, when Bills will leave Committee and it will be helpful to us all if we know when economic, defence or set-piece debates are to take place. However, I believe that the Leader of the House should be in a

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position to announce not only the business for the following week but the provisional business for at least the week after that. The House should accept that it was provisional and might be subject to change, occasionally at the request of the Opposition. The House would then accept that any change was made for good reason. That would be extremely helpful to everyone involved.

I said that the proposed changes are not dramatic or revolutionary, but that they can help the House to work more efficiently. As hon. Members have said, we need to examine our procedures and make changes to, for example, procedures relating to statements, the possibility of having written parliamentary questions during the recess and freedom of access to information, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth). They are all very important issues and although the proposed changes are not the last word on any of our proceedings they are constructive and can help the House to work more efficiently and effectively.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I cannot impose a limit of 10 minutes at this stage, but I hope that hon. Members will exercise voluntary restraint.

8.24 pm

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): The House will recall that I had the honour of being the Chairman of the Select Committee on Sittings of the House. It has been said that the Committee's report was the father of these proposals; in that case, the grandfather was my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) who is sitting next to me and who was the Leader of the House on whose initiative the Committee was set up.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on her fine speech. It is two and a half years since the Select Committee reported. We had a debate before the previous election and there was broad support for the report's recommendations. We had another after the election and there was even greater support, backed by an early-day motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick) and signed by 215 other hon. Members. The House now sighs with relief that some proposals are at last being discussed; members of the two Front-Bench teams have got down to some serious business and reached an agreement.

It is lamentable that it has taken the House so long to decide how to manage its own affairs. That might have something to do with the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), who made an extraordinary statement at the beginning of the debate. He said that there were usual channels within usual channels. I used to be part of that system and I must say that I had no experience at all of what he was talking about. It would be very dangerous for the House were there to be usual channels within the usual channels—the House could not work like that. However, in the Christmas spirit, let us welcome the proposals introduced by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

I believe that the proposals that we are debating today and the announcement made by the Leader of the House last week in a written answer amount to about 85 per cent. acceptance of the Select Committee's proposals. Those changes, coupled with certain procedures, can be said to be the most wide-ranging reform of the sittings of the House in the second half of the 20th century. They are as important as that and will greatly affect the way in which the House brings itself up to date.

In a way, the two-and-a-half year delay has meant that the proposals now receive even broader support in the House than they did when they were produced. The process reminds me of my annual practice of making sloe gin at home—it takes six months to make the stuff but the longer one leaves it, the better it tastes. However, that is incidental.

I shall not weary the House by relating the contents of the Select Committee's report that the Government have not taken up and that have not been embraced by the usual channels, but I must mention what is undoubtedly the most important omission in the proposals, which is the Select Committee's recommendation that a timetable be placed on all Government Bills. I know that this has always been the background to the major causes of non-agreement between members of the two Front-Bench teams.

The better management of Bills has been recommended by the Procedure Committee for a good many years, but nothing much has happened. Of course, we all know in our hearts that there are times when hon. Members of all parties use the procedures, for reasons that I well understand, to indulge in time wasting. It is a long-standing and well-known technique which all Oppositions, and some Governments, have used. I have been party to it myself, in government and in opposition, so I am familiar with it. Anything we can do to eliminate unnecessary time wasting is in the interests of the business of the House.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: My right hon. Friend has had long experience here and has admitted taking part in such practices on both sides of the House. Can he recall more than one or two occasions on which, at the end of the day, the legislation was in any way altered?

Mr. Jopling: Rarely indeed. That was a point that the Select Committee, in its unanimous proposals, had very much in mind. Very rarely do such techniques amount to very much—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Of course I can think of changes that have happened as a result of such techniques, but they have happened rarely and in our hearts we all know that.

Since the Select Committee started its deliberations three years ago, we have had many more timetable motions. When I was a business manager here in the early 1980s, I was absolutely determined that the Government should never exceed in a year the number of guillotines that Michael Foot produced in that famous one night—as I recall, he introduced five. Nowadays, that is all history.

The House has changed its mood and it has gone very much in the direction of accepting timetable motions. When I arrived here 30 years ago, there was tumult in the House whenever the Leader of the House proposed a guillotine motion. That is all in the past. The hon. Member for Dewsbury made a point with which I strongly agree. The Government have within their gift the right to apply a guillotine whenever they want. It is crucial, however, that they do not abuse that right. I say that to Ministers and to Opposition Front-Bench Members, and it applies to any party in government.

I shall now deal with the motions. I fully agree with motion No. 2 on consolidation Bills. Motion No. 3 concerns money resolutions and Ways and Means resolutions. There was a unanimous view in the Select Committee that endless debates on Ways and Means resolutions until a closure motion was moved and three-quarters-of-an-hour debates on money resolutions, although sometimes important, were nearly always unnecessary and often time-wasting.

The reform on statutory instruments is overdue. It is right that statutory instruments should go into Committee automatically, with agreement between the usual channels, and that they should be taken on the Floor, whether under the negative or affirmative procedure, if the Opposition especially want that. That must be right. However, I do not want my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, once the motion has been accepted, to propose that statutory instruments should be taken after a Second Reading debate, thus starting at 10 pm. That would be totally against the spirit of what he has said and of what the Select Committee has said.

Mr. Newton *indicated assent.*

Mr. Jopling: I see my right hon. Friend nodding his head. I hope that I can take it from that that the Government will not normally propose that statutory instruments should be taken after business has finished at 10 pm.

Motion No. 5, on the sittings of the House, closely follows the recommendations of the Select Committee on Friday and Wednesday sittings. I warmly support the proposal. I also support the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), which has not been selected. He proposes that there should be no ministerial statements on Wednesday mornings. Such timing would be totally against the spirit of the Select Committee's proposal and I hope that the Leader of the House will tell us that that will not happen. Such statements should remain at 3.30 pm.

I do not agree with the hon. Member for Walsall, North—I have had the pleasure of talking to him about this—about the three-hour recess Adjournment debate. The Select Committee made a close study of private Members' business. We added up the number of hours taken on private Members' motions, on the Consolidated Fund Bill, which goes through the night, on three-hour Adjournment debates, such as the one that we have just finished, and on the debates on the final day before the recess, such as that which we shall have tomorrow. We took the average number of hours for such private Members' business and we discovered that it was almost identical to having a four-and-a-half-hour sitting on Wednesday mornings between 10 am and 2.30 pm. We proposed, therefore, taking all that private Members' business out and putting it on Wednesday mornings. The hon. Gentleman's proposal that we should still have the three-hour Adjournment debate would upset the arithmetic, and I would be opposed to that.

I am very much more attracted by the proposal by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) that, on the Wednesday before a recess, we should have a similar debate. One could perfectly well structure it so that we could have, as the first motion, the motion for the Adjournment of the House for whatever recess it is. That would allow us for three hours in the mornings, between 10 am and 1 pm, as my right hon. Friend has suggested, to have the sort of debate—which I believe is very valuable and I bow to nobody in that—that we have just finished.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) will, I think, reply to the point about the Adjournment. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that what he has done, irrespective of the arithmetic, which fits, is to substitute a debate on the Adjournment on Wednesday for debates on specific motions? Irrespective of the fact that motions can be voted on and are amendable, that reduces the opportunities for private Members.

Mr. Jopling: The hon. Gentleman has got it a bit wrong. The proposal by the hon. Member for Walsall, North would provide 12 hours more of private Members' time than we have now; that goes against the feeling that we want a balance between Back Bench and Front Bench. His proposal would upset that. I hope very much that the House does not agree with the hon. Gentleman's amendment. I hope that when we come back to the matter in a year's time, an amendment similar to that tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton will be tabled and that we can vote on it. I shall certainly support it.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury raised the matter of safety valves. I was educated a great deal in my life by my great friend Lord Cocks, who was the Labour Chief Whip when I was Government Chief Whip. He used to say to me how vital it was to maintain in the House the right for people to let off steam—safety valves. That is why the Select Committee did not want to change what is, in my view, the somewhat absurd practice of allowing hon. Members to introduce ten-minute Bills in July when they know that they have no chance of getting them through. It is an important safety valve and therefore it is a good thing.

That is also why the Select Committee was not in favour of changing motions under Standing Order No. 20, to which the House is accustomed at 3.30 pm. Those safety valves are crucial and I am very much in favour of preserving such opportunities. I strongly approve, therefore, of the theory of having debates such as the three-hour debate we have just had, although they should be held on Wednesday mornings. I think that we can accommodate that at some time.

I agree with motion No. 6 on short speeches. However, I hope that the Speaker will make those views known to long-winded Ministers when they go on and on just because some minor official in their Department has said to them, "But Minister, it is very important to get these things on the record." It is a pain in the neck for the House when Ministers do that. We all know that, being Ministers, they will do that.

It is important that Ministers do not come to the House with 40-minute speeches and then plough through them. I hope that—if I may say this because my amendment has not been selected—in future, when Ministers open debates with speeches of more than 30 minutes, they will be continually interrupted, if not by the Chair, by Back-Benchers reminding them of the answer given on Thursday by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, that Ministers should confine themselves to 30 minutes. We ought to hassle Ministers who go on in that way.

Of course, it would be wrong—let me say this quite clearly—as I am sure that the hon. Member for Jarrow would understand, to tie Ministers absolutely firmly to a 20-minute winding-up speech, because that is obviously a procedural man-trap. If the Opposition spokesman sat down early and left 35 minutes before 10 o'clock, when the

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division was timed to take place, and the Government spokesman could speak for only 20 minutes, problems would arise. We cannot get trapped into that sort of country.

I shall sum up by reminding the House—

Mr. Skinner: That is 16 minutes.

Mr. Jopling: I am taking advantage of the last of the old days. When the new regime comes in, I shall be the first to obey the rules.

I remind the House that we meet on more days and for more hours than any other Parliament in any large democracy in the world. The public, frankly, cannot understand why we have to sit often half the night and sometimes all the night. The proposals will go some way—the hon. Member for Dewsbury was right—to streamlining our procedures. Above all, unlike the ill-fated Crossman proposals of the 1960s, which I remember very well, I believe that the proposals will be broadly acceptable to the House, and I hope very much that they will stand the test of time and practice.

8.41 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I beg to move amendment (b), in motion No. 5, leave out paragraph (10).

I would be happier in my own mind if tonight there were to be a genuine free vote. There is indeed a free vote for Labour Members, but, as I understand it, that is not so for Government Members. A payroll vote has been mobilised, there is apparently a two-line Whip. While I hope that a number of Conservative Members on the Back Benches will indeed exercise a free vote, it is unfortunate that we are faced once again with a payroll vote. It is not a very good preface to the supposed new regime.

I recognise the wish on the part of a number of hon. Members, Labour Members included, for changes in the time that we sit. I certainly do not look on colleagues who want such a change as if they were lazy and wanting a nice, quiet life. Indeed, if anything, on the whole, Members of Parliament are more likely to be workaholics than lazy types. The very thing that brings people into politics, in local authorities and professional politics, is a desire to be active.

Indeed, many hon. Members not only do an active job here, but carry a pretty hefty constituency case load. At times—perhaps, this is just my view—it would probably do us all good if we left more time for reading and reflecting. That is not an argument for sitting less time, let me quickly tell the Leader of the House. But it would do no harm sometimes for us to reflect on various matters, as that would help us in our daily work.

We are not alone in having somewhat odd hours. Sometimes, some hon. Members give the impression that only we lead a difficult life; the hours are so odd and strenuous and so on. Many of us, of course, were members of a local authority and we should not forget that many people on both sides of the political divide carry out local authority work and related work on four evenings a week, after their ordinary work. We are not the only people in politics who have somewhat difficult hours.

Of course, if one leaves aside politics, imagine the number of people in the country who work anti-social hours and who have no alternative.

Mr. Skinner: What about those down the pits?

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend talks of people who work in the pits. Imagine the number of people who do boring and monotonous, as well as very poorly paid work. Indeed, the way in which deregulation has worked in the past few years has meant that far more anti-social hours are worked. People do not have the—how shall I describe it—pleasing political environment of the House of Commons in which to work. So, for heaven's sake, let us keep things in perspective. We work difficult hours and it causes a strain on family life, but, in the main, as I have said, hon. Members are not the only ones who are in this position. Do not let us make martyrs of ourselves.

Mr. Cormack: It is probably a good idea to put on the record that an awful lot of hon. Members are in their offices as early as 8 o'clock in the morning, as well as being here as late as 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock at night. The hon. Gentleman is one of them, I know, and so am I.

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. There is a danger, when we talk about constituency Fridays, that we give the impression that those are the only Fridays which we devote to constituent's duties. I am one of those hon. Members, and I am sure that there are many more, who for various reasons, apart from any Friday constituency work, carry out regular surgeries on Saturday mornings. I do so because it is part of the political culture in my area. If I started to hold them at a different time, be it on Monday evenings, which would be most inappropriate to say the least, or on Friday evenings, the people who may wish to see me may have various difficulties in making a Friday evening, if only because of some of the anti-social hours of which I have been speaking.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): I was glad that my hon. Friend finally mentioned the question of strains on family life. It is rather odd that we spend much of our time in this place talking about the importance of family life and the need to reconcile it with other activities, when the way in which we work here is ruinous to family life. The reforms proposed do not improve the matter one jot, at least not for those Members who live outside London and who already carry heavy constituency loads on Fridays.

Mr. Winnick: I appreciate the strain on family life, as I have said, but my hon. Friend must understand that there are sacrifices—if that is the appropriate word—in all that we do. Service people, be they officers, non-commissioned people or in the ranks, lead the sort of life which is a strain on family life. They can be away from their families too, for example, when serving in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Winnick: In a moment.

What about the many people who work in the various emergency services who, by the very nature of their jobs, are away from their family lives? All I am saying is that, while I recognise the point made by hon. Friend, we are not alone. There are all kind of strains, which can be even greater when the work involves very poor pay. However, I do not dispute my hon. Friend's basic point.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. May I point out, having been here for nearly 30 years, and after long experience of politicians of all parties, that it sometimes seems that their marriages hold together much better when their spouses see as little of them as possible?

Mr. Winnick: I am not sure whether my hon. Friend speaks from personal experience or otherwise, but I gladly note her point.

Ms Walley: Does my hon. Friend agree that the last thing on earth that this place wants is elected members who have no families, who have no contact with their constituencies and have no idea what is going on in the world outside? That is why we have to do something to change the way in which we conduct our business.

Mr. Winnick: I do not know whether this is all injury time, but I say to my hon. Friend simply that perhaps—I have the greatest respect for her, as she knows—there are differences. From the Government's point of view, they would be quite happy if we sat less and if we did far more in our constituencies. Of course they would be happy. Perhaps, if we, as Labour Members, were the Government, we would be happy in the same way if the Tory Opposition Members of Parliament sat less.

This is our place of work. If we decide to be elected, it is in this place above all where we have to carry out our main work. If we work on the assumption that the strain is too much—I am not in any way being critical of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) as family life is far more important—one would inevitably question whether this is the right place of work for them. Surely there is no way in which professional politics can be conducted other than that. I ask again, what about councillors? Is there no strain on their family life?

Ms Walley: I accept that there might be certain excesses, but we must have a balance with the constituency, with this place of legislation and with our families.

Mr. Winnick: I think that we shall have to agree to disagree in some respects.

It is important to understand that, in this place, time is a weapon, and an important one. It is obviously especially important for the Opposition of the day and for individual Back-Bench Members, including Government Back Benchers. That is why I have reservations about some of the proposals. It is suggested that we shall leave the House at a certain hour and that many Bills will be timetabled, for example. We are in great danger of giving the Government a weapon.

The right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) said that he could cite very few examples of concessions having been given by Governments. I disagree. I would not wish to exaggerate and say that concessions are frequently given, but when the Government of the day are under sustained pressure and when time is our only weapon to force the Government to accept an accommodation—the same situation applies when the Opposition are Conservative—it is a weapon of considerable importance.

We are in danger of denying ourselves an important weapon. That is why I have many reservations about the proposals. It is all very well saying, "Yes, let's all be tidy and ensure that we finish at 7 o'clock. We shall timetable Bills and we shall not sit late." It would be wrong to take that course if, by so doing, we denied ourselves the important weapon of time. That is why I considered it necessary to table amendment (b).

Before the House goes into recess, we should have the opportunity to debate matters that concern us. Such debates should not be treated as formalities. We should not merely agree to a recess motion. Hon. Members should have the opportunity to air their grievances. If it is said that my remarks are inappropriate and that I am being too conservative, let me give two examples from our proceedings this afternoon.

The hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) is no longer in his place—I do not criticise him for that, especially after his speech—but it was clear that he had an important point to make. He believed that he had a constitutional right as a Member to do what he did over the recent vote on VAT. He made his point, and it would have been difficult for him to do so without the opportunities that the previous debate provided. Of course, it may have been embarrassing for the Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) talked about Spain's treatment of Gibraltar. Not every hon. Member may have agreed with him, but surely it was right that, before leaving this place for the Christmas recess, my hon. Friend should be able to express his concern and to argue that the situation should be urgently considered. He is concerned about what may happen between now and our return to this place after the recess. I implore the Leader of the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), who is his shadow, whether or not my amendment is carried—I have referred already to the payroll vote—not to remove the basic right to discuss such matters.

The right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), who chairs the Procedure Committee, of which I am a member, has tabled an amendment which in some ways deals with my point. It would provide for a series of Adjournment debates, but they would not be within the framework of a motion for the recess, on which we could vote. That is crucial.

Mr. Skinner *rose—*

Mr. Winnick: I think that my hon. Friend will probably have the opportunity—

Mr. Skinner: Look at the time. There are others who want to speak.

Mr. Winnick: I hope that my amendment will be supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

I have read a great deal of nonsense recently about the supposed weaknesses of this place. We have been told that we are outdated and out of touch. Such criticism should be directed at the Government and not at the House. Our parliamentary democracy has served the British people well over the centuries, but I suppose it could be said that we have only had real parliamentary democracy for less than 100 years.

The House of Commons is an important place and an important institution. When I read what some of our critics write, I think to myself, "How long would their civil liberties last—five minutes?—if it were not for this place?" I take much pride in this place because I believe that all our freedoms are centred on it and on the way in which we carry

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on our business. We should not forget that. I do not take that pride because I have been a Member of the House for many years.

We have seen dictatorships crumbling throughout Europe and elsewhere and in the past we heard people say, "That is the future." I then look at this place. The dictatorships go but we carry on. We survive because the House is so essential for the country. Whenever changes take place—no doubt they are important—they should not be at the expense of the right of Members to raise issues that concern them and to vote upon them. We should be able to use time as a weapon against the Government of the day. That is part of our procedure, or it should be. It is part of our parliamentary democracy, and that is why I have the reservations that I have expressed.

8.56 pm

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): Like the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), I used to believe in the use of time as an effective weapon for the Opposition. The more one studies that view, however, the more ineffective a weapon it has proved to be for Oppositions over the past 30 years. The only occasions when I can recall Oppositions successfully using the weapon of time were the famous occasions of reform of the other place and proposed Scottish devolution legislation. Those Bills were considered in Committee on the Floor of the House. I understand that Bills so discussed in Committee are exempt from any of the proposals that are set out in the report of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). I think that the importance of the weapon of time is exaggerated, but I understand why the hon. Member for Walsall, North made the point.

The intervention of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) summed up the dilemma in which the House finds itself. If the result of the proposed reforms is to make the Executive more powerful, they will not have fulfilled their aims. On the other hand, the hon. Lady is right to say that if we can find a modified and effective way of scrutinising the Executive, why should hon. Members have to put up with appallingly late nights and inconvenient lives? Our life is bound to be inconvenient to some extent, but not necessarily to the extent that it is now.

I was reading earlier debates on these matters a few hours ago before this debate began. I read a speech by the late Dr. John Blackburn. In July 1991, he drew attention to the effect on Members' health of our present arrangements. How right, alas, he proved to be. There are many examples of hon. Members in ill health having to attend the House late at night.

Surely tonight we are not settling the Standing Orders of the House once and for all. If the experiment which is to be carried out for the next few months is a success, no doubt the House will wish to endorse it. On the other hand, if it is a great failure, I suspect that the experiment will not be renewed next Session. There must be a debate. We are talking about Sessional Orders which lapse unless they are renewed by the House at the beginning of the next Session. The experiment is absolutely essential if we are to make any changes. No one believes that the way in which we organise the House of Commons at the moment is ideal.

Of course we have fewer late sittings than we had years ago. Until very recently, the average time at which the House rose did not vary very much. I believe that it probably went down last Session very considerably. However, for a very long period it was static and, for a longer period before that, it was much later. I do not believe that that had a noticeable effect on the way in which the House of Commons scrutinised the Executive, and I do not believe that the House will regret the loss of such late nights.

The hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) said that most of the proposals do not help hon. Members who live outside London. It is extremely difficult to find proposals which help those who have constituencies near or in London and those who live miles away. The two interests are inevitably divergent. Those who live miles away would like to get away to their constituencies on a Thursday and perhaps return to the House later on a Monday. Those who live in or near London are probably just as interested in getting back home to their families—if they have them—at a reasonable hour in the middle of the week. Those two desires cannot be reconciled completely.

It seems that the proposal of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale, and the acceptance by the Government, tries to make concessions to both points of view. It gives the provincial Member a chance to get back home earlier on a Thursday.

I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) in his new position to convey a message to the Leader of the House because I do not understand his proposal for Thursdays. I understand what is to happen on the Thursdays when we do not sit on Friday, but the report of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale recommends that even on Thursdays when we do sit on the Friday, the House should try to rise early. Is that the Government's plan? I should be grateful if that could be made clear.

The proposals are an extremely good compromise. There is an area towards which the Government have taken one step, but in respect of which I do not believe that they have not gone nearly far enough. I believe that it is quite intolerable that we are one of the very few Houses of Parliament where notice of business is given to Members at such short notice. The Government are taking steps to improve that. However, it is utterly ridiculous not to know until Thursday afternoon whether one can see someone in one's constituency on the Monday or Tuesday. Why cannot we know at least one week or even three weeks ahead what the business will be? If that means more changes to business than we are accustomed to, it would be well worth putting up with.

The same point applies to recesses. The Leader of the House has taken a step forward in that regard. It is welcome that we have been given more notice of recesses. It would be a great help to hon. Members—and perfectly practical—if my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House could go further than that and set out the major dates for a parliamentary Session when the Session begins, during the Queen's Speech, or very shortly afterwards.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern), the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, made that recommendation. No doubt he can confirm that such a procedure works very well in Commonwealth Parliaments such as those in Canada and Australia. They all said that it would be the end of the world, but it was not and now none of them would go back. I urge that that point is seriously considered.

Let us try this experiment. If we hate it, we can stop it. The House of Commons cannot just sit still and do nothing in the face of pressure among hon. Members of all parties for change and reform of our hours. This is a very good way of proceeding. Let us see whether it works and hope that it does.

9.2 pm

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I hope that I can be as brief as the right hon. Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon). I want to refer briefly to the changes that we are considering as they relate to minority parties. First, however, I add my tributes not just to the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and his Select Committee for the original report, but to the Leader of the House and the shadow Leader of the House for having cracked a very difficult problem which had created gridlock in respect of introducing the reforms over the past two and a half years.

I cannot understand why it has taken that length of time. We should consider these reforms as merely the beginning of an on-going process. The way in which politics is practised and the machinery of government change dramatically at an ever-increasing exponential pace. The experiences of the 1960s and 1970s are light years away from what we have to experience as hon. Members in the 1990s.

The House of Commons has an on-going duty to review the way in which the procedures of the House work. It was interesting that the Leader of the House confessed that there were bits and pieces of Standing Orders which he barely knew existed. I think that that is not an unusual experience for all of us. On the occasions when one reads the fine print of some of the Standing Orders, it is astonishing to see what they still contain. We would do the House no service if we ignored the fact that our parliamentary processes should be continuously scrutinised to see whether they are still relevant. We should excise those that become otiose and irrelevant. We do not do that nearly enough.

I welcome the package of measures, which were the result of careful negotiations between the Government and the Opposition parties. I am grateful for the consideration that the Liberal Democrats and the other minority parties were shown. We must do better. We should start now to consider what will happen after Jopling.

Whoever fell upon the idea of changing the Sessional Orders was a genius. As the right hon. Member for Southend, West has said, those orders lapse automatically unless they are renewed. I assume that the Leader of the House will allow a debate before the summer recess so that we can review them and that we do not need to go through the process of having a debate on the Sessional Orders in advance of next year's Queen's Speech. I am sure that the arrangements will become clearer as the debate unfolds.

We should start to look at what further and better changes could be made. More work needs to be done; other proposals must be made; and consultations must continue between the Government and the Opposition parties so that further changes can be considered after the ones before us now have been determined. In that way the progress made will be further extended. Some other proposals may be abandoned or confirmed, and so much the better for that. We must not think that tonight's proposals are the end of the story and give up searching for further improvements to the way in which business is dealt with in the House.

I agree with the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) that one of the problems from which the House suffers is an unacceptable overload of business. We must confront that problem in the longer term. I do not think it is right that Parliament should just seek to digest everything that Departments throw at it in the Queen's Speech. Some machinery must be found and given effect to to try to equate what is attempted in the Government's annual legislative programme and the time available. That is absolutely essential. We should set up a business committee to consider the best practices of other legislatures, because a lot of them are way ahead of us in terms of following procedures suitable to modern democracies in the 1990s. We could learn a lot, for example, from the Canadian Parliament and other sister legislatures which have had some good ideas.

The usual channels are an essential part of the process. For the package of reforms to work in the spirit intended by the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale when his Committee published its report, the Government as well as the usual channels will have to exercise a lot of good faith. The usual channels can, however, be rather exclusive from the point of view of the minority parties. Although I am in favour of trying to get an agreed timetable on a voluntary basis within the usual channels, those consultations must extend to the minority parties if such an agreement is to be held by all the Opposition parties. If the two major parties—the Government and the Official Opposition—sit down and carve up an official timetable, they should not be surprised if the minority parties, which were not consulted in that process, do not sign up to the agreement struck. The need for wider consultation should be understood from the outset.

It is essential to the process of reform that private Members' time is protected. Unless the almost arithmetical formula explained by the right hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale is rigidly adhered to, the time allocated for private Members' business could begin to be lost. If that happened, the package of reforms would lose support from hon. Members on both sides of the House. I accept, however, that the fear about losing the weapon of use of parliamentary time, as well as other old-fashioned, out-of-date and unfounded fears have been dealt with in the proposed reforms. For that reason, I am prepared to give them my support. But I am prepared to consider the package only if it is a first step in a process that will continuously review procedures, including the volume of legislation, changes that could be introduced in terms of Special Standing Committees and all the other ideas that have been discussed.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have asked for notice of business more than a week in advance. It is essential that we get more order into the parliamentary calendar. That is possible, given the political will. The Leader of the House is sympathetic to that request and I know as well as he does that there are problems in implementing it. But if he could go some way towards continuing to develop that, he would have support from both sides of the House.

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

The package is fine in so far as it goes, but I hope that it is the start of a more detailed process in the long term.

9.10 pm

Mr. John MacGregor (Norfolk, South): I am the former Leader of the House who set up the Jopling Committee, although I do not approve of the epitaph of my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) that I am the proposal's grandfather. Having just become a grandfather in the real sense, to add another would be an aging process.

I am delighted that so many of the Committee's recommendations are now being implemented and I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his Committee again on all the work that they did. I could not be more pleased that it is my right hon. Friend the present Leader of the House who is implementing so many of the recommendations. I also congratulate the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on her constructive and sensible approach. While the recommendations are wide ranging, in essence the package is practical—as one would expect, given the balance of the original Committee—and that is how we shall achieve our objectives.

I shall deal immediately with the criticism that the proposals are designed to fetter the Opposition or Back Benchers. That is plainly wrong for the following reasons. First, the real impetus behind setting up the Committee in the first place was, as I found in my first six months as Leader of the House, the frustration of many Members on both sides of the House about how the House carries out its business. Secondly, the composition of the original Committee shows that I endeavoured to make it representative of all sections of the House, and Back Benchers were more prominent than anyone who represented the Government.

Thirdly, it is important to recollect that Members' responses to the questionnaire showed that their biggest concern was late-night sittings, with 83 per cent. then—and, I suspect, more now—wanting a reduction in late-night sittings to be the priority. Those who argue that late-night sittings give time for many Back Benchers to express their views fail to recognise that the vast majority of their colleagues think otherwise. It is sometimes important to pay attention to what the vast majority on both sides of the House believe.

Fourthly, to those who have looked at overseas Parliaments, it is clear that we give much more time than any other Parliament in the world to the Opposition and to Back Benchers. If we compare the balance between Government, Opposition and Back Benchers' time before the recommendations with the balance after the impact of the recommendations, we see that the balance has not changed. The Committee was extremely careful to keep that balance as it was before, so there is no erosion of Back Benchers' rights.

We must all recognise the fact that there is much time-wasting in the name of parliamentary democracy, often late at night, which contributes little to parliamentary democracy. Our constituents certainly think that it does not contribute to parliamentary democracy and that we are mad to engage in it.

The Jopling report and its main recommendations reflect the right balance. The hon. Member for Dewsbury was right to put the emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness. We all know that this place has not been sufficiently effective in a number of areas. This package will enable it to become more so. I agree with the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that there are other ways in which that can be achieved, including ways of achieving a more cost-effective operation of the House. We should reconsider the number of written questions that are tabled, but we should also consider many other matters. However, the changes that we are debating are important steps forward.

On timetabling, I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale. I understand the problems that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House had, but I hope that what is being proposed is to formalise what is at present a very informal arrangement.

I have often felt that the problem of the way in which we deal with Bills is that as a result of the procrastination that sometimes takes place, for reasons that we all understand, later parts of Bills hardly receive any scrutiny—certainly not the scrutiny that they deserve. Timetabling of Bills enables both sides of the House to consider those parts of Bills that they believe to be the most important in the greatest detail. I believe, therefore, that the principle of timetabling is to the benefit of both sides of the House. That is why I hope that the process will become much more formal, and allow for the interests of minority parties to be taken into account.

On private Members' time and the shift from Friday business to Wednesday business, I shall make two arguments to reinforce what so many people have said, and what was clearly in the evidence to the Committee. In recent years, constituency pressures have become much greater on all of us and we have to undertake many duties in our constituencies which cannot be carried out at the weekend, such as visits to schools and factories—I speak as an hon. Member representing a rural constituency some distance from London. We may be willing to do those things on Saturdays, but our constituents are not, so it is important to have that time on a Friday.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not want to give way because one or two other hon. Members want to speak.

People who are worried about the loss of Back Benchers' time should recognise that the move to Wednesdays enables the issues to be raised at peak time as far as the focus is concerned. Frankly, the Consolidated Fund Bill debates hardly ever receive any notice outside this place because of the hours at which they take place, but if Back Benchers speak on a Wednesday morning and Wednesday lunchtime I can imagine that many of those debates will be featured in the media for the rest of the day. That is a strengthening of Back Benchers' position, rather than the reverse.

I strongly support the automatic referral of statutory instruments, because I believe that the changes that we made in the previous Parliament on the European Standing Committees were a major reason why hours late at night were reduced for all Members of the House. I also believe that the changes led to better scrutiny of the European instruments because we all know that often the attendance in the Chamber is not great late at night.

I agree with other hon. Members about announcing the recesses in advance and endeavouring to announce at least two weeks of the business at any one time. As a former Leader of the House, I know well all the arguments against that. I know the pressures. I know that it is not easy to work out the business of the House each week. On the other hand, with determination, some of the difficulties can always be overcome and appear a great deal less than they do in advance. It makes it extraordinarily difficult for Members to plan diaries in the way that is done anywhere else if we have such short-term announcements. We must all accept that the second week is provisional, for reasons that many of us will well understand, but even if there are only one or two changes in a month in the provisional arrangements, that is a great advance.

I conclude with the two fundamental arguments that emphasise all the work of the Committee and the issues that we are discussing now.

First, the arrangements will not work properly without the co-operation and self-discipline of Members on both sides of the House. We all know that parliamentary procedures that have been built up over time are such that those people who are determined to exploit them will be able to do so. If we are genuinely to reduce late sittings, as the vast majority of hon. Members want, co-operation and self-discipline are needed—including, incidentally, the length of speeches.

I have listened with great interest to the argument that Front Bench speeches should be restricted to 30 minutes, but that hon. Members should also give way to plenty of interventions from Members on both sides of the House. There is a conflict in that argument. Some of the longest speeches that I have made from the Front Bench were largely the result of taking a large number of interventions, so there will have to be a certain amount of self-discipline in that respect also.

The second argument concerns the wider importance of what we are debating today. It is extremely important that we continue to attract people of high quality to serve in Parliament. There are many influences at work that are making that much more difficult. Many people now recognise that they must take a substantial cut in salary to serve in this place. Several issues which the Nolan committee will have to consider may have an influence on deterring people from coming to this place. Also, there is often media attention on the trivial rather than on the serious. There is, above all, a feeling that the hours that we work and the way in which we conduct our business do not make people decide that they will seek a place in this House.

I have in mind, in particular, women Members of Parliament. There are many other reasons why we do not have enough women Members. I strongly believe and have always advocated that we must endeavour to have more women Members, and I should very much like that to happen. The recommendations, not least in relation to late sittings, will greatly help us in attracting not only people of high quality to this place but, above all, more women who are willing to serve as Members of Parliament. That is why I hope that the House will accept the recommendations today.

9.20 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I should like to explain why I intervened on the Leader of the House when he referred to the usual channels. On three occasions he referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), who has had discussions with the right hon. Gentleman, and on another occasion he referred to myself. I want to make it clear that I was not involved in discussions between the usual channels; the discussions were rightly left to my hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House. Twelve months ago I met the Leader of the House and other hon. Members, and we finished up with no agreement—needless to say. I speak on this occasion because I shall vote against some of the proposals, and I shall say why I oppose them.

I shall put two simple points to the House before I deal with the resolutions. First, the Government are elected to put legislation through the House. If there is any curtailment of debate on the Floor of the House, time will be taken from the Opposition or from Back-Bench Members. It is a simple fact. No one is suggesting that the Government, who are elected by the people, should not carry through the legislation in their manifesto. Hon. Members talk about cutting the hours of the House. Every Thursday at Business Questions I hear hon. Members ask the Leader of the House for statements, debates and so on.

Secondly—I speak now as Deputy Chief Whip—I see no reason why, halfway through a Parliament, when we have the Government on the ropes, we should give up any weapons. That is why I oppose one or two resolutions. If I am correct and the resolutions favour the Government, it would be best to have an objective debate and introduce the new practices after the next general election. The party which wins the next election would benefit from the resolutions.

We have had 21 Fridays off this calendar year. Apart from bank holidays and weekends, we have had 87 working days off. I do not know what hon. Members do if they do not want to speak to their constituents and become involved in constituency meetings. When I was elected originally in 1979, one could not move on a Friday for Conservative Back-Bench Members wanting to speak. What has changed? At that time, Conservative Back-Bench Members—geographically, it is easy for them to be here on Friday—had bigger majorities and did not need to go to their constituencies. Now, every Conservative Back Bencher has a marginal seat. Therefore, Conservative Members cannot come here on a Friday; they must go to their constituencies.

Also, the Government must have Conservative Members here on Fridays. On two occasions during the period of non-co-operation, when a Division was called, the Government could not provide a quorum. They could not provide 40 Members to be counted on a Friday. It is ironic that, not long ago, the House voted for Sunday trading. It was more or less said that every worker in the country should work on a Sunday—how hypocritical, when the House has met on only one Sunday this century.

I oppose abandoning the ways and means procedure, because it is a good tactic for Opposition Members. Indeed, in respect of Ways and Means resolutions, which are open-ended incidentally, the Government need 100 Members to force a closure after 10 o'clock. Clearly, the Government do not want to keep Tory Members here late at night, especially at a time when their morale is so low.

[Mr. Don Dixon]

As for affirmative resolutions, Standing Order No. 101 states that any Back Bencher who wants a debate on a statutory instrument on the Floor of the House has only to get up and shout "Object", with the support of 20 hon. Members, to achieve that. That right is now to be taken away from Back Benchers under a cosy agreement made through the usual channels. Already, too much European legislation and too many instruments are stuck away upstairs, so I am not happy with that proposal.

Most hon. Members will agree to some extent with the proposal on short speeches, but I would have liked the Jopling report to go further and to suggest that Privy Councillors should not have preference over anyone else. That would be fairer. It did not go unnoticed that the Chairman of the Committee was a right hon. Member himself. It also did not go unnoticed that he used to be a Government Chief Whip—that was why he was appointed.

I trust that many of my hon. Friends will join me in the Lobby against some of the resolutions tonight. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has negotiated a free vote: there will be no whipping on our side. That is why I can speak out tonight. Hon. Members should have the right to express their feelings; I am certainly expressing mine. I shall be voting against the motions.

9.26 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): My right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) and his Committee have done an exceedingly useful job for the House. They have produced a comprehensive report, summarising some complex and sometimes contradictory arguments that have been held in the House for a long time—certainly for a great deal longer than I have been here. The report is now a kind of locus classicus for any discussion of this subject.

There is a great deal in the report with which I agree. I have no objection to Wednesday morning sittings. I rather agree with the Jopling proposals, and the Government's proposals tonight, about Ways and Means and money resolutions. I have never understood the basis for such resolutions, other than to provide the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) with an opportunity to keep the House up late at night, sometimes for no obvious purpose. It always seemed to me that if the House willed a Bill through, it also willed the means. We are grown up enough, surely, to know that if we vote for something we must also vote for the money which the measure will involve being spent.

I also agree with the proposals to give the House better notice of recesses and longer notice of business coming before us. That is most welcome.

I do, however, have considerable reservations about what I think are the three essential resolutions—the one on statutory instruments, the one on sittings of the House and the one on short speeches. Just so that I do not immediately run into criticism, I shall try not to speak for too long on this last subject.

We hold this debate against a background of a steady decline in the respect in which Parliament is held and in the perceived influence that it has on our nation's affairs and on its vital purpose of law making, which is supposedly the primary function of any legislature. There are many symptoms of this declining regard: the greatly reduced attention that our proceedings receive in the press and the ever-increasing demands for referendums on all sorts of subjects among them. These are perhaps a reflection of a lack of confidence in the parliamentary process and a lack of commitment to Parliament as the centre of our constitution which had been taken for granted for so many centuries and generations. That is all very worrying.

It is tempting, of course, to ignore those facts, or if we cannot ignore the general drift in opinion, to put it down to forces beyond our control and say that it is nothing to do with us. I fear that that really is not good enough. It is something to do with us. It is no coincidence that Parliament has been a great deal less effective in its primary legislative role over the past generation or so than it had been for several centuries. Few private Member's Bills now get through on to the statute book; invariably almost all that do are sponsored or subsequently adopted by the Government. Few Back-Bench amendments to Bills, whether they come from Government or Opposition Back Benchers, remain on the Bill when it receives Royal Assent. Occasionally they get through in Standing Committee, but invariably are removed on Report.

That contrasts poorly not only with the past record of the House but of some other Parliaments—the European Parliament is a good example. There, some 50 per cent. of amendments tabled to directives get through and become part of the subsequent legislation or directive when promulgated by the Council of Ministers. The position in other democracies, such as the United States, is very different indeed. Congress is a genuine legislature. But here, thanks largely to the whipping system, the Government can be fairly confident that legislation drafted by the bureaucracy, but which Ministers defend ably once it comes before the House, will emerge from this place very much as it entered.

Not content with that enormous influence over primary legislation, the Government in recent years—it has been true of Governments of all political parties—have resorted increasingly to secondary legislation. Time and again Bills have come before the House that are extremely long and complex and not always well drafted, and they provide, in various clauses, for the Secretary of State to make regulations. Nobody in the House has the faintest idea what those regulations will be. Sometimes we can have a nasty shock.

One of which hon. Members on both sides of the House are conscious is the Child Support Agency. We passed the Child Support Act 1991, which seemed to enshrine a worthy principle: that where a parent is in a position to support a child, the charge for supporting that child should fall in the first place on that parent, and only if no parent is able to assume that responsibility should the charge fall on the taxpayer through income support or other welfare payments.

That seemed to be an unexceptional and worthy principle, and we all—at least Conservative Members—voted for it with great enthusiasm. We find, however, that some two years later there emerges from the bureaucracy an absolutely horrific rule book, which we could not have anticipated on the basis of statements made or discussions that were held on the original Bill and which is positively Orwellian in the detail into which it goes about the way in which families should spend their money and divide up their budget, and the relationships between parents and children, second families and first families and so forth.

That is just one small example, but the Government have bravely acknowledged precisely the point that I am making, because that was the point about the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994. A great deal of legislation was pushed through the House, largely at the instigation of the bureaucracy, which was redundant, unfortunate, excessive and, in many cases, onerous to British industry. In many instances it was at variance with the principles of human freedom to which we are very much attached.

The Government therefore quite rightly decided to get rid of a lot of it. That was an extremely brave and positive initiative. It was brave because it is not always very easy for people, particularly for Governments, to recognise where there is an excess of legislation, or where their own activities have been excessive and to take the necessary measures to reverse that. That is, perhaps, the best testimonial of the point that I am making.

Against that background, we must examine what is proposed for the future workings of the House. The conclusions that we should draw are actually the reverse of those expressed in motions 4, 5 and 6, to which I have drawn attention. We want more, and more effective, scrutiny. We certainly do not want to reduce the time available for scrutiny. There is no question that a quid pro quo of the proposal to reduce the scope for the House to meet after 10 o'clock is that there will have to be virtually automatic—although we do not use that term—universal timetabling of Bills. Clearly, that will reduce the opportunity for scrutiny. It introduces a great element of artificiality into the consideration of a Bill.

When one first reads a Bill it is impossible to know where the real pitfalls will arise and where it will be necessary to probe what is proposed more deeply and where it would be desirable to table amendments.

Mr. Cormack: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davies: I give way with pleasure to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Cormack: My hon. Friend should have said that at the moment, with the system of rigid guillotine that is frequently used, vast chunks of Bills are never discussed at all. Many clauses of the Bill to reform the health service were never discussed on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Davies: I accept that the form of retrospective timetabling that we now use is highly undesirable. The solution lies not just in trying to limit the time of speeches in the Chamber, but in having some mechanism to allow the Chairmen of Committees, if there appears to be a filibuster or something like that, to impose a rule limiting the amount of time that any hon. Member can speak on any particular amendment or group of amendments. That would be sensible and would go some way towards meeting my hon. Friend's concerns.

This would have been a good opportunity to provide for the proper use of Special Standing Committees and I am sorry that we are not doing that. They take evidence before the usual Standing Committee procedure on Bills begins. That would be a way for Parliament to look carefully at the work of the bureaucracy in preparing Bills.

On the question of statutory instruments, I have some hesitation about giving up albeit a theoretical right for 20 Members standing in their place to insist on bringing to the Floor of the House a statutory instrument to which we object. As I have said, so much of secondary legislation is misconceived and does not get the parliamentary scrutiny that it should have.

What is unclear from the motion—perhaps my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House might refer to this in his reply later—is what will happen in Committee if a resolution on a statutory instrument is defeated. With European Standing Committees, nothing happens—the fact that the resolution has been defeated has no practical influence on the future of the proposal before the Committee.

It is an irony of the present position that whereas this Parliament is supposedly a legislature and is regarded as such throughout the country, so much legislation—perhaps 99 per cent.—is, in practice, in the hands of the Executive branch of the Government. I am sorry that the opportunity has not been taken tonight to deal with that issue and to examine how Parliament could be made more effective, not just more convenient for those of us who happen to sit here. The great issue is whether or not Parliament will, in future, be an increasingly effective institution or whether it will be increasingly a merely decorative part of our constitution.

9.39 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I shall be brief, so that others have time to speak.

The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) said it was crucial to ensure that the Executive was made more accountable, and that more scrutiny was possible. Let me make two comments. First, I oppose any change on the basis that, if that scrutiny is to work, Opposition parties and Back Benchers should be given more resources and opportunities. Some of the proposals that we are discussing, and some of what has been said about money and Ways and Means motions, suggest that they will lose those opportunities.

I know that compulsory timetabling is not currently proposed, but I suspect that it may well be the next stage in the changes that are being made. I accept the existence of voluntary timetables, but if we are to have a compulsory system we shall have to change many of our other procedures in the Chamber; otherwise we shall merely be giving the Government additional resources and powers. If our purpose is to ensure that legislation is subject to scrutiny, we must be very cautious about taking such a step. Certain procedures could make this place more effective, but timetabling in itself will merely reduce the rights of individual Members and their constituents.

My second point is this. Having listened to most of the debate, I am irritated by the sense of complacency that has been evident. Many Conservative Members have agreed to, and voted for, reductions in the rights of the House of Commons. Let us consider the constitutional changes that have taken place—the growth of agencies and quangos, for instances. Such changes take power away from the House of Commons.

Mr. Bennett: And there has been a reduction in the rights of local government.

Mr. Fatchett: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

During the 10 years in which I have been a Member of Parliament, I have seen the powers of individual Members reduced in the interests of the Executive and the supposed

[Mr. Fatchett]

interests of efficiency. We must achieve a balance between efficiency and accountability; if we concentrate too much on efficiency, we shall reduce the accountability of the Executive to us as Members of Parliament. I would have given much more credence to what hon. Members have said tonight if they had been jealous of our rights over the past 10 or 15 years. A significant constitutional revolution has taken place, reducing the rights of the House of Commons.

The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding mentioned the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994. He should remember that in that Act Parliament agreed to empower the Executive, by means of secondary legislation, to abolish and amend primary legislation. That substantial constitutional change was made without a squeal from Conservative Members. When we talk of the rights of the House, we must balance accountability with efficiency; but let us always opt for accountability, and the rights of Opposition parties and Back Benchers.

9.43 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I take issue immediately with the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). I shall produce figures to show that Back Benchers' powers to raise matters in debates will be increased rather than reduced by the proposals that we are discussing.

This is a silver day for me. As Chairman of the Procedure Committee, for 11 years I fought to drag the House's procedures more into the 20th century than ever before. It is not a golden day, because many of the recommendations are not, as it were, in tablets of stone in the Standing Orders; let us hope, however, that they will be in time.

We should surely welcome the fact that we are cutting late-night sittings dealing with legislation. That must be wrong. It cannot make sense and thank goodness for the change.

The press refers to eight Fridays off. That is typical of the media and the British Broadcasting Corporation. They are entirely misleading the public. The proposal will mean that, on those days, hon. Members can go to their constituencies and visit schools and factories, which they are not able to do normally other than in the long summer recess.

I understand what Front-Bench Members are trying to do, reflected in the answer that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House gave me at column 803 of Thursday's *Hansard*. When it comes, however, to limitation of speeches by Front-Bench Members, early notification of major debates, dates of the recess, avoidance of late sittings, avoidance of highly contentious business after 7.30 pm on a Thursday, prayers settled by agreement, Second Reading Committees by agreement and voluntary timetabling of Bills, we shall have to have a lot of "best endeavours". I wish both Front-Bench Members well in bringing those things about.

I refer to the only major point that I wish to make. It involves the concern about the time available for hon. Members. The 1993-94 Session was shorter than the one on which the Jopling figures were based, with 154 sitting days and about 31 Wednesdays. In 1993-94, hon. Members spent 117 hours on private Members' motions, the last-day-before-recess debate, the Consolidated Fund Bill and the three-hour debate. There were 82 different debates.

On the basis of what will be brought in by the recommendations, with 31 Wednesdays, there will be 139 hours of debate on Wednesday mornings, which is about 22 hours more than in 1993-94. Furthermore, hon. Members will have twice as many opportunities to raise subjects of their choice—there will be 155 Adjournment debates compared with the 82 debates of 1993-94. The people who say that the recommendations will decrease the power of Back Benchers do not understand the resolutions.

I apologise for my cold. On guillotining and timetabling, will people please look at the last recommendation of the Select Committee on Procedure? That contained no proposal for permanent timetabling. It was left to the Bill's Standing Committee to decide the issue of timetabling. It said that a Sub-Committee should be appointed for every Bill. If after 15 hours, the Bill was not being proceeded with according to the wishes of the usual channels, a date should be set for the Bill to be reported out of Committee. If after another 15 hours, that was not working, a timetable motion would not be moved on the Floor of the House, but the Sub-Committee should recommend a timetable so that every part of Bill would be discussed. That makes a lot more sense. It leaves power in the hands of the Committee. Surely that is a better way of dealing with the matter. That being the case, I hope that we can consider the issue again.

The Procedure Committee has agreed to monitor the aspects of these motions over the whole period and to start taking evidence in May and June in the hope that we can report by the end of the summer recess. Then the usual channels of both sides can decide whether it is necessary to amend the position, to introduce more Sessional Orders or to put the proposal into the Standing Orders. I hope that that will be helpful. With that, I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will vote for the proposal and wish it a fair wind.

9.48 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I have been here before. I have heard all today's speeches to the effect that there will be no loss of time for Back Benchers and that everything will be all right. We heard John Silkin say that about the Consolidated Fund Bill many years ago when it used to be open-ended, but that came to an end. Standing Order No. 20 and private notice questions are rarely used and have all but gone and the same will be true of opportunities for Back Benchers to raise important matters. My guess is that this is the thin end of the wedge, but it is something that we shall debate again and again. We are handing valuable parliamentary time to the Government.

I came here to oppose this lousy, rotten Government and it is my job to keep them up all night if necessary. I have not come here to take part in a cosy consensus. We are here because we do not represent the standards that the Conservatives represent: they represent the bosses and we represent the workers. It is my job to ensure that people outside understand that.

Hon. Members say that they want to work better hours, but I take great exception to the four-day week being proposed today. There are 4 million people without jobs. Why are we not campaigning and passing legislation for a four-day week for those outside—the real wealth creators—so that we can mop up the vast numbers of the unemployed? If the House wants to work proper hours—9 am until 5 pm—let us get rid of all the moonlighters in the House. Hon. Members could start work at 9 am and finish at 5 pm and not work in the City, the boardrooms or the law courts—they would have to be here and, if necessary, clock on.

9.50 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): The one word that has been missing from our debate today has been "quality". I am referring not to the quality of speeches but to the quality of legislation. The only people to gain from the mish-mash of legislation of appalling quality that we pass are lawyers, not our constituents. That has to be a major factor in our consideration.

I am ashamed to do so, but I must plead guilty to working seven days a week, although not all that work is necessarily done in the House. I have served as a Government Back Bencher, an Opposition Back Bencher and an Opposition Front Bencher, and I must say that a load of romantic myths have been piddled here—[*Laughter.*]—peddled here tonight about the effectiveness of our current procedures. All those who complain about the proposed changes appear to be defending the status quo as something that has worked and prevented the Government from abusing the House. We know that, in the past 15 years, that has not been so. To try to defend the indefensible is not a satisfactory way to carry on in the latter part of the 20th century.

Certainly, we want better scrutiny and accountability, but the time is an overrated weapon. I have used it and abused it in government and in opposition, and a fat lot of good it did my constituents. In extremis, that weapon is still available to the Opposition, whatever party forms the Opposition.

The most conservative group of people that I have come across are Members of Parliament asked to discuss procedural change. As the Chairman of the Procedure Committee knows, there are many changes that could be brought about. Why are 10-minute Bills introduced only on Tuesdays and Wednesdays; why not on Mondays and Thursdays—simply because that is how the system has developed? I know that it is radical, but why not allow hon. Members to ask two supplementary questions at Question Time, so that Ministers cannot run away after answering only one? What about early-day motions being tabled in recesses to give us parliamentary privilege when raising issues?

There are many ways to modernise the way in which the House works and give more power to Back Benchers, without defending the indefensible. Some people claim that this place is the bee's knees of parliamentary legislatures and a beacon to the rest of the world, but most of the rest of the world has passed us by. Most of the legislatures based on our Parliament have modernised themselves over the years. Although they talk about this place as the mother of Parliaments, none of them apes our present procedures, which are not as effective as we may think they are.

One hon. Member mentioned Finance Bills and said that the rules that applied to Finance Bills were different. I remember that a couple of years ago, at the end of the debate on the Second Reading of the Finance Bill, I stood up at 10 pm and was called. The most horrified people in the House were my own Whips, who said, "Sit down, you are letting hon. Members know about the rules." The 10 o'clock rule does not apply to Second Reading of the Finance Bill.

The Finance Bill rule has been used on only one occasion in the past 15 years, when there was a concerted attack by the Opposition to bring the Government to heel in October 1984. We did not win, but the Government gave up their wind-up speech on their own Finance Bill. We made our point; the rule has been used only once.

The limits on hon. Members' speeches will be widely accepted. I hope that you use them with discretion, quality and efficiency, Madam Speaker. There is no God-given right for people who have served in this place for 30 years, ex-Cabinet Ministers and Privy Councillors, to take up the time that other hon. Members could make better use of.

9.55 pm

Mr. Newton: I ventured to suggest rather wryly in my opening speech that there were some signs that the debate would become a bit of a Christmas tree. It has done, with proposals ranging rather wider than those I have presented to the House. I will, of course, reflect on the various points raised, but I will not attempt to go far down those other paths tonight.

I welcome the robust common sense of much of what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) has just said, and I also welcome the similarly sensible approach, although slightly quieter in delivery, from the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor). Given that the hon. Gentleman's experience and mine go back over many of the same all-night sittings in the late 1970s, I well understand what he says.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South (Mr. MacGregor) was described as the grandfather of the proposals by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling), who described himself as the father.

Mr. Jopling: No.

Mr. Newton: Even if my right hon. Friend did not describe himself as that, I describe him as such. I suppose that that probably makes me the midwife. I can only say that the baby has had the gestation period of an elephant. I hope that it will prove to be similarly robust now that it is finally born.

The debate may well be remembered not for my proposals, but for the rare appearance of the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) as a speaker in our proceedings. Rarely have I seen so many people sucked into the House so quickly. His pulling power is such that clearly we should hear from him more often.

There has been a general welcome from almost everybody in the debate, apart from the hon. Members for Jarrow and for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett), and there were some slightly Delphic remarks from my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies). In general, there was a welcome, so I shall comment quickly on a few specific points that were asked.

I cannot advise the House to support the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). As my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale said, the amendment conflicts directly with a provision in his report. I can, however, say this, and I hope that it will give the hon. Gentleman some hope.

[Mr. Newton]

If the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) had been selected, I would have advised the House to accept it. I shall look at such proposals during the review that we have undertaken to have towards the end of the Session. I cannot tell the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) at the moment that the review will be prefaced by a debate before the summer recess, but I shall bear the thought in mind.

I noted the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale about statutory instruments being taken after 10 pm. I indicated our general acceptance of the proposition that fresh business would not normally be started after 10 pm. I also heard what my right hon. Friend said about statements on Wednesdays. The House might not wish to lock itself absolutely into a position in which, even if the most urgent thing arose, there was no possibility of a statement. I can undertake, however, that Ministers will not seek to abuse the proposal, and that the norm would be statements at 3.30 pm.

I propose to advise Ministers that they should normally reckon to come to the House with 20 minutes of material. If there were interventions, they would not then immediately be forced beyond half an hour.

In answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), yes, as I think we have shown already, we shall normally try to schedule what may be called light business for Thursday evenings, regardless of whether it is followed by one of the Fridays, although I cannot give an absolute guarantee of that.

My last point, because I am rapidly running out of time, is one of encouragement for the hon. Member for Jarrow, who appeared to gain rousing applause for his attack on Privy Councillors. Of course, the extension of the 10-minutes rule at least means that Privy Councillors will not be called at a time when they can indulge themselves by taking half a hour, only to leave many others with ten minutes later; so something has been done to redress the balance. Whether that is approved of by all the Privy Councillors on the Labour Front Bench, I do not know. That is for them to say.

The point on which I have been heavily pressed further, and of which I take note, concerns greater notice of parliamentary business. I cannot go further tonight, but the message is very clear, and I shall of course reflect on it.

It being Ten o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [9 December].*

The House divided: Ayes 217, Noes 41.

Division No. 26] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Battle, John
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Sir Graham
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Jean
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Dicks, Terry
Dobson, Frank
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Eagle, Ms Angela
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gapes, Mike
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hall, Mike
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moss, Malcolm
Mullin, Chris
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pearson, Ian
Pickles, Eric
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Sims, Roger

Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Timms, Stephen
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Vaz, Keith
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilson, Brian
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Dixon, Don
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Etherington, Bill
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Hood, Jimmy
Illsley, Eric
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Ian
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Simpson, Alan
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Denis Skinner and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That, during the present Session of Parliament, the Standing Orders and practice of the House shall have effect subject to the modifications set out below.

(1) In this Order 'a consolidation bill' means a public bill such as is defined in paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 123 (Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c., Bills).

(2) Notices of amendments, new clauses and new schedules to be moved in committee in respect of a consolidation bill may be received by the Clerks at the Table before the bill has been read a second time.

(3) If a motion that a consolidation bill be not committed is made by a Minister of the Crown immediately after the bill has been read a second time, the motion shall not require notice and the question thereon shall be put forthwith and may be decided, though opposed, at any hour.

(4) The question for the third reading of a consolidation bill shall be put forthwith.

(5) Any public bill, the main purpose of which is to give effect to proposals contained in a report by either of the Law Commissions, other than a private Member's bill or a consolidation bill, shall, when it is set down for second reading, stand referred to a second reading committee, unless—

(a) the House otherwise orders, or

(b) the bill is referred to the Scottish Grand Committee.

(6) If a motion that a bill such as is referred to in paragraph (5) above shall not stand referred to a second reading committee is made by a Minister of the Crown at the commencement of public business, the question thereon shall be put forthwith.

(7) The provisions of paragraphs (3) to (6) of Standing Order No. 90 (Second reading committees) shall apply to any bill referred to a second reading committee under paragraph (5) above.

MONEY RESOLUTIONS AND WAYS AND MEANS RESOLUTIONS

Motion made, and Question put,

That, during the present Session of Parliament, the Standing Orders and practice of the House shall have effect subject to the modifications set out below.

(1) The Speaker shall put the questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on motions authorising expenditure in connection with a bill and on ways and means motions in connection with a bill—

(i) forthwith, if such a motion is made at the same sitting as that at which the bill has been read a second time; or

(ii) not later than three-quarters of an hour after the commencement of those proceedings, if the motion is made otherwise.

(2) Business under paragraph (1) above may be proceeded with at any hour, though opposed.

(3) In Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business) paragraph (1) (d) and the proviso thereto shall be omitted.-*[Mr. Newton.]*

The House divided: Ayes 202, Noes 51.

Division No. 27] **[22.13 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Battle, John
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Sir Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gapes, Mike
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hodge, Margaret
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
McFall, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pearson, Ian
Pickles, Eric
Pike, Peter L

Pope, Greg
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Sims, Roger
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick
Timms, Stephen
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilson, Brian
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D N

Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cox, Tom
Dixon, Don
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek

Foster, Don *(Bath)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meale, Alan

Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett and
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C., AND EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made and Question put:—

That, during the present Session of Parliament, the Standing Orders and practice of the House shall have effect subject to the modifications set out below.

(1) The following paragraphs shall be inserted after paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.):

> '(2A) Where a Minister of the Crown has given notice of a motion to the effect that a statutory instrument or draft statutory instrument be approved, the instrument or draft instrument shall stand referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c., unless—
>
> (a) notice has been given by a Minister of the Crown of a motion that the instrument or draft instrument shall not so stand referred, or
>
> (b) the instrument or draft instrument is referred to the Scottish Grand Committee.'

(2) In paragraph (3) of the said Standing Order, for lines 18 to 20 there shall be substituted the words 'that a measure under the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919 be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent, or of a motion relating to an instrument made under such a measure'; in paragraph (5) for the words 'paragraph (3) (a) or (3) (b)' there shall be substituted the words 'paragraphs (2A) or (3)'; and in paragraph (6) the words from 'instruments' in line 54 to the end of the paragraph shall be omitted.

(3) Except as provided in Standing Order No. 14A (Consideration of draft deregulation orders), the Speaker shall put the questions necessary to dispose of proceedings under any Act of Parliament or on European Community documents not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of such proceedings; and Standing Orders No. 14 (Exempted business) and No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)) shall have effect accordingly.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

The House divided: Ayes 194, Noes 61.

Division No. 28] **[22.25 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert

Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Battle, John
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim

Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Sir Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Church, Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Dicks, Terry
Dobson, Frank
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gapes, Mike
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hodge, Margaret
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*

Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
McFall, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randel, David
Richards, Rod
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Sims, Roger
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*

Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Timms, Stephen
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen

Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D N
Clapham, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cox, Tom
Dixon, Don
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
George, Bruce
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*

Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mullin, Chris
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Purchase, Ken
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steen, Anthony
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Jimmy Hood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, during the present Session of Parliament, the Standing Orders and practice of the House shall have effect subject to the modifications set out below:

Provided that paragraphs (3) to (8) below shall come into effect on the third Wednesday on which the House shall sit after the making of this Order.

(1) The House shall not sit on eight Fridays to be appointed by the House.

(2) The Fridays so appointed shall be treated as sitting days for the purpose of calculating any period under any order of the House and for the purposes of paragraph (8) of Standing Order No. 18 (Notices of questions, motions and amendments) and of Standing Order No. 62 (Notices of amendments, &c., to bills); and on such Fridays—

(i) notices of questions may be given by Members to the Table Office, and

(ii) notices of amendments to bills, new clauses and new schedules and of amendments to Lords amendments may be received by the Public Bill Office,

between Eleven o'clock and Three o'clock.

(3) The House shall meet on Wednesdays at Ten o'clock and shall between that hour and half-past Two o'clock proceed with a motion for the adjournment of the House made by a Minister of the Crown.

(4) The subjects for debates on that motion shall be chosen by ballot under informal arrangements made by the Speaker analogous to those which apply to the motion for the adjournment of the House under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 9 (Sittings of the House); and no subject shall be raised without notice.

(5) Not more than two subjects shall be raised between Ten o'clock and One o'clock on a Wednesday, and not more than three between One o'clock and Half-past Two o'clock.

(6) A motion for the adjournment of the House not disposed of at half-past Two o'clock on a Wednesday shall lapse; the House will then proceed with private business, motions for unopposed returns and questions; no subsequent motion for the adjournment of the House shall be made until all the questions asked at the commencement of public business have been disposed of; and, save as provided in paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 20 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration), no Member other than a Minister of the Crown may make such a motion before the orders of the day or notices of motions shall have been entered upon.

(7) In paragraphs (1) and (2) of Standing Order No. 9 (Sittings of the House) the words "Wednesdays" and "Wednesday" respectively shall be omitted.

(8) Standing Order No. 10 (Sittings of the House (suspended sittings)) shall not have effect; the reference to the said Standing Order in paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 9 (Sittings of the House) shall be omitted; and in paragraph (1)(a) of Standing Order No. 133 (Time and manner of presenting petitions) the words from "conclusion" in line 10 to "and" in line 14 shall be omitted.

(9) In Standing Order No. 13 (Arrangement of public business) paragraphs (7), (8) and (9) shall be omitted; in paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 9 (Sittings of the House) for the words from "returns" in line 4 to the end of the paragraph there shall be substituted the words "and questions"; in Standing Order No. 15A (New writs) the words "or notices of motion" shall be omitted; in paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 90 (Second reading committees) the words "or notices of motions" in line 15 shall be omitted; and in paragraph (1)(b) of Standing Order No. 133 (Time and manner of presenting petitions) the words "or motions" in line 18 shall be omitted.

(10) In Standing Order No. 22 (Periodic adjournments) for the words from "periods" in line 3 to the end there shall be substituted the words "the question thereon shall be put forthwith".

(11) In Standing Order No. 54 (Consolidated Fund Bills) paragraph (2) shall be omitted.

Amendment (b) proposed: leave out paragraph (10).—*Mr. Winnick.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 65, Noes 171.

Division No. 29] **[22.37 pm**

AYES

Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cox, Tom
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dixon, Don
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
George, Bruce
Gordon, Mildred
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mullin, Chris
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Rendel, David
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody
and Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Battle, John
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Sir Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Church, Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Coe, Sebastian
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Dicks, Terry
Dobson, Frank
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gapes, Mike
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hodge, Margaret
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
McFall, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony

Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Richards, Rod
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilson, Brian
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. David Willetts.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 209, Noes 32.

Division No. 30] [22.48 pm

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bennett, Andrew F
Beresford, Sir Paul
Betts, Clive
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Sir Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D N
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Church, Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Corston, Jean
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dicks, Terry
Dobson, Frank
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Eagle, Ms Angela
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Flynn, Paul
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gapes, Mike
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harris, David
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hodge, Margaret
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Luff, Peter
McFall, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Mullin, Chris
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Simpson, Alan
Sims, Roger
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Timms, Stephen
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilson, Brian
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Willetts and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Dixon, Don
Etherington, Bill
George, Bruce
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lewis, Terry
McCartney, Ian
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spellar, John
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody and Mrs. Llin Golding.

Question accordingly agreed to.

SHORT SPEECHES

Motion made, and Question put,

That, during the present Session of Parliament, the following provision shall have effect in place of Standing Order No. 45A (Short speeches):

> "The Speaker may announce at the commencement of proceedings on any motion or order of the day relating to public business that she intends to call Members to speak for not more than ten minutes in the debate thereon, or between certain hours during that debate, and whenever the Speaker has made such an announcement she may direct any Member (other than a Minister of the Crown, a Member speaking on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, or not more than one Member nominated by the leader of the second largest opposition party) who has spoken for ten minutes to resume his seat forthwith.".—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 201, Noes 29.

Division No. 31] **[23.00 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Bates, Michael
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyes, Roland
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Sir Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Butler, Peter
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D N
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Church, Judith
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'clif)*
Coe, Sebastian
Coffey, Ann
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corston, Jean
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Dicks, Terry
Dobson, Frank
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dowd, Jim
Duncan, Alan
Eagle, Ms Angela
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gapes, Mike
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs. Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harris, David
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Doug
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hodge, Margaret
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Luff, Peter
McFall, John
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mullin, Chris
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pickles, Eric
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Simpson, Alan
Sims, Roger
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Soley, Clive
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Timms, Stephen
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilson, Brian
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and Mr. David Willetts.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Dixon, Don
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Etherington, Bill
Flynn, Paul
Hood, Jimmy
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Mackinlay, Andrew
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs. Llin Golding and
Mr. Frank Cook.

Question accordingly agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &C

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1994, which were laid before this House on 16th November, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

Question agreed to.

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Sir Nicholas Fairbairn be discharged from the Scottish Affairs Committee and Mr. Tim Devlin be added to the Committee.—*[Mr MacKay, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Secondary Schools (Bristol)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

11.11 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Since I was first elected to serve as Member of Parliament for Bristol, North-West in 1983, I have been conscious of an undercurrent of disquiet among parents in my constituency over whether their children are getting the best opportunity through the state secondary education system. It is only in the past three years since the Government started publishing national tables of the individual results achieved by state secondary schools that those worries have been brought into focus. One year's figures may have been unreliable, two years' figures may have been merely a snapshot, but when this year's figures confirmed the trend apparent from the previous two, I felt that it was necessary to introduce the debate, to discuss what is going wrong in state secondary education in the schools in Bristol, North-West and what can be dome about it.

There are eight state secondary schools within the boundaries of my constituency, excluding one special school. The comments that follow will relate exclusively to those eight—Filton high school, Henbury school, Lawrence Weston school, Lockleaze school, Monks Park school, Pen Park school, Portway school and St. Bede's Roman Catholic school. Five of those schools have sixth forms and offer A-level courses. The three that do not are Lawrence Weston, Pen Park and St. Bede's.

My comments do not relate to other schools outside the constituency boundaries, to which a number of parents nevertheless send their children, such as Marlwood and the Castle in Thornbury, the Ridings in Winterbourne and Cotham towards the centre of Bristol. Nor do my comments relate in any way to the private schools in the constituency, as will be apparent when I mention that, within a quarter of mile of each other and my home in Bristol, are two of the finest private secondary schools for girls in the country: Red Maids and Badminton. I should also make it clear that my comments relate to and are based exclusively on achievement.

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stern: On the hon. Lady's undertaking to be fairly brief, since we have a lot to get through, I would be delighted to give way.

Ms Corston: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, if one compares academic achievements of this year with last year, Filton high school made a 28 per cent. improvement in examination results, Lawrence Weston school a 183 per cent. improvement and the Portway school a 26 per cent. improvement, while for vocational courses, the pass rates were anything between 87 and 100 per cent? When the right hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) was Secretary of State for Education, he visited Pen Park school, told the staff that it was excellent and wrote to the local authority to confirm that.

Mr. Stern: I am well aware of the last fact because I visited the school at the same time as the then Secretary of State. I think that the hon. Lady will find that although the figures that she quoted are accurate, I shall put a slightly different gloss on them.

[Mr. Stern]

My comments relate to and are based exclusively on academic achievement. I am well aware of the other factors, all of them important, that go to make a good and successful school, and often counter-balance an apparent lack of academic achievement. I believe, however, that the majority of parents who make an informed choice as to the school to which to send their children will be concerned that their children gain the best possible chances in academic terms. It is on the basis of that assumption that I feel compelled to take up parliamentary time to outline the particular problems of the schools in my constituency.

Of the eight schools that I listed, only one even meets the Avon average for the number of pupils passing five or more GSCEs at grades A to C, and that is St Bede's, which has been so consistent over the past three years. All credit to it, in passing the Avon average and that of the whole of England in each of the three years.

None of the other seven schools in any of the three years has met the average for Avon. Those who know Avon will not be surprised to know that its average is consistently lower than that of the country as a whole.

In 1992, the national average for a state secondary school in terms of pupils passing five or more GCSEs at grades A to C was 38; in my constituency, even taking into account St. Bede's, which, as I said, consistently performs better than the national average, the average was 23.5. Despite rising averages for both Avon and the country as a whole, that for Bristol, North-West schools has remained stubbornly around that figure. Indeed, between 1992 and 1994, whereas the county average—as I said, it remains consistently lower than the average for the country as a whole—rose by four, the average for the schools in my constituency rose by 0.2.

In terms of academic achievement, the position is even worse at A-level. Of the five secondary schools offering A-level courses in my constituency, it is not only that the average for all five schools is consistently much lower than that of the county in terms of points score for A-level passes; not one school of the five in any of the three years that has been measured has ever reached the county average, which again is consistently below the national average.

I do not relate any of those facts with relish, because they represent a failure on the part of the state education system at secondary level in my constituency to provide what the rest of the county would regard as an acceptable level of attainment at both GCSE and A-level, and the failure of the county to provide what would be regarded in the rest of the country as adequate education attainment at both levels of examination. Now that the Government have rightly made it possible for those conclusions to be drawn and education attainment to be measured, I want to refer both to the reasons for that failure of the state education system to provide adequate academic education for the children of my constituents and to what can be done about it.

In our decentralised education system, it is clear that the prime fault must lie with the local education authority. For many years I have argued that the retention of many surplus places in schools within the county has led to a lower quality of education, and only now do we have the figures to prove me right. For whatever reason, I have no desire to blame either any political party or any officers or employees of the county—it has decided to pursue other objectives than the closure of surplus places, such as the elimination of single-sex education within the state system and a rabid opposition to grant maintenance.

The county will argue that it has not had enough money to provide adequate education, although it has never been able to convince me, and I am not sure that it has ever been able to convince my hon. Friend the Minister, that it is significantly worse or better off than any comparable county that is able to achieve closer to the national average in education attainment. It will argue that the brightest pupils are creamed off into the private sector. Yet that is not uncommon in any city. It may raise other arguments, but the central fact that cannot be escaped is that, whoever or whatever is to blame, it is the children of my constituents who know that, if they go to a school in my constituency—with one exception their average educational attainment will be lower than elsewhere.

Now that the information is available, I doubt whether there is any point in looking to Avon to make rapid changes. Avon, in any case, is about to be abolished, but the sort of changes that Avon needs to make, in my view in the closure of surplus places, will come too slowly to save the next few years' school children. Although I shall be interested in the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister on the subject, I doubt whether the application of further public money in the short term will make any significant difference.

The Government have now been in power for 15 years. In that time, their policies have clearly made no significant impact on educational attainment within the schools in my constituency. I cannot expect the Minister to produce an answer tonight or in the short term, because the local education authority must be the prime mover. Nor do I accept that the Government can remove from themselves all responsibility for the fact that, as the knowledge of what is available, particularly for brighter children in state schools in my constituency, becomes more widespread, the sense of desperation among parents can only deepen. Is there any power, any initiative or scheme that my hon. Friend the Minister can hold out that will offer even a hope of improvement in the sorry picture that I have described?

11.20 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education (Mr. Eric Forth): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) for giving me the opportunity to reply to the very important points that he has made today. The debate illustrates well my hon. Friend's continuing and great concern, which he has expressed in many ways and over a long time, about the effectiveness of the provision of education in and around his constituency.

I welcome my hon. Friend's tribute for the new information provided by the publication of school performance data to parents at large, and particularly to parents of children in his schools. I immediately accept and acknowledge that the publication of the results have different effects on different people. My hon. Friend has illustrated that fact by saying that he believes that the information has given rise to many concerns among parents in his constituency. That can be an effect of the additional transparency provided by publishing and making widely available information about the effectiveness of schools.

The positive side is that it also gives parents an opportunity to understand better what is happening in schools and to raise questions for themselves and their children, and hopefully through that process, with governors and head teachers about what is happening in schools. We are still in the relatively early stages of that process, but it is one that holds out considerable hope for the future.

Today's debate has already turned the spotlight on the quality of education in my hon. Friend's constituency to such an extent that the head teacher of Filton high school, one of the schools mentioned by my hon. Friend, took the trouble to contact my office today because he wanted to point out that he believes that his school has recorded significant achievements this year. He pointed out that his school appears in the good schools guide and that its results have improved by 6 per cent. He said that 190 surplus places are to be removed at the school in a forthcoming reorganisation.

That point illustrates the value of a debate like this, and I hope that my hon. Friend will be grateful for that, and the extent to which at least one head teacher in my hon. Friend's constituency wanted to take the trouble to point out what he believes are significant improvements being made in his school. We should all be grateful for that.

My hon. Friend listed actual comparative performances and went into some detail about them. He emphasised what he saw as the lack of educational progress or improvement in his constituency. He analysed what he saw as the reasons for failure of state or county provided education. He first mentioned surplus places and I agree that that is an important issue. It is one on which the Department for Education and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools are placing increasing emphasis. We have argued for some time that, if an authority allows a surplus of school places to continue over a period, that means that education money is wasted and is not spent as it should be in schools to provide the most effective education for pupils.

Although I would gather from what the head teacher of Filton has told us that a rather belated start has made to overcome the problems in my hon. Friend's constituency, I suspect that there is some way to go. I hope that the local education authority will tackle the surplus places problem with vigour in order to release much-needed education money for use in schools and in classrooms, where it can be best deployed.

Ms Corston: If the Government are so concerned about surplus places in Avon, can the Minister explain why they saw fit to build a city technical college in Bristol?

Mr. Forth: The CTC was a great step in the direction of providing quality and diversity of education. It is a beacon of excellence. The more excellent it becomes, the more, regrettably, the differential between its performance and those of the schools around is highlighted. Rather than decry the achievements of the CTC, I hope that the other schools will see it as a source of inspiration.

My hon. Friend mentioned the alibi that is sometimes used by LEAs, not least, I suspect, his own, when they make a plea about not having enough money. That is an interesting argument, because, in 1993-94, Avon received £2,566 per secondary pupil, whereas next-door Gloucestershire received £2,541. The interesting fact is that Gloucestershire's GCSE A to C grade results were better than Avon's—46.3 per cent against 40.1 per cent. One can draw a number of conclusions from those figures, but the one that comes to my mind—those present who listen to education debates will be able to predict what I am about say—is that there is no proven connection between the amount of money available to schools or to authorities and their educational outcomes.

The plea from LEAs that they do not have enough money will not wash, because it can be demonstrated that many of the authorities which receive far more per pupil than others still perform badly in educational terms. That excuse in unacceptable. I hope that it is also unacceptable to parents. If they are told by their LEA that it cannot provide a decent education because it does not get enough money, those parents should reject that excuse outright. They should note that it can be demonstrated that authorities who receive relatively low amounts of money per pupil manage to educate those pupils extremely well.

I was disturbed by my hon. Friend's comment that, despite the fact that the Government had been in power for many years, he had not seen an acceptable increase in educational attainment in his constituency. It is important to note, however, that we now have a national curriculum, which has been settled and agreed, on which teachers can concentrate. A testing regime is beginning to be established.

I emphasise "beginning", because the key stage 2 test, the important test at the end of primary schooling, will not be introduced until next year. I hope that hon. Members present share my warm welcome of today's announcement about that by the National Union of Teachers. I hope that all those developments mean that we will now be able to establish a properly established regular testing regime, precisely so that we know the attainment of pupils of our schools and, moreover, know their needs in more detail than in the past. I hope that when that is combined with teacher assessment it will give us a firm base on which to do that.

Now that Ofsted, the independent inspectorate, is inspecting schools for the first time on a regular, objective basis and highlighting schools that fail their pupils by failing to provide an acceptable standard of education, we have the beginning of a series of measures in place—there are others—which will enable parents to have much more confidence in the education provided in their area. I say that because most of those measures are at a relatively early stage of development. Although the curriculum has been around in some form for a number of years, only now has it been settled in a form that will be acceptable to all schools. The testing regime will now be available only in its developed form from next year, and it will be some time before its effects are fully felt by all pupils in all schools.

The inspection regime has not yet had a full cycle in all schools, although early indications are that the act of inspection stimulates schools to improve their performance. Even more encouragingly, when schools that have been identified as failing have been given an opportunity to improve, they have responded dramatically and brought about remarkable improvements.

That combination of measures, to say nothing of the publication of results mentioned by my hon. Friend, can give us great confidence that we shall begin to see considerable improvements in schools' performance in future, particularly schools in my hon. Friend's constituency. It is my contention that, despite the fact that my hon. Friend and parents in his constituency feel that schools have let their pupils down, they should now begin

[Mr. Forth]

to feel confident that the combination of measures that I have described will bring about a steady improvement in educational performance, which will make everybody feel much more satisfied.

My hon. Friend has had to paint a gloomy picture of schools in his constituency for the House tonight. I hope that the combination of the trouble taken by the head teacher from Filton, the pressure from parents through governors on heads and teachers, which will be brought about by their greater knowledge of what is happening in schools, the ability to compare schools and the mechanisms that I have described will give my hon. Friend greater confidence in the future than he has been able to show in educational performance in the past.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes to Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Tuesday 20 December 1994

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Traffic Flow (Belfast)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

9.34 am

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I rise to speak in the Adjournment debate before we depart for the Christmas recess. I extend to you, Madam Speaker, the Clerks and others my wish that the joy and peace of Christmas will be yours at this season.

I have chosen to speak on the subject of traffic flow in Belfast and appreciate the opportunity to raise the subject. I begin on a positive note by recognising the tremendous work that has been done, particularly within the northern and eastern approaches to the city, with the advent of the cross-harbour rail and road bridges, which will help in many ways. I suspect, however, that until the approach roads are completed, bottlenecks will cause problems.

I pay tribute to the fact that, after a long campaign, we have managed to achieve some calming measures in one part of my constituency, Great Northern street, which had been used as a means of bypassing seven traffic lights. People could go right through the area even though it is densely populated and heavily used.

Some humour was apparent as I fought the campaign. I received a letter from the Department of the Environment assuring me that, according to a census of usage, the traffic flows were insufficient to require calming measures. I looked at the calendar and discovered that the census was taken on a Sunday. I told the Department that I was not surprised that there was not a great traffic flow on that day. I obtained my calming measures—whether because the Department had made a mistake in the date or because I would not going away, I shall leave for others to say. The residents certainly appreciate the measures.

In keeping with most cities, Belfast has seen an escalation in car traffic. In the United Kingdom overall there was an increase in traffic of 40 per cent. in the 1980s. That followed the rejection of rail transport. One has only to look at the imaginative designs for developing Belfast 30 years ago to see that they were doing away with the rails completely.

I remember, 40 years ago, when I was a young assistant minister in south Belfast, I bumped up the Lisburn road on my bicycle because there were tram tracks on the road, but the trams and the trolley buses have disappeared in the search for mobility. Most of our roads and streets are narrow and were not built for the tremendous growth in the number of cars, so traffic adds to congestion in the lungs of a city where a high percentage of people have bronchial and asthmatic problems.

Before developing my argument on traffic flow I want to say a word or two about parking problems. I have found it difficult to persuade the Department to act on this subject. For at least eight to 10 years, I have been trying to secure residents' parking facilities in Belfast, which does not have legislation similar to that in London. I recognise that such legislation would not solve every problem and that different sections of the community have their own agenda, but, acting on behalf of my constituents, I broached the subject and was told that it was being studied.

I discovered some years ago that three experimental projects were being undertaken. On making inquiries, I discovered that two of them were in south Belfast—Stranmillis road and Pakenham street. The third one was in east Belfast, but I could not for the life of me understand why there should be parking problems there. I knew that, with the advent of many catering establishments, the growth in student population and the revival of night life in Great Victoria street, there was a great demand for parking in Stranmillis road and Pakenham street, to the detriment of local residents.

When I investigated further, I discovered that there was no experimental project or pilot scheme; it was a desk-top demonstration. I do not know how a desk-top demonstration can illustrate parking problems, but I was assured that no pilot projects were being conducted. I was told that there was a difficulty in finding the time to enact legislation. I understand that the Department is currently considering legislation— I do not know whether it is running on AC or DC current, but over the years it has been on-off, on-off.

The people of Belfast are crying out for adequate parking facilities. The Department had ample opportunities to introduce the necessary legislation. Under the abominable Orders in Council system, which has plagued us for years, the Department managed to propose orders when it so chose. It has not verified that legislation is in the pipeline, so I press the Minister to re-examine the issue.

Some of the busiest roads in Belfast— indeed in the United Kingdom— are located in my constituency. I welcome the decision not to proceed with the Belvoir Forest Park road and the widening of Balmoral avenue—the latter with a new junction at the Malone and New Forge roads. The authority's short-sighted planning led to road development towards the Lagan Valley parkway in the face of advice and protests from the residents. It did not realise that it would block traffic flows if cars travelling from the country to the city had to turn right into New Forge lane, and it has subsequently started construction of a roundabout.

I welcome the halting of the Belvoir Forest Park road project and the widening of Balmoral avenue, but that decision may be only temporary. Will the Minister cast some light on that issue? Was the project halted for good planning reasons or did the Department not have the finance to continue with it, and therefore its construction is threatened in the future?

The Donegall road development has had tragic consequences for 25 or 30 years. Reasonable housing in the area was allowed to degenerate as a result of the halting of the development and the plans for the city hospital. When the planning authority was pressed on the matter, it demolished houses in several streets and began construction of the road. However, the rest of the Donegall

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

road is blighted by the Department's tendency to plan in the long term and to forget about the immediate impact of its plans on local residents. One has only to drive down Great Victoria street, Sandy Row and the Lower Grosvenor road to witness the Department's failure to complete its road planning schemes in the centre of Belfast.

Was the development of Belvoir Forest Park road and the widening of Balmoral avenue halted on good planning grounds or is it merely in remission for financial reasons? Is it a permanent decision or has the development merely been postponed?

I wish to plead the case of a constituent who resides at the corner of New Forge lane and Malone road. He has sought planning permission for years to construct a smaller house more suited to his needs. He is in financial difficulties due to the failure to proceed with a purchase scheme, and I do not believe that that is the proper way to treat a senior citizen.

Four of the busiest roads in Belfast are situated in Belfast, South. Lisburn road is lined with some very fine shops, but there are inadequate parking facilities. Some 40 years ago it was the fourth busiest road in the United Kingdom—even the construction of the M1 did not reduce significantly the flow of traffic on the road. I welcome the fact that private enterprise shopkeepers have developed and improved their shop frontages along the road, but shoppers have nowhere to park because the provision of adequate parking facilities was not considered when making long-term planning decisions. The Minister may be aware that approaches were made to his predecessors over the years to secure some co-operation on that subject.

Cregagh road is a very busy shopping thoroughfare. I believe that small shops are the spirit and the life-blood of any community, but traffic congestion has produced vehicle fumes, which are affecting citizens' quality of life.

I wish to discuss two areas where I believe that something can be done to ease the traffic flow problem. There is a problem with the development of Ormeau road and the area near the Upper Saintfield road. The traffic flow into Belfast is phenomenal and a development was planned for Forster Green at the junction of the Saintfield, Ormeau and Newtown Breda roads. Has that project been postponed permanently or has someone else been left to carry the can? It is necessary to develop that junction properly.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I must declare a personal interest in the matter as I have a small printing business that is situated beside the Forster Green junction, so I know exactly how chaotic the traffic is. The chaotic traffic conditions are mentioned every morning on Radio Ulster and the whole of Northern Ireland knows that it is the most difficult road in the Province.

The Minister prepared his tender documents for the road scheme, which was due to commence in spring 1992, but it was postponed when other, less important road schemes around Newry proceeded. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Minister owes it to the House to give a firm announcement about when the road scheme will commence? It is the busiest road junction in the whole of Northern Ireland.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I agree with my right hon. Friend on the issue, and I share his concern. He is aware that I have argued for a long time against money being spent to develop the road south of Newry while the roads on the other side of the frontier are not able to handle heavy traffic. We should not develop less important roads, which will only add to traffic congestion.

As a graduate of Trinity college, Dublin, I remember when I could travel from Dublin to Belfast in less than two hours. With modern traffic movements, that journey now takes two and a half to four hours. Why should we spend millions of pounds developing the road south of Newry when the needs are in Belfast and along the Larne line, where traffic is heavier and which is vital to the economy of the Province and the Republic of Ireland? Perhaps I should declare an interest as I live just off the Ormeau road.

The Donegall road was the road of my birth and, with the advent of the west link, which joins the motorways, I understood that the original plan was for a flyover at the Broadway roundabout. We did not get that and it was due not to objections from residents, as happened in an area of east Belfast, but to financial considerations. It is a nightmare for people coming off the west link or travelling on the Donegall road. The Department has the excuse that the Roden street crossing was closed for security reasons and that it is not pressing for it to be opened—but it is—which means that the residents of Roden street, which has developed as a quiet residential area and is mainly made up of older houses, will be subjected to the rattling caused by heavy vehicles heading down the street.

A flyover on the west link would ease the flow of traffic down the street and improve the quality of life for many people. When will that flyover be built to ease the flow of traffic? There was a similar problem at the Grosvenor road exit to the west link in west Belfast. I wonder whether the Department is trying to deal with the two problems together.

Has the Department given much consideration to immediate or long-term planning to deal with traffic flow? People love their cars. They love them so much that they would even take them to bed, if they could get them up the stairs. The average car driver will park where it suits him or her, without considering the impact on other people. As long as it is convenient for them, they will park anywhere, irrespective of the convenience of others.

Is the Department considering car sharing—what our American cousins call the car pool—or transit lanes, such as around Sydney in Australia? Is any thought being given to the provision of out-of-town free car parks? Those schemes would allow people to travel into town by sharing a car or by train—the latter should be better promoted, especially as the cross-harbour bridge line now comes into the Central station and the line from Lisburn has a number of excellent halts along the road.

I understand that a designated bus route is being considered for the Ormeau area, but how far has that been developed? Is the Department persuaded that it will resolve traffic pressures and flows? It might help the buses, but will it deal with the problem of traffic flow?

What thought is being given to rapid transport or modern tram systems? In "Parliamentary Brief" this month, Professor Peter Jones wrote:

> "A combination of technological and political ingenuity will also be needed to come up with workable schemes that are both viewed as equitable and as effective."

What are we doing to try to get those equitable and effective schemes? How are we bringing technological and political ingenuity together to improve the traffic flow in Belfast?

Other countries have introduced urban transport schemes for health and environmental reasons. I have alluded to the health and environmental problems and it is important that we use the instinct to protect health that is developing in many people, that we have effective prevention measures and that we create a city with a quality of living that will attract people back into it, rather than driving them out.

The Minister will be aware of the Manchester Metrolink and the Sheffield supertram light rail system. I understand that other cities are in the queue for funding—for example the west midlands and Croydon. What consideration has been given to Belfast? I encourage the Minister to give us leadership in Belfast. How far advanced are plans for developing the old Comber rail line as a light railway track into north Down, which would allow people the choice of travelling that way instead of facing the journey down the Newtownards road, which can be a nightmare at times?

Will the Minister consider the progress in Caen, Normandy? It is significant that 50 years ago the parachute battalion of the Royal Ulster Rifles relieved Caen. I wonder whether we can learn something from that city that will now relieve Belfast. It is fascinating that Bombardier—a firm with significant interests in Belfast industry and manufacturing—is involved in the scheme there. Might some of our people examine that scheme, as I believe it to be innovative? There will be a single rail on the road for guidance and the system will be electric, which would help with the use of our electricity supply, which is improving day by day, and might help to reduce overall costs for industry. I trust that the price will come down, rather than increase, if more people use electricity. The trams in Caen will also have a diesel generator so that they can convert to a mobile vehicle on wheels, which would be an added advantage. Unlike the old fixed-track systems, which demanded expensive depots at the ends of the line and other places, the Caen system is imaginative and innovative. A single, fixed tram track with a diesel engine might be a scheme to consider in Belfast.

I appreciate the opportunity to raise these issues. I trust that the Minister will give us some light at Christmas time. I know that the roads are congested with holidaymakers and Santa Claus doing his shopping, but I hope that the Minister might be able at least to give us a foretaste of a Christmas present that will ease the traffic flow in Belfast.

9.57 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Malcolm Moss): May I reciprocate his warm messages for the Christmas festive season and congratulate the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) on his success in coming first in the ballot? I thank him for that as it means that I can get over to the Province to do some work later today. I also congratulate him on his choice of subject and commend him for the great detail that he has given. I will attempt to answer most, if not all, of his queries. I promise to write to him about those that I fail to cover in the time available.

Traffic flow in Belfast is an important subject. Approximately 19,000 vehicles enter Belfast city centre in the morning peak hour and, while congestion is not as severe as in a number of United Kingdom cities, we realise that it will become a problem if present traffic growth trends continue. With this in mind, we are looking at ways of making the best possible use of the capacity of the existing road network through improved traffic management techniques and public transport systems.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South began his speech by taking us back to his youth, when the tram system in Belfast city centre was an important ingredient of the transport network. Public transport, of course, still plays an important part in the movement of people in the Greater Belfast area. For example, more than 26 million passenger journeys were made on Citybus alone in 1993-1994—an increase of more than 5 per cent. on the previous year.

Another indication of the increasing attraction of bus travel for commuters is the City Express service, which was introduced in 1991 between Newtownabbey and Belfast city centre. The service regularly carries more than 10,000 passengers a week, 16 per cent. of whom are former car users and 20 per cent. of whom are new to bus travel.

There is clearly a market among commuters for fast and reliable alternatives to the private car. I believe that our public transport operators are responding to the demand for improved services from the travelling public. Undoubtedly there is scope for Ulsterbus, Citybus and Northern Ireland Railways steadily to increase their share of the market—particularly the commuter market. I would welcome that shift towards public transport as one way of helping to ease congestion on the city's roads.

The Government's commitment to the development of bus and rail services in the Belfast area can be seen in the number of major investments that we are making to the city's transport infrastructure. The new Dargan rail bridge, which opened on 28 November, links the Larne line with the rest of the rail network for the first time and represents an investment of some £30 million. More than 80 trains a day are now crossing the viaduct bringing passengers to and from Central station, and NIR is evaluating the economic case for building a station at Donegall quay, which would give direct access to the north of the city and the Laganside area.

In autumn 1995, facilities for passengers will be further enhanced by the reopening of the railway station at Great Victoria street. It will cost about £6 million and will provide an integrated travel centre with the Europa bus centre and will give passengers direct access to the business and social heart of the city.

At the opening of the Dargan bridge, I was delighted to be able to announce my support for the upgrading and reopening of the stretch of line between Antrim and Bleach Green on the Londonderry line. The new bridge and the reopening of this more direct route in 1997 will mean a 20-minute time saving for passengers between Antrim and Belfast and will allow NIR to assess the demand for new stations within the commuter belt along that corridor.

As well as introducing innovative services to cater for customer demand, the bus companies have a significant programme of capital investment to ensure that vehicles and facilities are among the best in the United Kingdom. I have already mentioned the Europa bus centre, which

[Mr. Malcolm Moss]

was opened in 1991 and which won a charter mark for the high quality of its service provision to customers. A new bus station costing more than £2.5 million is currently under construction at Donegall quay, and is scheduled to open in the spring of 1996. The new station will replace the existing station in Oxford street and will offer greatly enhanced facilities for travellers.

Other measures are also under consideration for improving the city's bus services. The Department of the Environment, the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Ulsterbus and Citybus are all represented on a working group examining bus priority opportunities for Belfast.

Rev. Martin Smyth: A former deputy lord mayor of Belfast said that it was the only capital city in the world which had its city hall in the middle of a bus depot. Will the Minister assure us that, in developing bus services in Belfast, consideration will be given to preventing a lot of buses from parking around the city hall?

Mr. Moss: I promise the hon. Gentleman that I shall look into that as and when the working group reports.

The group has been responsible for the introduction of a "with flow" bus lane on the Ormeau road and a system of selective vehicle detection on the Upper Newtownards road, which gives greater priority to buses by allowing them more "green light" time at traffic signals.

The bus companies recently presented a consultants' report to the Department on a range of bus priority measures that could be implemented throughout Belfast, and officials are currently giving the proposals careful consideration.

The biggest road scheme currently under way in Belfast is the cross-harbour road bridge, and I thank the hon. Member for Belfast, South for his warm welcome for that major capital scheme. When the bridge is opened to traffic in mid-January, it will, along with Westlink, form a new link in the strategic highway network, which will contribute to a reduction in traffic levels in the city centre.

To help to control and facilitate traffic movement in the Belfast area, a new system of traffic management will be gradually introduced, the aim being to discourage through-traffic from entering the central area while still allowing easy access for essential vehicles and buses. The most important feature will be the proposed new traffic circulation system, which will require completion of the inner ring road. Priority will be given to schemes to complete the section between Cromac street and Grosvenor road, as these are designed specifically to remove traffic around the city hall-Donegall square area of the city centre.

In the longer term, improved road capacity along Cromac street and Durham street may also be required and this will be considered as and when a need is identified. In the meantime, the Department intends to protect the lines of the new improvement schemes.

The approaches to the city centre are important in establishing a positive image of Belfast, and the Department is carrying out wide-ranging reviews of the traffic situation on the southern and eastern approach roads. The reviews of the southern approaches strategy will consider many options, ranging from the provision of new road links to radical new public transport proposals.

It was suggested that the road to Belvoir park has been cancelled or stopped. I am afraid that that is press speculation at this juncture, but I hope to publish a report in the new year when all will be revealed.

A major cause of traffic congestion in the southern approaches is the Forster Green junction, and a scheme to improve that important intersection will, it is hoped, commence early next year. This is a £2 million improvement scheme, which was previously in the programme for 1996-1997. We expect to bring the programme forward to 1995 as an infrastructure contribution from an adjacent commercial development, but its exact timing is in the hands of a developer.

Although it is not included in the southern approaches strategy, the need to improve traffic conditions on the M1 motorway between Dunmurry and Belfast is also being considered in conjunction with schemes to provide grade separated junctions at Broadway and on the Westlink at Grosvenor road. It goes without saying that schemes on that scale will be expensive and, given the many constraints on public expenditure, could not be constructed in the foreseeable future. With that in mind, the Department is exploring the possibility of attracting private finance for constructing these schemes. If the approach is successful, it may enable us to commence the schemes sooner.

Roads Services has had preliminary discussions with the Construction Employers Federation about the potential generally for private finance in road schemes. Discussions have also taken place with long-established construction firms that are particularly interested in the Westlink.

The eastern approaches strategy will concentrate on schemes which will link in with the Belfast cross-harbour road bridge, and includes proposals such as the Hollywood Arches bypass, the Connsbank link and a new flyover junction at the Harbour Estate access, which will remove extraneous heavy traffic from the Dee street-Mersey street residential area. A scheme to widen the Sydenham bypass is also proposed and those schemes are all included in the Department's six to 15-year major works programme.

Rev. Martin Smyth: The Minister mentioned the upgrading of Cromac street, Durham street and Grosvenor road. How much demolition will be required to clear the way for that upgrading and what impact will it have on the city?

Mr. Moss: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an immediate answer, but I shall write and give some indication of what it will entail.

Mr. John D. Taylor: May I return to the Minister's response on the necessity to improve the Supermac junction at Forster Green hospital? He was a little disingenuous when he said that it was previously in the programme for 1996-97. It was previously in the programme for 1992 and the Government put it back. He now says that it may go ahead in 1995, conditional on some project by a private developer. Will he assure us today that, whether or not that private developer proceeds, the Government recognise that the Forster Green junction scheme has top priority in Northern Ireland and that they will proceed with the scheme irrespective of involvement by a private developer?

Mr. Moss: I cannot give that road junction top priority in the Province. The hon. Gentleman will realise that I have plenty of other priorities.

Mr. Taylor: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Moss: No, let me finish. The scheme was in the rolling programme for 1996-97 and we hope to bring it forward with private capital. That development is going on. If it does not come to fruition, it will still be in the programme for 1996-97.

Mr. Taylor *rose*—

Mr. Moss: I should like to continue because the hon. Member for Belfast, South made a number of specific points that I want to answer.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South asked me about the Balmoral avenue widening scheme. The scheme was permanently dropped from the Belfast urban area plan on planning grounds. A public inquiry will be held next February into the accident remedial scheme at the junction of Balmoral avenue with Malone road, where some 25 personal injury accidents have occurred in the past three years. I can offer no commitment in view of that public inquiry.

Car parking is another important issue that is vital to the functioning of the business and commercial life of the city centre. The Department intends to concentrate its future efforts on providing additional short-term parking, but the number of additional spaces provided will depend on the level of private sector interest, as the budget for car parking is limited. In the current financial year, the only new car parking facilities being provided by the Department are in the Lisburn road area, where existing car parking lay-bys at Maryville street and Ethel street are being extended and a new 40-space car park is being constructed at Ferndale street.

I am aware that the Lisburn Road Association of Retailers and Business Services and the hon. Member for Belfast, South have lobbied consistently for the provision of additional car parking spaces in Lisburn road and I hope that my announcement today will go some way towards alleviating the problems in that area.

Rev. Martin Smyth: If my memory is correct, the scheme will simply replace lost car parking spaces: spaces will not increase. Some 50,000 cars go through the Supermac junction every day. It is the busiest in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Moss: We accept that it would merit providing some additional car parking on Lisburn road but unfortunately not on the scale that the Lisburn road association wanted.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South also asked about residents' parking. As he pointed out, all-day car parking in residential areas on the edge of the city centre is a constant source of annoyance to residents and downgrades their environment. With that in mind, the Department is introducing the necessary legislation, which will allow for the implementation of a residents-only parking scheme. We recognise that the introduction of residents-only schemes in one location may simply move the problem to adjoining areas, so a number of pilot projects may be required. Full consultation will be carried out with all local residents before any schemes are made permanent.

The hon. Member for Belfast, South referred to the Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order, which we are preparing for the legislative programme in the current Session. The timetable envisages a draft Order in Council being published before the end of the year, with the order being made by late 1995.

The Department is aware of the growth of traffic in Belfast and the fact that we must keep it under control. Contrary to public opinion, the construction of new roads is not a magic panacea that will solve all our problems. In the circumstances, a more wide-ranging approach is required to reduce potential traffic growth to a tolerable level. That does not mean that all road building will stop, but we must think twice and explore other alternatives before deciding whether a road scheme is required.

In the current major works programme, almost £12 million has been allocated to major roads schemes in the Greater Belfast area, excluding expenditure on schemes directly related to the cross-harbour bridge—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The next subject for debate is Gibraltar.

Gibraltar

10.15 am

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I have been lucky enough to win two draws in the ballot for Adjournment debates within five days. That is fairly good going and I pray that my luck holds until Saturday, when the next draw for the national lottery takes place.

I shall use this occasion to raise the topical and important subject of Gibraltar. I do so first as chairman of the British-Gibraltar all-party group, but I also declare an interest because one of my daughters is married to a Gibraltarian who runs an extremely successful business on the Rock.

I am pleased to see the Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), on the Front Bench to reply to this debate. I appreciate the fact that the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis), who would normally reply, is engaged in talks with the Spanish Foreign Minister, Mr. Javier Solana, at this very moment. I appreciate my right hon. Friend's coming here instead.

This matter is topical not only because of the talks taking place in the Foreign Office this morning but because, once again, Spain is laying siege to Gibraltar. Throughout its history, Gibraltar has resisted some 19 sieges and I am sure that it will have no difficulty resisting this one, provided that it gets the help that it deserves from the United Kingdom. Gibraltar has an important place in the history of this country. As BBC radio reminded us at the weekend, it is one of the last remaining red splodges on the map of the world and, as such, it is important that we stand by it. Although it now has little strategic value in terms of defence, we must not forget the role that it played in two world wars and as a back-up staging post in the Falklands war. I do not know where we would have been without it during the Falklands war or those two world wars, and we owe a debt of gratitude to the people of Gibraltar which will never be forgotten by this country. Britain must honour that.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): People in Northern Ireland have an empathy with the people of Gibraltar. The hon. Gentleman will know that Gibraltarians stayed in Northern Ireland during the war. In Gibraltar today, among other things, there is the Ballymena block. So we trust that the Foreign Office will represent Gibraltarians as British people rather than Spanish mandarins.

Mr. Colvin: That was a useful intervention and I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman's part of the United Kingdom stands as solidly, if not more solidly, with the people of Gibraltar as those of us on this side of the Irish sea.

Although Gibraltar's strategic value in terms of defence may have diminished, Gibraltar still has an important place in our political lives. It is essential that we continue to sustain and support it, particularly in its present difficulties with Spain. It is money which the United Kingdom taxpayer must be prepared to pay.

The importance of Gibraltar to Britain may be diminishing, but that does not mean to say that there is not still a strong body of opinion in this House and in the upper House that supports the Rock, and if things ever went wrong on Gibraltar, an awful lot of flak would fly. I have been encouraged, too, by the media response to Gibraltar's current difficulties, and it is interesting to note how many people have written to me, knowing my position and my interest in Gibraltar.

The frontier delays result from the Spanish Government's increasing harassment of people, during the past five weeks, at the land border. They have introduced a secondary control immediately after the usual passport and customs control. There have been delays of up to eight hours, into and out of Gibraltar, for those in vehicles, and delays of four hours for people travelling on foot. About 2,000 Spanish people walk in and out of Gibraltar every day.

This second control, some 10 m past the frontier line, has also resulted in drivers being fined for not carrying such items as surgical gloves in their first aid kits or a spare set of spectacles for those who wear glasses. Women have been strip-searched.

These measures have been justified by the Spanish authorities as necessary to curtail smuggling of cigarettes and drugs, and to prevent money laundering. Smuggling certainly takes place, as it does at any frontier. A packet of 20 cigarettes costs 60p in Gibraltar, but it sells in Spain for £1.20, so it is hardly surprising that smuggling goes on. It works out that 1.5 billion cigarettes are brought in and sold, which makes 50,000 per head of the Gibraltar population. There must be awful lot of smoke in Gibraltar—or clearly the cigarettes are going somewhere else.

I suspect that Spain's complaint relates to the smuggling of tobacco from Gibraltar and to the trafficking in cannabis from Morocco: both by sea. It is illogical that drugs should be transported from Morocco to Gibraltar and thence to Spain; nor is there any evidence that they are. If anything, it has been the infiltration of drugs such as cocaine and heroin from Spain to Gibraltar since the frontier opened in 1985 which gives rise to real concern.

The fact is that Spain is using this camouflage to bring political and economic pressure to bear on Gibraltar, just at a time when it is vulnerable because of the rundown of the Ministry of Defence's commitment to the Rock. There is certainly a case for tougher action against smuggling. Many of us have seen the 50 or 60 high-speed launches in Gibraltar harbour. They are painted dark grey and have no windscreens, so as to have a low profile on radar, and they are very powerful. Already regulations have been introduced to reduce the size and power of these launches, but more action is needed. The Government must take steps immediately to ensure that the launches are banned or have their power restricted even more. I see no reason why that cannot be done. If it is not, Spain will be given good cause for taking the type of action that it is. The British Government have a duty to remove that cause.

I should also like to draw the attention of the House to an article that appeared in *The Independent* on 14 December, suggesting that there was some sort of dirty tricks department at work in the Foreign Office, trying to undermine Gibraltar's position in advance of the talks with Spain. Will the Minister categorically deny that? Since the rundown of the MOD's establishment in Gibraltar—it used to constitute about two thirds of the local economy—the people there have managed to establish a growing financial services sector, regulated by a strong financial services commission which is headed by Financial Commissioner Mr. John Milner. He was appointed by the Secretary of State after consultation with the Governor of the Bank of England.

I am told that the Gibraltar Government remain fully committed to ensuring that the good name of their financial centre is maintained. It was brave to set up the centre when the world was in recession. The Gibraltarians need all the help they can to get it going properly.

If the Spanish authorities have any evidence that Gibraltar companies are being used for illicit purposes, they should provide details directly to the Gibraltar Government or to the British Government so that the necessary action can be taken. The measures being adopted at the land frontier may be justified by Spain only as a means of strangling the financial services centre at birth. The checks have been indiscriminate—affecting old people and children as well as other travellers. They are wholly indefensible, and I should like to know what HMG are going to do about the situation. What powers can be used to prevent the rights of British and European citizens—to freedom of movement under the European Union treaties—from being trampled on?

Self-determination is a matter that has been raised by the Chief Minister of Gibraltar many times in speeches to various audiences. I appreciate that it is not the same as total independence, but it could go some way towards it. The United Kingdom ratified the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights in 1976. Article 1 reads:

> "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

I would argue that when the United Kingdom ratified that covenant, she extended a list of dependent territories which included Gibraltar. At no stage did Britain say that she had any reservations about the applicability of this article to the people of Gibraltar.

If the United Kingdom thought in 1968 that the treaty of Utrecht of 1713 prevented the application of the right of self-determination to the people of Gibraltar, she would have felt the need to enter a declaration to that effect at the time of ratification. It would be a good idea if the Minister clarified the position, particularly in respect of the treaty of Utrecht and Gibraltar's constitution, which states that Gibraltar will remain British while the people of Gibraltar wish it to, but that if Britain does not want to hold on to Gibraltar it reverts to Spain.

The full benefits of European Union membership do not accrue to Gibraltar as yet; it is still outside the external frontier. Both we and the people of Gibraltar feel that it is high time Spain agreed to ratify the external frontier convention. It does not do so, because that means acknowledging the Rock's sovereignty—and that Spain will not do. Of course, if Gibraltar were within the external frontier, the problems of smuggling might not be so acute, because of the ensuing moves towards tax and duty harmonisation. Moreover, the difficulties with the airport might be overcome, and Gibraltar might begin to benefit from the advantages that other European countries enjoy via the liberalisation of air services.

Bringing Gibraltar within the external frontier would also mean that it could benefit from other forms of direct aid from the EU—the social fund, for instance. As time goes by, the European Union will, I think, replace Britain as Gibraltar's principal economic supporter. Thus, the sooner the latter is inside the external frontier, the better.

There have been moves towards greater co-operation. The Brussels agreement of 1984 represented a step forward in terms of Britain's relations with Spain over the question of Gibraltar. It was intended to help Spain and the United Kingdom to sort out their differences on Gibraltar and to prevent further difficulties from arising. Those talks take place annually between Foreign Ministers.

Gibraltar is allowed to have a representative in the British party at those talks, but has so far resisted the invitation to join. That is a pity. A representative should be there, if only in a listening capacity. However, it would be far better if, in his discussions with the Spanish Foreign Minister this morning, our Foreign Secretary could persuade him that Gibraltar should have a separate place at the talks under the Brussels agreement, so that its representatives could argue their points of view themselves and have equal status with Britain and with Spain. After all, the future of Gibraltar will be discussed in those talks and I think that the residents of Gibraltar should be entitled to have their own say.

The condition of the economy in Gibraltar is crucial. Ten years ago, Gibraltar was probably two-thirds dependent on the Ministry of Defence for its sustenance. That has now dropped to about 9 per cent. and by the end of the decade, it will have decreased to only 3 per cent. That makes Gibraltar much more vulnerable to any action that Spain may take on the frontier, and there is no doubt that the financial services centre, which was a brave attempt to diversify, came into being at a bad time.

The economy of Gibraltar affects people beyond the frontier. I have referred to the 2,000 people who come into Gibraltar each day, most of them to work. The area of the Campo, La Linea and the whole region of Andalucia is at present run down. The people who live there regard themselves as poor relations of Madrid and I think that they do not receive the economic assistance from Madrid that they should.

The Chief Minister, Mr. Joe Bassano, was brave to cross the frontier, the day after he was elected as Chief Minister, years ago, shaking hands with the mayor of La Linea and saying, "We are in this together. We shall help you and you help us. Let us be good neighbours." If that attitude could prevail in Madrid and in London, we could make progress on Gibraltar.

There is an opportunity for Gibraltar to provide a locomotive in that part of Europe—a locomotive that could help bring the rest of a rather depressed area into a better economic state and improve the lot of everyone.

If the airport agreement of 1987 were implemented, it would help. The problem is that the airport agreement was bilateral between Spain and the United Kingdom; Gibraltar was not party to it. If the financial centre is to work, it is very important that Gibraltar has a properly operating airport. At the moment Gibraltar is reluctant to implement the agreement simply because it does not trust Spain. The lack of trust must be overcome. The airport is on so-called "no man's land", which, at the time of the signing of the treaty of Utrecht, was a mosquito-infested bog which no one thought important. Now it is part of Gibraltar's lifeline. The matter of the airport agreement must be resolved.

[Mr. Colvin]

What is the way forward? The House should send a message to the Spanish Foreign Minister, Mr. Javier Solana, to put the question of the sovereignty of Gibraltar on the back burner for at least a decade and use those 10 years to build trust between Spain and the Gibraltar people. He should extend the hand of friendship rather than try to put a stranglehold on Gibraltar's economic future.

We already have excellent relations between the United Kingdom and Spain, which can be built on to good effect as regards Gibraltar. Spain must go out now and win the hearts of the Gibraltar people, especially the younger generation. If one held a referendum today on Gibraltar's sovereignty, similar to the one that was held in 1967, when 12,000 people voted in favour of staying British, and only 44—I never quite know what happened to those 44 people—voted to join Spain, one might receive a different answer. If only Spain could improve its relations with Gibraltar so that the two became better neighbours, there would be a good chance that another referendum might give a different answer.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Does the hon. Gentleman notice an inconsistency in Spain's approach? Today a very important meeting of the Fisheries Council of the European Union takes place in Brussels, and Spain is arguing for the right of access to the Irish box and other waters, on the basis that it does not want to be treated as a second-class member state of the European Union—it wants full rights. Should it not equally refer to Gibraltar as part of the European Union and extend to it the same full rights?

Mr. Colvin: That is a good point. There is a bargaining position here. I do not know what will be on the agenda this morning in the talks between the Foreign Secretary and the Spanish Foreign Minister, but I dare say that fishing rights and the Irish box will be mentioned as well as Gibraltar. There is room to bargain, but I do not think that this is a bargaining problem. Gibraltar should be fully in the European Union; if it were, many of those difficulties would be overcome.

Changes have occurred since the running down of the Ministry of Defence establishment in Gibraltar. At that time there was the presence of many thousands of soldiers, sailors, dockyard workers and many members serving in the Royal Air Force. Much of the property in Gibraltar was owned by the MOD. There was physical contact with the people of Gibraltar and there was therefore a stronger relationship between Britain and Gibraltar, secured in a sense by the two Governments. Since the withdrawal from Gibraltar, we have witnessed the beginnings of a break between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom in governmental terms, and it is important that Her Majesty's Government try to mend the break that has occurred.

A solution can be found only if Britain and Gibraltar approach the problem together in agreement. In the meantime, I should like my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, in replying to the debate, to confirm that the policy of sustaining and supporting Gibraltar in its present difficulties will continue.

10.37 am

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on his repeated good fortune in winning the ballot for Adjournment debates, and wish him well in the national lottery on Saturday. I also congratulate him on mentioning a subject that is of enormous importance and great interest to the House, and about which he speaks with great knowledge and considerable vision.

The timing of the debate, as my hon. Friend said, is opportune because my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is at this minute meeting his Spanish counterpart, Mr. Solana, for talks about Gibraltar under the Brussels process, and I shall say more about that in a moment.

It is by his own choice that the Chief Minister of Gibraltar is not present at the talks. He is in no sense barred from them and is kept closely informed of developments.

I shall first discuss the subject that my hon. Friend mentioned of the intrusive additional frontier controls introduced by the Spaniards at the border at the end of October. They are unacceptable. Every country has the right to reasonable checks at a frontier, but they must be proportionate; those imposed by Spain were not. They led to unacceptable delays of up to nine hours for vehicles crossing the border and two to three hours for those crossing on foot. As the House will be aware, we have made repeated strong protests to the Spanish Government in the last few weeks. I understand that those measures are not currently in operation, but we are watching the situation closely. There must be no question of their being reimposed. We should not forget either the lesser but still severe checks that have been in operation for many years and which Spain justifies on the ground that Gibraltar is not a member of the common customs tariff.

It is not enough to return to the delays that were the norm before. Our partnership in Europe requires that Spain goes further. We have suggested that the way forward is the use of red and green channels or random checks. It is true that Gibraltar is outside the common customs tariff by virtue of her omission from Council regulation 2154/1984 which defines customs territory and which has been the justification for the checks at the border. Technically, Spain is within its rights in carrying them out, but, as I say, the present level of checks is a disgrace and it is important that they cease permanently.

Mr. Colvin: I am glad to hear what my right hon. Friend says, but will he acknowledge that there is an agreement between Her Majesty's Government and Spain to chase drug runners which has been relatively successful? The police in Gibraltar have proved extremely efficient in chasing smugglers, too, but there may be a weakness in the Customs and Excise. That is one branch of the Gibraltar Government which could well be strengthened. But the House should not believe for a moment that not enough is being done, in co-operation between the United Kingdom, Gibraltar and Spain, to chase drug traffickers.

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising an important point. I shall come to smuggling in a moment.

First, I reaffirm the Government's commitment to the people of Gibraltar, most recently made in the House by my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. We shall never allow the people of Gibraltar to pass under the sovereignty of another state against their freely and democratically expressed wishes. That is set out in the preamble to the Gibraltar constitution and it is a pledge which I reiterate to the House today.

My hon. Friend mentioned the recent speculation in the British press about dirty tricks. I can give him every assurance that there is no question of the United Kingdom being involved in dirty tricks of any sort to undermine the Gibraltar Government. That could not possibly benefit anybody. Speculation about that is totally unfounded and unhelpful. In that context, the word "rubbish" has appeared in at least one of today's papers and that sums up the matter fairly accurately.

The Brussels process was initiated in 1984 to facilitate avenues of practical co-operation between Gibraltar and Spain. Its provisions include the establishment of the free movement of persons, vehicles and goods, provisions which have been met by Spain more in the breach than the observance. That is yet another reason why the question of checks and other harassment from the Spanish side is so intolerable. None the less, it is an important and useful vehicle for discussion on the way ahead in Gibraltar. There is plenty of unrealised scope for practical cross-border co-operation which could benefit both economies. I should like us to have more of that and less megaphone diplomacy—or, should I say, lack of diplomacy—which has been the hallmark of many of the public pronouncements emanating from the Spanish side of the border in recent weeks.

We would welcome participation by the Government of Gibraltar in the Brussels process discussions. Their voice should be heard and I regret that the Chief Minister chooses not to attend the sessions at which, as I said earlier, he would be welcome. The Governor is currently attending the discussions instead. Talks under the Brussels process also provide for discussions on sovereignty, but that is against the background of our commitment to the people of Gibraltar to which I have just referred.

My hon. Friend mentioned the airport agreement. Gibraltar is concerned that the implementation of the 1987 airport agreement has implications for sovereignty. Those concerns are unfounded, but we have committed ourselves not to impose the agreement on it and officials are continuing to work towards a solution which is acceptable to all parties.

Mr. Colvin: The other means of communication out of Gibraltar is by sea and at the moment the only thing that stands in the way of the ferry service between Gibraltar and Algeciras is Spain's reluctance to permit it. I hope that that is another matter that will be on the agenda at this morning's talks between the Foreign Secretary and the Spanish Foreign Minister.

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend raises an important matter. If the ferry is not a subject on the agenda this morning, it soon will be.

My hon. Friend also referred to self-determination. We in the House are aware of the keen debate that is taking place in Gibraltar on self-determination. The right of self-determination has, as my hon. Friend said, to take account of the treaty of Utrecht, under which independence is not an option without Spanish consent. Any changes to Gibraltar's future status will have to be acceptable to all parties and we do not consider that, in adhering to article 10 of the treaty of Utrecht, which accords sovereignty to the United Kingdom, we are in breach of the United Nations charter.

My hon. Friend referred to drugs and smuggling. One of the allegations that Spain has produced to support its activities at the border has been the smuggling of drugs. I make it clear that we in the Government and in the House detest drug smuggling and the Government are committed to the fight against it. The Government of Gibraltar have repeatedly said that that is their position, too. The Gibraltar Government are currently implementing into their legislation the important 1988 United Nations drug convention.

The Royal Gibraltar police, a small but determined force, have been most effective in seizing quantities of illegal substances. In the past year alone, they have seized nearly 2 tonnes of drugs and made some 500 arrests. That, by any standards, is an impressive total which puts paid to spurious claims by the Spaniards of inactivity.

Her Majesty's Government actively support the Government of Gibraltar in the fight against drugs with expert advice and specialist equipment, including fast launches. There is good co-operation between Gibraltar and its Spanish counterparts at local level and successful joint operations have been mounted. We are keen that that should continue and not be hampered by political interference.

There is more that the Gibraltar Government could do. Too many fast launches are still not caught by existing legislation. Other controls could be imposed. I would like to see action on that front, but it is up to the Spaniards, too, to ensure that the climate is right to enable new steps to be taken.

On tobacco smuggling, which my hon. Friend raised—it is another stick that Spain uses to beat Gibraltar—I should make it clear that Her Majesty's Government do not condone it any more than any other sort of smuggling. The appropriate legislation is, of course, not within Her Majesty's Government's area of responsibility, but we are in close contact with the Government of Gibraltar, to whom we have repeatedly and forcefully represented our concerns, about appropriate measures.

Mr. Colvin: This is a rather important point, because the export of tobacco from Gibraltar at present—perhaps through illegal smuggling—is probably worth about £15 million to its economy. Since the rundown of the Ministry of Defence commitment, other economic activities had to be found. It has been suggested—certainly in the press—that Britain is playing Nelson and turning a blind eye to the smuggling of tobacco, because Britain understands that, were it not for the value to the Gibraltar economy of tobacco, Britain would have to find money elsewhere to support the economy. Will my right hon. Friend comment on whether that is true or false?

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising those untrue allegations. Of course, Great Britain is certainly not turning a Nelsonian blind eye.

As my hon. Friend says—with his knowledge about it—Gibraltar's economy is a delicately balanced instrument, and the serious problems resulting from the frontier queues are not to be underestimated. We are also conscious of the potential implications of the drawdown

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of the Gibraltar garrison. It is a direct result of the political and strategic changes that have taken place in Europe. Her Majesty's Government are, as the House knows, subject to economic pressures and the need to use their resources to best effect. The changing world affects us all and we must adjust to take account of those changes.

The Ministry of Defence is conscious of Gibraltar's particular problems and is providing specially tailored training courses for those affected. It is also setting up a special service to assist staff to find alternative employment. The Chief Minister has expressed his understanding and gratitude to the Ministry of Defence for its imaginative and sensitive approach.

As times change, so we need to look at new ideas. In answer to the Chief Minister's special plea for assistance to Gibraltar in that context, a joint economic forum was established earlier this year to draw together all possible sources of advice and assistance to Gibraltar. It has met three times so far, most recently on 12 December. It is of prime importance that Gibraltarians use the opportunity to introduce new ideas. We will do our part.

One idea that Gibraltar is taking forward is to establish itself as an offshore financial services centre. A financial services commissioner, Mr. John Milner, has been recruited, as my hon. Friend mentioned. He started work in August and is tasked with building up Gibraltar as a financial centre and to ensure that regulatory controls are carried out to the highest UK standards. We have asked the Spanish authorities to substantiate their allegations about Gibraltar as a money-laundering centre and to provide examples where co-operation has been refused. To date we have received nothing. Money laundering is, of course, a criminal offence and neither Her Majesty's Government nor the Government of Gibraltar condone it. The European Community money laundering directive will shortly be in force in Gibraltar and the financial services commission, under Mr. Milner, will deal effectively with any attempts to evade the law.

The way ahead should lie in building up the economy, not handouts. On Gibraltar's development aid programme, the Chief Minister himself told us in 1988 that he wished Gibraltar to be able to stand on its own feet. We applaud that and believe that Gibraltar's economy may, despite its serious difficulties, be resilient enough to bounce back.

My hon. Friend mentioned the European Union. Gibraltar is, of course, part of the European Union by virtue of British membership. At the time of British accession, Her Majesty's Government negotiated for Gibraltar a special status within the Union, which relieves Gibraltar of many burdensome aspects—for example, it is not part of the common agricultural policy, or the common customs territory, nor does it have to levy VAT. It is therefore not a contributor to Community resources.

Gibraltar's position within the Union gives it access to the single market in services—crucial to its aspiration to develop as a financial services centre within the Community. We have also negotiated for Gibraltar an impressive package of EU structural funds. Between 1994-96 Gibraltar is due to receive some £8 million. That funding is well above the UK average, which takes careful account of the territory's distinct needs and problems. That is a mark of our commitment to securing for Gibraltar the maximum possible benefits from its position within the European Union.

In that spirit of shared mutual interest, we have discussed with the Gibraltar Government the backlog of directives awaiting implementation in the territory. In recent months, we have identified a package of specific measures—primarily EC directives—that require implementation in Gibraltar. Implementation of those measures would amount to a major step forward for Gibraltar in addressing its backlog. That is essential, and turning a blind eye to legally enforceable obligations cannot be an option.

Many of the directives are important for reasons of good government and sound administration. They concern regulatory standards in Gibraltar's financial services centre, open tendering of Government contracts and the curbing of money laundering. Others are important because of the protection that needs to be extended to Gibraltarians, for example, against dangerous working practices, environmental pollution and so on. Gibraltarians should have that protection just like all other European Union citizens.

Mr. Michael Jopling (Westmorland and Lonsdale): Does my right hon. Friend agree that many Members of the House have been disturbed about reports in the Sunday press two days ago that the very matters that he is talking about—European Union regulations—have not been implemented? It is very difficult to understand why they have not been. Will he give an assurance that the Government will do everything possible to ensure that the Government of Gibraltar will implement all those regulations at once so that they can appear to be—and be—squeaky clean in the eyes of the world in terms of smuggling, drug running and money laundering?

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend is, of course, absolutely right. These are not a selection of tiresome, meddling, interfering demands; they are international obligations and include very important measures, and Gibraltar and Gibraltarians will benefit from their implementation.

These are difficult times for Gibraltar, both politically and economically. We will do our bit to secure Gibraltar's future, and will do so gladly. But the impetus for much of what is needed must come from Gibraltar itself. The Government of Gibraltar must ensure that they have the legislative framework in place and the infrastructure support that they need if they are to make the most of the opportunities.

The future must also lie in the development of a sensible, unpolemical and practical working relationship with Gibraltar's northern neighbour, Spain. We believe that to be crucial. Let us examine co-operation and the benefits that could flow to both sides of the border from it. Let me assure the House that we shall do all that we can to help Gibraltarians make the most of the opportunities available to them and to help them meet the challenges effectively.

Points of Order

10.59 am

Ms Harriet Harman (Peckham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you ask the Secretary of State for Employment to make a statement to the House today about part-time workers? We understand from the newspapers that later today, by way of a written answer, the Secretary of State will announce a change in the law relating to Britain's 6 million part-time workers. He should make a statement because part-time work is of growing importance to our economy, not only to the women who work part time in order to combine work and family responsibilities but to the growing number of men who work part time because they cannot get a full-time job. The Secretary of State should recognise that economic success will be achieved only if we have a well-motivated, confident work force rather than a growing number of people who feel insecure at work. He should make a statement to the House today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady knows that it is not in my power to demand that any Secretary of State or Minister come to the Chamber at any time. I therefore regret that I am unable to accede to her request.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that it is on a new subject.

Mr. Flynn: Indeed, it is. I want to raise a matter with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you are a defender of the rights of Back Benchers. Last week, by way of answer to a parliamentary question in the Chamber, a decision was made that affects 1,000 jobs in my constituency. I believe that the same thing will happen today in relation to jobs at Companies house in Cardiff. Can we examine the way in which such matters are announced—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not for the House to anticipate what may or may not happen later today or later in the week. The hon. Gentleman is a Back Bencher, but he is taking up the time available to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson).

Railway Manufacturing Industry

11.1 am

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise as a matter of urgency the plight of our railway manufacturing industries. With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that of the Minister, some of my colleagues who have a particular interest in the subject will be participating in the debate.

This is not a hypothetical threat. According to the Railway Industry Association, 5,000 jobs have been lost in 1994 alone and about 20,000 more jobs are under threat, 2,000 of them in the very near future. It is a rapidly unfolding, utterly unnecessary tragedy created solely by the Government's policies towards the railways. Even after 15 years, I find it incredible that the Government are prepared to stand idly by and see another great industry, in which Britain long led the world, being destroyed. But that is what is inexorably happening.

This year, 1994, is the first year in the history of our national rail network that British Rail has not authorised the construction of new rolling stock. As recently as last week, Richard Hope and Professor Bill Bradshaw stated in their report to the Select Committee on Transport that on current projections it would be 1997 before new orders were placed. By that time, Britain would undoubtedly have lost the capacity to build whole trains.

Until 1 April this year, British Rail owned 11,800 coaches which were then handed over to the rolling stock leasing companies which, for the time being, remain in the public sector. The life expectancy of trains ranges from 25 to 40 years. If one assumes an average of 30 years, the average rate of replacement should be about 400 a year. On top of that, there should be an on-going demand from London Underground. Together, those sources of orders should provide a stable base for train builders and their suppliers which can be topped up by the export orders which, mercifully, our industries continue to attract. However, one cannot have an export industry for very long without a home base and that is what Government policies are denying the railway manufacturers.

In September 1992, the then Minister for Public Transport, the right hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), said that he did not intend there to be any hiatus in rolling stock investment. In reality, Ministers could not have been more effective in creating a fatal hiatus for the train building industry if they had planned to do so. I have sheaves of similar examples of Ministers giving assurances to my colleagues and me that there would be no such hiatus. During one exchange, my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) pointed out with uncanny accuracy what was going to happen to ABB in York. He was attacked by the right hon. Member for Kettering as a designer socialist who did not understand how those things work. We now know who understood how things worked and thousands of train makers are paying for that knowledge with their jobs.

The 1991 procurement plan for British Rail envisaged a programme of 800 class 471 Networker vehicles for Kent coast services—600 to replace slam-door stock and 200 to reduce overcrowding. In fact, the Kent coast services will get 15 of the four-car Networker express trains now being completed by ABB at York—60 vehicles instead of 600. That is important not only for the train

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building communities but for those which depend on railways and are suffering from obsolete stock because of the collapse in manufacturing orders.

There were to be 248 class 341 Networkers to upgrade services on the Great Eastern route and 32 locomotives and 320 coaches as part of the long-overdue upgrading of the west coast main line. Neither of those projects has reached first base. I stress that, at present, there are no plans for new orders in 1995.

So far, I have concentrated on rolling stock but it is exactly the same story in other aspects of railway manufacturing. In the last two years of British Rail's responsibilities, which ended on 1 April this year, there were no new contracts for signalling or electrification projects of any significance. That has not changed under Railtrack and it will not change in the current year in the light of the external financing limits announced by the Government following the Budget.

Late in the day, the Tories reluctantly conceded that there could be such a thing as a public/private finance initiative. So far, that has yielded only the Northern line order for London Underground, which was granted only after an intensive campaign by the manufacturers in alliance with the Opposition and important sections of the media, notably the London *Evening Standard*. The Railway Industry Association said:

> "Whilst there may well be a role for Private Finance Initiative projects in the longer term, it will take time, and time is something manufacturing industry does not have."

In any case, the private finance initiative is not a panacea and cannot be presented as such. In fact, in many ways it further complicates the possibility of orders being placed rapidly because it imposes yet another hurdle between a project being conceived and an order being placed.

The unfolding tragedy is at its most acute in York, where there has been large-scale investment by ABB to create a production line which is the equal of anything in Europe. However, the cupboard is bare of orders and thousands of jobs are on the line. The same is true of suppliers to that company. The situation will become terminal when the Networker contract expires towards the end of next year unless replacement orders are received.

Unless Ministers intervene and cut through the bureaucracy of rail fragmentation and privatisation, there will be no such orders. That is the stark reality. Because of the uncertainty in the railway industry, no one is in a position to order new rolling stock—not British Rail, not the leasing companies and not the operators. Only the Government have the power to break the deadlock but so far they have shown a shocking lack of interest in doing so.

There is no doubt that, at the time of privatisation, ABB was sold British Rail Engineering Ltd. under false pretences. There was supposedly a long-term procurement programme and there was no hint of the politically motivated chaos which was about to be visited on the whole railway industry.

Mr. Richard Hope, one of the most authoritative observers of the railway industry, wrote in *Modern Railways* about the "precipice diagram" heading rapidly towards disaster in 1995 and wipe-out in 1997. He said that nothing could happen in terms of new orders

> "before 1996 at the earliest and then we can only guess at how long a privatised ROSCO"—

or leasing company—

> "would take to strike a deal with a newly appointed franchisee, go through the Euro-procurement gavotte punctiliously and then place an order."

The railway manufacturing industries cannot wait that long. The Government have already decimated the British shipbuilding and bus building industries through the politics of dogma. Are they now going to do the same to railway manufacturing? The indictment is already serious; 5,000 jobs have been lost in the year now ending. Are the Government prepared, for the sake of privatisation dogma, to go the whole hog and deny Britain a train building industry?

The extraordinary irony is that, so far, the greatest victim of the obsession with rail privatisation is the existing private sector of the railway industry—the people who build trains and other railway equipment. Must American, Spanish and Korean workers benefit yet again from the destruction of a great British industry? Those are the countries that will supply our trains if our own industry is allowed to wither and perish. That is the question that the Minister must face today, and his answer will be closely listened to in every railway manufacturing community in Britain.

With your leave, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like the rest of my time to be taken by my hon. Friends who have constituency interests in such matters.

11.10 am

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Select Committee on Transport is so concerned about the situation in the railway industry that it has undertaken to put on the record a report dealing with the immediate chaos and total confusion brought about by privatisation. Therefore, I cannot speak about either the evidence that will be given or that which has already been submitted to us in a short paper by Mr. Richard Hope.

However, I shall speak about ABB, in my constituency, especially the nature of the bill of sale made out at the time of privatisation. It is important to realise that thousands of jobs in Crewe depended on what used to be called the British Rail works. That was the reason why the city exists; it was to build railway engines that Crewe was first set up on a green-field site.

At the time of privatisation, a large sum of taxpayers' money had gone into modernising the factory, and its working practices and overall organisation had been totally changed within the previous 18 months. ABB was taking on not an old-fashioned factory or a non-flexible work force, but a modern manufacturing unit capable of competing with the best in the world and of supplying British Rail throughout the country with the very best of equipment. The factory had not only done that in conjunction with British Rail in the past but was set up very much in line with what BR needed for the future.

However, the reality for ABB has been different. My hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) has spoken of the contract recently agreed for underground trains. Of course we are delighted when any manufacturing jobs in the railway industry have been brought to Britain, but even under that contract, much of the manufacturing will be done in Spain and France. Although the west midlands will benefit to some extent from the contract, most of the work will be not manufacturing but assembling, which the factories can carry out without much difficulty. Indeed, we have factories throughout the United Kingdom that can manufacture from scratch very high-quality trains.

Ministers continually tell us that they understand that without an adequate transport system, our economy would fall apart. In a recent speech that I discovered only today the Minister said:

> "We cannot afford to ignore or even underestimate the economic implications of transport. Transport measures which would make it more difficult for our industries to flourish at home and compete abroad would lead to increasing unemployment and would deprive us of the wealth that is necessary to maintain and enhance our natural environment".

Why then do the Government seem so determined to ignore all the advice given to them since the beginning of the disaster of privatisation? In a remarkable and brilliantly researched report, the Transport Select Committee under a Conservative Chairman—the late lamented Robert Adley—told them exactly what would happen if there was a hiatus between the initial decision to privatise and the decision to go ahead.

The evidence was spelt out in that report—evidence was even given by Lord Prior, not only a former Conservative Member of Parliament but a former Conservative Minister—explaining in detail what the railway industry would face if no immediate orders were placed and if there was not an immediate commitment to a considerable new build programme.

The Government ignored all that. They took absolutely no account of the destruction that they were bringing about in the railway industry. Indeed, they made it worse, because the suggestion was that privatisation would in future concentrate on Railtrack rather than on the ROSCOs. The chaos caused by those decisions added to the problems that already existed.

I shall not take up a lot of time, but I want to say one simple thing to the Minister. This country used to be able to compete throughout the world in manufacturing industry, especially manufacturing for railways. It is no accident that wherever one goes in South America or in the Commonwealth one finds the remains of British railway equipment manufactured in Britain—and it is of the best quality.

Yet, under the Conservative Government, there has been a deliberate rundown of those industries, on the grounds not of economics, or that we could not compete, but of a deliberate dogmatic commitment to the destruction of what were seen as subsidiaries of a nationalised industry. Even when it became plain to everybody that that was not the position, the Government persisted in treating the manufacturing units in that way.

The loss of jobs and skills has been horrendous. Every time that we lose a major order that should go to British railways and improve the lot of the customer, we lose a whole generation of skills as well as all the economic input to the areas concerned. Railway passengers are now travelling in increasing discomfort, as if we were using the rolling stock of Argentina in the 1900s, and they pay horrendously high fares. They can see no clear understanding of that on the Government's part, and no commitment to doing anything to improve matters.

When I look at what has happened in my constituency—at the agony of the destruction of the British Rail works and the jobs that it provided—and when I realise their total lack of understanding of the future of the British rail manufacturing industry, I see all that is worst in the Government. They are unimaginative and dogmatic and, so far as one can see, they are doing their best to hand over the whole of our manufacturing industry to any country in the world, so long as it is not this country. If they want to build bogies they send to France; if they want to build shells they send to Spain. They will not build trains in Britain because somehow they see that as a political decision.

Anyone in his right mind knows that unless we manufacture in this country, we shall perpetually have to import other people's products. The Government will have to pay a high price for what they are doing to the railway industry.

11.18 am

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on securing the debate. When the Railways Act 1993 was before the House as a Bill, the Government often said that they wanted to avoid a hiatus in railway investment during the initial period running up to privatisation. That initial period has stretched because the franchising timetable has slipped, which has made the problems in the railway manufacturing industry even greater.

I shall speak briefly about the situation in my constituency which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North said, faces the most serious problems. When BREL was privatised five years ago, the York carriage works employed 2,500 people. Now it is left with just 750 employees. After Christmas, with the end of the order for building the Strasbourg tram, there will be yet another 100 redundancies. Then the remaining work force will have their future literally hanging on a thread. They will have the tail end of just one order—the last part of the Networker order for Kent commuters—which will come to an end in the autumn of next year. Unless a further order is received in the next two or three months, the York works will close.

Since privatisation, ABB has invested some £50 million in the York works: £20 million in capital assets such as machinery and £30 million in staff training and new work practices. All that could be cast aside. When rail manufacturers from abroad come to the York works, they say that it is the most modern manufacturing plant for aluminium-bodied railway carriages in Europe. That would be lost if the plant were allowed to close.

There is a way to save the York works. It is for the Government and British Rail to invoke the clause in the present contract which allows the existing order for Networker carriages to be rolled forward into a fourth tranche. The only people who seem to be opposed to that are ABB's main competitor, GEC. GEC appears to be lobbying the Government to persuade them that the follow-on clause should not be invoked. The company says that, instead, the contract should go out to Europe-wide competition. GEC knows full well that if that happens, by the time the order is awarded, the ABB factory in York will have closed and the company will be in a monopoly position as the only major supplier of railway rolling stock in the United Kingdom. Such a predatory approach to the industry will lead to the

[Mr. Hugh Bayley]

destruction of the industry. It will lead to higher prices for British railway customers because there will be a lack of competition.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bayley: No, I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman had a good chance to speak yesterday.

I shall give 12 good reasons, all short, why the Government must act now. First, if they invoked the follow-on clause, the customer would get the trains at least 12 months earlier than if a Europe-wide tendering process was initiated. Secondly, British Rail would get the trains at a lower price because it is cheaper to use an existing production line than to close it down and build a new one. Thirdly, if the Government let the York works close, it would show an appalling contempt of inward investment, given that the company has brought £50 million of investment into the British economy. Fourthly—I say this with deference to a policy with which I do not agree—it would be a poor advertisement for privatisation to allow a company that the Conservatives privatised with 2,500 employees just five years ago to close.

Fifthly, it would not cost the Treasury a penny to invoke the clause. British Rail would be able, using the private finance initiative, to raise capital from the private sector. Indeed, it would be a good demonstration of the viability of the PFI. Sixthly, it would demonstrate the Government's environmental commitment to rail transport and relieving pressure on the roads. Seventhly, it would avoid the costly life extension repairs that would be needed to the clapped-out, 30-year-old, slam-door rolling stock which would be left servicing Kent commuters if the order did not come through.

Eighthly, to place the order for the new carriages would respond to the safety case put up in the Cannon Street crash report that the old carriages should be replaced on safety grounds. Ninthly, it would improve the quality of service to Kent commuters. Tenthly, it would improve the income generation of the train operator in that part of the country. When ABB's carriages went on the Chiltern line, the number of passengers increased by 60 per cent. Eleventhly, to bring forward the order would avoid import penetration. As my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said, the main competitor imports its body shells and bogies from abroad. Twelfthly, it would retain competition in the manufacturing of rolling stock in the United Kingdom. In summary, there would be massive economic benefits for York, London and commuters to London.

Last May the Minister with responsibility for railways told the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and me at a meeting of the York rail forum that the question of who would place the order and who would own the rolling stock could and should be resolved by September this year. Now the Government blame British Rail for dragging its feet, but they, too, have dragged their feet and they must break the deadlock.

11.26 am

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): I wish to illustrate the problem by referring to another company. The Hunslet Engine Co. in my constituency is 132 years old. Its products have served railways throughout the world for the greater part of that time. Therefore, it has a distinguished history as one of the oldest companies in Leeds and one of the oldest railway engineering companies in Britain. Its products are to be found not only still running after many years but in museums and parks as exhibits because of the long service that they gave to the railways.

I shall mention three aspects of the relationship of the company to Government finance in recent years. I was a member of the Leeds development corporation when that was set up. It found Hunslet Engine Co. doing well and expanding. The company built a works to do body work on coaches. Hunslet TPL was formed. I was part of the committee that gave a city grant to the company, so that it could expand its premises and build a modern line for the production of new rolling stock. On that line, the 323 class has been produced for the west midlands. That order is on-going. It will be completed in six months. If no further orders come forward, the Hunslet Engine Co. will close at the age of 133.

The company has won two orders in recent years, the first being the order to produce the new rolling stock for the Strathclyde passenger transport executive. That order was won against competition and at a competitive price. It could not be proceeded with because the Government have measures in place to abolish the regional council of Strathclyde, and no alternative financing method could be found in time to allow that order to be placed. Therefore, the company lost work that would have kept it in existence for a further two years.

The company also won an order to produce the rolling stock for the Leeds-Bradford electrified line. Again, that order could not be proceeded with because finance for the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority could not be found as a result of the changes introduced with privatisation, and alternative arrangements could not be put in place. The company has won two major orders against competition, including European competition. Each of the orders has been effectively cancelled by the Government's legislation.

I took the previous Minister, the right hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), to Hunslet TPL last year. He was extremely impressed. He promised that he would do all that he could to help it and see that it continued and had orders financed. However, it was beyond him to find his way through the legislation. He could not make it possible for the orders to be financed.

The mess of the Government's privatisation plans has killed the railway engineering industry in Britain. What has happened to my company in Hunslet is disgraceful. It is struggling on in the hope that orders will be produced, but unless the Government change their policy, it will be impossible for any orders to come forward to save those major companies. That will have a major employment effect in Yorkshire.

11.28 am

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) for securing this debate which, although not well attended, is about an important issue. Railways are not, as many people seem to think, a leftover from the 19th century. In the thrusting, forward-looking parts of the world, railways are very much part of the future. Korea has its new high-speed train network. Taiwan has its new metro system. Even in Geneva, new rails are being built in the city centre to run street cars for people to move their money around in that great Swiss capital. It seems that only in this country are railway systems—the rails that trains run on and the engines themselves—consigned to the scrap heap. I have a particular interest because I represent a steel constituency. The demand that is already virtually absent for products made by my constituents will now be further lessened by the announcement that we have heard this week about ABB in York.

I am glad to say that this year British Steel made handsome profits, but as we look at those handsome profits, we must ask ourselves where they are going. Today, it has been announced that £40 million odd is to be invested in Alabama. While the sun sets on steel making at Ravenscraig, Templeborough and my constituency of Rotherham—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must relate his remarks to investment in the railway manufacturing industry, not traverse the world talking about the future investment plans of British Steel.

Mr. MacShane: Railway manufacturing consists almost entirely of steel products. If British Steel is to have a future in this country instead of becoming a holding company with its operations mainly overseas, we need a new coalition of demand for the products used to manufacture railway trains and tracks. Products for use in this country are sorely needed to link my constituency of Rotherham to the high-speed network in Europe. We also need products for export overseas because the future of the most forward-looking countries lies in their transport systems, based on rail systems.

I commend the points made by my hon. Friends and I hope that we shall soon have a Government who take seriously the need for a coherent, modern railway manufacturing sector in this country. I hope that we shall soon have a Government who put demand for the products made by my constituents at the top of their priorities.

11.31 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy (Mr. Charles Wardle): I congratulate the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) on obtaining this debate. I understand the interests that he and his hon. Friends have in the subject. As became apparent to the House, there is a fundamental divide between us on the merits of privatisation. It is not a matter of dogma—while I entirely understand the pressures in the marketplace, it is simply not enough to complain that jobs are going to American, Japanese or Spanish workers or, as the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) said, to French workers.

What we must have—I am sure that the industry is striving for it—is a thoroughly competitive industry that faces up to the realities of the marketplace. Privatised company after privatised company has increased its investment, adding to its order books, becoming more efficient and competing in the marketplace and, in a number of instances, in the world marketplace. I shall not dwell on that subject for long, but I am bound to answer the questions posed.

Before I turn to the key issues raised, I must mention orders for ABB—a subject raised by the hon. Members for York (Mr. Bayley) and for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) and also mentioned—I think yesterday—in a speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). British Rail is currently assessing whether it can justify a new order of electrical multiple units under the private finance initiative.

The Department of Transport stands ready to provide any assistance that British Rail may require in preparing such a case and, if a submission is made, will consider it as quickly as possible. It would be wrong for the House to get the impression that British Rail has been dragging its feet—that is not so. There has to be a commercial need, and a good business case made, for new rolling stock. As I am sure that the House will agree, it would be folly to scrap sound and serviceable trains prematurely. It must be the operators of the trains who say that they need to replace certain rolling stock, that the prices available look reasonable and competitive, and that the extra revenue generated will pay for the new equipment.

Moreover, the financial terms offered by the private sector have to be acceptable as a long-term lease. When the commercial case for the new trains is made by British Rail, I can assure the House that the Government will look at it swiftly, but they will need to be satisfied that the terms represent proper value for taxpayers' money.

We have heard much this morning about the problems of over-capacity, and a number of Opposition Members have mentioned redundancy. Nobody relishes redundancy. There can be no question about that—before I came to Parliament I worked in manufacturing industry and I understand the need to be competitive. I also understand the pain, trauma and dislocation involved when workers, whatever their job in manufacturing industry, are made redundant. But unless industry is competitive and can compete in world markets with suppliers offering goods and equipment from abroad, in the longer run there will be yet more redundancies. We must face that fact.

We have an effective manufacturing base in this sector and it must strive to remain so and to win yet more export business. We are doing a great deal to support those efforts, as I shall show. Investment in the railways has been at record levels in recent years. The 1992-93 total of £1.5 billion was the highest amount in real terms since 1961. About £4 billion has been spent by British Rail on rolling stock since 1979. About one quarter of the total rolling stock has been renewed since 1985—that represents almost 4,000 new vehicles and locomotives that have been brought into service over the past 10 years.

Investment levels over the past few years in London Transport and London Underground, which are supplied by the same industrial base, have been equally high. In 1992-93, the figure was £832 million. In 1993-94, it was £846 million and in the current year, ending next March, it is estimated to be £999 million.

Those high levels of investment will continue. We expect the railway industry to be able to invest about £1 billion next year. That figure includes British Rail expecting to spend £90 million and three rolling stock leasing companies expecting to spend £129 million on new rolling stock in 1994-95. British Rail was also allowed to sign operating leases for £150 million worth of additional Networker trains earlier this year. That relaxation of the guidelines was designed to promote a competitive leasing market. We shall continue to

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encourage manufacturers to come forward with privately funded proposals that offer value for money and fall within the private finance initiative.

In terms of infrastructure, between 1980 and 1993, investment of the order of £1 billion, especially in new technology in track and signalling projects, has already taken place. In this current financial year, Railtrack expects to spend £550 million on investment in track and signalling, including £100 million for channel tunnel services, and £800 million for the maintenance of track, signalling and telecommunications.

The recently announced £400 million order for new Northern line tube stock shows what can be done. London is to receive a complete fleet of new trains for the Northern line, with the first coming into service in about 18 months. That breaks new ground in the provision of rolling stock, in a deal in which GEC-Alsthom will finance the entire cost of the trains and their maintenance and take a substantial share of the risks in the project. In return, the company will be paid according to the performance of the new trains.

That is a radical new way of providing train services and a clear demonstration of innovative thinking stimulated by the private finance initiative, with the private sector taking on risk and responsibility, and bringing its project management and commercial expertise to bear on what has for too long been regarded—it still is by some Opposition Members—as the exclusive preserve of the public sector financed by the taxpayer. The project is a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to public transport and a perfect example of how the deal-driven private finance initiative can deliver more and better-quality investment in key projects. Private finance will no doubt speed the replacement of existing trains.

Current activities for new rolling stock include the Networker trains being manufactured by ABB for British Rail under the £150 million deal to which I alluded earlier. There is also a £40 million deal with ABB to supply mail trains for the Post Office, and the investment associated with the channel tunnel, where GEC-Alsthom is assembling the Eurostar trains and constructing coaches for the European overnight stock fleet. On top of that, Bombardier Prorail and Brush traction are producing the class 92 locomotive for the Euroshuttle freight trains. Orders are currently being processed for London Underground on the Central line and the Jubilee line and for major refurbishment work on Piccadilly line rolling stock.

As I said earlier, British Rail is at present assessing whether it can justify bringing forward work, but that is a justification which British Rail must bring to the Government's attention as soon as it sees fit.

Mr. Wilson: I want to be clear about this. Is the Minister urging British Rail to bring forward the continuation of the Networker programme on the understanding that if it is commercially viable, it will be approved? Does he recognise the urgency of the matter? Notwithstanding the fact that British Rail will cease to own the trains a few months later if privatisation goes ahead, is he saying that British Rail should come forward quickly with proposals to order the Networker trains?

Mr. Wardle: I repeat what I said earlier—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman heard me. British Rail must make that assessment and the Department of Transport is ready to provide assistance to it. I made the point that British Rail is not dragging its feet. British Rail must make a judgment as to whether the process is to go ahead.

Labour Members have talked about privatisation and I said that greater competitiveness is the key underlying theme in this area. Privatisation is the most far-reaching reform of British industry in half a century. Railtrack is now a fully independent company and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport informed the House on 24 November, it is our intention to privatise Railtrack within the lifetime of this Parliament. Passenger and freight operating companies have begun to operate as units within the board.

We have set the target of franchising a majority of train services by April 1996 and the franchising director has announced the start of the pre-qualification process for the first franchises. The privatisation of British Rail's infrastructure service units, British Rail Maintenance Ltd. and other businesses, is already in progress and the transfer of British Rail's domestic freight services to the private sector should be completed by the end of 1995.

Privatisation will enable Railtrack and private companies to provide a better service, bringing substantial benefits to train operators, to passengers—the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich complained about the treatment of passengers—to other rail users and to investors. The privatisation of other public utilities has shown that privatised companies have invested heavily in infrastructure and in their industries post-privatisation. There is no reason why the railway system will not also benefit from the investment of private finance.

I shall now mention some of the activities in which the Department of Trade and Industry is involved, where the aim is to assist UK railway manufacturing companies. Under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Export Trade, we are offering a wide range of export help. The industry has had a long period of success in winning export work, but I believe that more can be achieved. We stand ready to help, where we can, companies which seek to gain more orders at both main and sub-contract level.

The President of the Board of Trade's initiative on export promoters has led the way on a number of export-related activities and, taking their lead, we are running a series of market-opportunity awareness initiatives, including inward and outward missions which are aimed at both home and overseas markets. The industry can achieve a secure future through competitiveness.

We are also supporting research and development projects totalling £8 million, which are aimed at enhancing our technology capability. The sector has benefited from a scheme aimed specifically at pulling through industrially relevant technology.

The Government have done a great deal for the UK railway equipment industry. They have invested more money, opened up new opportunities to finance projects, and supported exports and research and development. Privatisation and a competitive cost structure offer the best long-term security to this sector of manufacturing industry. The Government's general support for manufacturing, coupled with a stable and low-inflation economy, reduced burdens on business and strong support for exports, mean that the industry can look forward to a strong future.

Secure Unit Development (Sheffield)

11.45 am

Sir Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): I am grateful for the opportunity to register, on behalf of my constituents, a major concern—the proposed secure unit development in the green belt in Limb lane, Dore. The debate links three Government Departments— the Department of Health, the Department of the Environment and the Home Office— which all have a part to play in the debate.

The secure unit development in the green belt in Limb lane, Dore, is based on Sheffield city council's proposal to build an eight-place secure unit with an open four-bed unit. Sheffield city council, the planning authority for such matters, runs the existing unit, and it will run the new unit. It has given itself planning permission for the development despite much local opposition which, as far as I can tell, has been ignored totally.

The city council has advertised the development as a "departure", and the Secretary of State for the Environment will have to decide whether to call in the application for his determination. The city council had a choice of many sites for the proposed development, and, while neither I nor the residents of Sheffield are opposed to secure units, I believe that the site the council has proposed is flawed in several key areas: siting; environment; safety; and, above all, cost.

Sheffield city council conducted a search for the site, but it seems odd that its search was limited to only five sites. One of the sites—Thornseat lodge near Strines—is located within the Peak national park. The council maintains that the existing building is unsuitable for conversion, and it advised that Peak park planners have told the council that planning consent will not be recommended for a new building in that rural location, which is also in the green belt. Sheffield council also advised that the site has very poor transport access. I will return to that subject later.

For some reason, which is not exactly clear, other sites do exist in Sheffield, but they have not been studied for the development. The scheme will serve the whole county of South Yorkshire, which comprises Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield. It is an area of more than 385,000 acres, with a population of 1.3 million and, using the 1971 census, 485,000 households.

Anyone would think that such an area would require a centrally located site, yet the site in Limb lane in Dore, Sheffield, is in the extreme south-west of the county, and it is nearer to Derbyshire and Greater Manchester than many parts of South Yorkshire. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health, in his letter to me of 10 November, advised that the only secure facilities currently available in Yorkshire and Humbershire are at Eastmoor, Leeds, and Sutton Place in Hull. He said that there was a sound case in principle for providing an additional eight-place unit in the region, and that that, ideally, should be located in South Yorkshire.

More suitable sites have been suggested in South Yorkshire, and those would not involve the time, money and inconvenience to staff, the police, the courts and visiting relatives. Surely it would be better for the county and the surrounding areas to locate the site further north or east within the county. There appear to be many more

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suitable sites and locations in that area. In February and March 1993, I was as vociferous in my objection to the siting of a unit in the Crookes area of Sheffield.

On the environmental aspects, the proposed site is 6.5 acres within the green belt for the city of Sheffield. That green belt or lung has been laid down, defended and jealously guarded by a succession of local councils for many years. It is located within a few hundred yards of the Peak park boundary and open moorland, and it backs on to the Ecclesall woods area.

Several years ago, the Government turned down flat an application to remove a farm from the green belt in the Dore area. Recently, a report about another proposal in the green belt in the *Sheffield Telegraph* stated:

> "The site is not surrounded by residential development, indeed, Newfield Lane forms a very clear boundary between the urban development of Dore Village and the open land beyond, says the report."

That proposal was refused planning permission.

I do not understand the difference between land in one part of Dore that is not in council ownership, which was refused planning permission, and the Limb lane site, which is in council ownership, and was granted planning permission. Both pieces of land should have been refused permission. If the council had been consistent, both would have been refused.

Several months ago, King Edward hospital in Rivelin valley, which is not in my constituency, was refused planning permission by the city council. The reason given was that the hospital was in the green belt. Again, I supported the refusal of that application, and it seems consistent that, if an individual applies to erect a structure on land in the green belt, it should be refused by the council.

As the Limb lane site is 6 acres plus, and the proposals for the secure unit cover approximately 2 acres, one must ask, what about the rest of the site? If the development is granted planning permission so easily, what is to stop the rest of the site being developed now or in the future?

On the safety aspects of the proposed project, under the present open accommodation system at Limb lane, there have for many years been nightly car thefts, burglaries, and ram-raiding of village shops and houses in the area because of inmates running loose at night. That is not hearsay. I refer to a recent article on page 8 of the Sheffield edition of *The Star* on 14 December 1994—the day after I led a delegation to the Minister. I forwarded a copy of the article to the Minister as it highlights the present situation. It covers several incidents, and I shall refer to just one part of it.

A 13-year-old charged with car theft was allegedly seen with another youth trying to break into a second car in Dore, 45 minutes after being returned to the Limb lane home by police officers. One police officer is quoted in the article as saying:

> "We will continue doing our bit but there is little satisfaction when you know that 30 minutes after dropping someone at Limb Lane they might be at it again."

As I said, Limb lane is in the green belt on a narrow country lane near to open moorland and on the extreme boundaries of Sheffield. That is not a suitable site.

Last Thursday evening, I arrived home to discover a motor car with its door half open, parked in the middle of the road and obstructing the driveway to my home. A neighbour who was examining the car advised me that two youths had just got out of it and run off. She had been alerted by the loud noise that the car was making. It was no wonder. The car was a mess. It had obviously been rolled over, its roof was slightly caved in, it was bashed in on the side, and the two offside wheels were running on the rim. My immediate thoughts were obvious to everyone as I telephoned South Yorkshire police.

The cost of the scheme, which will be met by the Government, is about £1.6 million. It will attract 100 per cent. funding from the Department of Health, which will also pay the design fees.

On 13 December, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State who will reply to the debate met a deputation regarding the secure unit. It was led by Councillor Bobbie Fleming, Val Malthouse and Margaret Lloyd. They explained to the Minister in my presence, and in no uncertain manner, their concerns, and pointed out that, if the council was unable to control the existing site, they had no confidence that a better site, wherever situated, would be run any better. Those points having been made direct to the Minister—I am grateful to my hon. Friend for meeting the delegation—there are, however, many unanswered questions, which I hope to cover in this debate.

Around the time of the public meeting chaired by Councillor Bobbie Fleming and attended by 200 to 250 people at King Ecgbert school in Dore on 19 October 1994, the Sheffield family and community services department circulated a leaflet on secure accommodation in Sheffield. The front of the leaflet states that it provides answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about the proposal to establish a secure accommodation unit in Sheffield.

Alas, the leaflet poses more questions, than ever before. The questions and answers include:

> "Is this the same project as the one that was planned at Crookes? No. The Crookes proposal was to move the existing remand service from Limb Lane to Lydgate Lane.
>
> Why Dore? A condition of the funding is that the secure unit must be built on local authority owned land. We conducted a survey of all Council land available including land at Bradfield, Low Edges, East End and Norfolk Park. The only site feasible was at Limb Lane.
>
> What will happen to the boys currently at Limb lane? We will continue to have a small remand provision at Limb lane.
>
> What does 'secure' really mean? The buildings' external perimeter and all the internal areas are locked.
>
> Will there be a security fence? No. The external wall of the building provides the security boundary.
>
> Will it have security lights? The external lighting will be normal street lighting on the drive".

Sheffield is one of those places that is not renowned for having its street lights on. Much of its street lighting is defective. The council always says that it is short of Government funding, but, as every hon. Member knows, the council decides the priorities of its funding.

The answer on security lighting continues:

> "The entrances to the building will have security lighting similar to domestic floodlights."

The questions and answers continue, but I do not propose to spend any more time on them.

In February 1993, another public meeting was held in the Crookes area, and a correspondent said:

> "I was able to present strong evidence arising from the situation at Limb Lane to counter the rather vague arguments being presented by Social Services."

Those are not my words, but those of a resident in the Crookes area.

In the notes taken at the meeting on 19 October and circulated on 6 December, the councillor stated that consideration had been given to locating the unit in the Don Valley/M1 corridor, but no suitable land in the council's possession had been identified there. Much of the area had been designated suitable for industrial development, and for planning purposes it is controlled by Sheffield development corporation. That seems to be an ideal spot for the location of such a project.

A report to the Sheffield family community services programme committee, dated 6 July, confirms that financial support to local authorities for purchasing remand places is under serious consideration, and 100 per cent. finance is available to local authorities.

In his letter, for which I am most grateful, the Minister advised me that, while the local authority has a statutory responsibility on the preferred site for a secure unit, which is a matter for a local decision, none the less some consideration should be given to the location being in the interests of residents and the community—or is it merely a matter of the Department issuing the cheque?

If it is as I illustrated—only time limits what I can say about breakouts from the existing remand home—is there no mechanism whereby the police can take effective action? If it was a club, they would close it down. Is there no way in which the Home Office and/or the Department of Health can check the efficiency of such premises and how they are run, and take action? If so, how, and—above all—when? Surely South Yorkshire police have more to do than spend time returning people to a home, who are then back on the streets within minutes doing similar actions, or even worse.

More suitable sites are available in Sheffield and South Yorkshire which are not in the green belt. While I welcome the concept of a secure accommodation unit, it should be sited in the area near the main road network so that it is accessible to visitors and offenders. Why does the site have to be located in the green belt? Why does it have to be where it is, as it is inconvenient for South Yorkshire and more convenient for Derbyshire?

If Peak park planning would have turned down Thornseat lodge because it would not be recommended for new building in a rural location and has poor transport access, why has Sheffield given planning permission for Limb lane? When developers have been correctly turned down for development in the green belt, why has the Limb lane site been granted planning permission by the council?

I have several more questions for the Minister to answer. How does the Department know that the site is the best one for South Yorkshire or for Humberside? Does the Department talk to residents? What account is taken of their feelings? Does the Department consider questions of accessibility? If so, what are they, and for whose benefit? What responsibility does the Minister or the Department have to ensure that this is the best use of taxpayers' money? Does the Department monitor how the money is spent if the scheme is working? If the Department does that, how is it done?

What consideration is taken to ensure that the site is the best one for the whole of the county, and not just Sheffield? Has my hon. Friend considered the use or otherwise of such a development in the green belt? What checks are taken to ensure that the city council has carried out a full and proper consideration of every alternative site? Have other sites within the county even been considered? Does the Department listen only to the city council, accept its word and then merely issue a cheque?

Finally, why—when the Government are increasing the size of the green belt—do councils such as Sheffield help in some instances to preserve it, yet when it suits them grant themselves planning permission? It appears to me to be inconsistent, and an inconsistency that requires explanation. I look forward—as do my constituents—to hearing what my hon. Friend the Minister has to say on the points which I have made during this short debate.

12.2 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): I am pleased to respond to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir I. Patnick), who described with his usual, but perhaps new-found—after his periods as a Trappist Member of the House—eloquence the concerns and fears of his constituents about the management and operation of the existing open children's home in Limb lane in Dore in his constituency, and about Sheffield city council's proposals to locate a children's secure unit on the same site.

I was grateful to meet my hon. Friend and a number of his constituents last week to hear their concerns at first hand, and perhaps that answers one of my hon. Friend's questions. We certainly welcomed the opportunity to hear direct from my hon. Friend's constituents, and to listen to the points which they had to make. They had disturbing stories to relate about the nuisance caused by residents of the existing open children's home at Dore, and I do not underestimate the genuineness of their concerns. I listened then, and I have listened carefully to what my hon. Friend has had to say today.

My hon. Friend made a number of references to planning matters, and I know that he will understand when I say that I will refer the points to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. If the planning application goes to appeal, I am sure that the location of the proposed project within the green belt will be one of the factors which my right hon. Friend would wish to take into account in reaching any decision which he is required to make.

While I may not be able to intervene in the way in which my hon. Friend and his constituents might wish, we do take seriously the concerns which have been expressed, and we shall look carefully to see whether their fears for the proposed secure unit are well founded.

As my hon. Friend has explained, Sheffield city council's proposal is to provide an eight-place secure unit in the grounds of the existing children's home at Dore on the outskirts of the city. I understand that the council selected the site as offering the best potential—as it saw it—for a secure development after a careful appraisal of a number of possible locations, to which my hon. Friend has referred and which are owned by the council in and around Sheffield.

My hon. Friend referred to the question of the council owning the land. That is quite true, because the money paid by the Department covers buildings and the

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refurbishment of those buildings for its potential proposed use, but not purchase of land. That is why there would be the limitation that is perceived by the city council.

Sir Irvine Patnick: What would happen if a site was rented or leased by the council? Would that be a way forward? Does a site have to be wholly owned by the council before any grant comes from the Department of Health?

Mr. Bowis: We are looking for the council to develop proposals on land which it does own. The council probably would not consider the option of purchasing land to place in its ownership, because the cost would not be recoverable under the budgets which we are providing.

The proposal is one of 20 similar projects throughout the country which are required to increase the national stock of secure facilities by some 170 additional places for criminal justice purposes. The project is intended to fill a significant gap in the current provision of secure facilities in South Yorkshire and—as my hon. Friend said—I mentioned in my letter that, at present, the only other secure facilities in the Yorkshire and Humberside region are at Leeds to the north and Hull to the east.

Sir Irvine Patnick: I am sorry to press my hon. Friend on such matters, but the council does own redundant schools near the motorway and the Don valley area. Why is none of these mentioned in the report? Why has the Department of Health not asked whether there are other buildings available?

Mr. Bowis: It is not for the Department to start hunting around for options or to suggest that the council should look for further options. We can proceed only on the basis that the council has a responsibility to look around for sites for which it has access, and on which it proposes to build and run a secure unit. My hon. Friend's question therefore would be better directed at the city council, to see whether it has other proposals which it could consider.

In part, the national programme forms an integral element of the Government's plans to tackle the problem of persistent young offenders, and it complements the Home Secretary's programme to provide a network of secure training places for sentenced 12 to 14-year-olds by ensuring that local authorities will be in a position to comply with court requirements that certain remanded juveniles be removed from the streets and placed in secure accommodation.

To that extent, one of the underlying purposes of the capital programme is to tackle the very problems that concern my hon. Friend and his constituents.

Sir Irvine Patnick: My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) is a former Sheffield city councillor, and she and I know this matter like the proverbial back of our hands, as I was a councillor on Sheffield city council for 20 years. If, even at this late stage, Sheffield said that it had a redundant school that would be a better option, could that be considered?

Mr. Bowis: I do not know the back of my hon. Friends' hands, but I acknowledge that, if the proposal came forward, it would be for Sheffield council to bring it forward and put in a proposal for both the programme and planning consent. That is certainly permissible.

I am pleased to tell the House that local authorities are generally making good progress in taking this capital programme forward. Tenders for four projects have already been let and a number of other programmes will go out to tender in the next few months. All but four of the proposed schemes have already received planning permission or are not anticipating planning difficulties. There is therefore every expectation that the bulk of the programme will be completed during 1996.

The provision of secure accommodation is the statutory responsibility of local authorities. As with any other form of local authority home, the authority must follow statutory procedure for seeking planning consent. I understand that a planning application has been lodged by the social services department, and is currently being considered by the relevant local statutory committee. As such, my hon. Friend will understand that it would not be proper for my Department to attempt to influence what is a local and democratic decision.

That does not mean that we do not take a close and active interest in proposed schemes. Indeed, I hope that I can reassure my hon. Friend—and, through him, his constituents—that, if the application for planning permission is granted, we shall work closely with Sheffield social services department to ensure that the highest standards of safety and security are incorporated into the building.

We shall do that in a number of ways. As a matter of routine, my officials will be involved in advising and supporting the authority throughout the planning and design process. That would be achieved primarily by a member of my Department's social services inspectorate working alongside the project team. The advice and support of technical staff in the NHS who specialise in that area of work will also be available to the authority.

Even with that close support during the planning process, the authority will not be able to use the building as secure accommodation without first seeking the approval of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. In considering those matters, she is supported by advice from the Department's social services inspectorate.

Again, I reassure my hon. Friend that the Secretary of State would not wish to approve the opening of the premises unless and until she was totally satisfied with both the standard of safety and security provided, and the quality of the management and supervision of the residents.

Once opened, the unit would be visited regularly by the social services inspectorate both with and without notice, with a major inspection every three years to ensure that standards were maintained. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would have no hesitation in withdrawing her approval at any time if there was an unacceptable diminution in those standards. In reaching such decisions, my right hon. Friend would wish to take into account not only the safety and security of the residents but the potential risks to the public.

I am pleased to assure the House, as I hope I reassured my hon. Friend's constituents the other day, that local authority secure units have a commendable record in containing children safely and securely. It is rare for them to cause concern to residents in the areas where they are located.

I fully accept, however, that my hon. Friend's prime concern and that of his constituents is the difficulty caused by residents in the open part of the home at Limb lane. I also accept that, ideally, they want the whole campus relocated elsewhere, although the number of children accommodated in open conditions would be reduced to four if the secure unit went ahead.

As I said earlier, while the Department cannot intervene in the location of premises, I take seriously the concerns about lack of control of residents. For our part, I am asking my Department's social services inspectorate to discuss with the director of social services for Sheffield what further steps could be taken to improve the quality of management and supervision of residents at Limb lane. In addition, I am sure that the director of social services would wish to consider extremely carefully the points made by my hon. Friend and myself in today's debate.

Sir Irvine Patnick: The problems are happening now. I quoted an article showing that only last week people were breaking out, and the police were asking what could be done. Cannot something be done immediately to ensure that that stops?

Mr. Bowis: It is precisely because of my hon. Friend's concerns and because he sent me the most recent report in his local newspaper on the problems at the home in the village of Dore that I have said clearly that, following this debate, I shall draw attention, through my social services inspectorate and its discussions with the director of social services, to the points made by my hon. Friend, the points which he submitted to me in writing and my response.

I hope that it is clearly understood that that is a message to the authorities in Sheffield that I want the problems caused to local people by residents of the home to be tackled now. In particular, I want to be satisfied that the authority has reviewed its policies on control and discipline of young people in its care, in the light of the clear guidance on permissible forms of control in children's residential care homes which we issued in April 1993, as well as what has been said during today's debate.

I wish to make it clear to my hon. Friend, the Sheffield authorities and the people of Sheffield who may be concerned about the extent to which staff of such homes can control young people in their care in open homes or any other form of accommodation that the Government and the whole House would expect all staff in children's homes to take positive action to prevent children from running away or running amok.

Staff should not hesitate to take the appropriate action to prevent a child from injuring himself or herself, or another child or person, be it a member of staff or someone outside the home, or damaging property. They should not shrink from using physical restraint on those children when necessary. They should also remember that external doors can be locked in exactly the same way as one would lock the doors of one's own home to keep children in and intruders out.

It is important to say a word about some of the initiatives that we are taking to make residential care for children a positive placement choice, providing proper care for children rather than the dustbin which some people had come to regard as the sole purpose of residential care. On Friday in this House, I was pleased to present awards for good and innovative practice in residential child care, sponsored by Advancement of Residential Child Care—ARCC—and *Care Weekly*. I am anxious to raise the morale and the standing of staff who work in residential child care. That can come about only if good practice reigns, and if bad practice is rooted out.

We have had some valuable reports on this subject, including those from Sir William Utting and Norman Warner. We have acted on them; we have been supported in our efforts by the Association of Directors of Social Services. We know that, over the past 15 years or so, there has been a significant reduction in the number of children in residential care. Many of those who remain are older than such children used to be, and resident children with emotional difficulties and disturbed behaviour live together in greater concentrations than before.

I do not underestimate the difficulties faced by staff in providing the right care for these children. Many come from disadvantaged backgrounds; many have experienced multiple placements; many have been physically or emotionally abused. Whatever we might aspire to, children's homes can never be replicas of family homes. It is therefore important that they be managed so as to ensure they play a positive part in meeting the needs of vulnerable children.

Successive reports have commented on the good work being undertaken by dedicated and committed staff, but they also point to many examples of poor or inattentive management: too many unqualified staff left inadequately trained, supervised and managed to deal with difficult children. That is why we set up the residential child care support force, under the leadership of Adrianne Jones. It has been encouraging to see the response of local authorities, which welcome the help given them by the support force to improve the management and quality of their residential child care services.

The support force has developed a substantial agenda. It includes looking at the effectiveness of pre-placement assessments, developing a strategic planning framework for local authorities to use on their own or in collaboration with other authorities, developing effective relationships between education and social services departments, and looking at models of staff management and supervision.

I am well aware that the main effort towards and responsibility for achieving change in residential child care lies with the purchasers, the planners and the providers. For our part, we have promoted the residential child care initiative, which has thus far enabled about 400 senior officers from the local authority residential child care sector to study for a diploma in social work.

To help to combat the often negative image of residential child care, in collaboration with other agencies such as Barnardo's we have developed communications strategies designed to increase understanding and recognition of the positive contribution that residential child care makes to certain groups of young people.

In 1993, our social services inspectorate published "Corporate Parents", a report of inspections of child care services in 11 local authorities. It described a high incidence of children's absence without authority—a point that we heard several times today—from the homes visited. Although all homes had procedures to be followed in the case of absence of a child, there was little in the way of good practice guidance.

Furthermore, in very few authorities were there management monitoring systems to establish the number of absent children, the pattern of absence or the reasons for their running away. The report accordingly recommended that local authorities establish monitoring systems. A forthcoming set of standards for residential child care services, prepared by the SSI, will stress the need for children who run away to be offered a chance to

[Mr. Bowis]

speak to a person independent of the home. The home should also have positive practices for receiving a returning child, so that he or she will be encouraged to remain.

None of these initiatives can necessarily produce immediate results, but I wanted to show my hon. Friend that the Government take this subject seriously. If children are to receive the necessary care, affection and discipline in children's homes, it is important that these initiatives succeed. If they do not, what we have described here today is unlikely to improve. That would not be acceptable to my hon. Friend or me, or—most importantly—to the children or their families and to those in the neighbourhoods in which they live.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hallam, and my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight), who has been listening intently and who knows Sheffield well, may not be completely satisfied by what they have heard me say today. I hope, however, that I have been able to convince him that I take his concerns seriously; and that, to the extent to which it is in the gift of the Department to do so, I have been able to reassure my hon. Friend that we shall look carefully at the child care regime at the open children's home in Dore, and at the proposals and procedures for secure accommodation, if it is offered. If planning permission for a secure unit at Limb lane is granted, we shall ensure that it is designed with the protection of the residents, both internal and local, fully in mind.

Casualty Services (South London)

12.24 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the subject of casualty services in south London. I am chiefly concerned about the services provided at King's College hospital in Denmark Hill. I am also concerned about how current proposals for other hospitals are likely to impact on that hospital.

The other proposals that I have mentioned are, first, the closure of the accident and emergency service at Greenwich general hospital. Secondly, there is the closure of the A and E service at Brook general hospital—both services are to be transferred to the military hospital at Woolwich. Thirdly, there is the absolute closure of the A and E service at Guy's hospital, which currently takes about 60,000 emergency cases a year.

There are already some restrictions on access to casualty services at Guy's. Restricting admissions from GPs there is already beginning to have an impact on the casualty services of other hospitals of south London, not least King's College.

Hospitals nowadays have to make two judgments. They have to make a financial judgment about the work for which they will tender as well as a medical judgment about the work that they are capable of performing. I am afraid that sometimes the financial drive to gain part of the market in health services may throw into doubt the medical judgments that are made.

To give some idea of the flavour of the problem, I offer a summary of an independent report, recently published in summary in the *South London Press* on 16 December. We learn that serious doubt has been cast on plans to axe the major casualty department at Guy's. The report says that the overspill of patients from the closure of the unit at Guy's could prove too much for the neighbouring St. Thomas's hospital at Waterloo, according to an independent study by top consultants KPMG Peat Marwick. The report goes on to say that the NHS has little experience of closures of such a large unit; Guy's serves about 60,000 patients a year. The report describes how the displacement of patients, combined with the probable move of services from the other two hospitals I have mentioned, is likely to push St. Thomas's above the 100,000-a-year patient limit.

I shall now discuss King's College hospital. The report, which was commissioned by the Save Guy's Campaign, but which is nevertheless wholly independent, expresses anxiety about whether King's College hospital and Lewisham hospital would be able to cope with increased numbers of patients. King's College hospital is my main concern, although I shall mention others in south London in passing.

King's takes about 70,000 accident and emergency cases a year, of which 14,000 involve what are called accidents at home, at work or at leisure—there appear to be a large number of leisure accidents—and about 1,600 result from road accidents. I say to the Minister that there is strong evidence that King's College hospital is unable to cope with the number of accident and emergency cases that it receives at the moment, let alone with any increment that would result from the closure of Guy's casualty department or closures further afield.

Why do I say that? The present building is not reassuring. I do not pretend to quote exactly, but I think that it was described by John Pilger as being rather like a front line in a war zone. It is outdated and cramped, and a poor relation of the advanced services that are provided at King's College hospital. In its present condition, its physical facilities compare poorly with those at Guy's or St. Thomas's or St. George's—another hospital in south London. I appreciate that it is being rebuilt at the moment, that it is improving, and that most patients are "triaged", or analysed, by a nurse within five minutes of arriving. I think that it is up to almost 100 per cent. However, being analysed by a nurse within five minutes of arrival at hospital is not the same thing as being treated.

I do not want to denigrate the hospital or to detract from the efforts of the staff there, but I remain worried about its ability to cope with its present volume of work, let alone the increase that might come about as a result of the closure of Guy's. I do not think that it is capable of withstanding the pressures that might accrue from any further closures.

As a starting point for making that judgment, let me quote, not from the Peat Marwick report, but from a report that was published by the Minister's Department in 1992, when there was an inquiry into casualty services at King's College hospital following tragic cases, some of which involved my constituents. The report first recognises—as I do—that the accident and emergency department at King's is being rebuilt, but it says:

> "Rehousing the department is necessary but not sufficient. If King's College Hospital do not alter the circumstances in which the accident and emergency department has to operate, staff will find it difficult to provide a good quality service and patients will still be at risk. The accident and emergency department staff have much to do to prepare for the difficulties they face as the department is being refashioned around them and for the challenge of functioning efficiently in the new environment. Preparation should start soon; it should include a rigorous review of operational policies, medical and nursing records, manuals, procedures"

and so on.

I think that the crucial paragraph in the summary of the report describes the conditions in casualty in 1992. On the subject of management decisions, the report says:

> "we think that they ought to have been taken sooner. It ought not to have been necessary to set up an external inquiry to ensure that the hospital and the health authority took action. All clinicians and managers at King's ought to have seen as their concern the unacceptable conditions for patients in the accident and emergency department. The Community Health Council's record of complaints received from patients highlights the distress and dismay of patients and relatives who have encountered these conditions.
>
> The failure to grapple with those problems is a failure of the whole organisation.
>
> Experience has shown that at King's it will require unremittingly determined management to make sure that these problems do not recur."

That was 1992, and it is beyond question that there was anxiety then. However, two years later, one is entitled to examine the performance and to acknowledge that there has been an improvement, but to say that shortcomings remain in that performance, which call into question putting any extra pressure on that hospital until it is able to cope with its existing problems.

To describe what I regard as continuing inadequacies, I first draw from a publication called "Casualty Watch", which is published by Southwark community health council. It takes half a day, one day a month, and considers how long it takes people to be treated in the accident and emergency department at King's. The day chosen for most of the following material is 28 November.

A 93-year-old woman waited eight hours, 24 minutes in casualty following an epileptic fit before a decision was made to admit. That is far too long.

On the same day, a man of 53 waited six and a half hours in casualty with a collapsed lung. I know something about that condition because 32 years ago I went to the same hospital group with a collapsed lung. That was before the days of high technology and concentration, when Dulwich hospital was open, and I was admitted to a ward almost immediately. I think that that was the last time that I was treated as an in-patient in a hospital. For a man of 53 with a collapsed lung, six and a half hours is far too long to have to wait.

To show that there are pressures elsewhere in the system, on the same day a patient waited six hours for admission to St. Thomas's hospital. I saw some figures yesterday, 19 December, showing that another patient had to wait six and a half hours in Guy's. If Guy's is closed and pressure is put on other hospitals which already have long waiting periods, what will be the consequence?

Some people say that if Guy's is closed patients can be sent north of the river. That means sending them in an ambulance through the Rotherhithe tunnel where a blockage could result in an equal period of waiting.

I have mentioned "Casualty Watch", but I am bound to cite some individual cases, not least because a number of constituents have asked me to raise them in the debate.

I start with the case of Miss Maloney, the correspondence about which arose in February 1993. Miss Maloney was brought to King's College hospital on 1 February 1993 suffering from injuries sustained in a fall outside her warden-controlled flat. She first attended the casualty department at 9.20 am. She had suffered a number of small strokes and had high blood pressure problems. In the afternoon, it was decided that she was fit to go home. In a letter to me a relative of hers says:

> "She was very unsteady on her feet and we had to get a taxi as no other means of transport was offered".

Miss Maloney returned to her warden-controlled accommodation, but the warden was extremely alarmed at her condition and telephoned the general practitioner who telephoned the casualty department requesting an ambulance immediately to return her to the casualty department at King's College, having first established that a bed would be available.

Miss Maloney arrived at the hospital at 6.15 pm, but no doctor examined her until 9.30 pm. Her son arrived and stayed until 4 am. In the same letter her relative says:

> "I apologise for the lengthy description of events, but feel that two pages of writing is not too much to read compared with a 79 year old lady spending approx. 29 hours on a hospital trolley."

I come next to the case of Mr. Moffatt. I shall not go into any great detail, but simply quote what the hospital said about his case:

> "It is quite unacceptable that patients should be kept waiting for admission in the Accident and Emergency Department for 22 hours but it has got nothing to do with the cutting back of hospitals, or for that matter closing wards . . . In fact we . . . have opened more than 30 beds in the last few weeks to try to deal with the unprecedented increase in emergency cases that have been coming through our doors."

That is all very well, but there is no mention of how many beds have been closed before those 30 beds were opened. To be fair, the hospital goes on to blame the local

[Mr. John Fraser]

authority for the time that it takes to take patients out of care at King's College hospital, particularly when they are elderly.

It is often argued that the problem with accident and emergency services is that under community care the local authority does not take patients out of hospital quickly enough. But there are dangers in getting patients out of hospital as soon as possible. An example of that was given in an article in the *South London Press* on 16 December. It reads:

> "Last Friday the South London Press highlighted the case of bedridden Lilian West (84) who died alone in her Herne Hill home without support. She had been released from hospital two days earlier and taken home by ambulance without a message reaching Southwark social services."

I am not talking about Lambeth council.

> "Mrs. West was found dead by her doctor on November 25. She had died from bronchial pneumonia."

A great deal of care needs to be taken to ensure that people who leave hospital under those circumstances, particularly the elderly, will go to a safe environment and will not have to come back very quickly, as happened in the previous case.

There is yet another case. I quote now from a letter from King's College hospital. It reads:

> "I would like to begin by offering my condolences on the loss of your daughter and sincere apologies for the distress both you and your daughter were caused by the lengthy wait for admission to a hospital bed from the Accident and Emergency Department."

That was February 1994. Again, I do not want to quote too much, but just give a flavour. The hospital—not the relatives—says:

> "She left the Accident and Emergency Department for the ward at 12.00 noon on 5 January, ten and a half hours after a decision to admit her had been taken and 16 hours after her arrival in the Department. I can only apologise for what is an unacceptable delay."

I come to yet another case, a Mrs. Harmer. A constituent who wrote to me said:

> "On the day of her admission she was given reasonably prompt care and attention by the medical staff in the Accident and Emergency Unit and I left her later that day having been assured that she would be admitted to a ward by the evening. On telephoning . . . at 9.00 pm I was shocked to receive the news that she was still in the Emergency Unit and, in fact, she remained there until the early afternoon of the next day. She had, therefore, spent a total of 27 hours on a hospital trolley bed in the Accident and Emergency Unit which was, for most of that time, extremely busy and cramped"—

as anybody visiting the department at King's College hospital would know—

> "and where her own health was put at further risk by the stress of such an environment and the physical discomfort she suffered."

In response the hospital said that it was its standard

> "to admit patients"—

to the wards—

> "within 4 hours . . . In your mother's case a decision to admit was made at 18.30."

It said that the

> "Accident Department treated 201 patients of whom 41 required admission one of the highest numbers admitted during the month of January."

That was January 1994. It goes on to say:

> "Again I am sorry that Mrs. Harmer waited such an excessive length of time in the Accident Department."

I am afraid that the list just goes on and on. There is the case of Mrs. Crowley. She had been taken to hospital after being mugged. She was discharged back to her own home. There is some disagreement about the medical judgment, but her GP felt that she should not have been sent home. I shall now quote from the rather sad paragraph of the letter from the hospital:

> "However, the GP subsequently wrote to the hospital on 20 January, to confirm that he wished Mrs. Crowley to be readmitted to hospital as it was proving difficult to manage her at home. She was admitted on 21 January and, as you know, sadly died on 4 February from acute peritonitis and a ruptured bowel."

That is a case of "Let us vacate the hospital bed", and shows a difference in judgment between the accident and emergency department and the local GP.

I was talking yesterday to my local community health council. It gave me further examples, all arising in 1994. In January 1994, a 90-year-old woman was received at King's College hospital. She had fallen at home, injuring her hip, and was admitted at 10.10 at night, where she remained on a trolley until 5.30 pm on 27 January 1994—a period of 21 hours—having received minimal care and a small amount of painkillers.

The patient has asked for confidentiality, so I will not, therefore, quote the name. I raised the matter with the hospital and with the South East London health authority. Its comment is somewhat surprising. It said:

> "Whilst I would not wish to underestimate the seriousness of the situation at King's it is worth noting that other local providers such as Lewisham, other parts of London and our Region, indeed in England as a whole, are undergoing similar pressures about which we know very little."

I do not find it reassuring to be told by the health authority that such problems exist not only at King's College hospital but all over the country and that the reason for them is not understood. The letter continues:

> "We are trying to piece this together so that we can make sense of the whole."

Let us remember that this is in the context of a proposal to close a major casualty department. It states:

> "I am determined that we get to the bottom of what is happening so that the proper arrangements to guarantee our residents a decent service can be made."

I am not reassured by that.

The Minister may be aware of an unfortunate incident that occurred in June this year. The London *Evening Standard* reported:

> "The Department of Health has furiously denied yesterday's story in the Evening Standard about how a war veteran was left dying on a trolley at a London teaching hospital until his family offered to pay for a private bed."

There was some dispute about whether the family was required to pay, but the incident nevertheless reveals a lamentable state of affairs.

I have details of yet another case of a woman left on a trolley from lunchtime on 17 March of this year until 7 pm the following day. Most of the cases that I have mentioned involve constituents who have come to my advice surgeries. I have not trawled through such cases in order to tell horror stories, but I suggest that the catalogue of incidents must prove that the hospital is not yet ready to have further pressures placed on it.

I acknowledge that King's College hospital is aware of its failings. I know that its buildings are inadequate and that that is not the hospital's fault because it inherited them. The hospital is doing what it can and is building a new accident department, but it would be dangerous to close Guy's and Greenwich hospitals until King's College hospital is up to standard. It has not yet learnt to live with what is from time to time a deficient ambulance service and a community care service that leaves much to be desired.

Most people go to hospital only as a result of an accident or an emergency. They are entitled to an ambulance service that is quick and reliable, which is not always the case in London. They are also entitled to prompt, reliable and effective treatment and to be discharged into secure surroundings, especially if they are elderly or mentally distressed. In the present circumstances, those rights will be abrogated or put at severe risk until there is an improvement in services at the casualty department at King's College hospital. Until there is an improvement in the ability of other casualty departments in south London to cope, it would be wrong to proceed with the present proposals. The Minister needs to tackle the problems that I have outlined. I wish the hospital well. I want it to succeed, but I have a duty to my constituents to express their concerns.

12.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I congratulate the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) on raising a matter of great importance to his constituents and those of surrounding areas in south-east London. I thank him for the constructive way in which he outlined the problems and must apologise for the disturbance caused when a pair of crutches belonging to a Government Whip which had been placed on the Table—not for the debate but for other purposes—fell off. That perhaps serves to remind us that even the Whips Office is vulnerable to the type of accidents that we are debating.

I am certainly aware of the difficulties that existed and which, according to the hon. Gentleman's evidence, continue to occur from time to time at King's College hospital's accident and emergency department. One of the first things that I had to do as a Minister in 1992 on a trip around the regions was to go to a studio in the midlands to discuss the tragic case of a lady who had died following a wait on a trolley at King's. As the hon. Gentleman acknowledged, efforts have been made since then to try to ensure that the A and E department at King's is able to deal with the enormous demands placed on it by the local population and the way in which health is dealt with in London. I say that advisedly; we are all aware that because of the weaknesses in primary care that have grown up in London there is enormous pressure on accident and emergency departments.

The hon. Gentleman knows that there is an £8 million building programme in progress at King's. It has been difficult to advance that as quickly as we would have liked, for the simple reason that it has to take place around the existing department, so that people are sitting in what may sometimes seem to be a building site. There have been great attempts to ensure that the quality of care is kept up, despite those difficulties, but the new facilities will not be ready as soon as we would wish.

Apart from that investment there have also been considerable efforts to prevent problems such as trolley waits occurring unnecessarily. This year the demand for emergency admissions at King's has increased by more than 10 per cent. in terms of numbers of attendances, and I shall return to that subject later. However, the hospital now believes that, thanks to the efforts of the clinical staff and of management, it is now constantly achieving about 85 per cent. of admissions within four hours of the decision to admit.

The overall performance on discharge has improved too, with increases in day care and day work. That has enabled King's to reduce lengths of stay in hospital by 10 per cent., and occupancy to 90 per cent. Many of the cases that the hon. Gentleman cited are indeed shocking and should not have occurred. Efforts will continue to be made to avoid such long trolley waits in future; it is fair to say that such problems are probably more severe at King's than at any other hospital in the country.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned a letter that he had received from the health authority referring him to the overall problems caused by increases in demand for accident and emergency services and admissions to hospital. All around the country, especially last winter and in recent months, there have been sharp rises in the numbers of emergency admissions; it is not known for sure what the causes are.

There may be some social or demographic factors, or the increase may have something to do with asthma or bronchitis—last winter the onset of 'flu was certainly a big factor. However, it is not 100 per cent. known what has caused the increase in emergency admissions all over the country. Much work is being done to establish the causes so that, for the reasons that the hon. Gentleman gave, we can plan. We need to know what is likely to be the future demand on A and E departments.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned problems on discharge. Certainly there have been instances, many in London, of insufficient co-ordination between hospitals and social services departments so that people have not been properly looked after when they got home. I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that all those instances are avoidable; they do not necessarily arise from questions of resources, whatever anyone may say. What matters is achieving good organisation in social services and in the hospitals so that the two work closely together. No one should be discharged from hospital without adequate provision being made for them when they get home, and I am sorry to hear about some of the cases that the hon. Gentleman has described.

There are bound to be changes in A and E provision both in London and in the rest of the country. It is increasingly being recognised that A and E departments are high-tech, in the sense that they need all the best equipment, and to have all the clinical specialties concentrated within them, so that as much as possible can be done for the seriously ill people who arrive there.

The hon. Gentleman may be aware of the trauma centre at Stoke, which is still experimental in the sense that it is a pilot project. There is round-the-clock consultant cover. It appears from studies that dozens and possibly hundreds of lives have been saved by taking people to that centre rather than to local district hospitals where a team can be assembled which can ensure that very seriously ill people and particularly trauma cases from serious accidents can benefit from all the necessary facilities together and ready. Paramedics call forward by radio to alert crash teams. That is likely to be a feature of the future. We must be aware that it will entail concentration of accident and emergency facilities in some hospitals.

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

The hon. Gentleman rightly issued a warning that proposed closures of accident and emergency units elsewhere might put too much pressure on, for example, St. Thomas's and King's. We shall watch that closely. I give the hon. Gentleman an assurance, which has been given before, that closures will not take place until adequate provision has been made elsewhere. In London that is a case of not only the considerable investment that is being made in improved accident and emergency facilities at King's, Lewisham and St. Thomas's, to name but three, but desperately needed improvements in primary care so that more of the people who attend accident and emergency units inappropriately either go to doctors or attend minor injury units elsewhere.

It has been stated that perhaps up to 25 per cent. of all who attend large units such as King's could probably be better treated elsewhere. That is not to blame the public but to point out that we are not using resources efficiently and that we must make other facilities available. I have heard from London ambulance personnel—those who are in the front line driving ambulances— that the figure may be even higher than 25 per cent. in London and that we need to do a great deal to ensure that people do not attend accident and emergency units inappropriately. The result of their doing so is unacceptable delays. We need to get on with the large investment that is being made in primary care in the London area.

I conclude by reassuring the hon. Gentleman that we will not close accident and emergency units without making adequate provision. We shall continue to ensure that those who need better primary care and facilities other than accident and emergency units have those services provided. I thank the hon. Gentleman for bringing the cases that he raised in the debate to my attention. If he wishes to give me others in which he would like the names to be kept confidential, I should be happy to look into them.

Gulf War Syndrome

12.58 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): "My son is sick," she said, "please can you help me." The woman opposite me in my advice bureau, a middle-aged mother like myself, was clearly very worried. Her son, she explained, was a professional soldier who was still serving. He had a distinguished career behind him and had several years before retirement. He had served in all the trouble spots, including Northern Ireland, but since he had returned from Operation Granby in the Gulf he had not been well. In deference to her wishes, his identity is confidential. There are several similar families in my area. Their efforts are being co-ordinated by a former soldier, Terry Walker, of Littleover in Derby. Terry is unwell, but has been unable to obtain an accurate diagnosis or explanation.

We talked about the issue on Remembrance Sunday around my kitchen table at home. The families convinced me that Gulf war syndrome, as it has been dubbed, is genuine. If that is right, the way in which the Gulf veterans complaining of it have been dealt with so far is a national disgrace.

I shall rehearse a few facts that, I hope, my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will accept. The forces sent to the Gulf were facing an enemy known to be equipped with chemical and biological weapons, and not averse to using them. It was essential to protect the troops as effectively as possible. Everything that occurred was carried out with the best motives—there is no argument about that—but good motives are not a substitute for good practice.

What appears to have happened? First, the troops were given an astonishing range of injections, which included two types of anthrax, plague, pertussis, polio, cholera, botulism, typhoid, hepatitis and yellow fever: nine within four days. I understand that the Minister has since admitted that they were also given injections against meningitis and tetanus, which brings the total to 11.

Several of the injections were given jointly. The pertussis vaccine was given to enhance the effectiveness of the plague vaccine. One soldier counted 27 injections before leaving England. There was no choice in the matter. Richard Turnbull, ex-RAF, told the Channel 4 "Critical Eye" programme, broadcast on 13 October this year, that station routine orders were issued stating that disciplinary action would be taken against any refusers.

It is not unusual to give vaccines conjointly, but by any standards this was an untried cocktail. In response to one of the many parliamentary questions that I tabled to the Minister asking what independent research he had commissioned into the possible after-effects of inoculation against the various diseases, he said:

> "None. All known vaccine interactions are published in standard medical text books and the British national formulary."

My hon. Friend the Minister should try reading the British National Formulary—it lists only three vaccines: influenza, rabies and typhoid, which are all shown as interacting with certain drugs, including treatment for asthma and anti-malaria tablets. Most of the concern in the BNF is that the vaccine may be rendered useless if other drugs are in use—it is not looking particularly at the exacerbation of side-effects.

According to the BNF, the anthrax vaccine is supposed to be administered by four injections with intervals of three weeks between the first, second and third injections and six months until the fourth. That is not the pattern that many war veterans report—everything was done with far greater haste. In any case, the plague vaccine was not licensed for widespread use in that way. It was available only on a named doctor-named patient basis, as were the nerve agent pre-treatment set tablets. It is no wonder that neither treatment is in the BNF—like thalidomide, the products were regarded as too dangerous for general use.

The nerve agent pre-treatment set—a chemical whose correct title is pyridostygmine bromide, a carbonate closely related to organo-phosphorus compounds—had to be taken every eight hours for the whole time that someone was in the Gulf. It was not licensed for general use at the time and still is not. It appears to have been thoroughly nasty stuff and is the main target of complaints in the United States of America. It caused violent side-reactions and many subjects quickly stopped taking it.

Therefore, we have two aspects—injections and NAPS—but there are more possible contributory factors. Other organo-phosphorus compounds were in common use, including malathion as a delouser, and a product called DEET—diethyltoluamide—which is used against sandflies. My hon. Friend the Minister may well tell me that malathion is found in head lice shampoo, but one is not supposed to breathe it in. Various chemicals were used against rotting animal corpses and garbage, which can themselves give rise to infections.

There was widespread atmospheric pollution due to the burning of oil wells, to which many soldiers were exposed for months on end. We in Derbyshire know that, among the products of incomplete combustion of hydrocarbons is the killer chemical, dioxin. There was at least one possible chemical attack on 20 January 1991, witnessed by many of the troops, and perhaps more. American veterans have testified that some of the dead Iraqi soldiers that they brought in had few marks on their clothes, but badly blistered and burned flesh—the hallmarks of chemical attack, including by mustard gas. Not surprisingly, those who handled the contamination became sick themselves.

I add two other possible factors. First, however safe a single injection or exposure might be, in combination the results could be highly dangerous. The presence of minute quantities of certain compounds can make proteins more active and serious damage is therefore that much more likely. Secondly, there may also be susceptible individuals. I am an asthmatic. The gene that gives rise to asthma is quite common— it is present in about one third of the British population. It also causes hay fever, rhinitis, eczema and related conditions, all involving heightened reactions to outside stimuli.

I have a mild allergic reaction to certain things. My daughter had contra-indications for the pertussis vaccine and she did not have it. Anything can trigger the problems, particularly in a subject who is in stressful circumstances as these men and women were.

When I asked the Minister whether any links with asthma or hay fever had been investigated, he answered that individuals with a history of asthma

"could be susceptible to one of the protective measures, NAPS, the active constituent of which is pyridostigmine bromide".

He continued:

"However, asthma is generally not compatible with service in the armed forces and potential recruits with a history of this condition would not be accepted for service".—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1994; Vol. 251, c. *305–307*.]

He appears to be saying that no one who carries the gene could possibly have been in the Gulf. That is rubbish, particularly when we take into account all the civilians who were present. I questioned one of my constituents about whether there was any asthma or a tendency to hay fever in the family and the answer was yes.

In a recent debate in the other place on 12 December, in answer to a question from the Countess of Mar, the relevant Minister, the noble Lord Henley, stated that full research on all the protective products had taken place at the Ministry of Defence's own establishment at Porton Down. That is the only place that does such research and much of its work, I think quite rightly, is classified.

Tests were conducted on healthy volunteers for two weeks at a time. They were then paid £200 and returned to their regiments. One must observe that that was hardly a sound basis for treating thousands of men and women who were taking tablets for months on end under battle orders. Given the amount of junk pumped into the soldiers, we should not be surprised if some developed illnesses, the symptoms of which have persisted long after their return from the Gulf. It would have made medical history if no side-effects had resulted.

In the United States of America, several investigations have been under way at Senate level. One conducted by Senator John D. Rockefeller of the Congress Committee on Veterans' Affairs recently branded the US Government's usage of the products in this way as "reckless".

I can appreciate the difficulties involved. The conditions that have been dubbed "Gulf war syndrome" seem to fall into various categories that tend, confusingly, to produce similar symptoms.

Some illnesses appear to be associated with an infective agent. Dr. Vivien Lane, formerly senior medical officer at RAF Stafford, nursed a group of sick soldiers who had been invalided out of the Gulf. She fell seriously ill herself and required intensive care. She has since suffered from chronic sickness, weakness and fatigue, chest pains, skin sores and severe debilitation. Three years later, she is still poorly. A visit to America revealed the presence of large numbers of unknown bacteria in her urine. Intensive antibiotic treatment has helped. She never, at any time, visited the Gulf.

The Library informs me that some US veterans have been diagnosed as suffering from leishmania tropica. So far, 12 have shown evidence of a new strain— viscerotropic leishmaniasis— which does not show up in ordinary blood tests. It is at least possible that the bacteria mutated in the exotic circumstances that I have described.

There are also psychiatric conditions: depression and intense anxiety. Some men seemed to get high when taking the NAPS tablets, while others developed explosive rages or bouts of uncharacteristic aggression. Some soldiers have been referred to psychiatrists and others were told that they were suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome.

No one appears to have noted that these symptoms are the recognised results of organo-phosphoric poisoning. The fact that exposure to certain chemicals can cause

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severe and persistent personality changes is known throughout the medical world, but not at the Ministry of Defence.

Still others seemed to have some form of neurological damage or a change to their immune systems. They reacted badly to something that they were given or to a combination of the vaccines, NAPS and other agents to which they were exposed. For some, the effect was immediate and catastrophic.

Corporal Robert Lake, formerly of the 11th Armoured Workshops, collapsed after an anthrax injection and was unable to breathe. He is now severely disabled. He is the first to receive a war pension because, in the view of the War Pensions Agency—although not yet of the Ministry of Defence—his condition was caused by the injections that he received.

Kevin Wilson of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers had a kidney infection, breathing problems and a persistent skin condition. Paul Ash, of the same regiment, was vomiting blood and still gets pains in his legs and sweats profusely on exertion. Eddie Blench, formerly of the 1st Armoured Division, also has aching joints, bruises easily, can walk only slowly and at one point lost his sight, which has only slowly returned. I was told that 20 of our local regimental band went out to the Gulf. In wartime, they are the field hospital orderlies. Four of the 20 have come back ill.

Yet, no one can tell those people what they are suffering from and no effective care pattern has been offered. Instead, medical records have been altered and, in several cases, requests for records have been ignored or denied.

To those men and women, the words of Colonel Box of the Defence Medical Services directorate are incomprehensible. I quote from correspondence with him, in which he said:

> "There is absolutely no scientific or clinical evidence that a medical condition exists which is peculiar to the Gulf conflict."

Colonel Box's statement, which I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will not repeat, is tantamount to saying that those veterans are mistaken. One soldier had "hypochondriac" written on his records. That is not merely deeply cruel and thus bad military practice—the wrong way to deal with sick soldiers—but bad medicine, too. The result of that extraordinary denial is all too apparent. The only people prepared to come forward are those who have left the armed forces. Those who wish to continue their careers face an impossible dilemma. If they seek help, they are officially branded as malingerers.

What should we do? Anecdotal evidence of the type that I have presented is clearly unsatisfactory. We need a proper inquiry, which could be conducted jointly by the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health. The objective would be to find out what the condition or conditions might be, as a first step towards treating the victims effectively. An investigation conducted by medical personnel of the highest standing would gain the confidence of all concerned. All the possibilities—infections, neurological conditions, psychological damage and all the multiple causes—must be checked out thoroughly.

With the national health service, the United Kingdom is in a unique position to perform medical research of that calibre, but the research must be thorough. Only if we have access to the whole population of sick people and they are all dealt with honestly and with a genuinely open mind, will we get to the bottom of the matter.

The Ministry of Defence can help by issuing regimental part I orders, insisting that anyone who has shown the symptoms must come forward. I am assured that, if they are ordered to do so, they will, and they will be secure in the knowledge that, by obeying orders, their future careers will be protected.

Sooner or later, the matter will be out in the open. More than 400 veterans are suing the Ministry of Defence and some have been granted legal aid. The Ministry is in the same position as the Department of Health found itself in over vaccine-damaged children and haemophiliacs infected by HIV. In both cases, Health Ministers recognised the inevitable. Treatment was guaranteed, compensation was paid and court cases, which are so distressing for all concerned and are of value only to the lawyers, were avoided.

My constituents tell me that all they want is diagnosis, care and treatment for the sick. I hope that Ministers can properly accede to that reasonable request. We could go a little further. In conjunction with the Americans, French, Canadians and other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies, we could far better establish what precautionary treatment to give soldiers in the field of war and what to avoid. We will still need to protect our troops, but if we could develop better measures out of the current misery, all would benefit—the armed forces, the soldiers and their commanders and the causes for which they so willingly and bravely serve.

1.13 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) for putting her case so powerfully and sensibly. I hope to deal with most of the points that she raised. She mentioned a number of very important matters, some of which she was good enough to inform me about in advance, for which I am grateful. I will do my best respond to those questions, but inevitably I shall take the opportunity to write to my hon. Friend on some of the details after the debate because of the time factor.

This is the first time that the matter has been debated on the Floor of the House, but it has been the subject of a considerable amount of interest in the past few years. I acknowledge the interest of my hon. Friend, whose constituent rightly came to see her to express concern.

First, I must say—my hon. Friend, who is a former and distinguished Minister at the Department of Health will know this—that the health of the members of our armed forces is clearly of paramount importance and a first and cardinal responsibility of the Government. I therefore want to begin by explaining the Department's involvement with the issue of what is alleged to be a medical syndrome which has become known as "desert storm syndrome" or "Gulf fever".

We first became aware of the claims that United States Gulf veterans were suffering from illnesses which they believed were due to their service in the Gulf conflict at the end of 1992. The symptoms claimed were numerous and diverse, and covered many that are commonly experienced among the general population. They included diarrhoea, hair loss, bleeding gums, breathing difficulties, joint pains and fatigue, but it was not until some months later that media reports surfaced in this country alleging that similar unexplained illnesses were being suffered by our troops.

The causes alleged to be responsible for the illnesses were diverse. They ranged from the use of depleted uranium shells, sandfly bites and smoke from Kuwaiti oil fires—as my hon. Friend rightly mentioned—to the medical protective measures rightly administered to the troops against the clearly and definitively assessed threat of chemical and biological warfare agents in the theatre. All those theories were examined fully by my Department's scientific and medical specialists, and no evidence was found of any harmful exposure of troops to those agents. Nor were the symptoms reported of the type which would be expected to result from such exposure.

From the outset, our medical specialists determined that the only way to establish whether there was a genuine health problem among the Operation Granby veterans that was peculiar to their service in the Gulf was by a systematic examination of all those complaining of the symptoms. Shortly after the initial reports, the then Minister of State for the Armed Forces, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), made vigorous public requests in the media for all those suffering from ill health which they believed to be due to their Gulf service to come forward at once for a medical examination. Those who had left the service were, for reasons of medical ethics, advised to seek referral through their GP. Service medical officers were also clearly directed to refer for assessment any serving patient who had been in the Gulf and was suffering from unexplained and inexplicable symptoms.

I should like to repeat that invitation once more. It is extremely important that concerned individuals come forward for examination.

Despite the appeals, by the end of 1993 fewer than 20 veterans had come forward or had been referred by medical officers. By mid-1994—a year after the initial request—the figure had risen to about 50. All those examined were, however, found to be suffering from recognised medical conditions, none of which was peculiar to service in the Gulf.

Despite the initial findings of our investigations, reports of veterans suffering from unexplained illnesses have continued to surface, and those have been reinforced by allegations from the families of Gulf veterans who were also suffering from ill health. Thorough investigations of the continuing allegations have revealed them to be a mixture of unsubstantiated rumour, incorrect information or a repetition of earlier allegations which have been fully investigated and found to be unsupported by the facts.

My Department's approach has continued to be to subject all the allegations to rigorous medical and scientific examination. Only in that way can an objective database be built up, from which increasingly firm conclusions about the existence or otherwise of a Gulf illness can be drawn.

To date, our investigations of all those issues have failed to establish scientific or medical evidence of the existence of an illness among Gulf veterans, or their families, peculiar to their Gulf service.

Since the middle of 1994, increasing numbers of veterans have come forward for examination under those arrangements. Rather than a medical phenomenon, it appears to be the result of a specific request that we made to solicitors representing some 440 veterans who, as my hon. Friend said, are potential claimants against my Department in seeking compensation for ill health which they claim is due to their Gulf service.

I find it rather difficult to accept my hon. Friend's suggestion that we are not getting a true picture of the problem as those who are serving are reluctant to come forward because of their anxieties that their employment and promotion prospects will be adversely affected. Having said that, my hon. Friend related her views about why she believed that is so, and I therefore give her my absolute personal assurance that those who come forward with genuine concerns about their health will be treated fairly and sympathetically and that their future prospects will in no way be jeopardised.

Medical officers in the services are much closer to their patients than a civilian GP, and if service personnel were suffering the debilitating symptoms claimed but not seeking help, their service doctors would soon become aware of it, as would, just as important, their immediate commanders who deal with them, see them and have them in the palm of their hands every day.

My hon. Friend suggests that one way of ensuring that more individuals come forward is to order them to do so. I understand her argument but do not believe that it is advisable or necessary to take such an extreme step. To do so would create unnecessary concern among service personnel and their families. We have said publicly, often and regularly that people will be treated sympathetically and in full medical confidence and I have repeated that assurance again today.

I shall now give more details of the medical assessment programme which we have been operating since the middle of 1993. To date and to ensure consistency, all those coming forward for assessment have been examined initially by the service consultant physician at the Princess Alexandra's RAF hospital, Wroughton, although other service consultants will be employed on initial examinations at times when the patient load requires it.

Under the assessment programme, each patient is examined as an individual and the examination tailored accordingly. Approximately 208 people have now come forward to enter the assessment programme and 67 have so far been assessed. The majority of those now being seen are from the group of potential claimants to which I referred.

I recognise that the rate of examination has not been as rapid as, ideally, it should have been, and have taken action to double the rate of assessments to 20 a week. The progress of the programme has, however, been hindered by a high proportion—about half—failing to turn up for their appointments. That is not only foolish but risks slowing down the work rate as a consequence, as my hon. Friend will know only too well because of her experience in the Department of Health.

All patients have a thorough medical examination, which includes taking a full medical history, blood tests, urinalysis, X-rays, ultrasound scans, electrocardiograms and vitalograph studies. If considered clinically necessary, further tests or referrals to other civilian or service

[Mr. Nicholas Soames]

consultants are then arranged depending on the patient's individual circumstances, and may include assessment of immune status or toxicological tests.

While the assessed patient sample has not yet been able to catch up fully with the recently increased numbers, there is still no evidence emerging of an unexplained illness peculiar to service in the Gulf.

The symptoms complained of are varied, often unverifiable by objective tests and most of them are commonly suffered by the general population. The only observable pattern to the symptoms seems to be a commonality, in about half the patients seen, of vague tiredness, fatigue and depressive-type symptoms, but with no evident link to Gulf service.

A recently published survey of psychiatric morbidity in Great Britain clearly demonstrates how common these symptoms are in the adult population: 27 per cent. complain of fatigue, 25 per cent. complain of sleep problems, 22 per cent. complain of irritability and 20 per cent. of general worry. I have no wish to diminish the importance of such complaints when they arise in Gulf veterans, for all symptoms are very real to the patient and must be taken seriously, but I am bound to point out this day-to-day background of common symptoms so that the issue is seen in its proper perspective.

There were 45,000 UK troops in the Gulf and it is a statistical inevitability that a proportion of them would have suffered illness, including the symptoms most commonly linked to the alleged syndrome, even if they had not gone to the Gulf.

Much concern has been expressed about the measures taken to protect service personnel from the assessed threat in the Gulf from Iraqi chemical and biological warfare agents. My hon. Friend dealt responsibly with that matter. To protect against nerve agents, servicemen were required to take one 30 mg tablet every eight hours from their nerve agent pre-treatment set, commonly known as NAPS.

The constituent drug of NAPS, pyridostigmine bromide, has been used for many years in civilian medicine in much larger doses over longer periods without long-term adverse health effects. NAPS was fully tested for safety and efficacy and has been granted a licence by the Medicines Control Agency.

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend should be aware that it is licensed for use with very sick people suffering from myasthenia gravis. That is not exactly the same as giving it to healthy people.

Mr. Soames: I cannot deal with that point now, but I shall happily take it up with my hon. Friend when she comes to see me.

To counter the possible Iraqi use of biological warfare agents, vaccines to meet the assessed threat were offered to UK personnel on the basis of voluntary informed consent. I regret that I can neither give, nor confirm, details of the vaccination programme because they remain classified for operational reasons, in order to protect the position of our forces who might have to face a similar threat in future. I can assure my hon. Friend, though, that the vaccines had well-recognised civilian applications and were fully tested and cleared for use.

When judging our protective programmes, I ask my hon. Friend to recall, as I know she does, just how serious the threat from Iraq was at the time. I know she will agree that we owed it to our troops to give them the best protection against this threat and that it would have been indefensible for us to have held back from providing available measures that might well have proved life saving.

We have also investigated the other causes which have been suggested for the alleged syndrome, but no scientific evidence has been found that our forces were exposed to any harmful levels of toxic substances or that the medical protective measures, either singly or in combination, could lead to long-term health problems.

My hon. Friend asked that an independent inquiry be established. I have to say that in the absence of any confirmed scientific evidence that there is a health problem resulting from Gulf service, I do not believe that there are any grounds at present for such an inquiry.

Having said that, I have some sympathy with the arguments advanced by my hon. Friend, and I can assure her that I will look again very carefully at the case for such an inquiry—we shall discuss that in more detail when we meet—should any evidence emerge, or indeed if there is anything else that my Department can reasonably do.

In closing, I should like to emphasise that despite the lack of scientific evidence we keep a genuinely open mind. We shall continue our investigations based on a medical and scientific evaluation of the growing data bank resulting from our medical assessment programme and we shall monitor other developments closely, especially those in the United States of America.

My hon. Friend has raised an extremely emotive matter, which is clouded in debate in the press with so much nonsense and foolishness that it was a pleasure to hear her present her case with such clarity. It is a serious matter, to which we attach the greatest importance. We do not take it lightly, and we shall do everything possible to lay at rest the minds of those people who are concerned, but they must come forward for examination. They may come forward in full confidence that everything will be treated as they and their families would hope, and that it will certainly not affect any of the prospects of serving soldiers, sailors or airmen.

Road Safety (Urban Areas)

1.30 pm

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): This season intensifies all emotions. We have children around us, going over the top with excitement; loneliness becomes more intense; road accidents at this time of year become more tragic. It is therefore appropriate to discuss road safety in urban areas, because there are bound to be some tragedies throughout the country and along the way.

I have asked for this Adjournment debate because of a sad case in my constituency of a five-year-old boy called Ryan Monk, who was knocked down by a car on 11 July 1994 and was in hospital for many months, very severely injured. He may never quite regain all his capacities.

You can therefore imagine Ryan's parents' feelings, Madam Deputy Speaker, when they were told informally by the police that they were not prepared to prosecute the driver for any offence, especially as the parents had received a copy of the accident record of South Yorkshire police dated 21 July, which showed that the driver was travelling at about 39 mph on a main road that has a 30 mph speed limit. The brake marks extended 24.9 m and the accident report says that, had the vehicle been travelling at 30 mph, the braking distance would have been reduced to approximately 14 m. If the approach speed had been at or less than the permitted speed and the child had entered the carriageway at any spot between the origin of the marks and the limited braking distance, the impact would have been considerably less, and if the child had entered the road slightly outside that area, the impact would not have occurred.

Ryan's parents met me and said that they were very worried. I wrote to South Yorkshire police and was surprised to receive a letter from them saying that they had reviewed the case and were not prepared to prosecute, because

> "in reality, we would rarely prosecute any driver for driving at 39 mph in a 30 mph area, even based upon accurate technological evidence."

Having received that reply, I pursued the matter because it seemed to me that if 30 mph was the appropriate speed limit on an especially dangerous main road in my constituency, 30 mph it should be. In that case, even though there was no question of the driver being at fault in the sense that the child ran into the road, the impact could not have occurred, had the speed limit been complied with.

A comparison of braking distances shows so accurately what we all know—that the speed at which a motorist is travelling is probably the most significant factor in the severity of any accident. Therefore, I welcome the £2.5 million that the Government have recently put into the effective campaign urging people to kill their speed, not a child. If those are the facts and we are prepared to put that sort of money behind such a campaign, it should be part of an integrated programme to reduce accidents on busy roads in urban areas so that the £2.5 million is not wasted.

In pursuing the matter of the 39 mph figure with the police authority, I was told that the Association of Chief Police Officers suggests a 10 per cent. variable in its guidelines. However, 10 per cent. of 30 mph is 33 mph, not 39 mph. I understand that it is common to suggest another 3 per cent. variable in case the speedometer is wrong, and yet another 3 per cent. variable in case the police monitoring is wrong. The Government have an opportunity here to act with much greater firmness by clarifying the speed tolerance and making it clear, rather than giving so much discretion to police officers, that if it is 10 per cent., that is the tolerance that should be accepted.

When I asked what was happening to prosecutions for speeding offences in police force areas around the country, I was surprised to find a remarkable drop between 1992 and 1993, mirrored almost police force by police force—161,352 in 1992 dropping right down to 110,571 in 1993. In Yorkshire generally, the number of prosecutions dropped from 12,447 to 7,117—a remarkable drop.

I accept that the bulk of the drop in the number of prosecutions is accounted for by the increased use of fixed penalties and cameras and that that may be a more cost-effective way of dealing with people who break speed limits than prosecuting them. But using spot fines and camera checks makes it easier to be clearer about speed limits and therefore to clarify that a speed limit of 30 mph means just that.

In addition, having three sets of figures—for prosecutions, for fixed on-the-spot penalties and for motorists caught as a result of a speed camera—makes it more difficult, and unnecessarily so, to monitor the efficiency with which police deal with speeding in their areas. Simply collecting the number of prosecutions does not take account of the number of people whom the police know have committed a speeding offence but have not prosecuted.

Following on from that, my next assumption—it is possibly wrong—was that the reduction in the number of prosecutions might have been a convenient way in which to reduce the crime statistics, which, as Labour Members know, have been particularly embarrassing for the Government, as they have shown their appalling record on law and order over the past 10 years. I understand, however—I should like some clarification from the Minister on this—that motoring offences, certainly not offences such as speeding, are not counted in the crime statistics. That is the information that I have from the chief constable of south Yorkshire.

If motoring offences and speeding offences are not recognised as criminal statistics, it seems to me that the Government are saying that it is more of a criminal offence to have stolen a car than to be driving a car at a speed at which somebody could be killed or seriously injured. That is not necessarily an issue for the Department of Transport, but it is of concern to me. If somebody is sitting behind the wheel of a car and is driving outside the rules of the road, that person is a danger. If people are driving at excessive speeds, they are driving almost with criminal intent, because of the potential damage that they can do to the life and limb of other members of the public. I would like some clear answers from the Minister on that point.

Before I leave the question of enforcement, it is important to say that there is room to operate much more effective monitoring, to recognise, clarify and publish the motoring offences clearly, police force by police force, and to look at that matter of public safety in the same way in which we look at other crime statistics.

I have paid a lot of attention to the question of enforcement and prosecution in connection with road safety, because I think that it is possibly the simplest, most

[Mrs. Helen Jackson]

sensible and easiest way to make a major contribution. I can remember the time when seat belts were not compulsory. There was much opposition before that legislation was enacted. As soon as the legislation was enacted, the opposition to it vanished and it made a major impact on the number of people who were badly damaged in road traffic offences.

I shall deal now, within the same theme of an integrated approach, with specific road safety measures. The Government have many ways in which they can make a positive impact on road safety. Burncross road in my constituency is a major road—the A629. It is built up on either side, as are many main roads in the outskirts of urban areas. It runs for perhaps two miles without any pedestrian crossing, without traffic lights at junctions with other roads that cross it and, therefore, without any natural break to ensure that cars travel at only 30 mph. Incidentally, that is another reason why, on roads where they have the necessary discretion, the police should make it clear that in such areas the speed limit must be adhered to. The police wrote to me as recently as April to say that 37 people had been injured on Burncross road since 1986. It clearly has an extremely poor accident record.

I recognise that local authorities, highways authorities and police authorities are working closely together to develop an approach to speed and road safety which emphasises the provision of breaks so that motorists have to reduce speed. Groups of constituents come to my surgery asking for road humps or pelican and pedestrian crossings but, when I put their case to the authorities, I am told that the prime reason why they cannot be provided, or at least not in the foreseeable future, is finance. I am aware that five or six road humps along a suburban street can cost several hundred thousand pounds. In Sheffield, about two pelican crossings are installed each year. Any other requests for such crossings have to join a queue, often for many years.

Will the Minister guarantee that there will be a redistribution of finance from the roads budget to road safety in urban areas? I am especially disappointed that Sheffield's road settlement, which it received last Thursday, does not reflect that notion. Sheffield asked for £750,000 for road safety measures but was offered only £350,000. Its road improvement budget also suffered a cut of £18,000, but without the necessary finance we can do nothing to increase the number of pelican crossings, road humps or school crossing patrols. There have also been cuts in the latter in Sheffield.

I put it on record that I welcome the reduction in spending on new roads. The fourth key criterion in road safety in urban areas is the need to encourage people out of their private cars and on to public transport. However, I cannot welcome what the Government have done to public transport in Sheffield in the past 10 years. The arguments have been well rehearsed in the House and I shall not repeat them. Sheffield had the best integrated public transport system in Europe but it has been destroyed by the deregulation legislation introduced in the mid-1980s.

I seek an integrated policy on urban road safety. The Government should back up their campaign against speed by issuing unambiguous guidelines to police authorities about what a speed limit really means and ensure that prosecutions can be undertaken simply and efficiently, with fixed penalties for excessive speeding if necessary.

Finally, the Government must back that up by redirecting the finance for road safety measures to local authorities in urban areas, and they must work co-operatively on those issues with the Home Secretary, with local authorities and with the police authorities that must enforce such measures.

1.49 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): We have heard an interesting speech by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson), articulating the view that we should reduce the road programme. That is a commonly held view, which has led me to define a new law of politics. It was Churchill who said that we are all in favour of reductions in general and of expenditure in particular. My new maxim is that we are all in favour of abolishing the road programme, except in our own constituencies. Anyone who listened to Question Time yesterday would have heard Labour Members urging the Secretary of State to build roads fast in their constituencies, because they recognised how vital those roads were to the economic regeneration of the parts of the world that they represent.

I tell the hon. Lady in passing that when I came to the Department of Transport two and a half years ago, I had the dubious pleasure of examining Sheffield's transport infrastructure. I came to the clear conclusion that nothing had destroyed the public transport infrastructure of the town so successfully as the efforts of Sheffield council. Much of what has happened there has been inflicted entirely by the local authority—in marked contrast with what is happening in other cities all over the country whose public transport infrastructure is excellent, and operates under exactly the same Government regulations as apply in the people's republic.

However, let us deal with the serious points that the hon. Lady raised about road safety. First, I am sure that the whole House would want to send young Ryan Monk our best wishes for a speedy recovery. Let us hope that he can recover as completely and speedily as possible and enjoy a happy Christmas.

Much of what the hon. Lady said about the operation of speed limits and the way in which prosecutions are brought was entirely sensible and fair, and I want to underline one or two of the points that she made. First, whoever was responsible for the accident, and whether or not the young child ran into the road without giving the motorist sufficient notice—it is not for us to judge what none of us witnessed—suffice it to say that the more slowly the vehicle that hit the child had been travelling, the greater would be the prospect of the child's surviving, and of his suffering only minor injuries.

As the hon. Lady said, that was one of the key messages of the campaign, and I am glad that she appreciates it. It is not a matter of politics but the result of hard work by the excellent officials in the Department who produced the campaign based on the slogan, "Kill your speed, not a child". I shall say something later about how that is developing as part of our integrated approach.

Prosecutions must be a matter for the appropriate chief constable and for the Crown Prosecution Service. However, I make it clear for the record that the speed limit is the limit. Decisions about prosecutions—taken, essentially, in local circumstances, and having regard to the desirability of achieving convictions—do not disguise the fact that the limit is the limit, and remains the limit. If authorities wish to raise or lower limits, they are at liberty to do so. I am sure that the hon. Lady will appreciate the fact that it is dangerous to speculate on individual decisions.

I shall write to the hon. Lady about the relevance of speeding convictions in relation to overall crime statistics. I fully understand that although speeding offences may not be in the same category as other areas of criminality, I am advised that some categories of motoring offence are included in the national statistics. More to the point, though, I know that such offences can cause terrible tragedy. Indeed, if one were to try to evaluate such matters one would find that their consequences can be out of all proportion to those offences that are regarded as more serious in terms of penalties.

The hon. Lady spoke about enforcement. Let us develop that. She was right to see enforcement as an important issue, but even more important is changing attitudes and habits. The remarkably successful drink driving campaign started by telling people that drinking and driving was unlawful and that if they did it they were likely to lose their licence for a long time. That, indeed, was the case and remains the case. It is worth underlining that.

It is interesting that what changed people's habits was changing the message to a more subtle but much more powerful one. We told people that drinking and driving was anti-social and was not funny and that they might do something that would live with them for the rest of their lives. They certainly might be imprisoned, heavily fined and lose their licence, but that would be the least of the scars that they would bear. They would have on their conscience an avoidable accident which the driver allowed to happen by unwisely drinking. That remains the theme that we have adopted in this year's campaign launched on 6 December. We point out that normal, decent, law-abiding people can make an unwise decision about a Christmas drink.

Let me underline if I may, Madam Deputy Speaker, that by all means people should have a great Christmas party, enjoy it and have as many drinks as they like. But for goodness sake, at the end of it they should not go anywhere near a motor car. That remains consistently good advice.

The same message applies to speed. We have used the concept of inappropriate speed in an attempt to change mental attitudes. As well as going for enforcement, which the hon. Lady is right to highlight, we should induce in motorists the realisation that speeding is not about absolute speeds. Ironically, the speeding problem is a problem of urban areas, not motorways. Proportionately, far more accidents occur in urban areas than on motorways. Through the campaign that we are running, we are trying to show motorists how they might well be operating within a legal speed limit but still be driving at a speed which is inappropriate to the conditions.

The classic example that we used is that of a vehicle travelling past a school at the time of day when children are leaving school. To travel at 25 mph may be to be travelling far too quickly. It is important to underline that. The concept of appropriate speed is difficult to get across. We may not have succeeded entirely in our last campaign. I have received letters from people who are worried that we seem to suggest that someone who is acting lawfully and driving within the speed limit is none the less doing something wrong. We have had to explain that we are talking not about something that is criminal in the legal sense of the word but about something that is clearly inappropriate to the driving conditions.

As for resources, I have personally ensured that, in the past two years, we have maintained £50 million a year for local safety schemes throughout the country. I cannot comment on the amount for which Sheffield bid. Undoubtedly, it consistently bid for more than even it believed that it could spend. That money goes into local safety schemes and is effective. We have 130 20 mph schemes. I opened the 100th scheme in my constituency in Epping Forest in a rural context. It was an interesting variation of the usual urban scene. Such schemes are producing good dividends. We have achieved about 70 per cent. overall casualty reduction. Better news still, there has been an 80 per cent. reduction in child accidents. That is a good pointer to the future.

None of the measures works all the time. They all have to be seen in context. We have produced a new, user-friendly booklet entitled "Safer by Design", which includes a glossary of all the measures available to us. Speed control humps, speed cushions, chicanes, narrowings and so on all offer us an opportunity to take on even more work in speed control.

On the subject of casualty reduction targets, if the hon. Lady had been here on 25 November she could have participated in an excellent debate in which we made it clear that, although we have met our fatal and serious injury targets seven years in advance of the target date, we still have further to go. No one in the House is complacent about road deaths despite the fact that there have been fewer this year than at any time since records began in 1926. No one will be complacent as long as, sadly, approximately 80 people are killed on our roads every week. It is a challenge to us all—an all-party challenge and a challenge to both central Government and local authorities. I hope that Sheffield, as elsewhere in the country, will be willing to participate in that challenge so that we can do something about such dreadful and needless deaths.

Rural Community and Farmers

2 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My constituency is in a predominantly rural area and contains some of the most beautiful countryside in Britain. We cherish and love our rural community, but we are constantly aware of the threats to it and to those practical farmers who work the land and are so industrious.

What I have to say is partly national and partly local. I shall first mention the scale of the problem and the pressures. Some 12 million people—23 per cent. of the population—live in the countryside and there is inevitably much pressure from visitors who make 900 million trips a year to the countryside. We must take into account the desire of the millions who belong to the National Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, ramblers and others who want to use the countryside. We have constantly to strike a balance between providing facilities necessary to enable people to enjoy the countryside and ensuring that the countryside is not diminished by over-invasion and misuse.

It is also fundamental to our way of life, our culture and heritage to devote a significant amount of time and policy making to the countryside and the rural community. In that respect, village halls are immensely important. There are several in my constituency, including in Ashley, as well as the new Grosvenor centre at Gnosall, which was refurbished, voluntarily, by local people. I hope that some effort can be given, for example through the lottery, to help people who make such a positive effort to help others in their local rural neighbourhood.

People often associate crime primarily with urban areas. But Peter Cadbury—a relation of mine—recently, and famously, commented on the problems of rural law and order. He is right. The problems have grown significantly worse in our area and elsewhere throughout the country. In many places—even in some reasonably sized towns—local police stations have been closed so that one can obtain immediate help from the local police only by means of switches through the local police telephone network system, which causes much concern.

The House of Lords recently produced a report on rural housing. Some 39 per cent. of parishes have no shop, 60 per cent. have no primary school and 74 per cent. have no general practitioner practice. A great number of changes have been made, but I am trying to show that people who think that life in the countryside is some sort of idyllic Fragonard-style life are sometimes unaware of the fact that rural inhabitants do not always have brilliant communications. Sometimes, more elderly residents do not have facilities that people living in towns take for granted.

The Government have taken important initiatives in relation to using housing associations as a means of drawing money from the Housing Corporation and so forth. Between 1990 and 1993 those initiatives produced only 11 per cent. of the projected need. We must look again at the very important question of rural housing. The House of Lords report said that the issue was considered by some witnesses to be the most pressing of all in rural areas in the United Kingdom. We need to take careful note of that point.

Hunting, shooting and fishing are part of the culture and identity of the countryside. Many people associate those pursuits with elitism, but that is not the case. Fishing is one of the most popular hobbies in the United Kingdom—I believe that as many as 3 million people go fishing. Before he moved to London, Izaak Walton lived in Stafford and wrote many of his great works with the area in mind. He left his estate to the burghers of Stafford with the proviso that, if they did not behave themselves, the remainder of his estate would pass to a rural area called Eccleshall.

Shooting is not an elitist activity by any means; it is now enjoyed by a broader section of the community than ever before. Hunting is a controversial issue. I have expressed my strong objections to hare coursing and badger baiting, but I believe that foxhunting is a traditional country pursuit which should be allowed to continue.

We must reform the common agricultural policy and, in the process, reform the support that is given to farmers. Today the Council for the Protection of Rural England produced a new policy paper which shows that an extraordinary amount of public money is spent on farm support throughout rural England, but the quality of the English landscape—its flora and fauna—continues to decline at an alarming rate. It says that the farm support system must be changed.

The balance of opinion in the agricultural community is shifting. British farmers must be given a fair and reasonable deal, not only by this Government but by the European Community and the general agreement on tariffs and trade. British farmers deserve a fair deal for their industry, high efficiency and the quality of their products. Although one welcomes reports such as this, it is important to make sure that they have the right emphasis and look after the British farmer as well.

The set-aside policy is not welcomed enthusiastically by farmers in general; they do not want it. There is something extraordinarily perverse about the scheme. As a result of European Community directives, land is compulsorily put to one side and farmers see their land, which they would prefer to use, covered in weeds. That practice is counter-productive to the wonder and the beauty of the countryside. Thistles and weeds spread from one field to another, which means that farmers must use more pesticides to eradicate them, and they may tend to use too many concentrated fertilizers on the remaining land to increase the volume of production. There is something fundamentally wrong with the way in which the scheme works.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, T.S. Eliot, Wordsworth, Shakespeare and Herriot drew inspiration from our countryside. We should examine to what extent rural life is destroyed by the vast amount of red tape which farmers face. Farmers in my constituency are tearing their hair out over the volume of paperwork about set-aside and so on with which they have to deal. It is exhausting to have to fill out paperwork late into the night when one has been up since 5 am. Most farmers are small business men and they have to contend with an enormous burden of paperwork.

The movement of livestock is very contentious. I have made my position clear. Farmers are being badly treated. As I told my hon. Friend the Minister in Committee the other day, they should not be put over a barrel because of the monopolistic activities of the ferry owners. I am glad to see that there has been some movement, but we still have a long way to go, as my hon. Friend knows.

Perhaps the code of conduct that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food agreed is a move in more or less the right direction, but the real problem is that farmers are up against it and need as much help as possible.

On the use of nitrates, it is highly inappropriate for European directives and rules to be applied throughout Europe when the water tables, aquifers and water supply systems are different in each country. Often, the person convicted or harassed about bad pollution did not cause it. The polluted water often seeps through the sandstone or whatever and percolates to another part of the countryside and the person held responsible is not the person who caused it. We must deal with problems of that type.

We should pay more attention to the new reed bed proposals, which will help to combat pollution and sewage in streams and rivers. I understand that that is a brilliant, simple and cheap way to reduce the sewage and other pollutants that get into our river system.

As I am not much of a chemist, I do not know about sonochemistry, but I understand that it is a system designed in the United States, which is a highly effective means of cleaning up water in a cost-efficient manner.

Leisure is another important factor. The English tourist board should be encouraged to provide more help for getting the balance right. People know of my strong opposition to car boot sales. When 20,000 cars descend on Eccleshall in my constituency they cause pollution, destroy the environment and are a noise nuisance. The sales are also unfair to other small businesses. We have debated all those factors before and I hope that in the near future an hon. Member will take up the Bill that I tabled last year.

The criminal element is associated with such sales. We heard how Peter Cadbury found that articles were stolen from his and his friends' garages and outhouses. The relationship between car boot sales and the development of crime is important. It is a serious problem.

Also, we do not want the countryside to be turned into theme parks. I shall merely leave that as a general thought for my hon. Friend.

Farmers need a proper economic return from agriculture and the rural economy must have the capacity to provide them with another source of income. Farmers in my constituency, whom I meet regularly, are deeply concerned about several issues, for example, the lack of sheep quota for developers. That means that young farmers who have taken on a larger farm cannot obtain milk quota or an increase in their allocation of sheep quota to match their increased acreage. The policy should be carefully thought through.

The proposed removal of the waste grant means that the smaller farmer, who has endeavoured to acquire sufficient capital to install a slurry management system, will not be able to proceed.

The problems associated with livestock exports are increasing, not decreasing. Despite some of the efforts that Ministers have made, the result will be an oversupply on the British market and a collapse in prices, which will affect small farmers who do not have milk quota.

I shall refer to the 1994 Budget proposals. Farmers and rural communities are deeply concerned about the question of taxation placed on fuel in an attempt to increase the use of public transport. But public transport is not generally available to those in rural areas—at least, not on the scale on which it is available to others.

The proposals to remove the tractor licence exemption facility will seriously affect many farmers, particularly those whose farms are divided by roadways. That is a practical point, which means that a farmer wishing to gain access to his own buildings and land across a road cannot do so legally without the purchase of a full tractor licence. Something must be done about that. The Budget also included proposals to reclassify the agricultural vehicle excise duty, and I appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister to look carefully at that in her discussions with the Treasury.

I now come to the vexed question of milk. I was selected for my constituency on the day that milk quotas were announced in May 1984, and I will not forget that in a hurry. I was not pleased when the Chancellor did a deal with the Italians, despite their fraudulent activities, regarding the milk quota. I will not go into that now, as I might have the Whip taken away.

On the black marketing of milk, the industry would support any action taken by the intervention board, but we must remember the serious problems which face the milk industry at present due to the price of additional milk quotas. In some cases, farmers are having to deal with quota at twice the value of production levels, and I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister will look at that.

There are also the problems of pig farmers. I have written to my hon. Friend on a number of occasions regarding stalls and fairness for the British pig farmer in relation to those in the rest of Europe. Over and over again there are distortions and there is a lack of enforcement of the rules in other countries, whether in livestock, transport, milk quotas or environmental standards and pollution.

This is not just Europhobic waffle—it is what is going on in other countries. People such as myself want the European Community to work effectively and have continually said so. We raise questions about what is going on, but sometimes we do so in language which is not thought to be entirely desirable. None the less, there is a fundamental dishonesty about the way in which European Community issues tend to get dealt with. It is not always deliberate, but it turns into a real problem because we get a mismatch between the promises and the performance. That makes people extremely unhappy.

British farmers are suffering from the uneven playing field in comparison with their European counterparts. They feel strongly that we must take a more realistic approach, bearing in mind some of the unfair competition that is currently coming from Europe.

There is another, and final, point. Yes, we must reform the common agriculture policy, but the benefits of coming out of the exchange rate mechanism have led to an improvement in farming incomes in the past two years. We have a new opportunity with regard to the volume of meat which is apparently now being consumed by Brazil and the Asian countries. That is liable to increase, and it could completely distort the basis on which GATT was calculated with regard to beef production and exports. We should be wary—as in some other matters on the European scene—of getting ourselves locked into rules which have no regard to the reality of the movements in the marketplace.

[Mr. William Cash]

There are some useful papers coming out on the subject, which must be a good indication of the fact that people—including my hon. Friend and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—are thinking through the problems in the light of the new circumstances. I am delighted, for example, with the constructive paper produced by the Country Landowners Association which said that we must make agriculture in Europe more competitive in world markets, bring supply and demand into better balance, be compatible with the single market and—in relation to the environment—improve the countryside to make it clean and attractive. It continued to say that we must support environmental programmes, develop rural communities, diversify the economies of rural areas and support the economic programmes where there is a market failure. Those are constructive ideas and I sincerely hope that my hon. Friend will take in good part the fact that I am not trying to criticise now or at any time but hoping desperately that somebody is listening.

2.19 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Angela Browning): I am grateful for the opportunity provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) to have a debate on so important an issue. He began by outlining the importance of the rural economy in his constituency. I assure him that I, too, am familiar with Stafford, having canvassed for him at his by-election some years ago.

I shall touch on a few specific points which my hon. Friend mentioned before dealing with the general context of his speech. On difficulties with the live transportation of animals for export, I hope that he will be reassured that, having put at the top of our list the importance of animal welfare, which also concerns farmers and exporters, the Government will introduce new measures on 23 January to ensure that we cut out the cowboys in the trade who have done a grave disservice to a legitimate and legal trade. I hope that we can then continue to export animals with the highest standards of animal welfare and bring before the UK courts those who try to cheat and break the rules. That will greatly benefit the industry.

My hon. Friend mentioned sheep quotas. When proposals for sheep quotas were put on the table, the UK Government opposed them because we had the experience of milk quotas and find quotas extremely inflexible. However, other member states disagreed and we have had to apply them. I sympathise with my hon. Friend, but sheep quotas have been allocated for this year, which means that some people who may have expected to receive a quota have not received one.

My hon. Friend also mentioned the pig industry. He may be aware that in a debate on the pig industry under the Consolidated Fund motion last week, I outlined to the House the measures taken by the UK Government in respect of the French, who have not played fair and have put our pig industry at a competitive disadvantage. We have already placed those measures before the Commission because matters such as the Staviporc scheme and interest-free loans in the French pig industry are not in line with regulations. We shall pursue those issues vigorously.

Before looking at the relationship between farmers and the rest of the rural community, I shall expand a little on the rural community as a whole because the sweeping importance of rural communities formed the basis of my hon. Friend's speech. Some important changes have taken place in recent years in the jobs and life styles of people who make up the rural community and it is questionable whether, in many traditionally rural areas, there is a truly distinct community dependent entirely on the economy of its local village.

In the period between 1981 and 1991, the population of rural areas in England increased by just over 7 per cent., with a corresponding decline in metropolitan areas of nearly 5 per cent. Those of us who have lived in rural areas for all or most of our lives understand why people wish to leave urban areas and enjoy the quality of life in rural areas. During the same period, the number of new businesses in England increased by 33 per cent. net and employment by 15 per cent. in rural areas.

Part of the influx to rural areas has resulted from greater access to cars, which enables people to work in towns yet live in the country. Improved mobility has also given rise to employment opportunities that have little connection with traditional village life, such as light industries or financial services, which we now find increasingly in rural areas.

It may not be surprising to find that agriculture accounts for only 2.2 per cent. of the total national work force and contributes only 1.4 per cent. to gross domestic product. Yet anybody visiting the countryside will not fail to appreciate how much—more than three quarters—of the landscape is still predominantly agricultural. It is essential, therefore, that our rural development policies take account of environmental and conservation concerns in an integrated approach—my hon. Friend touched on that, too—while also recognising that rural areas are not homogeneous. For instance, in my home county of Devon, farming accounts for one fifth of the work force—above average for the United Kingdom. Although farming may account for only a small contribution to the rural economy, it still has an important part to play in the wider issues of countryside development.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will have noted with interest the announcement made on 22 November regarding the rural White Paper. It is being produced jointly by my Department and the Department of the Environment, and will be drawn up in consultation with other Government Departments as well as a range of non-governmental organisations.

My hon. Friend mentioned several aspects of rural life that might not seem immediately relevant to agriculture but which are part of the rural culture. He mentioned difficulties with village halls, crime in rural areas, housing needs, village schools and leisure and rural sports. The aim of the White Paper is to produce a long-term strategic outlook for the future of rural areas, and it will be set in the context of the Government's sustainable development strategy.

I agree with my hon. Friend that an area that needs urgent attention is the changing role of agriculture and the future of the common agricultural policy. In addition to the White Paper, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced on 6 December that he is establishing a CAP policy group to provide advice to the Government on all aspects of United Kingdom policy on the CAP.

The reform of the CAP is one of the most important challenges facing us, and I can assure my hon. Friend that we intend to press for a rational policy which better serves the UK's interests. It should also meet the needs of an expanding European Community; the countries of central Europe wish to join at the end of this century and that will have an important effect on CAP policy.

Although we are concerned to achieve a fairer CAP regime, we believe it important that other member states also recognise that, with other countries joining the Community, the CAP has to be resolved not just in this country but on an EC-wide basis. For instance, as part of the structural funding arrangements to aid structural readjustment, six predominantly rural areas in England have been designated under objective 5b, with the overall aim of improving socio-economic conditions.

The projects and schemes approved under these arrangements will be financed by a partnership between the Government, the European Commission and, when appropriate, the private sector. Funding will be limited, and it is intended that this assistance will enable businesses to become self-supporting by, for example, securing new markets for their goods or services.

My hon. Friend mentioned the importance of diversification by agricultural businesses. The agricultural component of this structural readjustment is aimed at moving away from traditional agricultural support to a wider economic base, providing a more market-based approach which can survive without the necessity for Government handouts in perpetuity.

Another area in which we have made progress in partnership with Brussels is with agri-environment measures, which were introduced as part of the 1992 CAP reform settlement. Under the EC agri-environment regulation, we have implemented a number of schemes that encourage environmentally friendly farming. As part of the CAP reforms, farmers are increasingly looking to diversify their businesses to supplement traditional agriculture. It is indefensible to continue growing food that is surplus to requirements and yet to support farmers for doing so. I hope that my hon. Friend agrees with that.

Structural adjustment, agri-environment measures and diversification are therefore some of our key tools in the implementation of a more sensible, rational approach to agricultural support.

I have highlighted the development of reform in a European context, but we should not forget the other important contributions that the UK Government are making in their own right to improve structural matters, such as the proposed agricultural tenancy law reforms. A dynamic tenanted sector will be important if agriculture is to respond to market and policy changes. I hope that it will also be of help to the group that my hon. Friend mentioned—young farmers entering farming for the first time.

To tackle the decline in the amount of rented land available, the Government published their Agricultural Tenancies Bill on 18 November. The Bill has already started its progress through the House in another place.

It must also be remembered that there is a range of Government policies aimed at other aspects of rural areas, their economies and communities. Industrial, education, housing and transport policies all have special significance for rural areas. We want a vibrant rural economy, covering both agriculture and non-agricultural sectors, in which people work and live and make an invaluable contribution to the national economy.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has introduced a wide-ranging debate, but I hope that I have convinced him that the new measures being taken, especially by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, will consider some of those issues in a much broader context.

Insider Share Dealing

2.30 pm

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): I am grateful to be given the opportunity to raise this issue today. I want to focus specifically on the insider share dealings of Lord Archer, and I do so because he has chosen not to reply to any of the letters that I have sent him about his share dealing activities.

In September, I wrote a fairly lengthy letter to Lord Archer, posing detailed questions; he chose to ignore it. I followed that letter with others, and he also chose to ignore those. He has jumped into the undergrowth and is refusing to answer the questions that have been asked of him, legitimately, by Members of the House. I think that is an absolute disgrace for a Member of Parliament, albeit an unelected Member of Parliament—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, I remind him of our very important rule that criticisms are not offered to any Member, either in the House or in the other place, unless on a substantive motion. Such a motion is not before us today, so I must counsel caution in what the hon. Gentleman says.

Mr. Prentice: That puts me in some difficulties, but I shall endeavour to be circumspect and allude to various matters tangentially perhaps rather than directly.

When *The Sunday Times* broke the news of Lord Archer's share-dealing activities in August, there was astonishment in my constituency—a constituency that was represented, before I came here, by a Conservative Member of Parliament for 13 years. When my constituents read that Lord Archer had made £80,000 in share-dealing transactions in two days, there was outrage.

The very week that Lord Archer made—I say "made", not "earned"—£80,000 in share-dealing activities, a job was advertised in the job centre in Nelson, which is in the heart of my constituency, for a kitchen assistant and cook, with pay of £2.92 an hour. That person would have had to work 27,397 hours or a 40-hour week for 13 years to make what Lord Archer made in his share-dealing activities in the space of four days last January.

As we approach the anniversary of that share-dealing activity, I invite the Minister to reject or perhaps tell the House whether he condones the activity of a man who was very close indeed to becoming chairman of the Conservative party. In fact, he was widely regarded in the press and among Conservative Members as being an heir apparent until that matter blew up.

The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), who retired as chairman of the Conservative party, was succeeded by the right hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley). He urged Lord Archer to speak out, as I have. In September, the right hon. Gentleman, speaking to the *Financial Times*, said:

> "Geoffrey will find it probably better to speak out rather than not."

That is what I am urging the noble Lord to do—to speak out.

When *The Sunday Times* broke the story in August, Lord Archer's reaction was astonishing. When the story first reached the public prints alleging that he had bought shares in Anglia Television—a company in which his wife, Mary, was a non-executive director—he said:

> "It is completely untrue. I did not buy any shares. I am not going to make a statement. That sort of accusation is libellous."

I will be guided by you, Madam Deputy Speaker, but there are people who would say that that was just a downright lie.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am giving guidance. I do not think that that is an appropriate comment to use in this context. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman does not pursue that line at all. I remind him that the topic that I read out before he spoke was simply "Insider Share Dealing". It makes no reference to any named person. I must therefore caution him again.

Mr. Prentice: I seek your further guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker, because when I applied for the debate to Madam Speaker, I recall that I linked the share-dealing activities of Lord Archer with insider trading. That was the specific issue that I sought to raise.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am not party to what took place in any guidance that the hon. Gentleman may have received outside the Chamber, but I am very clear about what may or may not take place inside the Chamber now. It is important that he realises that comments that reflect upon the honour or integrity of a Member of the other place are not in order now, except on a substantive motion. I have made that point before, but I make it again. No such substantive motion is before us at this time.

Mr. Prentice: I shall try to weave my way through the thickets as best I can, Madam Deputy Speaker, given what you have just said, but is it in order for me to say that the quotation from Lord Archer which was carried in the national press in August was economical with the truth?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. As that now has a clear derogatory meaning, I must rule that out of order as well.

Mr. Prentice: Well, I have tripped over that particular thicket, Madam Deputy Speaker. I find that the constraints are such that I cannot make the speech that I had intended to make.

I shall, in conclusion, simply say that the country has not received all the answers that it requires about the share-dealing activities of Lord Archer in January. Many national newspapers across the political spectrum have highlighted the gaps where Lord Archer has not been forthcoming.

The editorial from *The Guardian* on 26 August this year said:

> "Lord Archer has admitted a 'grave error' in buying shares in Anglia television and in causing 'needless embarrassment' to his wife who is a director of the company. But he strongly denies that the transaction was carried out with the benefit of any insider information."

It seems to me that it is virtually impossible to secure any conviction under the Financial Services Act 1986, or the relevant legislation, if the parties to any insider dealing resolutely stick to their story. So if Mary Archer did not say anything to Lord Archer, and if he did not say anything to Mr. Broosk Saib, and Mr. Broosk Saib did not know what time of day it was—he hardly knew of the existence of Anglia Television—I invite the Minister to comment on the point that it is impossible to secure a conviction.

The editorial continues:

> "There must therefore have been other reasons why he"—

Lord Archer—

> "didn't use his normal stockbrokers, but chose instead"—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am concerned that this, too, is, in its own way, reflecting on Lord Archer's conduct in a way that is not suitable for this type of debate. I think that the hon. Gentleman would be wise to follow his own advice of concluding fairly rapidly.

Mr. Prentice: I will do so, but with great disappointment, because I thought that, in this forum—of all forums—it would have been possible to discuss in an unemotive way a matter of great controversy, which has triggered a response not just from the Conservative party but from the public prints. It is disappointing that I do not have an opportunity to raise these important issues in this forum, but I shall seek to do so in another way.

2.41 pm

The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): I am answering a debate which, in a sense, has not happened, but I make no complaint about that, because my responsibility as a Treasury Minister is with policy relating to insider dealing, whereas the investigation thereof and, indeed, prosecution, is a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry.

It would be wholly improper of me, both in a departmental sense and as a matter of parliamentary privilege, to comment on many of the allegations that the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) has chosen to make this afternoon under the privilege of the House. If the hon. Gentleman had clearly said that the debate related to the noble Lord Archer, there might have been a different Minister at the Dispatch Box seeking to answer his debate, but the title of the hon. Gentleman's debate relates to insider share dealing, which is a serious and very important matter and so is a matter for me to deal with.

Insider dealing is not a victimless crime and the Government have, on a number of occasions, by introducing legislative change and prosecution thereunder, sought to deter, detect and, indeed, penalise wherever possible those activities, which do cause pecuniary loss to some and bring markets into disrepute as well.

With regard to the noble Lord Archer, all I can do this afternoon in response to the points that the hon. Gentleman has chosen to make is to reassert the position that has been put before. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and his Department propose to take no further action in the matter, which has been thoroughly investigated by independent inspectors and subject to independent legal advice. As my right hon. Friend has also explained, there is no legal provision for the publication of the inspectors' report, and it would be quite improper for him to publish it. It is just possible, with the consent of all parties and with all the evidence concerned, that disclosure of a report could take place, but the clearest—

Mr. Gordon Prentice: Will the Minister give way on that point?

Mr. Nelson: No, I will give way later, but it may be helpful if I just explain a few further facts, which are already in the public domain and which may answer the hon. Gentleman's point.

In February of this year, two independent inspectors—a Queen's counsel and a chartered accountant—were appointed to investigate possible insider dealing in the shares of Anglia Television, just before a bid for the company by MAI plc in January of this year. On 7 July, the Secretary of State confirmed that Lord Archer was one of several people subject to the investigation and also in July the inspectors submitted their report. They concluded that there was no basis on which to prosecute Lord Archer. However, the report was referred to independent counsel who also advised against prosecution.

Accordingly, on 28 July, the President of the Board of Trade announced that, on the basis of the report and departmental and other legal advice, he had concluded that the DTI should take no further action against any of the parties under investigation. In those circumstances, as explained by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, I have nothing further to add to the facts that are already in the public domain.

However, I should like take this opportunity to comment a little further on insider dealing, which may be of interest to the hon. Gentleman, although he has not sought to use the precious opportunity afforded by this debate to raise such matters. They were, of course, of great interest to the House during the passage of the Criminal Justice Act 1993, previously during the passage of the consolidating Company Securities (Insider Dealing) Act 1985 and, originally, during that of the insider dealing legislation introduced in 1980. This Government were the first to make insider dealing a criminal offence. Therefore, we are fully aware of the serious consequences that insider dealing can have for the operation of the financial markets.

The markets are the channels for a large proportion of individuals' savings, invested directly or on their behalf by institutions and on which individuals' future well-being depends. In turn, the financial markets channel those savings to companies on which our national prosperity ultimately depends.

To meet the objectives of investors and companies, the markets must operate efficiently and fairly. If market participants feel that there is a risk that they may be disadvantaged by insider dealing, they may be less willing to invest via the capital markets or may demand a higher return from companies for doing so. Either way, market liquidity could be damaged and the cost of raising capital increased. That effect would, of course, be in addition to any loss that an individual investor may suffer if insider dealing were unchecked.

The Government are therefore firmly committed to insider dealing legislation that allows people who take advantage of privileged information to be caught and punished. That is why the Government made insider dealing illegal in 1980 and why we extended the prohibition on 1 March this year to cover a broader range of misconduct than was previously the case. For example, it is now illegal for an employee of a company to sell a competitor's shares on the basis of the inside information that his employer has won an important contract that would prove detrimental to the competitor's business prospects.

The new legislation also covers a wider range of securities and applies to off-market transactions which involve a professional intermediary as well as to business transacted on investment exchanges.

Our approach to insider dealing has been to define in statute what constitutes the offence and what is meant by the terms "inside information" and "insiders". In doing so, we have recognised that there is always something of

[Mr. Nelson]

a trade-off between the degree of certainty that can be incorporated into the law and the avoidance of loopholes which would allow the real insider dealers to go about their wrecking business within the law.

We believe that the insider dealing provisions contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1993 draw the line in the right place. That should mean that the real insider dealers can be caught while the people engaged in legitimate activities are left to go about their business. The legislation does not, therefore, threaten legitimate communication between companies and their individual institutional shareholders and investment analysts. Nor does it jeopardise properly conducted corporate finance transactions.

Underpinning the legislation are the systems for detecting insider dealing. The Government greatly welcome the improvements in market surveillance which have been brought about through the introduction by the London stock exchange of the integrated monitoring and surveillance system. We also welcome the exchange's decision to consult on ways to curb disorderly markets. Although we recognise the fact that evidence of insider dealing can be difficult to obtain, the ability of the system to monitor the stock market on a real-time basis, stricter legislation and tougher procedures for handling disorderly markets will send a clear message that insider dealing will not be tolerated.

The Government believe that the seriousness of the offence justifies criminal sanctions, as it harms not only individuals' interests but the integrity of the financial markets, and affects the costs to companies of raising capital. We also believe that criminal sanctions have a considerable deterrent effect on would-be insider dealers, which helps to mitigate those harmful effects.

That is not to say, however, that civil sanctions do not exist to punish insider dealing; they certainly do. Civil remedies are available—for example, where there has been a breach of the rules of a self-regulatory organisation or of a contract of employment. In addition, there may be circumstances in which claims for compensation could be made.

The Government accept, of course, that the nature of the offence means that insider dealing can be difficult to establish. That would be true under any system of enforcement, and I assure the hon. Gentleman that the law against insider dealing is kept under review to ensure that it is as effective as possible.

I do not believe that the offence of insider dealing is a matter of bipartisan difference. It is a matter of great concern to those outside and inside the House because it affects the integrity and liquidity of the markets, and the respect for contractual arrangements. When insider dealing occurs there is undoubtedly pecuniary loss to those who may have been taken advantage of by others with inside information.

That is why it was the Conservative Government who made insider dealing a criminal offence. As the Minister responsible, I decided not to take the opportunity offered by the European Community directive to decriminalise the offence. That would have been possible and many, including some in the House, have urged the case for making insider dealing a civil offence because that may carry a lower burden of proof. They have argued that although the offence exists and the penalties are strong—limitless fines and up to seven years in prison—the number of prosecutions has not been substantial, and nor has the number of individuals convicted.

Nevertheless cases have been brought, people have been convicted and penalties have been imposed. Moreover, we cannot quantify the deterrent effect that that may have on the marketplace, preventing people who would otherwise have been tempted to do so from engaging in insider dealing.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: Does the Minister accept that there would be greater public confidence in the system that he has described if there were greater transparency? He said that it would be possible to release the DTI report on Lord Archer's share dealing if all the parties agreed. Will he urge his noble Friend to agree to that?

Mr. Nelson: No I would not, because the President of the Board of Trade has made it clear that not only did he obtain one set of legal advice from a chartered accountant and a Queen's counsel—that was the advice of the inspectors, given to him as the Secretary of State—but he then chose not simply to take that advice but to submit that report to a second opinion, as it were, by putting it to counsel. Both sets of advice were clear: no foundation existed for prosecution in that case.

Although under section 179(1) of the Financial Services Act 1986 the Secretary of State is allowed to disclose information collected by section 177 inspectors, provided that he has the permission of

> "the person from whom the primary recipient"—

that is, the inspectors—

> "obtained the information and if different, the person to whom it relates",

the point is that that would require such permission from each separate person who gave a statement to the inspectors. Even if that were practicable, there is no express power for publication in the report itself. I am bound to observe that a more mischievous objective than a desire to ensure the integrity of the law or decisions of the Secretary of State prompts the hon. Gentleman to suggest that the matters have not been properly considered.

There was a full debate about the confidentiality of submissions to inspectors in such cases in the House of Lords. Indeed, the ministerial undertakings that section 177 reports would normally never be published were made during the Lords Committee stage of the Financial Services Bill by Lord Lucas of Chilworth. That is the case in this instance. That may not be a decision that the hon. Gentleman likes, but it reflects the proper way of dealing with such cases.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that such matters are considered carefully. I have not seen the report. That is also entirely proper. It is not for me, a Treasury Minister responsible for overall policy and the integrity of the financial markets as a whole, to second-guess reports, proposals and recommendations put to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

My right hon. Friend has made his position clear. The hon. Gentleman is going over history. There is nothing new to elucidate and I have said nothing new in my remarks this afternoon which should encourage him to believe that there will be any change of mind on the matter. The points that he raised were more about pursuing an individual high-profile case and claim than a genuine attempt to improve the effectiveness of our insider dealing legislation. It is important legislation. It sends broader messages to the financial markets as a whole. Its aim is not served by dwelling on cases and making comments such as the hon. Gentleman has made this afternoon.

If the hon. Gentleman were really concerned about the wider implication of loss through insider dealing, he might have dealt with some of the issues surrounding how the new legislation was working out in practice and the new monitoring and surveillance systems of the London stock exchange. We heard nothing about that from the hon. Gentleman. I have no wish in the last moments of the proceedings of the House before we adjourn for Christmas to take the hon. Gentleman to task in this season of good will, but the Government attach great importance to the legislation, great seriousness to the crime of insider dealing and great precedence to the legislation and the cases that we have seen through.

The debate was an opportunity to have a more wide-ranging and important debate of interest to people outside the House. Having said that, it has provided me with an opportunity to set out the importance that the Government attach to the subject and some of the legislative history. I hope that that will be of reassurance to a wider audience outside the House, if not to the hon. Gentleman.

It being two minutes to Three o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put, pursuant to resolution [16 December].

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 5 December 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Gipsies and Travellers

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what discussions he has had with his ministerial colleagues regarding the effects of withdrawing the legal obligation to provide sites for gipsy and traveller communities with particular reference to a possible challenge in the European Court of Human Rights.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. Policy in this area is not a matter for which my Department has responsibility.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what external advice he was given regarding the withdrawal of the legal obligation to provide sites for travellers and gipsies under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. This policy is not one for which my Department has responsibility.

Court Hearings (Waiting Lists)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to reduce long waiting times before court hearings are heard.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The work of all courts is monitored to ensure the most effective use of resources to reduce delay for court users. Waiting times for cases vary considerably and are determined by several factors, some of which are outside the control of the courts.

In the Crown court, current initiatives include the introduction of plea and directions hearings to help reduce delays. More circuit judges have been appointed and plans have been made to increase the number of days sat in the Crown court.

With regard to civil cases, Lord Woolf is conducting a wide-ranging review of the rules and procedures in the civil courts, and Dame Margaret Booth is researching delay in Children Act cases.

Legal Aid

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received on the likely effect of the changes to legal aid regarding the combination of fees for advocacy and litigation in criminal cases in magistrates courts in the willingness of solicitors to undertake advocacy work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There have been no recent changes in legal aid payments in criminal cases in the magistrates courts which have resulted in combined fees for litigation and advocacy. I have no plans to introduce such changes. Accordingly, I have received no representations about this subject.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the qualifications for legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: To qualify for civil legal aid, an applicant must be able to show that he or she has reasonable grounds for taking or defending an action and that it is reasonable in all the circumstances of the case that legal aid be granted. He or she must also be assessed as having disposable income and capital within limits laid down in regulations. These are currently £7,060 for income and £6,750 for capital; the figures are £7,780 and £8,560 for personal injury cases. An applicant for criminal legal aid must be able to show that it is in the interest of justice that legal aid be granted, and that he requires help in meeting the costs of his case.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the total number of medical legal aid cases which were received between January 1983 and December 1993; and how many of these cases required a tribunal sitting.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Legal aid is not available for the majority of cases dealt with by tribunals. Legal aid is available, however, for pursuing claims in the civil courts. The number of legal aid certificates issued in respect of medical negligence cases is available only on a financial year basis; between April 1983 and March 1994 approximately 81,000 civil legal aid certificates were issued in total. Information is not available as to the means of disposal of those cases.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what estimate he has made of the amount and the percentage of the legal aid budget that was spent in the past three years by those claiming *(a)* because their financial assets were frozen and *(b)* they were bankrupt.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Departmental and agency expenditure in support of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people includes cost elements associated with staff numbers, training, publicity, provision of special equipment and modifications to buildings and cannot be disaggregated. The number of staff or staff hours equivalent allocated to achieve the objectives cannot be estimated as implementation will require the commitment of staff throughout the Department and its agencies.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Details of the number of staff who have declared a disability for the years 1990 to 1994 inclusive are set out in the tables. For the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Public Trust Office details are given of those staff who have classified themselves as disabled, whether registered or not. Projected figures for the next five years are not available.

Number and percentage of disabled staff employed by the Lord Chancellor's Department over the past five years.

	Able Bodied	*Per cent.*	*Disabled*	*Per cent.*	*Not Known*	*Per cent.*
1990	7,063	62.8	379	3.4	3,809	33.8
1991	7,984	67.8	422	3.6	3,360	28.6
1992	8,776	72.9	464	3.8	2,770	23.3
1993	8,954	74	454	3.8	2,679	22.2
1994	8,720	73.4	401	3.4	2,765	23.2

Number and Percentage of Disabled Staff Employed by the Public Trust Office over the Past Five Years.

	Able Bodied	*Per cent.*	*Disabled*	*Per cent.*	*Not Known*	*Per cent.*
1990	354	59.5	15	2.5	226	38
1991	372	63.6	16	2.7	197	33.7
1992	395	67.4	17	2.9	175	29.7
1993	398	70.3	19	3.4	149	26.3
1994	380	69.1	18	3.3	152	27.6

Number and Percentage of Registered Disabled Staff Employed by the Land Registry over the Past Five Years

	Registered disabled	*Per cent.*
1990	286	2.8
1991	262	2.6
1992	259	2.6
1993	241	2.6
1994	246	2.8

Number and Percentage of Registered Disabled Staff Employed by the Public Record Office over the Past Five Years

	Registered disabled	*Per cent.*
1990	Not available	
1991	11	2.5
1992	11	2.6
1993	9	2.1
1994	14	2.95

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published at the beginning of March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies.

Secure Hospital Accommodation

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received from judges as to the availability of secure hospital accommodation for mentally affected defendants; and what consultations he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and the Home Secretary about such accommodation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department has not received any representations from judges on the availability of such accommodation, nor has there been discussion with the Secretary of State for Health or the Home Secretary on this subject. The provision of these services is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and health authorities exercise the function on her behalf.

Custody Waiting Times

Mr. Straw: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the number and percentage of defendants dealt with within the custody waiting time limits set by his Department in each year since these waiting limits were set.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Information about the statutory custody time limits is not collected in the form requested for either the magistrates or Crown court. So far as the Crown court is concerned, of the 19,738 defendants remanded in custody who were committed for trial and dealt with during the first 10 months of 1994, 74 per cent. of them—around 14,670 defendants—waited less than 16 weeks. It is not possible to provide an accurate comparable figure for earlier periods.

Sentencing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what actions he is taking to ensure judges understand their responsibilities on sentencing under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Judges receive copies of statutes and statutory instruments and keep themselves up to date on new and amended legislation. During seminars, and through its bulletin, the Judicial Studies Board draws the attention of judges to relevant sentencing information.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years;

(2) what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office, which has no associated agencies, consists of 38 staff, many of whom are on loan from other Departments. No registered disabled people are currently employed, or have been employed during the last five years, and there are no projected figures. The size and nature of the Department make it inappropriate to seek to allocate resources specifically to the programme in question.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Lord President of the Council what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in late February or early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies.

ENVIRONMENT

Dogs (Byelaws)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to approve new byelaws to hold owners more accountable for their pets in respect of dog faeces on streets and public footways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Ceridigion and Pembroke North (Mr. Dafis) on 30 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *731*.

Radioactive Substances Act 1960

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what duty of care requirements there are on the operator of a disposal site for low-level radioactive waste under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, as amended.

Mr. Atkins: The disposal of low-level radioactive waste to such sites is regulated by means of authorisations granted under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993. Each authorisation sets out the limits and conditions required for safe disposal at a specified site, and places a legal duty on the person authorised to ensure that disposal takes place in accordance with the limits and conditions of the authorisation.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the standard spending assessments for 1994–95.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: On Thursday 1 December at columns *1333-37* my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a statement on the local government finance settlement for 1995–96, including proposals for standard spending assessments.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. Gummer: None. Civil Servants may provide briefing of a factual nature for Ministers on matters relating to their own Departments. In addition, Ministers in preparing for a constituency speech can draw on material produced by their Department during the normal course of business.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Expenditure in support of this programme includes elements for staff consultation, publicity, training and modifications of buildings and accommodation which cannot be disaggregated. There is, however, a specific annual budget—£21,500 this year—for the provision and maintenance of technical aids for disabled staff.

It is estimated that staff resources to initiate the programme will be the equivalent of 1.2 dedicated staff; its implementation, however, will also require the commitment of personnel managers, trainers, line managers and other staff throughout the Department.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Robert B Jones: The following information covers non-industrial staff in my Department and agencies, excluding Property Services Agency:

Year	*Registered Disabled Staff*	*Non-Registered Disabled Staff*[1]	*Combined percentage of Total Staff*
1990	68	86	2.5
1991	73	58	2.5
1992	64	34	1.5
1993	64	34	1.5
1994	70	68	2.0

[1] voluntary responses to staff surveys have revealed a mixture of registered and non-registered disabled staff.

Future figures are not projected.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities are unable to fund disabled facilities grants in the current financial year.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: None.

Local Government Commission

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether it is his policy to implement any recommendations from the Local Government Commission which will add to the administrative costs of local government in the areas concerned.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My right hon. Friend takes his decisions on local government reorganisation in the light of reports from the Local Government Commission. The policy guidance to the commission requires it to judge financial consequences, among other factors, but does not rule out options which would be marginally more expensive than the status quo if the extra cost would be outweighed by other considerations. The actual costs or savings achieved will depend on decisions taken by the authorities concerned.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has received from the local government commissioner of the transitional and on-going costs for savings arising from its recommendations that new unitary authorities should be established in Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hampshire.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is contained in the local government financial appraisal reports for Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hampshire published separately in October 1994 by the Local Government Commission for England. The information, which relates to indirect costs, is as follows:

	Transitional £ millions	*Ongoing savings costs £ millions*
Bedfordshire	7—10	(2)—1
Buckinghamshire	10—13	(2)—(5)
Hampshire	10—12	(1)—(5)

Notes:

[1] Transitional costs relate to the cost of reorganisation spread over a number of years.

[2] Savings—costs—shown are annual figures.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the implications for tenants of Thamesmead Town Ltd. and the London boroughs of Greenwich and Bexley of the new measures for housing benefit outlined by the Secretary of State for Social Security on 30 November.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: None.

Urban Policy

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the priorities for Her Majesty's Government's urban policy during the current Session of Parliament.

Mr. Curry: The Government's aim is to provide sustainable regeneration and economic development through main and European spending programmes; through the single regeneration budget, including English Partnerships; and by levering in private investment. Following my right hon. learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement, some £4 billion will be made available through the SRB alone over the next three years to support partnership and other locally based regeneration activities. Local people in urban and other areas will therefore benefit from a wide range of employment, training, education, housing, crime prevention and other measures.

Appropriation Accounts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the 1993–94 appropriation accounts.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Volume 6 of the 1993–94 appropriation accounts will be laid before the House of Commons and published once the Comptroller and Auditor General has completed his audit work. At present, this is expected to be in January 1995.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in late February—early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies.

Waste Water Treatment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from water and sewerage companies to vary the dates for the achievement of targets set by the European Union municipal waste water treatment directive with respect to *(a)* inland sewerage treatment works and *(b)* storm sewer overflows and establishment of guidelines for flexibility of capital expenditure between the two.

Mr. Atkins: The Government made clear in "Water Charges: The Quality Framework" published in October 1993 that some modification of the urban waste water treatment directive, particularly the deadlines, was desirable. The European waste water group, an alliance of private and public sector operators of waste water treatment plants in the United Kingdom and some other member states, has also recommended to the European Commission that the time scale for implementation of this directive should be re-examined so as to ensure that the rate of change in charges is sustainable by the customer. The distribution of capital expenditure is a matter for the water companies subject to the various requirements of the directive and the overall price limits set by the Director General of Water Services.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Dicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made with the single regeneration budget; when he will be announcing the results of the first bidding round; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Resources for the single regeneration budget for 1995–96 and the two subsequent years have been maintained at over £1.3 billion per year. These resources will enable the single regeneration budget to support continuing public investment in initiatives to encourage regeneration including urban development corporations, housing action trusts, English Partnerships, business start-up, estate action and city challenge. These commitments are worth more than £1 billion year.

In addition to meeting these existing commitments, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has been able to provide for an increase in resources for the first single regeneration budget bidding round of £75 million over the next three years. This will boost the funds available for the first round to £125 million in year one, 1995–96, and £225 million in each of the years 1996–97 and 1997–98.

As well as increasing resources for the first round, my right hon. Friend has also been able to find resources for a second bidding round which will be launched next year, working up to a total of £200 million in 1997–98, with £40 million available in 1996–97 for early funding of approved bids.

In all, the provision for the single regeneration budget over the next three years is almost £4 billion, of which over £800 million will be available for new projects.

The overall quality of the bids submitted in the first round was excellent. In line with the bidding guidance for the single regeneration budget, which was issued on 14 April, the bids covered a range of objectives, including employment, training and education, support for enterprise, housing projects, crime prevention schemes and initiatives directed specifically to ethnic minority communities. Most of the bids demonstrated a strong emphasis on sustainable development and lasting regeneration.

The bids have been drawn together with a wide range of partners from all sectors of the community. The bidding process has engendered an unprecedented level of co-operation between local authorities, training and enterprise councils, the private and voluntary sectors, and others.

The first round bids indicate that every £1 of support from the single regeneration budget will, over the lifetime of projects, generate some £4 in other private and public contributions.

The increased resources available for the first bidding round should mean that, of the total of 469 bids submitted for funding to the Government offices for the regions, about 200 are likely to be successful. Details of the successful individual bids will be published tomorrow, and will be placed in the Library of the House and circulated to hon. Members.

Local Government Reorganisation

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provisions he intends to make for employees in local authorities in England and Wales affected by local government reorganisation and for severance pay generally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Regulations have been laid before the House today which provide mandatory compensation terms for staff made redundant by the reorganisation of local government in England and Wales. In addition, the regulations give local authority employers the opportunity to provide improved levels of severance pay in general cases of redundancy and new powers to pay compensatory lump sum payments to groups of eligible pensioners whose pensions were reduced following the Court of appeal judgement in Allsop *v.* North Tyneside MBC. The regulations come into force on 28 December. Copies have been placed in the Library.

In making these regulations we have built on the proposals which we consulted earlier this year, and we have taken account of all the representations which we have received, including the advice and comments of the Local Government Staff Commission (England) and the Staff Commission for Wales.

The regulations now provide a new statutory framework for employers to compensate employees made redundant in the future on the basis of a tariff linked to the age and service of the employees concerned. For cases of redundancy due to reorganisation, special mandatory provisions will apply. This recognises the key role of local government staff in the transition to reorganised authorities.

The cost of all severance payments must be met from authorities' own resources and not from local authority pension funds. Future settlements will take account of the transitional costs of local government reorganisation, including those arising from severance payments.

I am pleased also to announce two consultation exercises beginning today with the local authority associations, local authorities and other local government interests. The first deals with proposals for a detriment compensation scheme in England and Wales to provide compensation to employees who suffer a reduction in salary as a result of reorganisation. The second is about draft regulations to provide arrangements for general staffing matters arising from reorganisation in England. Responses to both of these exercises are being requested by 23 January 1995.

Copies of both consultation papers on a detriment scheme and the draft regulations on staffing are also being placed in the Library.

Regional Funding

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those public projects which received European regional development funding and were subsequently privatised over the last 10 years, indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 24 November 1994.]:* The information for projects in England for which my Department is responsible has been placed in the Library of the House.

Christmas Expenditure

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much public money will be spent on entertaining, Christmas decorations and other festive activities this Christmas season by his Department and Government agencies answerable to his Department; and of this sum how much will be spent in Ministers' private offices and official residences.

Mr. Gummer: Disaggregated information of this nature is not available; such costs are covered by the entertainment expenditure budget for the Department, details of which were given in reply to a question from the hon. member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 24 October 1994, *Official Report*, column *405*.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many official Christmas cards he and his Ministers intend to send in 1994; how much these cards will cost *(a)* to buy, *(b)* to post and *(c)* in staff time, to sign, address and place in envelopes; and if he will place in the library a sample copy of the official Christmas card he intends to send this year.

Mr. Gummer: A total of 740 official Christmas cards have been ordered for the six Ministers in the Department of the Environment. Printing costs for these will be £318.20, which includes a donation to charity and also value added tax. The unit cost will be 43p. Postages are estimated to be £140.60. Information on the cost of staff time signing, addressing and placing into envelopes is not available. I will place a sample of this year's card in the Library.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil Servants

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister how many applications have been made by civil servants who wish to leave Government for posts in the private sector in the past five years; and how many of these applications have been *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected.

The Prime Minister: Complete information is not available in the form requested. Most applicants are considered by Departments, and the information is not held centrally.

All applications by officers at grade 3 equivalent and above, and cases at grade 7 and above where there has been contact with the prospective employer, are referred to the Cabinet Office. A total of 1,348 applications have been referred to the Cabinet Office since 1 January 1990; of these, 967 were approved unconditionally and 381 were approved with conditions. Under the business appointment rules, applications cannot be rejected outright, but approval may be made subject to behaviourial conditions or to waiting periods of up to a maximum of two years.

A breakdown between applications to take up private sector appointments and those in public sector organisations outside central Government could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people;

(2) what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

The Prime Minister: For these purposes, my office is classed as part of the Cabinet Office. I therefore refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Prime Minister what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

The Prime Minister: For these purposes, my office is classed as part of the Cabinet Office. I therefore refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Efficiency Scrutiny

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what basis the public sector research establishments in the Ministry of Defence and those in Northern Ireland were excluded from the on-going efficiency scrutiny.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Defence establishments were excluded from the multidepartmental efficiency scrutiny of public sector research establishments in the light of the separate "Front Line First" review under way within the Ministry of Defence. Developments in that review were, however, monitored by the scrutiny team. The Northern Ireland civil service, as a distinct and separate entity, is not normally included within the remit of multidepartmental efficiency scrutinies but shadows them to ensure that best practice is read across in a manner tailored to local circumstances.

Large Hadron Collider Project

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has made of the additional contributions to the large hadron collider project which could come from future participants.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: It is too early to say what additional contributions to the large hadron collider project might be forthcoming from new future participants. Discussions are generally at a very early stage.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total cost of the large hadron collider project so far.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Nothing.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the amount of the United Kingdom contributions to the large hadron collider so far.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Zero.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will name the countries which are interested in contributing to the large hadron collider project at CERN.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Many countries have expressed interest in participating in the large hadron collider project at CERN which will be the world's premier particle physics endeavour. Negotiations with individual countries are at various stages of advance and we hope these can be successfully concluded as soon as possible once formal approval of the project has been given.

Efficiency Scrutiny

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the costs, so far incurred, of the efficiency scrutiny being carried out into the public sector research establishments.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: As stated in the report published on 11 July 1994, the cost of the undertaking this scrutiny was approximately £157,000. This figure does not include the costs incurred by establishments and others in providing information: these costs are not collected centrally. The costs to date of co-ordinating the public consultation process amount to some £27,400.

Crown Servants

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what consideration underlay the decision not to publish after 1989 an annual report on the acceptance of outside appointments by Crown servants as promised in the "Statistical Report 1980";

(2) when he next intends to publish a statistical report of acceptance of outside appointments by Crown servants.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Statistics on the acceptance of outside appointments by the Crown servants have been published in various forms over recent years, including in the statistical reports published periodically by the Cabinet Office since 1986. Since the last formal report, covering the period ending 31 December 1989, comprehensive statistics have been supplied by the Cabinet Office for publication in the fourth report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, Session 1990–91; in the minutes of evidence taken before the Treasury and Civil Service Sub-Committee on the role of the civil service on 23 November 1993; and in answer to various questions from hon. Members, most recently in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 20 April 1994, *Official Report*, columns *577–80*. I intend to publish a further formal statistical report in 1995.

Quangos

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those quangos to which members are appointed by the Government or nominees of the Government and the annual cost of salary or emolument payments to members of the quangos.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I refer the hon. Member to the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1993", copies of which are available in the Libraries of both Houses. This lists all non-departmental public bodies, and certain other bodies, and shows appointments by the Queen and her Ministers, including those made on their behalf or jointly, as well as any remuneration of board chairmen or members.

Inner Cities

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussion he has had, in his capacity as chairman of the ministerial committee on regeneration, on policies aimed at the restoration of pride in inner cities.

Mr. David Hunt: Discussions in my role as chairman of a ministerial committee are confidential.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is not available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in late February—early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The figures are as follows:

Cabinet Office, including the Prime Minister's Office and the Office of Public Service and Science

Year	*Number of registered Disabled Staff*	*Percentage of registered disabled staff in Department/ Agency*
1990	27	1.1
1991	38	1.6
1992	31	1.3
1993	38.5	1.7
1994	24	1.1

HMSO

Year	*Number of registered disabled staff*	*Percentage of registered disabled staff in Department/ Agency*
1990	69	2.1
1991	61	1.8
1992	55	1.7
1993	53	1.7
1994	46	1.6

Central Office of Information

Year	*Number of registered disabled staff*	*Percentage of registered disabled staff in Department/ Agency*
1990	11	1.5
1991	8	1.2
1992	7	1.1
1993	5	0.9
1994	4	0.8

Projected figures for the aforementioned areas are not available.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: My Department's expenditure in support of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people includes a proportion of the cost of its personnel and support services. This sum, which covers training, special equipment, modification of buildings and accommodation, cannot be disaggregated. Within the Office of Public Service and Science there is, however, an equal opportunities division which is responsible for promoting equality of opportunity service-wide. The total budget in 1994–95 for EOD's disability branch is £117,000.

Successful implementation of the action programme will require the commitment not only of equal opportunities officers but of other personnel specialists, training officers, and individual line managers throughout the organisation. The number of staff hours that will be devoted to this cannot be estimated with any accuracy.

Budget Information

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make available in the Vote Office the background note to the Budget, news release from the Cabinet Office—OPSS 242/94—on science expenditure maintained at record level in 1995–96.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I have made available in the Vote Office the news release from the Cabinet Office—OPSS 242/94—with the background note to the science budget attached. I have also arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the special advisers employed by his Department in each of the last five years indicating when they *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department and the annual salary they received.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department did not exist in any comparable form before 1992. Figure for earlier years are therefore not available. The figures since 1992 are:

	(a)	*(b)*
Mr. I. Wilton	April 1992	November 1993
Dr. J. Nicholson	September 1992	July 1994
Mr. D. Rutley	January 1994	July 1994
Mr. M. McManus	July 1994	to date

I have also been asked to list the special advisers in the Chief Whip's Office as follows:

	(a)	*(b)*
Miss S. Hole	September 1991	to date
Miss S. McEwen	June 1992	to date

Salaries for special advisers are negotiated individually in relation to their previous earnings, and are confidential.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Staff Salaries

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission if he will list the members of staff of the House whose salaries are higher than those of *(a)* junior Ministers, *(b)* Ministers of State and *(c)* Cabinet Ministers.

Mr. Beith: There are 37 Officers of the House at grade 5 and above whose salaries are higher than those received by junior Ministers, 17 who receive higher salaries than Ministers of State and three whose salaries are higher than those for Cabinet Ministers. Details of the posts and grades were set out in my answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, columns *191-93*.

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *191*, if he will list those staff of the House not included in his answer whose salary plus additional payments takes their emoluments above the salary of hon. Members.

Mr. Beith: There are 45 staff at grades 7 to 12, in addition to those listed in my answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, columns *191-93*, whose salary plus additional payments takes their emoluments above the salary of hon. Members.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Serious Fraud Office

35. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the work of the Serious Fraud Office.

The Attorney-General: The Serious Fraud Office has a current case load of 49 cases. Since 6 April 1988, it has been responsible for 139 trials involving 303 defendants, of whom 191 have been convicted.

36. Lenient Sentences

36. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Attorney-General what trends he can report on appeals against lenient sentencing.

The Solicitor-General: As the Attorney-General's power of review becomes more widely recognised and his jurisdiction extended, the number of sentences he is asked to consider has increased.

Brendan Smyth

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Attorney-General (1) if he will publish a detailed explanation of his role in the Brendan Smyth extradition case and related issues;

(2) if he will set out any points of difference or emphasis that he has with the detailed explanation of the Irish Attorney-General's into the circumstances surrounding the extradition to Northern Ireland of Brendan Smyth which was published in Dublin on 9 November 1994.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to my written answers to him on 21 November 1994, *Official Report*, columns *37-38;* 25 November 1994, columns *388-89;* and 28 November 1994, column *512*.

I understand that the report of the former Irish Attorney- General to his Cabinet on the circumstances surrounding the processing by his office of the request for extradition of Brendan Smyth has been placed in the library of the Dail, and that the present Irish Attorney-General has published in *The Irish Times* of 2 December 1994 a further detailed report, which includes extracts from the former report. Copies of *The Irish Times* are in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

UNESCO

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in the United States of America about rejoining UNESCO.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has not had any recent discussions with his United States counterpart about rejoining UNESCO. My officials here and in Washington and Paris are, however, in regular contact with their United States counterparts.

We are keeping the issue of rejoining closely under review but have come to no decision yet.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Goodlad: The number and percentage of registered disabled people employed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, including the Overseas Development Administration, in the past five years are set out in the table. Projected figures for the next five years are not available.

Year	*Number*	*Percentage*
1990	45	0.57
1991	49	0.62
1992	49.5	0.62
1993	50.5	0.65
1994	51.5	0.65

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Goodlad: FCO-ODA expenditure in support of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people includes cost elements associated with staff numbers, training, special equipment, modification of buildings and accommodation and cannot be disaggregated. The Department is committed to achieving the objectives of the programme, but the number of staff or staff hours equivalent allocated to achieve these objectives cannot be estimated since successful implementation will require the commitment not only of equal opportunities officers but of personnel managers, recruitment officers and individual line managers throughout the Department.

General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government support the social clauses proposed in the GATT negotiations, to be discussed in the social summit convened in Copenhagen by the United Nations in March 1995.

Mr. David Davis: The Government do not support calls for the inclusion of a social clause in the GATT or other multilateral trade agreements. We remain unconvinced that trade measures are an appropriate or effective way of addressing the issue of labour standards. We believe this issue is better addressed in other ways and other forums, notably the International Labour Organisation. We are concerned that changes to GATT rules, ostensibly to promote social objectives, could be used as a cover for protectionist action.

Romania

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what submissions he has made to the Romanian Government concerning the proposed introduction of a prison sentence for those who fly Hungarian flags or sing Hungarian anthems.

Mr. Baldry: Legislation for a revised criminal code is being considered by the Romanian Parliament. We are monitoring developments closely.

Nuclear Disarmament

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what considerations led Her Majesty's Government to abstain in the vote on the resolution regarding nuclear disarmament proposed by Japan, A/C.1/49/L.33/rev.1, in the first committee of the United Nations.

Mr. David Davis: We abstained out of concern that this resolution, which was tabled after the main body of resolutions on nuclear issues, could be seen to cut across existing initiatives in the sensitive area of nuclear arms control.

Bosnia

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his current policy on the safe areas in Bosnia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We fully support United Nations Security Council resolutions 824, which designates the cities of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, Bihac and Srebrenica as safe areas in Bosnia, and 836, which authorises UNPROFOR, acting in self-defence, to take the necessary measures, including the use of force, in reply to bombardments against the safe areas or to armed incursions into them.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in late February-early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies.

Euratom

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to raise the matter of the application of Euratom safeguards to all Swedish nuclear facilities on accession to the Economic Union, at the next Foreign Affairs Council.

Mr. David Davis: I understand that Sweden has accepted the safeguards provision of the Euratom treaty and the application of existing safeguards in full. There is therefore no need to raise the matter in Council.

Appropriation Accounts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to publish the 1993–94 appropriation accounts.

Mr. Goodlad: Volume 2 of the 1993–94 appropriation accounts will be laid before the House of Commons and published once the Comptroller and Auditor General has completed his audit work. At present, this is expected to be in January 1995.

Labour Attachés

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the United Kingdom embassies and missions which have officials working full time as labour attachés; and which of them are seconded from other Ministries.

Mr. Goodlad: Four overseas missions, in Bonn, Brussels, Madrid and Paris, have full-time United Kingdom-based labour attaché positions. At present, these are all filled by secondees from the Department of Employment.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each of the incidents that have taken place in detention centres in Hong Kong holding Vietnamese boat people where either the police or armed forces were called in to quell a disturbance since 1 January 1994.

Mr. Goodlad: Since 1 January 1994, there have been three occasions on which the royal Hong Kong police force and the correctional services department of the Hong Kong Government have had to enter detention centres holding Vietnamese migrants to maintain order. The first was on 7 April at the Whitehead detention centre. The second on 19 and 20 September, and the third on 20 November, were at the High Island detention centre, both preceding repatriation flights which took place a few days later.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total number of Vietnamese boat people being held in detention in Hong Kong on 28 November.

Mr. Goodlad: On 28 November 1994 there were 23,538 Vietnamese migrants in detention in Hong Kong.

EU Fisheries Commissioner

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 24 November, *Official Report,* column *304,* what plans he has for consultations with the President of the Commission over the reallocation of the post of the EU Fisheries Commissioner following the Norwegian referendum.

Mr. David Davis: It is for the incoming President to allocate portfolios in consultation with the other Commissioners-designate. We have long argued that the Fisheries Commissioner should be fully committed to stock conservation and to the cost-effective operation of the common fisheries policy.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. Baldry: None. Civil servants may provide briefing of a factual nature for Ministers on matters relating to their own Departments. In addition, Ministers preparing for a constituency speech can draw on material produced by their Department during the normal course of business.

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the United Nations by states of the Economic Community of West African States about *(a)* the cost of the ECOMOG peacekeeping operations in Liberia, *(b)* the need for more logistical support and *(c)* their commitment to the Liberian operations; and what has been the response of the United Nations.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 29 November 1994]:* The only formal approach to the United Nations by ECOWAS has been that of President Soglo of Benin, who wrote to the Secretary-General of the UN following the signing of the Cotonou agreement to ask for UN support for the ECOWAS monitoring group, ECOMOG. In response, the UN Secretary-General established the UN trust fund to support the expanded ECOMOG operation.

More recently, President Abacha wrote to the UN Secretary-General on 17 October 94 about the material difficulties faced by ECOMOG. A high-level UN mission is now visiting west Africa to investigate the ways in which UN-ECOMOG co-operation can be enhanced.

The UN secretariat stays in close contact with all states contributing to ECOMOG. The regular calls for support for ECOMOG which appear in both UN Security Council resolutions and reports by the Secretary-General reflect the widespread concern that ECOMOG should be properly resourced to fulfil its role.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Targeting of Aid

41. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures his Department has taken to ensure that Britain's aid programme benefits the world's poorest people.

Mr. Baldry: Our aid to low-income countries is designed to promote lasting reduction of poverty through the encouragement of broad-based economic growth, through investment in social and infrastructure systems, through direct poverty reduction activities and through targeted help for those unable to benefit from growth.

43. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of overseas aid goes towards meeting basic needs.

Mr. Baldry: We estimate that in 1992–93 around 10 per cent. of United Kingdom bilateral aid expenditure was on basic human needs. In addition, we provided £150 million of bilateral emergency aid, most of which went to meet basic needs in times of crisis, as did much of the 46 per cent. of aid channelled through multilateral agencies.

44. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the overseas development budget goes towards assisting the world's poorest countries.

Mr. Baldry: In 1992–93 80 per cent. of United Kingdom bilateral aid to the developing countries which is allocable by income group was spent on aid to the poorest countries.

Sri Lanka

42. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the aid projects now being financed by the United Kingdom in Sri Lanka.

Mr. Baldry: The main focus of the current United Kingdom aid programme in Sri Lanka is support for forestry, education, relief and rehabilitation, and good government. A full list of current projects has been placed in the Library of the House.

Bangladesh

45. **Mr. Deva:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have taken place with the Government of Bangladesh about United Kingdom aid.

Mr. Baldry: I discussed our bilateral aid programme with the Bangladesh Finance Minister during my recent visit to Bangladesh. I also saw for myself the excellent development work with poor people being carried out by

Proshika, a local non-governmental organisation supported by the Overseas Development Administration.

Albania

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken *(a)* bilaterally and *(b)* via the European Community, to persuade the Greek Government to end its block upon the proposed European Union aid package to Albania; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The EU Foreign Affairs Council on 28 November agreed unanimously to release 15 mecu of a 35 mecu package of macro-economic aid to Albania. The release of a further 20 mecu will be decided by the Foreign Affairs Council in the light of a report from the Commission on the progress of economic reform and respect for human rights in Albania.

Pergau Dam

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the terms of reference and the time scale for reporting back on the review of development programmes announced by him in the light of the High Court ruling on the development support for the Pergau dam project; and if he will make the review findings public.

Mr. Baldry: The terms of the review are to examine all ODA activities that fall under section 1 of the Overseas Development and Cooperation Act 1980 in the light of the interpretation of the Act given in the Pergau judgment by the High Court. In particular, the review will consider whether any other current activities fall outside the Act as now interpreted.

It is the intention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to advise the House of the outcome of this review as soon as its conclusions are reached and the Government have decided whether or not to appeal against the judgment.

Departmental Statistics

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the *(a)* budget and *(b)* staffing level of the Overseas Development Administration (i) in 1974, (ii) in 1979 and (iii) at the latest date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The number of staff in ODA, including its agency, the Natural Resources Institute, were 2,164 on 1 April 1974, 2,285 on 1 April 1979 and 1,553 on 1 April 1994. The expenditure for which ODA is responsible was £364 million in 1974–75 and £848 million in 1979–80 and is estimated to be £2,396 million in 1994–95.

Staff reductions have been achieved by efficiency improvements so that the quality of aid programme delivery has remained high.

Crown Agents

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date he appointed Baroness Miller of Hendon as a Crown agent; on whose recommendation she was appointed; what relevant experience she had for the appointment; what annual payment is made for the appointment; what time is devoted each month to her work as a Crown agent; what official meetings she attends in this role in each year since her appointment; and what relevant interests she has which may conflict with her work as a Crown agent.

Mr Baldry: Baroness Miller of Hendon was appointed to the board of Crown Agents on 1 September 1990 following consideration of a number of potential candidates. She resigned on 22 July 1994, on her appointment as Baroness in Waiting. Baroness Miller was chairman and chief executive of an international purchasing and marketing company from 1972 to 1988, and brought considerable business experience to the work of the board.

Crown Agents board members currently receive an annual fee of £5,320 and usually devote about one day per month to their duties. Before appointment they are required to give assurances that they have no financial or other interests which would conflict with their responsibilities to the Crown Agents.

Family Planning Projects

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the 50 new family planning projects announced at the Cairo conference; how these projects are to be funded; and what funding will be taken out of other projects to fund them.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 1 December 1994]:* We expect to commit £100 million for population and reproductive health programmes in 1994 and 1995. These funds will be channelled through bilateral programmes, direct contributions to multilateral organisations and non-governmental organisations. No funds will be taken from other projects.

Know-How Fund

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money Britain spent from the know-how fund in 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94; and if he will give a breakdown by country and list the projects on which this money was spent.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 1 December 1994]:* Know-how fund expenditure in 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 is detailed in the table. Regularly updated lists of individual projects are available in the Libraries of both Houses.

United Kingdom gross public expenditure from the Know-How Fund—excluding emergency aid—1991–92 to 1993–94—£ thousands

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
FSU Central Asian Republics			
Kazakhstan	5	138	1,221
Kyrgyzstan	—	—	486
Tajikistan	—	—	3
Turkmenistan	—	—	4
Uzbekistan	—	267	634
Europe: CEE-FSU Countries in transition			
Belarus	—	26	185
Bulgaria	889	1,952	1,874
Former Czechoslovakia[1]	5,555	7,066	1,154

United Kingdom gross public expenditure from the Know-How Fund—excluding emergency aid
1991–92 to 1993–94—£ thousands

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Czech Republic[1]	—	70	2,768
Estonia	8	360	481
Hungary	5,730	5,824	6,281
Latvia	—	351	453
Lithuania	6	472	1,305
Moldova	—	—	65
Poland	9,944	10,584	11,878
Romania	839	3,090	3,741
Russian	6,601	11,654	19,787
Slovak Republic[1]	—	98	2,569
Ukraine	100	3,098	4,385
Europe: CEE-FSU			
Developing countries			
Albania	—	46	419
Armenia	—	1	54
Azerbaijan	—	81	131
Georgia	—	26	74
States of ex-Yugoslavia	—	45	498

[1] On January 1 1993 the former Czechoslovakia divided into the Czech and Slovak Republics. From then on assistance to these two countries is shown separately. Those joint programmes which began before this date are still recorded under former Czechoslovakia.

TREASURY

Secret Files

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many *(a)* top secret and *(b)* secret files his Department holds.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury currently has around 600 top secret files, well under 1 per cent. of the total number of files held in the Department. Information concerning the number of secret files is not available.

Child Care

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he will take to minimise the financial burden of child care on the low-paid and women following the proposal that national insurance contributions should be levied on employer-funded child care outside the workplace.

Sir George Young: National insurance contributions are not payable on employer-funded child care or other benefits in kind. The child care disregard for family credit which was introduced in October is worth up to £28 a week to low-paid couples and lone parents.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of his Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not yet available. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's departmental staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental reports, to be published in the late February-early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should, as far as possible, be achieved without redundancies.

Appropriation Accounts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to publish the 1993–94 appropriation accounts for his Department.

Sir George Young: Volume 12 of the 1993–94 appropriation accounts will be laid before the House of Commons and published once the Comptroller and Auditor General has completed his audit work. At present, this is expected to be in January 1995.

Government Debt

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about his review of the management of Government debt and gilt sales.

Mr. Nelson: The debt management review will look at the existing arrangements for the setting of debt management policy, the selling of government debt and the management of outstanding debt. Our objective is to ensure that the United Kingdom matches best practice in the rest of the world.

European Community Finance

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *155*, concerning differences between the text of the Edinburgh presidential conclusions and the relevant draft decisions of the Council of Ministers of the European Community, if he will list the textual differences together with an assessment of their respective significance.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Council decision 94/728/EC Euratom involves a number of changes from the existing own resources decision—Council decision 88/376, EEC, Euratom—which are not direct consequences of the Edinburgh future financing settlement. Most are minor changes of wording which have no effect on the meaning of the text. The more significant textual changes are as follows—unless otherwise specified, the article references relate to decision 94/728/ EC, Euratom:

Article

Replacement of the phrase "The budget of the Communities shall, irrespective of other revenue, be financed entirely from the Communities' own resources" with, "The budget of the Communities shall, without prejudice to other revenue, be financed wholly from the Communities' own resources."

This change is simply a matter of translation. The French text of the new decision retains the same wording as previously:

"Le budget des Communautés est, sans préjudice des autres recettes, intégralement financé par des ressources propres aux Communautés."

The new English translation is consistent with the wording of article 201 of the treaty of Rome.

Article 2(1)(d)

Introduction of a cross-reference to directive 89/130/EEC, Euratom (a directive spelling out how member states' gross national products are to be calculated for own resources purposes). The formula in the present own resources decision refers to

"a Directive [to be] adopted under Article 8(2) of the Decision".

Directive 89/130/EEC,Euratom had not been agreed when the 1988 ORD was adopted. It has however been in use since 1989, so the text of the new ORD involves no change in procedure.

Article 2(4)(b)

Removal of some redundant text—"For 1988, the gross amount of the reference compensation shall be reduced by 780 mecu"—referring to transitional arrangements for 1988, since the point is now of no relevance.

Article 2(7) of Decision 88/376,EEC,Euratom

Deletion of this article, which covers the arrangements for assessing the financial contributions of member states in which the method of calculating the "harmonised" base for VAT-based own resource contributions has not been established. This Article has become redundant since the uniform rate of VAT applies in all member states—and where the point is of relevance to a new member state, temporary arrangements are more appropriately a matter for the treaty of Accession.

Article 5

Modification to give legal force to the informal understanding reached in 1988 that is the United Kingdom abatement were to exceed our contributions under the VAT based resource, any excess could be offset against our fourth resource payments; the present ORD simply states that the abatement shall be offset against our VAT based contributions. Also a minor change in the way other member states' contributions to the abatement are accounted for in the Community budget.

Article 8

Renumbering of cross-reference to treaty article—previously 206a, now 188c—reflecting restructuring of treaty after Maastricht.

Article 9

Addition of reference to refunds received by Greece between 1981 and 1985. These were previously in Greek treaty of accession. The point is of no substance whatsoever.

Article 11

Deletion of a redundant provision relating to the financing of the high flux reactor—scientific research project on the Dutch-German border—of 1984–1987.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which members of the European Community have approved the Council decision 94/729 of 31 October 1994; by which date he expects it to come into force; by what means and to whom member states are making known their completion of their necessary constitutional procedures; and by what means such notifications are publicised.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: To date, no member state has ratified the 1994 own resources decision, although on current information Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Ireland and Italy are expected to do so by the end of the year.

Member states will notify the Secretary General of the Council, in writing, upon completion of their necessary constitutional procedures. The own resources decision will enter into force on the first day of the month following the receipt of final notification by the Secretary General of the Council. Member states will then be notified in writing of this by the Council secretariat.

Hotel and Guest House Accommodation

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what studies have been conducted into the effect of VAT on hotel and guest house accommodation throughout the European Community.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am not aware of any completed studies on VAT and hotel accommodation throughout the European Community.

Barnett Formula

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the future of the Barnett formula.

Mr. Aitken: Public expenditure in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland continues to be determined mainly by reference to the block and population-related formula arrangements, which were updated in 1992.

Tobacco Smuggling

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps his Department is taking to combat tobacco smuggling.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In order to combat smuggling from other EU member states, Customs has allocated some 240 staff in single market excise work, most of whom are specially trained excise verification officers. The EVO effort is intelligence directed, and is supported by other specialist investigation staff and the control measures taken by Excise and VAT visiting officers. Frontier controls by customs staff are used to counter smuggling from outside the EU.

Late Payment of Bills

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many of the bills paid by his Department during the last month for which figures are available were paid within *(a)* up to one month, *(b)* up to two months, *(c)* up to three months, *(d)* up to six months and *(e)* over six months from receipt of invoice; and how many were over the date for payment by (i) up to one month, (ii) up to two months, (iii) up to three months, (iv) up to six months and (v) over six months;

(2) of the bills currently awaiting payment in his Department how many are over the advised payment date by *(a)* up to one month, *(b)* up to two months, *(c)* up to three months, *(d)* up to six months and *(e)* over six months respectively.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 1 December 1994]:* The information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Departments, however, are required to provide details of their annual payment performance in their departmental reports. In the three months to end October 1993, on average, 93 per cent. of invoices were paid within agreed terms or 30 days, whichever was the sooner.

Selector Europe

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contracts have been awarded by his Department or organisations responsible to it to Selector Europe since 1 January 1990; and what has been the value of the contracts.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 2 December 1994]:* The Treasury has not awarded any contracts to Selector Europe.

TRANSPORT

A30

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is able to announce the preferred route for the scheme to improve the A30 trunk road between St. Erth and Newtown.

Mr. Watts: I am pleased to be able to announce today the preferred route for the improvement of this section of the A30 trunk road in the far west of Cornwall. Brochures giving details of the route are being sent to all affected and interested parties.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objections of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport has a departmental programme of action for equal opportunities. This embraces action for staff with disabilities.

Departmental expenditure, the number of staff or staff hours equivalent allocated to achieve the objective of the programme for action cannot be estimated, since successful implementation will require the commitment not only of equal opportunities officers but of other personnel officers, recruitment and training officers and individual line managers throughout the organisation.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Norris: The table gives the numbers and percentages of registered disabled people—RDP—employed in this Department and associated agencies over the past five years.

Year	*RDP*	*Total staff*	*RDP as a percentage of total staff*
1990	180.05	15,229.05	1.2
1991	185.00	14,804.05	1.2
1992	191.05	15,346.05	1.2
1993	186.05	14,412.00	1.3
1994	181.00	12,929.05	1.4

Projected figures are not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each department, branch and agency.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in late February—early March 1995.

Railtrack

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much of his Departmental budget has been allocated to advertising and promoting the sale of Railtrack plc.

Mr. Watts: For 1994–95, £12 million has been set aside for external advice on railways privatisation. Within that, there is no specific provision for marketing the sale of Railtrack.

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the names of consultancy firms employed to assist with the sale of Railtrack plc;

(2) how much his Department has spent on consultancy firms employed to assist with the sale of Railtrack plc.

Mr. Watts: No consultants have yet been appointed specifically to advise the Government on the flotation of Railtrack.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those items of expenditure and receipts included under the heading "Privatisation effects" in the table accompanying his Department's press notice 457, issued on 29 November, which are not included under the heading "British Rail privatisation" in table 1.1 in his Department's transport report 1994, Cm 2506, and vice versa.

Mr. Watts The privatisation effects listed in the table accompanying the Department's press notice No. 457 include the proceeds from the sale of rolling stock leasing companies—ROSCOs—and other rail businesses apart from Railtrack that will be scored in the Department of Transport's provision. The provision takes account of lost Railtrack and ROSCO revenue contributions.

"British Rail Privatisation" in table 1.1 of the transport report 1994 covers expenditure incurred by the Department of Transport on the employment of outside advisers.

Appropriation Accounts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish for 1993–94 appropriation accounts.

Mr. Norris: Volume 5 of the 1993–94 appropriation accounts will be laid before the House of Commons and published once the Comptroller and Auditor General has completed his audit work. At present, this is expected to be in December 1994.

Taxi Licences

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the deregulation of local authority control of taxi licences.

Mr. Norris: These matters were covered in the report of the Transport Select Committee on taxis and private hire vehicles. The Government hope to reply to the Select Committee very shortly.

Motorway Accidents

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has regarding the number of accidents on motorways involving drivers who have passed their tests in the previous year; and what plans there are to promote the pass-plus scheme.

Mr. Norris: Out of over 7,000 newly qualified drivers asked about their accident involvement in the first year after passing their driving test, 40—about 0.6 per cent.—reported having had an accident on a motorway. We plan to promote the pass-plus scheme by a major launch in February; by national advertising in the press; and by posters and leaflets distributed to driving test centres and driving instructors. We also plan to co-ordinate our promotional activities with those of participating insurers.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *118*, what were the total resources available to the Vehicle Inspectorate in each of the last five years; and what has been the effect of providing additional resources for emission checks on the availability of resources for other tasks.

Mr. Norris: Total resources available to the Vehicle Inspectorate for roadworthiness enforcement spot checks in each of the past five years were:

Year	*Hours (inspection time)*
1989–90	72,528
1990–91	73,887
1991–92	86,005
1992–93	[1]108,841
1993–94	82,850

[1] Increased activity to monitor the effects of the change in the light goods vehicle testing regime.

No additional resources were required for emissions checks. These activities were all completed within agreed budgets.

Vehicle Identification Numbers

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation to make it an offence to *(a)* own and *(b)* sell a vehicle or motor cycle with its chassis, engine, or vehicle identification number defaced or missing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: It is already an offence to use a vehicle on the road in contravention of the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 which set out the requirements for identification plates for all types of vehicles.

The Road Traffic Act 1988 makes it an offence to sell an unroadworthy vehicle. Unroadworthiness is defined in terms of defects which carry potentially serious road safety implications. I have no plans to widen the scope of that provision.

Sickness Absence

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *121*, if he will list the approaches set out in occupational health notice 93/3 which deal with sickness absence.

Mr. Norris The information is as follows:

(i) sponsorship of health promotion activities; and

(ii) a review of the organisation of work.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *121*, if he will list the agencies which are currently implementing the approaches set out in the occupational health notice 93/3; and if the Central Transport Group is implementing these approaches.

Mr. Norris: All agencies of the Department of Transport and the Central Transport Group have under way programmes or initiatives which fall within both approaches set out in the OHS notice.

Drivers' Hours

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list his proposals for the deregulation of drivers' hours; and when he intends to implement them.

Mr. Norris: We are considering what, if any, changes might be made to our national rules on drivers' hours. We will consult further with the industry before putting any changes into effect.

London Underground (Crime)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the number of *(a)* assaults and *(b)* robberies on each of the London Underground stations on the Northern line in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The information for 1993 and 1994 is set out in the table. Figures for earlier years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

London Underground: incidents of assault and/or robbery on the Northern line since 1 January 1993

Station	*Assaults*		*Robberies*	
	1993	*1994*	*1993*	*1994*
Edgware	4	0	0	1
Burnt Oak	0	0	2	3
Colindale	1	0	0	1
Hendon Central	2	2	1	2
Brent Cross	0	0	0	1
Golders Green	1	1	2	4
Hampstead	1	4	2	0
Belsize Park	2	1	0	1
Chalk Farm	1	0	3	0
Camden Town	10	8	7	5
High Barnet	1	0	0	0
Totteridge and Whetstone	1	0	1	0
Woodside Park	0	0	0	0
West Finchley	0	0	1	2
Mill Hill East	0	0	0	0
Finchley Central	2	1	0	2

London Underground: incidents of assault and/or robbery on the Northern line since 1 January 1993

Station	*Assaults* *1993*	*1994*	*Robberies* *1993*	*1994*
East Finchley	0	0	1	1
Highgate	1	3	2	3
Archway	5	3	5	4
Tufnell Park	0	0	0	2
Kentish Town	0	3	0	5
Mornington Crescent	0	0	0	0
Euston	10	2	3	2
Warren Street	3	1	0	0
Goodge Street	1	0	0	1
Tottenham Court Road	4	5	5	7
Leicester Square	7	2	0	1
Charing Cross	0	0	0	0
Embankment	1	0	0	1
Waterloo	1	3	1	0
King's Cross	5	3	2	3
Angel	4	3	1	1
Old Street	1	2	2	0
Moorgate	1	0	0	0
Bank	2	2	1	0
London Bridge	6	6	2	0
Borough	0	0	0	2
Elephant and Castle	4	5	1	3
Kennington	3	3	6	2
Oval	6	1	8	3
Stockwell	3	4	3	11
Clapham North	1	0	2	3
Clapham Common	6	4	6	5
Clapham South	5	2	5	0
Balham	11	4	17	4
Tooting Bec	1	2	6	7
Tooting Broadway	3	0	15	1
Collier's Wood	3	2	2	3
South Wimbledon	1	1	4	1
Morden	0	2	0	3

Notes:

(1) Figures for 1994 cover the period 1 January 1994 to 30 November 1994.

(2) Figures for assaults include assaults on passengers, staff and the police.

Source:

British Transport police figures supplied to London Underground.

Vehicle Emissions

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *118*, if he will quantify the levels of resources devoted to emission checks over the last three financial years, and so far in this financial year.

Mr. Norris: Resources devoted specifically to emission checks over the last three years and to the end of October 1994 were:

Year	*Hours*
1991–92	6,029
1992–93	6,373
1993–94	8,082
1 April 94 to 31 October 94	[1]2,413
1994–95—budget	8,423

[1] Excluding blitz checks commencing 2 November 1994.

However, all of the 200,000 or so roadworthiness enforcement spot checks to be carried out by the Vehicle Inspectorate this year will include at least a visual check for excessive emissions.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport further to his press release 397 of 20 October, if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the specific dates on which additional vehicle checkpoints have been set up in London to test vehicle emissions and for each date, *(b)* the number of staff operating such checkpoints, *(c)* the total number of hours spent at each checkpoint by staff, *(d)* the number of vehicles stopped, *(e)* the number of vehicles tested, *(f)* the number and percentage of vehicles that were deemed to be unsatisfactory and *(g)* action taken by staff against vehicles which were deemed to be unsatisfactory.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 2 December 1994]:* The London emission blitz took place between 2 and 10 November using four inspectors working a total of 30 hours, on each of 2, 3, 4, 7 and 9 and 10 November. Results are still being complied and I will make an announcement about them shortly.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, further to his press release 397 of 20 October, what make and type of equipment were used by vehicle inspectors to carry out spot checks of vehicle emissions; what criteria were employed to determine whether emissions were of a satisfactory level; and what immediate sanctions or penalties were applied to prevent unsatisfactory vehicles from continuing on the road.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 2 December 1994]:* The FKI Crypton 284 CO/HC emission meter was used for petrol engines and the Sum ASA 200 smoke meter for diesels. Where emissions obscured vision or were likely to cause a danger to other road users vehicles were prohibited from continuing their journey. In less serious cases, the effect of the prohibition was delayed for up to 10 days to allow time for remedial action.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport further to his press release 397 of 20 October, how many additional staff were specifically newly recruited or reallocated from other duties to carry out spot checks on vehicle emissions at check points in London.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 2 December 1994]:* Twenty-four man days were allocated to this work. All the inspectors involved were temporarily redeployed from other duties.

M23

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate was made by the runway capacity in the south-east working party of the volume of road traffic on the M23 north of Gatwick in 2020 if an additional runway were to be built at Gatwick, expressed as a percentage increase over the present level; and if he has considered proposals for extending the M23 northwards into London.

Dr. Mawhinney: Indicative work for RUCATSE suggests that, if an additional runway were to be constructed at Gatwick, under conditions of high national road traffic forecast growth, average daily traffic volumes on the M23 north of Gatwick would be about 165,000 vehicles per day in 2020. These figures include airport and non-airport related traffic, and represent an increase of about 80 per cent. over levels in 1993. We have no plans to extend the M23 north of the M25.

Ticket Barriers (Underground Stations)

Mr. Cohen: Top ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total cost of installing ticket barriers in London Underground stations; when the first one and when the last one of the old design was installed; and what is the total estimated cost of installing the new design of ticket barrier in all of London's stations.

Mr. Norris: The first ticket gates of the old design were commissioned in October 1987, the last in June 1992.

London Underground estimates that buying and installing these gates—excluding the associated costs of structural modifications to stations—cost around £18 million at 1993–94 prices.

No estimate has been made of the cost of installing the new design ticket gates in all London Underground stations.

European Regional Development Funding

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those public projects which received European regional development funding and were subsequently privatised over the last 10 years, indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 24 November 1994]:* The information for projects in England for which my Department had responsibility is as follows:

Company/Project	*ERDF grant (£ thousand)*	*Payment dates*
Liverpool airport		
Phase 1 development	524	18 September 1985
	20	25 July 1989
Phase 2 development	536	28 November 1985
	6	30 September 1986
	9	17 November 1987
	29	25 July 1989
Phase 3 development	1,908	19 March 1986
	447	11 February 1987
	61	17 November 1987
	127	25 July 1989
Runway	29	17 November 1987
	8	24 March 1988
	81	29 July 1988
Tees and Hartlepool port authority		
Transit shed E, Tees	144	1 May 1985
Paving of ro/ro terminal, Tees Dock	138	28 November 1985
Surfacing of car terminal, Hartlepool	26	4 March 1986
	26	1 May 1986
Transit shed B, Tees	178	1 May 1986
Paving timber storage area	77	1 May 1986
Roll-on/roll-off pontoon and Linkspan, Hartlepool	245	24 August 1986
Soda ash export facility	4	24 September 1986
Clark Hawthorn site power supply	8	30 March 1987
Teesport container terminal	915	19 July 1991
New quay and channel realignment, Hartlepool	661	19 July 1991
Merseyside Transport Ltd.		
Garston bus garage	487	28 November 1985
	46	30 September 1986
	83	17 February 1987
	32	17 November 1987
Jackson street bus garage	764	12 August 1985
Speke bus garage	224	19 March 1986
Yorkshire Rider Ltd.		
Thornbury bus workshops	177	28 January 1985
	139	18 September 1985
Crosville Motor Services Ltd.		
Love lane bus depot	13	19 March 1986
	177	9 September 1986
Ribble Motor Services Ltd		
Blackburn bus depot	103	5 February 1986
	34	8 December 1986
Yorkshire Traction Co. Ltd.		
Bus engineering facilities, Rawmarsh	88	30 May 1985

Operation Seafire

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how far the Stena Sea Lynx was from Fishguard at the commencement of Operation Seafire on 17 October;

(2) how far and on what bearing Stena Sea Lynx drifted during Operation Seafire on 17 October;

(3) how far and on what bearing the pick-up point was for West Glamorgan firefighters during Operation Seafire on 17 October from RAF Chivenor;

(4) at what time West Glamorgan fire brigade vehicle registration No. F993 YWO boarded Stena Sea Lynx during Operation Seafire on 17 October.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 2 December 1994]:* These are operational matters for the Coastguard Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 5 November 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions as the questions deal with operational matters, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

The Stena Sea Lynx was 7.5 Nautical Miles from Fishguard at the commencement of exercise SEAFIRE. Regrettably, the position previously given in answer to PQ 90/94/95 was incorrect. The correct position was 52 08N 004 56W.

The distance that the Stena Sea Lynx drifted during the exercise SEAFIRE was not recorded. The vessel was maintaining her approximate position using her engines.

The pick-up point for West Glamorgan firefighters during the exercise SEAFIRE was 015 degrees True, 37.5 Nautical Miles from Chivenor.

The West Glamorgan fire brigade vehicle registration number F993 YWO, with one fire office in attendance boarded Stena Sea Lynx between 0515 and 0600. The vehicle was the target vehicle supposedly containing chemicals as part of the exercise scenario.

Air Traffic Forecasts

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the impact of BAA plc's latest London area traffic growth statistics for the first nine months of 1994 on the Department's air traffic forecasts published earlier this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 2 December 1994]:* The increase in passengers numbers in the first nine months of 1994 at the BAA London airports, equivalent to growth of 7 per cent. per annum, has no impact on the Department's air traffic forecasts. The Department's forecasts are for air traffic growth in the longer term. Deviations from long-term growth rates in individual years can be expected given the cyclical nature of economic growth.

London Transport (Bus Services)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list London Transport's quality of service indicator results for high frequency bus services, including *(a)* scheduled, excess and actual waiting times, *(b)* actual wait divided by scheduled wait and *(c)* chance of waiting (i) less than 10 minutes, (ii) 10 to 20 minutes and (iii) over 30 minutes for (y) each quarter of 1993–94 and 1994–95 and (z) each route in each of the 33 London boroughs.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 2 December 1994]:* I will place the information requested in the Library shortly.

Medical Treatment (Vessels)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce the medical treatment on board vessels directive, EC 92/29/EC 31/3/93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Ms Joan Walley, dated 5 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question on the introduction of EC Directive 92/29/EC31/3/92 on the minimum safety and health requirements for improved medical treatment on board vessels.

The Terms of this Directive require Member States to bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with this Directive by 31 December 1994. The choice of form and method of implementation is however left to each Member State. The chosen UK methods of implementation and promulgation are by Regulation and Merchant Shipping Notice.

A consultation document containing the Marine Safety Agency's proposals for implementation of this Directive was circulated for comment on 15 August 1994. As a result of this consultation exercise amendments have been made to the original lists of required medical supplies. Work is continuing on the drafting of both revised Regulations and an accompanying Merchant Shipping Notice.

Fishing Vessels (Safety)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will meet members of the South Western Fish Producers Organisation and their representatives to discuss concerns about the consistency of application of the fishing vessel safety rules of 1975.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Ms Joan Walley, dated 5 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the concerns of the South Western Fish Producers Organisation (SWFPO) with regard to the survey of fishing vessels.

The chief executive of SWFPO and others met the chief surveyor for the agency's south and south-west England district on 5 July 1994 to discuss apparent inconsistencies in fishing vessel survey requirements. As a result of that meeting, one case is currently being examined. The district chief surveyor asked SWFPO to provide details of any other cases which demonstrated the inconsistencies to which it referred. That information is still awaited.

However, in view of its continuing concern, I would be happy to offer the SWFPO a further meeting to discuss survey consistency with those responsible here for fishing vessel survey matters. I will be writing shortly to the chief executive of SWFPO to suggest such a meeting.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the planned expenditure and expected receipts, in each case item by item, which his Department estimates will contribute to the net income of £770 million in 1995–96 and £325 million in 1996–97, and net expenditure of £600 million in 1997–98 under the heading "Privatisation effects" in the table giving expenditure totals in his Department's press notice No. 457, issued on 29 November.

Mr. Watts: The estimates underlying these figures are commercially sensitive and cannot therefore be revealed publicly.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those items of expenditure and receipts, included under the heading "BR/Railtrack" in the table accompanying his Department's press notice No. 457, issued on 29 November, which are not included under the heading "National Railways EFL" in table 1.1 in his Department's "Transport Report 1994", Cm 2506, and vice versa.

Mr. Watts: The external finance for BR-Railtrack set out in the table accompanying the Department's press notice 457 now excludes provision for European Passenger Services Ltd., and grant from the Scottish Office to Strathclyde passenger transport executive for rail services in that region, which were included under the heading "National Railways EFR" in table 1.1 of the transport report 1994.

Severn Bridge

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will carry out a survey of traffic moving across the Severn bridge, recording separately the numbers of heavy goods vehicles from other light traffic and showing the results for each direction of travel.

Mr. Watts: Traffic flows across the Severn bridge are already monitored in both directions by the concessionary that operates the bridge, Severn River Crossing plc. The figures differentiate between heavy goods vehicles and other light traffic and are collected for both the directions of travel.

Airlines (Aid)

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further representations he is making to the EC regarding state aid for airlines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Government have applied to the European Court to annul the Commission decision of 27 July 1994, allowing the French Government to inject FF20 billion into Air France. We also intend to intervene in the application by British Airways, Air UK and other European airlines to the court of first instance to annul the decision. I shall press the European Commission to take a rigorous approach on any further state aid cases which arise in this sector.

Marine Rescue Centres

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* fully trained coastguards and *(b)* auxiliary coastguards were dedicated to staffing operations rooms in MRCCs and MRSCs on 1 April 1990, 1 April 1993, 1 April 1994 and 1 November 1994.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Coastguard Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 5 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question as the question deals with an operational matter, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

The following table shows the number of *(a)* fully trained coastguards and *(b)* auxiliary coastguards dedicated to staffing operations rooms in MRCCs and MRSCs on the dates requested:

Date	*Fully Trained Coastguards*	*Auxiliary Coastguards*
1 April 1990	469.5	419
1 April 1993	450	397
1 April 1994	448	373
1 November 1994	443	377

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport 1) if he will list the minimum staffing levels in operation rooms at each of the marine rescue co-ordination centres and sub-centres;

(2) if he will take steps to verify that all standing operational orders, regulations and minutes relating to staffing levels in operation rooms at all marine rescue co-ordination centres and marine rescue sub-centres have been complied with since 1 April 1994.

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for the Coastguard Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Mr. N. Ainger, dated 5 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions as these questions deal with operational matters, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

The following table details the minimum staffing levels per watch in operations rooms at each of the MRCCs and MRSCS:

RCC/MRSC	*Minimum staffing level per watch*	*MRCC/MRSC*	*Minimum staffing level per watch*
Clyde	1 SWO 2 WO	Dover	1 SO 1 SWO 3 WO
Belfast	1 SWO 2 WO	Thames	1 SWO 2 WO
Oban	1 SWO 2 WO	Solent	1 SWO 3WO
Stornoway	1 SWO 2 WO	Yarmouth	1 SWO 2 WO
Aberdeen	1 SWO 3 WO	Humber	1 SWO 2 WO
Pentland	1 SWO 2 WO	Tyne/Tees	1 SWO 2 WO
Shetland	1 SWO 2 WO	Swansea	1 SWO 3 WO
Forth	1 SWO 2 WO	Milford Haven	1 SWO 2 WO
Falmouth	1 SWO 3 WO	Holyhead	1 SWO 2 WO
Brixham	1 SWO 2 WO	Liverpool	1 SWO 2 WO
Portland	1 SWO 2 WO		

(SO—Station Officer, SWO—Senior Watch Officer, WO—Watch Officer)

The information provided relates to Basic Watch Level requirements. The actual staffing levels may be greater where additional operational requirements have been identified.

When, unavoidably, Basic Watch Levels cannot be maintained by the use of regular Coastguards, trained Auxiliary coastguards may be used to substitute.

The maintenance of required staffing levels in operations rooms at marine rescue coordination centres (MRCCs) and marine rescue sub-centres (MRSCs) is complied with whenever possible. However shortages do occur from time to time due to unforeseen circumstances. These do not affect safety.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Accounts

Mr. Flynn: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what is the current shortfall or profit in the accounts of the Church Commissioners.

Mr. Alison: The financial statements of the Church Commissioners, published as part of their annual report and accounts, include an income and expenditure account and a statement of total gains and losses as required by financial reporting standards. The latter shows that, in 1993, consolidated expenditure exceeded income by £2.1 million and consolidated capital gains amounted to £296.2 million.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners on what grounds the Church Commissioners do not usually publish the accounts of the companies and undertakings owned by them.

Mr. Alison: The accounts of the Commissioners' United Kingdom subsidiary companies are filed at Companies House, where they are available for public inspection. The accounts of all their subsidiary undertakings are incorporated in the Commissioners' consolidated accounts—published with the annual report—and the Commissioners therefore see no practical purpose in publishing separately the accounts of their subsidiaries. In this, they follow the practice of most parent companies.

EMPLOYMENT

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Miss Widdecombe: Information covering the refurbishments carried out by the headquarters department, which were not funded by the Property Holdings Agency, is shown in the table.

Disaggregated information of this nature is not available for premises in the Employment Service or the Health and Safety Executive.

Employment department headquarters refurbishment costs 1991–1994

EDHQ Project	*Dates*	*Cost £ Million*	*Description of work*
Caxton house, London	1991–92	1.411	Level 4
	1992–93	1.474	Level 3
			Complete up-grade of internal office and service areas to meet the demands of a modern office environment. Includes lighting, cabling for computers, open planning, energy efficiency and toilets and full redecoration.
236 Grays Inn road, London	1992–93	1.920	As above, excluding toilets.
Woburn place, London	1993–94	0.190	As above, including removal of asbestos, excluding toilets.
East Lane house, Runcorn	1993–94	1.528	Modernisation of main frame computer hall. Making use of down-sizing of computer and air conditioning equipment to create additional space for administrative staff.
Ranmoor hall, Sheffield	1991–92	1.036	Residential accommodation and reception areas
	1992–93	0.040	Conference and classrooms
Moorfoot, Sheffield	1992–93	0.600	Open planning and air conditioning of cellular office space to accommodate computer based administrative work relocated from London.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Miss Widdecombe: None.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years; and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Miss Widdecombe: I regret that it is not possible to break down budgets and staffing in this way.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Miss Widdecombe: Figures of registered disabled people in the Employment Department group are set out in the table. Projected figures are not available.

Year	*Registered Disabled*	*Per cent.*
1990	1,544.0	3.2
1991	1,688.5	3.2
1992	1,964.0	3.4
1993	2,019.5	3.4
1994	2,197.0	4.0

Training for Work

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the proportion of unemployed people currently undergoing training for work; what is the cost of providing training for work; and how many unemployed people find work within *(a)* two weeks, *(b)* one month, *(c)* two months or *(d)* four months of completing a training for work programme.

Mr. Paice: On 14 August 1994 there were 99,400 people participating in training for work in England. This is equivalent to 4.6 per cent. of the level of seasonally adjusted unemployment in England in that month.

The cost of providing training for work in England in 1993–94 was £760.2 million. The estimate for the cost of providing training for work in England in 1994–95 is £693.3 million.

The information about how many training for work leavers find work is not available for the periods requested; 38 per cent. of those who completed their agreed training in England and Wales during the period April 1993 to January 1994 were in a job six months after leaving training for work.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in late February-early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies.

Government Contracts

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements he now plans to introduce to replace the priority suppliers scheme in relation to tendering for Government contracts.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the rely that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 29 November 1994, *Official Report,* columns *637–39.*

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the aggregate management running costs of the English training and enterprise councils for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94, the first half of 1994–95 and the latest estimated outturn for 1994–95 as a whole.

Mr. Paice: The English training and enterprise council statutory annual accounts for 1992–93 show administration costs to be £140.7 million in aggregate. I am unable to give the figures requested for 1993–94 and 1994–95 as this information is not yet available in the public domain. However, as TEC accounts for 1993–94 become available to the Department, copies will be placed in the Library.

Appropriation Accounts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to publish the 1993–94 appropriation accounts.

Miss Widdecombe: Volume 5 of the 1993–94 appropriation accounts will be laid before the House of Commons and published once the Comptroller and Auditor General has completed his audit work. At present, this is expected to be in December 1994.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Crown Jewels

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage to what extent the crown jewels are royal property; and what is the extent of public ownership and interest in them.

Mr. Sproat: I am advised that the crown jewels kept in the tower of London are, like the historic royal palaces themselves, the property of the Queen in right of the Crown. They are, therefore, held in trust by the sovereign for successive generations. My Department, through the Historic Royal Palaces agency, is responsible for the security, conservation and presentation of the crown jewels in the tower of London.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies in each year since their establishment; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Dorrell: The numbers of registered disabled people employed by the Department of National Heritage and its agencies in each year since its establishment in April 1992 are as follows:

	1992	*1993*		*1994*	
		Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Totals	N/A	7	1.7	5	1.1

Projected figures for the next five years are not available.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department fully supports the aims of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people. There is no discrete budget for action associated with the programme, as expenditure includes cost elements associated with, for example, staff numbers, training, alterations to buildings and accommodation, which cannot be disaggregated.

It is not possible to estimate the number of staff or staff hours equivalent necessary to achieve the objectives of the programme for action as the implementation of the programme will require the involvement not just of equal opportunities-disabled persons officers but of other human resource specialists, recruitment and training officers and individual line managers throughout the Department.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with the trustees of the Tate gallery about measures to ensure better access for disabled people to the gallery.

Mr. Dorrell: The policies adopted by the Tate gallery for access for people with disabilities are a matter for the trustees of the gallery.

Under the statutory fire and safety regulations, only six people in wheelchairs can visit the main floor of the gallery at Millbank at any one time. However, the trustees welcome visitors with disabilities and are committed to improving access to the gallery, which their planned building programme due to start in 1995 will help to achieve.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimates he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each department, branch and agency.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in late February-early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. Dorrell: None. Civil servants may provide briefing of a factual nature for Ministers on matters relating to their own Departments. In addition, Ministers in preparing for a constituency speech can draw on material produced by their Departments during the normal course of business.

Independent Radio Stations

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what his Department is doing to ensure adequate news coverage on independent radio stations.

Mr. Dorrell: The BBC provides news coverage on its radio services as part of its public service functions. The Broadcasting Act 1990 does not require applicants for independent radio licences to offer a news service, but provides that any news that is broadcast by a licensed station must be presented with due accuracy and impartiality.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the special advisers employed by his Department in each of the last three years indicating when they *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department and the annual salary they received.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 1 December 1994]:* The special advisers employed by the Department of National Heritage over the last three years are:

Name	*Date joined*	*Date left*
Viscountess Cobham DL —two days a week	12 July 1992	24 September 1992
Mr. Chris Hopson	22 April 1992	24 September 1992
Mr. Dominic Loehnis	7 November 1992	20 July 1994

Salaries for special advisers are negotiated individually in relation to their previous earnings, and are confidential. They are, however, normally paid on a special advisers' salary spine of 34 points, ranging from £19,503 to £67,609. Appointments are non-pensionable, and the salary spine reflects this.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Roads

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been expended to date in *(a)* reopening and *(b)* refurbishing cross-frontier roads between (i) County Tyrone, (ii) County Fermanagh, (iii) County Armagh, (iv) County Londonderry and (v) County Down and the Irish Republic.

Sir John Wheeler: The value of work completed to date to reopen and refurbish border crossings is as follows:

	£
County Armagh	30,000
County Fermanagh	325,000
County Tyrone	175,000
County Londonderry	70,000
Total	600,000

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from which budget the money has been provided in order to *(a)* reopen and *(b)* refurbish cross-frontier roads between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic.

Sir John Wheeler: The cost of reopening and refurbishing the cross-border roads previously subject to closure order will be met entirely by the Northern Ireland Office.

Health Service Spending

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of spending per head of population on national health service provisions in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Moss: Based on the latest available figures for 1992–93, hospital and community health services and family health services expenditure is £439 and £160 respectively per head of population in Northern Ireland.

As the HCHs, FHSs, and personal social services constitute the integrated health care service for the Province, the HCHs figure is an estimated apportionment.

Council for Voluntary Action

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the current employment statistics for the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action; to what extent they fall within the fair Employment Commission's criteria for employment; and if he will give details.

Mr. Ancram: Under the terms of section 23 of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989, all private sector organisations with more than 10 employees are required to register with the Fair Employment Commission. The Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action falls into this category. Registered employers are also required by the 1989 Act to monitor their work force annually and to carry out a review of their working practices at least once every three years.

The Fair Employment Commission's latest summary of monitoring returns which describes the position at the end of 1993 was published in March 1994. It shows that the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action had a total of 36 employees, of whom 19 were Protestant, 12 were Catholic and five were "non-determined".

Terrorism

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are taken to ensure that those with terrorist motivation are not placed in sensitive positions within public or voluntary organisations which receive public funding.

Sir John Wheeler: The Secretary of State is not responsible for staffing matters within public bodies and voluntary organisations. However, the criteria to be applied to those appointed to serve on public bodies are determined by the Department concerned which takes account of the expertise and experience required to serve on the body, and seeks evidence of a person's suitability for appointment as it determines to be necessary.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Sir John Wheeler: The number and proportion of staff in the Northern Ireland civil service who self-declared a disability in the years 1991 to 1994 are as set out in the table. The figures in brackets refer to the number and proportion of staff declaring a disability who were, or who had previously been, registered as disabled.

	Number	*Percentage of service*
1991	1,290 (361)	4.4 (1.2)
1992	1,262 (431)	4.3 (1.5)
1993	1,282 (463)	4.3 (1.5)
1994	1,300 (476)	4.2 (1.6)

Figures for 1990 are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Projected figures are also not available.

The number of registered disabled people working in the Northern Ireland civil service under the sheltered placement scheme has risen from 15 in 1991 to 80 in 1994.

One registered disabled person—0.5 per cent. of the work force—joined the small civil service cadre of Northern Ireland in 1994. There have been no other registered disabled employees in the period from 1990 to 1994.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Sir John Wheeler: In the Northern Ireland civil service expenditure aimed at advancing equality of opportunity for people with disabilities includes costs arising from staff time, monitoring, training, special aids and equipment, modification of buildings and accommodation etcetera which cannot be disaggregated. The number of staff or staff hours equivalent allocated to achieve the objectives of the code of practice on the employment of people with disabilities in the Northern Ireland civil service cannot be estimated as the successful implementation of the code requires the commitment not only of dedicated equal opportunities specialists but of other human resource specialists, trainers and individual line managers throughout the service.

Similarly, dedicated expenditure by the home civil service cadre of the Northern Ireland Office on the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people cannot be disaggregated.

Mounty Mellary Abbey

Mr. McKinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what contact the RUC or the Director of Public Prosecutions has directly or indirectly with the Abbott of Mounty Mellary abbey in County Wexford, or his representative, about a priest reportedly residing at the abbey.

Sir John Wheeler: There has been no contact of any kind.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what difficulties have been encountered by the RUC in investigating allegations of child sex abuse in respect of a priest formerly living in Derry and reported to be currently residing at Mount Mellary abbey in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: To date, no complaint of an offence has been made to the RUC, and therefore no investigation has commenced.

Father Brendan Smyth

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the RUC, the Northern Ireland office, or any other Government or law enforcement agency have received an invitation from Cardinal Cahal Daly to assist his inquiry by giving evidence into the Church's handling of complaints relating to Father Brendan Smyth and other related cases.

Sir John Wheeler: I am not aware of any such invitation.

SCOTLAND

Agricultural Assistance

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library his Department's guidelines indicating the criteria for eligibility for assistance for agricultural projects in the highlands and islands from objective 1 funding.

Sir Hector Monro: Explanatory leaflets covering the three main elements of the highlands and islands agricultural programme are being prepared. I shall arrange for copies of these to be placed in the Library at the appropriate times.

Assistance (Crofters)

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assistance he has made available by district under the crofters building grants and loans scheme and the number of crofters assisted in each of the last five financial years.

Sir Hector Monro: Details of the assistance made available for housing under the crofters building grants and loans scheme by former crofting county and the number of crofters whose applications for assistance were approved in each of the last five financial years are set out in the following table:

	1989–90 £000s	*1990–91 £000s*	*1991–92 £000s*	*1992–93 £000s*	*1993–94 £000s*
Argyll	121	117	99	97	311
Caithness	45	1	37	138	146
Inverness	1,147	1,510	1,401	1,732	1,724
Ross-shire	1,137	1,355	1,608	1,671	1,652
Sutherland	266	350	160	435	277
Shetland	342	503	470	495	519
Total	3,058	3,836	3,775	4,568	4,629
Applications approved					
New houses	109	126	122	148	143
Improvements	237	210	156	179	166

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Lang: The numbers and percentages of registered disabled people employed in my Department and associated agencies over the past five years are set out in the table:

Registered disabled staff employed in the Scottish Office, its executive agencies—Scottish Prison Service shown separately—and the associated departments of general register office and Scottish record office

Year	*SO+*	*SPS*	*GRO*	*SRO*
1990				
—Number of registered disabled staff	73	5	7	2
—percentage of all staff	1.2	0.1	2.3	1.8
1991				
—Number of registered disabled staff	66	5	2	5
—percentage of all staff	1.1	0.1	0.6	4.2
1992				
—Number of registered disabled staff	86	5	6	2
—percentage of all staff	1.4	0.1	2.1	1.8
1993				
—Number of registered disabled staff	81	3	5	1
—percentage of all staff	1.3	0.1	1.8	0.9
1994				
—Number of registered disabled staff	79	2	3	2
—percentage of all staff	1.3	0.05	1.2	1.6

Note:

Position as at 1 June for 1990 and 1991; 1 July thereafter.

Projected figures of the next five years are not available.

My Department recently undertook a detailed survey of disability and long-term health conditions in the workplace. The survey revealed that 97 staff felt they were affected "a great deal" and a further 300 "to some extent" by a disability or long-term health condition in the workplace. This represents a total of 397 or 5.3 per cent. of all staff in the Scottish Office, its agencies and associated departments.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Lang: Within the Scottish Office, its executive agencies and associated departments, expenditure in support of the programme of action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people includes expenditure associated with policy development and implementation, recruitment, training, assessments, special equipment, modification of buildings and accommodation. A separate budget cannot be disaggregated.

The number of staff or staff hours equivalent allocated to achieving the objectives of the programme of action similarly cannot be calculated separately. Successful implementation requires the commitment and involvement of not only disabled persons officers and equal opportunities officers but personnel officers, recruitment and training officers as well as line managers throughout the organisation.

Sheep Premium

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when his Department will complete the payment of the sheep premium; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the answers that I gave to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 24 November, *Official Report*, column *343*.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provisions he intends to make for employees in local authorities affected by local government reorganisation and for severance pay generally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: I am laying before the House today regulations which will enable local authorities to make improved payments to employees made redundant or prematurely retired. These regulations come into force on 28 December 1994. Copies of the regulations have been placed in the Library.

I shall also today be issuing for consultation the Government's proposals for the compensation which will be made available to those local authority staff in Scotland who are either made redundant or suffer loss of remuneration specifically as a result of local government reorganisation. Details of these proposals will also be placed in the Library.

In drawing up these proposals I have considered carefully the advice offered to me by the Local Government Staff Commission (Scotland). I have also taken into account the comments which have been received from local authorities and staffing interests on the commission's advice.

One of the main messages from this consultation has been that it is crucially important to let local authority staff know as soon as possible what compensation terms will be available during the period of transition to the new councils. Accordingly, I am today issuing the Government's proposals for consultation with a view to finalising them early in the new year. Comments on the proposals are invited by 23 January 1995.

In coming to a decision on these matters, I have had to look to the interests of local authorities, their employees and the taxpayer. I believe that what I am proposing offers a sensible balance in this respect.

EDUCATION

Funding

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average annual cost met from public funds of *(a)* a nursery school place, *(b)* a primary school place, *(c)* a secondary school place and *(d)* a full-time undergraduate place in bands 1, 2 and 3.

Mr. Robin Squire: The net institutional expenditure per pupil in England for 1992–3, the latest year for which figures are available, was—in 1994–95 prices—£1,683 in local education authority-maintained nursery and primary schools; and £2,399 in LEA-maintained secondary schools. Separate information is not collected for nursery and primary schools.

Figures are not available for the average cost of an undergraduate place in bands 1, 2 and 3. The estimated annual average cost from public funds—for a full-time equivalent student in higher education—in 1994–95 is £4,500.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many copies of *(a)* "Grant-Maintained Schools: Questions Governors Ask", *(b)* "Grant-Maintained Schools: Experiences During the First Year", *(c)* "Grant-Maintained Schools: Experiences of Primary Schools" and *(d)* "Grant-Maintained Schools: Experiences of Secondary Schools" have been produced since 1988; and what was the total cost for each booklet;

(2) how many copies of *(a)* "How to Become a Grant-Maintained School", *(b)* "Grant-Maintained Schools: Questions Parents Ask", *(c)* "Grant-Maintained Schools: What it Means for Staff" and *(d)* "Grant-Maintained Schools: Questions Staff Ask" have been produced since 1988; and what was the total cost of each booklet;

(3) how many copies of *(a)* "Grant-Maintained Schools: Experiences of Former Voluntary Schools", *(b)* "Going Grant-Maintained with Other Schools: GM Clusters" and *(c)* "Education into the Next Century", have been produced since 1988; and what has been the total cost for each booklet;

(4) how many folders have been produced for the distribution of material on grant-maintained schools; and what has been the cost since 1988.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out. With one exception, the publications listed contain factual information on various aspects of grant-maintained status.

Some of these publications are no longer in use and are now out of print. The publication "Education into the

Next Century" was a summary of the White Paper "Choice and Diversity: a New Framework for Schools"; it was not primarily about grant-maintained schools.

Publication	*Approximate number produced*	*Approximate total cost of production £*
Questions Governors Ask	90,000	17,000
Experiences During the First year	485,000	243,000
Experiences of Primary Schools	70,000	112,500
Experiences of Secondary Schools	35,000	
Experiences of Former Voluntary Schools	35,000	
How to Become a Grant-Maintained School (five editions since 1988)	595,000	123,000
Questions Parents Ask	1,588,000	105,000
What it Means for Staff	193,00	12,000
Questions Staff Ask	250,000	197,000
Going GM with other Schools: GM Clusters	13,000	15,500
Education into the Next Century	2,750,000	117,000
Folders	263,000	77,000

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the advertising campaigns her Department has run for grant-maintained status; and, for each campaign, if she will list *(a)* the total cost, *(b)* the cost of the advertisements, *(c)* the cost of the advertised telephone service and *(d)* how many inquiries were received on the advertised numbers.

Mr. Robin Squire: There have been two campaigns to advertise sources of factual information on grant-maintained schooling: one to advertise the pilot "GM Helpline" in January 1993, and one in January and February 1994 to advertise the availability of booklets on GM status following the coming into effect of the relevant provision of the Education Act 1993. The costs and number of inquiries are listed.

	1993 £	*1994* £
Total cost	211,000	207,000
Cost of advertisements	200,000	207,000
Cost of telephone service	11,000	—
Number of inquiries	2,650	[1]1,544

[1] These calls were handled by an existing telephone inquiry line and their cost cannot be disaggregated from the overall figure.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list, in chronological order, the "Going GM" conferences held by her Department on grant-maintained status, giving in each case *(a)* the date, *(b)* the location, *(c)* the number of schools invited, *(d)* the number of schools represented, *(e)* the number of representatives attending and *(f)* the cost.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out in the table.

Number	*Date*	*Location*	*Number of schools invited*[1]	*Number of schools represented*	*Number of delegates*	*Cost*[2] £
1	16 November 1992	Leeds	6,250	57	95	6,202
2	12 December 1992	Bolton	6,250	93	160	6,873
3	15 January 1993	Sheffield	6,250	120	207	8,164
4	30 January 1993	Manchester	6,250	75	138	7,734
5	10 February 1993	Newcastle	1,645	139	222	8,539
6	11 February 1993	Newcastle	1,645	121	204	8,539
7	15 February 1993	Leicester	3,406	65	108	4,306
8	1 March 1993	Nottingham	3,406	111	197	7,751
9	8 March 1993	Taunton	192	62	90	3,491
10	10 March 1993	Birmingham	3,406	120	202	8,512
11	29 March 1993	Nottingham	3,406	109	176	7,378
12	26 April 1993	Daventry	3,406	45	77	4,150
13	30 April 1993	Haydock	100	35	62	2,858
14	4 May 1993	Maidstone	5,825	122	219	7,894
15	7 May 1993	St. Albans	5,825	109	198	9,772
16	13 May 1993	Heathrow	5,825	111	209	10,077
17	19 May 1993	Sandown	5,825	110	209	8,019
18	27 May 1993	Watford	5,825	106	197	6,876
19	18 June 1993	Bournemouth	3,213	103	180	6,669
20	28 June 1993	Cheltenham	3,213	99	194	6,263
21	13 July 1993	Exeter	3,213	95	173	7,638
22	23 September 1993	Maidstone	5,825	37	72	4,473
23	7 October 1993	Bristol	3,213	56	112	8,908
24	5 November 1993	Cambridge	2,087	90	171	9,240
25	2 December 1993	Cambridge	2,087	107	176	9,156
26	3 February 1994	Darlington	7,164	53	94	5,392
27	18 February 1994	Manchester	7,164	67	114	8,236
28	4 March 1994	Newcastle	7,164	47	77	6,392
29	14 March 1994	Huddersfield	7,164	57	102	7,645
30	27 April 1994	Harrogate	7,164	91	152	10,454
31	28 June 1994	Stratford	5,059	82	141	7,747
32	5 July 1994	Hinckley	5,059	43	63	4,720
33	13 July 1994	Stoke	5,059	22	39	3,859
34	24 September 1994	Warrington	2,100	29	52	4,723

Number	*Date*	*Location*	*Number of schools invited*[1]	*Number of schools represented*	*Number of delegates*	*Cost*[2] £
35	27 September 1994	Penrith	669	24	53	3,554
36	1 November 1994	London	2,240	43	78	6,404
37	21 November 1994	Newquay	797	52	107	[3]4,000
Total						252,608

[1] The same schools were invited to more than one conference in order to give headteachers and governors more choice over date and location.

[2] Costs listed are those attributable to specific conferences. In addition, there are two contracts: one for support services which for the 37 conferences has totalled an estimated £263.623 and one for mailings which has totalled approx. £66,965. Total, £583,196.

[3] The costs for Newquay are an estimate pending receipt of the invoice.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many and what percentage of *(a)* grant-maintained and *(b)* local authority schools have outside toilets.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what is the basis for the payment of expenses to individuals on her Department's GM speakers list;

(2) what is the total cost of the expenses paid to individuals on her Department's GM speakers' list; how many individuals have been paid such expenses; and how many speaking functions were involved.

Mr. Robin Squire: GM speakers are volunteer heads, governors and bursars of grant-maintained schools who are reimbursed for expenses incurred in providing factual information about grant-maintained status to interested schools. Payments are made on receipt of proof of expenditure on the following basis:

travel to and from a meeting at which they are asked to speak;

overnight stay, if this is unavoidable, up to a maximum of £65-(£70 in London);

photocopying costs for provision of written material;

light refreshments in connection with a visit to their school by representatives of another school (or schools);

supply cover, if a GM speaker cannot fulfil teaching commitments because of a relevant engagement, up to a maximum of two days' cover per school per month.

Since the GM speakers' list was first established in 1992, approximately £72,000 in expenses has been paid to about 240 speakers. The Department has received claims for over 180 speaking engagements in the current financial year. Records of the numbers of engagements prior to April 1994 are not available.

Mr. Flynn : To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to ensure that the same standards of financial and managerial control that now apply to local education authority schools will be required for grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: Grant-maintained schools are already subject to a range of provisions to ensure that the highest possible standards of financial and managerial control apply. These provisions include the requirements of education legislation, school instruments and articles of government and detailed financial management procedures and audit requirements set out in a financial memorandum and other documents. Some provisions apply to GM schools but not to their LEA equivalents. In addition, the Funding Agency for Schools has a duty to carry out value-for-money studies of GM schools.

Undergraduate Courses

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total expenditure in respect of tuition fees for undergraduate courses in institutions of higher education in 1992–93; and how much of this was for students not qualifying for mandatory maintenance award on grounds of high parental income.

Mr. Boswell: The total expenditure in the academic year in 1992–93 by local education authorities in England and Wales on fees paid by them as part of mandatory awards for students attending first degree courses was £1,233 million. It is not possible to estimate how much of this expenditure was for students not qualifying for a mandatory maintenance award on grounds of high parental income. However, 26 per cent. of all first degree students in receipt of a mandatory award received no maintenance grant as a result of means testing.

Class Sizes, Rotherham

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list class sizes for years 1 and 7 in all schools in Rotherham at the beginning of the school year in 1992, 1993 and 1994.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on class sizes for individual year groups is not available centrally.

Student Loans Company

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to privatise the Student Loans Company.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has no current plans to privatise the Student Loans Company. The loans scheme, including options for introducing private finance, is kept under review.

Capital Works

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money has been allocated to Liverpool for capital works on schools since 1989, and if she will list for each scheme *(a)* the amounts approved to basic credit approvals and supplementary credit approvals, *(b)* the year of approval and *(c)* if it has been completed.

Mr. Robin Squire: Liverpool's annual capital guidelines for schools have been as follows—£'000:

1989–90: 541
1990–91: 8,262
1991–92: 5,425
1992–93: 5,576

1993–94: 2,822
1993–95: 4,540

The funding and progress of individual projects are a matter for the local education authority.

Supplementary credit approvals have been issued to Liverpool as follows:

1992–93; £212,000 for health and safety work.
1993–94: £590,000 for work to implement statutory proposals at Alice Elliott and Underlea special schools; and the consolidation of Broughton Hall Roman Catholic school on one site.
1994–95: £133,000 for health and safety work.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. Forth: None. Civil servants may provide briefing of a factual nature for Ministers on matters relating to their own Departments. In addition, Ministers in preparing for a constituency speech can draw on material produced by their Department during the normal course of business.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what direct earmarked funding is available to further education colleges for the development of information technology services and training.

Mr. Boswell: None. Colleges have flexibility to use the funds available to them to invest in information technology as they think best.

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what training and advice material her Department has issued to governors of further education colleges.

Mr. Boswell: Governors themselves have a responsibility to ensure that they have the training to enable them to perform their functions accordingly. The Further Education Funding Council for England has published the "Guide for College Governors" to assist them in their work, and issued circulars of guidance to governors on a variety of matters. The Further Education Staff College offers courses for governors which can be tailored to colleges' particular needs.

Universities (Academic Staff)

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to her answer of 24 November, *Official Report,* column *274,* if she will show the number of *(a)* female and *(b)* male academic staff in each age range and department group

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is shown in the table.

Full-Time non-clinical academic wholly university-funded staff in former UFC-funded English universities, 1992–93—Women

Cost Centre	*Age under 25*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–44*	*45–49*	*50–54*	*55–59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
Education	2	11	32	65	110	127	71	24	12	454
Medicine, dentistry and health	8	42	96	105	89	89	58	22	22	531
Engineering and technology	7	27	35	35	26	14	7	1	3	155
Agriculture, forestry and veterinary science	2	13	9	13	9	9	5	1	1	62
Biological, mathematical and physical sciences	8	46	93	95	69	72	45	29	18	475
Administrative, business and social studies	14	119	182	186	211	153	96	41	20	1,022
Architecture and planning	0	4	6	11	8	5	6	1	0	41
Language, literature and area studies	34	106	123	121	124	153	120	53	30	864
Other arts	2	24	49	53	58	63	49	18	12	328
Libraries, museums, etc (research only)	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	4
Total	77	393	625	685	704	685	459	190	118	3,936

Source:
Universities' Statistical Record.

Full-Time non-clinical academic wholly university-funded staff in former UFC-funded English universities, 1992–93—Men

Cost Centre	*Age under 25*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–44*	*45–49*	*50–54*	*55–59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
Education	0	8	23	98	185	232	230	166	73	1,015
Medicine, dentistry and health	6	62	151	249	304	333	241	144	84	1,574
Engineering and technology	16	129	347	390	462	530	519	418	234	3,045
Agriculture, forestry and veterinary science	3	26	35	54	62	83	50	37	29	379
Biological, mathematical and physical sciences	21	268	556	669	696	938	1,082	782	366	5,378
Administrative, business and social studies	33	240	425	490	745	1,033	614	362	157	4,099
Architecture and planning	0	9	20	28	38	49	55	26	21	246

Full-Time non-clinical academic wholly university-funded staff in former UFC-funded English universities, 1992–93—Men

Cost Centre	*Age under 25*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–44*	*45–49*	*50–54*	*55–59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
Language, literature and area studies	12	64	136	159	268	410	377	221	111	1,758
Other arts	2	43	134	173	253	382	316	194	127	1,624
Libraries, museums, etc (research only)	0	2	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	8
Total	93	851	1,827	2,310	3,013	3,991	3,487	2,351	1,203	19,126

Source:
Universities' Statistical Record.

Full-Time non-clinical academic wholly institutionally funded staff in former polytechnics in England, 1992–93—Women

Cost Centre	*Age under 25*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–44*	*45–49*	*50–54*	*55–59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
Education	1	14	33	76	104	144	79	37	6	494
Medicine, dentistry and health	6	25	53	73	92	91	62	25	5	432
Engineering and technology	7	30	41	41	30	39	25	6	5	224
Agriculture, forestry and veterinary science	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	4
Biological, mathematical and physical sciences	13	84	109	105	125	120	53	19	9	637
Administrative, business and social studies	37	153	247	293	355	316	122	66	12	1,601
Architecture and planning	3	4	9	21	22	21	7	2	—	89
Language, literature and area studies	14	43	44	48	69	72	24	20	5	339
Other arts	8	53	78	96	123	105	56	23	2	544
Libraries, museums, etc (research only)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	89	406	614	757	920	908	428	198	44	4,364

Source:
The Academic Staff of Polytechnics and Colleges: PCFC/HEFCE Return.

Full-Time non-clinical academic wholly institutionally funded staff in former polytechnics in England, 1992–93—Men

Cost Centre	*Age under 25*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–44*	*45–49*	*50–54*	*55–59*	*60 and over*	*Total*
Education	3	5	19	61	146	212	163	100	36	745
Medicine, dentistry and health	4	13	33	56	68	78	34	24	7	317
Engineering and technology	34	127	236	326	411	518	499	369	145	2,665
Agriculture, forestry and veterinary science	—	2	3	6	4	10	4	3	2	34
Biological, mathematical and physical sciences	19	168	254	395	460	656	457	289	88	2,786
Administrative, business and social studies	33	148	308	485	944	960	562	317	153	3,910
Architecture and planning	1	11	31	42	80	127	88	49	23	452
Language, literature and area studies	3	15	21	36	70	86	78	36	12	357
Other arts	2	59	121	166	238	427	273	128	52	1,466
Libraries, museums, etc (research only)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	99	548	1,026	1,573	2,421	3,074	2,158	1,315	518	12,732

Source:
The Academic Staff of Polytechnics and Colleges: PCFC/HEFCE Return.

Educational Psychologists

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many educational psychologists have been employed by local authorities in each year since 1979.

Mr. Forth: Information on the number of educational psychologists employed by local education authorities of 1985 and 1992 to 1994, the only years for which information is readily available, is shown in the table.

Full-time equivalent number of educational psychologists in post by local education authority. As at January of each year

LEA	*1985*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Inner London	87.7	—	—	—
City	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Full-time equivalent number of educational psychologists in post by local education authority. As at January of each year

LEA	*1985*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Camden	—	7.8	7.0	8.2
Greenwich	—	11.0	12.0	12.0
Hackney	—	8.5	7.5	10.0
Hammersmith and Fulham	—	8.0	7.0	7.0
Islington	—	10.0	8.0	8.0
Kensington and Chelsea	—	6.0	7.0	7.0
Lambeth	—	7.8	11.1	13.5
Lewisham	—	10.0	9.0	9.0
Southwark	—	10.0	10.5	11.6
Tower Hamlets	—	10.0	8.5	8.0
Wandsworth	—	11.0	10.0	5.6
Westminster	—	7.0	6.0	6.0
Barking and Dagenham	7.0	7.5	7.5	7.2
Barnet	8.5	13.6	14.5	14.5
Bexley	5.0	6.5	6.5	8.0
Brent	9.6	11.2	8.5	10.5
Bromley	8.0	10.0	10.0	9.0
Croydon	9.0	10.8	10.8	10.8
Ealing	5.4	9.8	9.8	11.8
Enfield	9.0	12.5	13.0	15.2
Haringey	7.0	9.8	10.8	10.8
Harrow	6.0	6.0	9.0	8.6
Havering	8.0	8.0	8.7	8.0
Hillingdon	5.0	8.2	8.8	8.9
Hounslow	5.9	5.8	6.0	8.1
Kingston upon Thames	2.0	3.0	4.0	4.3
Merton	5.0	5.7	6.6	5.4
Newham	11.0	11.0	10.2	10.0
Redbridge	6.0	7.4	7.4	7.4
Richmond upon Thames	4.0	5.5	6.0	6.0
Sutton	4.0	6.0	4.0	5.0
Waltham Forest	8.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
Birmingham	37.2	37.5	31.5	39.3
Coventry	12.3	14.0	12.0	12.0
Dudley	7.5	8.5	7.1	6.6
Sandwell	8.0	14.0	14.0	12.0
Solihull	7.3	8.0	8.4	7.5
Walsall	7.0	10.0	9.0	10.0
Wolverhampton	6.0	10.0	9.0	9.0
Knowsley	7.0	6.8	5.8	6.8
Liverpool	15.5	18.0	18.0	18.0
St. Helens	4.0	6.5	9.0	8.0
Sefton	9.0	11.0	10.0	10.0
Wirral	8.0	13.5	10.5	11.5
Bolton	4.0	7.4	7.4	7.4
Bury	3.5	4.5	4.6	4.6
Manchester	14.0	19.3	18.2	17.8
Oldham	5.0	4.0	7.0	6.0
Rochdale	9.0	7.5	7.5	7.5
Salford	6.0	7.0	7.6	7.6
Stockport	6.7	9.5	9.5	10.4
Tameside	7.0	11.0	8.0	7.0
Trafford	3.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Wigan	8.0	6.5	6.5	9.0
Barnsley	4.0	4.5	4.5	5.6
Doncaster	9.0	9.0	11.0	11.0
Rotherham	9.0	10.3	9.3	10.3
Sheffield	13.6	16.2	18.2	16.3
Bradford	14.0	19.0	20.0	21.5
Calderdale	2.0	6.8	6.5	7.0
Kirklees	12.0	15.0	17.0	18.0
Leeds	13.5	19.0	19.0	15.0
Wakefield	6.0	12.0	10.5	8.5
Gateshead	8.0	10.0	8.5	9.0
Newcastle upon Tyne	12.0	11.0	11.0	11.0
North Tyneside	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
South Tyneside	6.0	8.0	6.0	6.0
Sunderland	9.0	10.1	11.1	11.5
Isles of Scilly	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Avon	28.6	28.8	25.5	25.0
Bedfordshire	12.0	17.0	15.9	14.9
Berkshire	17.3	17.0	19.5	18.8
Buckinghamshire	16.0	21.9	23.0	22.8
Cambridgeshire	12.0	14.0	16.0	18.0
Cheshire	17.0	25.1	25.3	25.1
Cleveland	18.0	18.3	16.5	19.9
Cornwall	8.0	12.0	12.0	12.0
Cumbria	9.0	18.0	19.0	19.0
Derbyshire	21.5	33.1	30.3	29.0
Devon	20.4	22.1	24.5	24.5
Dorset	14.5	17.5	18.6	17.6
Durham	17.4	20.4	23.5	21.5
East Sussex	11.8	19.6	18.7	19.8
Essex	31.4	42.7	42.3	35.8
Gloucestershire	11.0	17.0	17.4	16.4
Hampshire	31.5	44.0	46.8	46.9
Hereford and Worcester	11.0	16.5	16.0	16.0
Hertfordshire	21.5	28.4	33.0	28.0
Humberside	21.0	24.0	24.0	21.0
Isle of Wight	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0
Kent	19.0	30.0	36.5	42.1
Lancashire	34.0	42.0	40.2	43.5
Leicestershire	19.0	33.6	32.6	32.7
Lincolnshire	10.0	13.0	13.0	15.0
Norfolk	14.0	18.5	19.0	18.0
North Yorkshire	15.2	20.0	19.0	18.0
Northamptonshire	15.0	17.5	19.0	25.5
Northumberland	4.1	9.5	9.5	8.4
Nottinghamshire	30.0	28.5	29.0	28.6
Oxfordshire	12.5	14.5	14.5	14.5
Shropshire	8.0	12.0	11.6	11.6
Somerset	9.0	11.0	11.1	11.9
Staffordshire	17.7	29.4	27.4	27.0
Suffolk	13.0	14.0	14.0	15.0
Surrey	22.0	28.4	29.5	27.2
Warwickshire	9.8	12.3	12.7	14.1
West Sussex	12.0	17.4	17.1	19.0
Wiltshire	13.0	14.8	13.3	14.0
Total: All LEAs	1,173.4	1,496.6	1,497.7	1,514.2

Further Education (Asian Pupils)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she has made of the proportion of girls of Asian heritage or background who do not continue in education beyond 16.

Mr. Boswell: It is estimated that in 1993–94 15 per cent. of girls of Asian ethnic origin did not remain in full-time education at 16, compared with 11 per cent. of Asian boys and 27 per cent. of pupils of all backgrounds.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by her Department and associated agencies, over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Forth: The number and percentage of registered disabled people employed by the Department and the Teachers Pensions Agency over the last five years are as follows:

Year	Number (full-time equivalents)	Per cent.
1994	60.0	2.9
1993	63.0	3.0
1992	68.5	2.6
1991	70.0	2.6
1990	65.5	2.6

This table refers only to staff who are registered disabled. There are disabled people employed by the Department who choose not to register, and therefore do not appear in the figures.

Projected figures for the next five years are not available.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the budget allocated by her Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years; and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Forth: Departmental expenditure in support of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people includes cost elements associated with staff numbers, training, special equipment and other forms of support, accommodation, etcetera, and cannot be disaggregated.

The number of staff or staff hours equivalent allocated to achieve the objectives of the programme for action cannot be estimated, since successful implementation will require the commitment not only of equal opportunities officers but of other personnel, welfare and training officers and individual line managers throughout the organisation.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will publish the revenue and capital budget for each of the city technology colleges for 1993–94 and 1994–95; and what was the number of pupils.

Mr. Robin Squire: The revenue and capital grants allocated by the Department to each of the city technology colleges for 1993–94 and 1994–95, and pupil numbers for those years, are shown in the table.

All grant figures are given in £ million (Revenue in academic years; capital in financial years)

	Recurrent grant paid 1993–94	*Pupil numbers 1993–94*	*Capital grant paid 1993–94*	*Recurrent grant estimate 1994–95*	*Pupil numbers 1994–95*	*Capital grant estimate 1994–95*
Kingshurst	3.6	1,223	0.3	3.7	1,250	0.2
Djanogly	2.6	844	0.1	2.7	867	0.1
Macmillan	2.8	912	0.3	3.0	980	0.7
Emmanuel	1.9	600	—	2.0	750	0.1
Dixons	2.5	730	0.3	2.7	895	0.2
Leigh	3.4	1,140	0.3	3.7	1,236	0.7
Harris	3.2	1,000	0.1	3.5	1,033	0.3
BRITschool	2.9	686	—	3.0	703	0.4
Bacon's	4.0	1,050	—	4.1	1,061	—
Haberdashers'	4.7	1,150	2.7	4.8	1,139	0.1
Thomas Telford	2.5	664	—	2.8	832	—
Brooke Weston	2.5	745	0.1	2.7	860	0.1
ADT	2.7	592	—	3.1	736	0.1
Landau Forte	2.0	450	—	2.2	600	—
John Cabot	1.3	150	2.9	1.5	327	0.7
Total	42.4	11,936	7.1	45.4	13,269	3.8

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will publish a list of all city technology colleges showing their examination results and truancy figures.

Mr. Robin Squire: The examination results and truancy figures for city technology colleges have been published in the 1994 performance tables. They are reproduced below with the appropriate local education authority averages.

1994 Performance tables—CTCs

		15 year-old performance GCSEs						*16+ year-old performance GCE A/S*							*Absence*	
CTC	*Pupils aged 15*	*5+ A*–C Per cent.*	*5+ A*–G Per cent.*	*1+ A*–G Per cent.*	*VQ number entered*	*VQ percentage achieving Per cent.*	*Number entering <2*	*Average point score per candidate*	*Number entering 2 or more*	*Average point score per candidate*	*Average point score per exam entry*	*VQ number entering in final year*	*VQ percentage number achieving qualifications Per cent.*	*Pupils of compulsory school age*	*Authorised absence Per cent.*	*Unauthorised absence Per cent.*
ADT College	3	0	0	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	572	6.9	0.2
Wandsworth	—	29	75	88	—	80	—	3.4	—	11.9	4.4	—	85	—	8.0	2.3
Bacon's	150	11	76	95	—	—	18	0.7	22	8.6	2.8	—	—	892	13.1	0.8
Southwark	—	18	70	85	—	85	—	0.6	—	7.3	2.5	—	100	—	9.8	3.8
Brooke Weston	64	58	100	100	34	100	37	3.0	38	13.2	4.1	7	100	644	7.3	0.1
Northants	—	39	89	95	—	95	—	2.6	—	13.9	4.5	—	90	—	7.6	0.7
Britschool	108	31	86	92	81	91	86	3.3	16	10.9	3.7	168	86	234	0.5	0.2
Croydon	—	37	83	91	—	89	—	3.3	—	13.6	4.7	—	85	—	7.6	0.6
Djanogly	145	16	80	98	145	38	—	—	1	4.0	1.3	—	—	797	3.1	0.5
Notts	—	35	84	91	—	80	—	2.5	—	14.0	4.3	—	83	—	8.1	1.6
Dixons	98	68	100	100	94	52	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	744	5.6	0.1
Bradford	—	27	76	89	—	71	—	2.5	—	13.6	4.1	—	87	—	9.2	3.5

1994 Performance tables—CTCs

		15 year-old performance GCSEs						16+ year-old performance GCE A/S							Absence	
CTC	*Pupils aged 15*	*5+ A*–C Per cent.*	*5+ A*–G Per cent.*	*1+ A*–G Per cent.*	*VQ number entered*	*VQ percentage achieving Per cent.*	*Number entering <2*	*Average point score per candidate*	*Number entering 2 or more*	*Average point score per candidate*	*Average point score per exam entry*	*VQ number entering in final year*	*VQ percentage number achieving qualifications Per cent.*	*Pupils of compulsory school age*	*Authorised absence Per cent.*	*Unauthorised absence Per cent.*
Emmanuel	2	0	0	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	597	5.1	[1]—
Gateshead	—	34	80	88	—	80	—	3.4	—	15.9	5.3	—	96	—	9.1	1.8
Harris	135	27	85	96	16	88	—	—	4	4.0	1.7	16	81	874	7.5	0.1
Croydon	—	37	83	91	—	89	—	3.3	—	13.6	4.7	—	85	—	7.6	0.6
Haberdashers'	177	55	95	100	—	—	9	1.9	84	14.3	5.0	—	—	884	5.6	0.3
Lewisham	—	27	78	91	—	82	—	2.6	—	10.9	4.0	—	91	—	8.8	1.8
John Cabot	Opened 1993, data not required															
Avon	—	40	86	93	—	75	—	2.4	—	13.2	4.5	—	89	—	8.1	0.9
London Forte	[2]—	—	—	—	—	—	18	4.3	33	14.3	5.0	35	94	313	3.2	[1]—
Derbyshire	—	41	88	94	—	86	—	2.9	—	16.2	4.6	—	86	—	7.6	1.2
Leigh	132	19	83	95	120	78	15	2.7	23	10.6	3.7	15	100	971	6.9	0.2
Kent	—	40	86	94	—	81	—	3.0	—	15.8	5.2	—	79	—	7.8	0.6
Macmillan	172	44	95	100	51	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	904	8.6	1.9
Cleveland	—	35	81	89	—	84	—	1.9	—	17.3	5.1	—	96	—	9.9	1.4
The CTC Kingshurst	172	47	96	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	53	89	913	3.5	[1]—
Solihull	—	48	91	96	—	90	—	2.3	—	14.0	4.1	—	85	—	6.3	0.3
Thomas Telford	[2]—	—	—	—	—	—	18	3.2	14	15.2	4.7	53	100	525	4.5	[1]—
Shropshire	—	47	91	96	—	93	—	3.5	—	16.9	5.1	—	97	—	6.7	0.4

[1] Less than 0.05 per cent. of half days missed.

[2] No 15 year-old pupils in college.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate she has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by her Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating her estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate she has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in late February-early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years;

Mr. Waldegrave: The figures for the registered disabled people employed in my Department, including executive agencies, in the past five years are as follows:

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Number	139.5	141.5	138.5	159.0	143.5
Percentage	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.6	1.4

In addition to those people registered as disabled, an internal survey of staff shows that the number of people with disabilities is between three and four times greater than the number of those registered as disabled.

No projections have been made for future years.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years; and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Waldegrave: Departmental expenditure in support of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people falls to a range of budgets such as accommodation, personnel management, equal opportunities and staff training, and cannot be disaggregated. Similarly, it is not possible to estimate the numbers of staff or staff hours allocated since successful implementation will require commitment not only of equal opportunities officers but of many other sections throughout the Ministry, including executive agencies.

Foot and Mouth Disease

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many imported cattle found to be seropositive to foot and mouth disease have been *(a)* slaughtered and *(b)* restricted to the holdings on which they are at present.

Mrs. Browning: Of the 249 cattle of Czech and Polish origin which were tested positive last year for the presence of antibodies to foot and mouth disease, a total of 36 have been slaughtered by their owners; 213 animals remain under movement restriction on their current holdings.

Intervention Board Chairman

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who appointed Mr. John Ellis to the post of chairman of the Intervention Board executive agency which oversees banana import licence arrangements.

Mr. Waldegrave: Mr. John Ellis was appointed chairman of the Intervention Board for Agricultural

Produce on 22 February 1986 by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland jointly. Bananas were first brought within the scope of the common agricultural policy in July 1993.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the departmental report, to be published in late February-early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies.

Milk Quota

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce measures which would facilitate the acquisition of milk quota by new entrants to farming; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I recognise the difficulties faced by those seeking to establish themselves in the dairy industry, and the Department has in the past looked at ways of attempting to assist new entrants. However, quota for this purpose could be obtained only at the expense of existing producers. Moreover, it would be very costly from an administrative point of view to ensure an equitable distribution of quota to new entrants, not least since any such scheme would inevitably be over-subscribed. There are, therefore, no plans to introduce special measures for new entrants. But we keep the matter under review and discuss it from time to time with the National Farmers Union and others.

Pollution

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many incidents involving sheep dip solution contaminating *(a)* rivers and lakes and *(b)* the domestic water supply have been reported for each year since 1987.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply:

(a) This information has been published since 1990 in National Rivers Authority annual reports on water pollution incidents in England and Wales.

(b) Results of the monitoring of public water supplies in England and Wales are published in the drinking water inspectorate's annual reports. One incident involving a sheep dip chemical was reported in 1994. There is no centrally held data for private supplies, but my Department is aware of four incidents at one site between 1991 and 1993 involving sheep dip chemicals.

WALES

Internet

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to provide information via Internet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My Department is examining the potential of making information available electronically via the Internet through the CCTA Government Information Service.

A55

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to further control trading in lay-by areas on the A55 in Clwyd.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office has been reviewing its policy towards trading in trunk road lay-bys particularly on high speed dual carriageway routes such as the A55. This review will be finalised very shortly.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future applications to Wales of the Barnett formula and its implications for each of the major categories of Welsh public expenditure.

Mr. Redwood: Changes in the public expenditure provision for the Welsh block continue to be determined mainly by the well-established, population-based formula linked to changes to comparable programme expenditure in England. I have flexibility in allocating the resources within the block, which comprises all programmes within my responsibility with the exception of agriculture. I shall be announcing the allocations for individual programmes shortly.

Unemployment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new policies he will adopt to assist the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Redwood: I will ensure that our main training programme for long-term unemployed people, training for work, is focused more sharply on getting people into work. In addition my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has announced a number of measures to help the long-term unemployed which will be implemented in Wales. These include extending community action and an expansion of the work trials scheme. Unemployed people in Wales will also benefit from the improved incentives flowing from the social security changes announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Redwood: Departmental expenditure in support of its programme of action for people with a disability and the civil service programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity for people with a disability includes costs associated with a number of elements such as the procurement of specialist equipment, positive action training, adaptations of accommodation and buildings, and staff costs and cannot be disaggregated.

The number of staff or staff hours equivalent, allocated to achieve the objectives of the programmes for action cannot be estimated. Successful implementation depends on the co-operation and commitment of a number of staff including the equal opportunities officer, the training officer, personnel specialists, accommodation officers and line managers and also involves consultation with disabled staff.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Redwood: The number and percentage of registered disabled people in my Department over the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Number*	*Percentage*
1990	32	1.4
1991	30	1.3
1992	37.5	1.5
1993	40	1.5
1994	37	1.6

My Department also employs a number of unregistered disabled people equivalent to 2.1 per cent. of staff.

Projected figures are not available.

Footnote: Figures relate to July each year and include figures for Cadw, Welsh Historic Monuments.

Public Appointments

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for the latest available date a list of public authorities to which he makes appointments, indicating *(a)* the total number of members of the authorities, *(b)* the number of members which he appoints and *(c)* the location of the headquarters of the authority.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested has been placed in the Library of the House.

Public Authorities (Rent Payments)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the total amount of rent for headquarters paid by each public authority to which he makes appointments and the corresponding per square foot rental per year where headquarters are located in Wales for each of the last three available years together with the grand total.

Mr. Redwood: This information is not held centrally.

Visual Handicap

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were registered *(a)* blind and *(b)* partially sighted as at 31 March 1986 and 31 March 1991.

Mr. Richards: The numbers of people who were registered as blind or partially sighted in Wales on 31 March 1986 and 1991 are given in the table:

Number of people	*1986*	*1991*
Registered blind	8,362	8,999
Registered partially sighted	5,420	6,546

Sight Tests

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the estimated savings made in 1992–93 as a result of the introduction of a charge for sight tests.

Mr. Richards: The changes made in 1989 restricted the category of people who were eligible to receive free sight tests. No new changes were introduced. The expenditure on eye tests in Wales in each financial year from 1986–87 and 1993–94 are shown in the following table:

General ophthalmic services—sight tests
Costs per annum (Wales)—£000

	£
1986-87	5,081
1987-88	6,246
1988-89	6,901
1989-90	3,501
1990-91	3,105
1991-92	4,163
1992-93	4,919
1993-94	5,350

Medical Complaints

Mr. Flynn: to ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many medical complaints were heard in Wales in each of the past five years; and in what percentage of cases complaints of patients were upheld.

Mr. Richards: The information is as follows:

a. *Hospitals*

The number of clinical or partly clinical complaints made in hospitals and handled locally were:

	Number
1988-89	668
1989-90	647
1990-91	734
1991-92	767
1992-93	1,232

Information on the outcome of these complaints is not held centrally.

b. *Family Health Services*

The number of general medical services complaints made to FHSAs were:

	Number
1989-90	303
1990-91	353
1991-92	389
1992-93	414
1993-94	433

The number of complaints upheld by FHSAs were:

	Number
1989-90	18
1990-91	23
1991-92	12
1992-93	16
1993-94	17

In addition, the following numbers of complaints were upheld on appeal to the Secretary of State:

	Number
1989-90	4
1990-91	5
1991-92	4
1992-93	2
1993-94	4

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will set out his reason for calling for a second ballot on grant-maintained status at West Monmouth school, Gwent; and if he will make a statement on the result of the second ballot.

Mr. Richards: The reasons are set out in the Department's letter to the school's chairman of governors dated 26 September 1994, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. In the second ballot, a majority of parents voted against grant-maintained status for the school.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the gross amount spent by his Department in each Welsh county to advertise, promote and inform schools and parents on grant-maintained status.

Mr. Richards: Since 1990, the Welsh Office has spent around £165,000 in total ensuring that schools are provided with factual information on grant-maintained status. It is not possible to break this down on an individual county basis.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to ensure that the same standards of financial and management responsibility now applied to local education authority schools will be applied to grant-maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: Local education authorities are responsible for ensuring good standards of financial management in their schools. This can vary between authorities as revealed in the Audit Commission's 1993 report "Adding up the sums: Schools' Management of their Finances" which suggested that in some 40 per cent. of schools, financial accountability was weak or non-existent.

Grant-maintained schools in Wales are subject to a range of provisions aimed at ensuring that the highest possible standards of financial and managerial control apply. Among these are:

—detailed financial management procedures and audit arrangements that are set out in a financial memorandum and other guidance, including a requirement for annual external audit by approved independent bodies.

—examination by the Comptroller and Auditor General who reports his findings to the House of Commons in each Session of Parliament; and

—a range of orders and regulations that prescribe how GM schools must operate.

Bodies (Transport)

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales why the body of the stillborn baby recently transported from the Wrexham Maelor hospital was sent to Cardiff for tests instead of to a nearer hospital in the north-west of England.

Mr. Richards: It was decided by the consultant obstetrician, and with the consent of the family concerned, to send the baby's body to Cardiff because that is where the relevant expertise lay in this instance.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what planning guidance currently covers the operation of plants processing toxic or hazardous wastes.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The planning system does not seek to control the method of processing of waste substances. The disposal or recovery of toxic or hazardous wastes is subject to regulation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with district auditors concerning the financial operations of NHS trusts in Wales.

Mr. Richards: The Welsh Office has discussions with district auditors on a wide range of issues.

Infertility

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to ensure that all purchasing health authorities contract with providers for a comprehensive infertility investigation and treatment service.

Mr. Richards: The NHS in Wales provides a wide range of services for the investigation and treatment of infertility. Decisions about the level and type of service to provide must be left to individual health authorities to determine in the light of local needs and circumstances.

The Welsh Office has provided guidance on infertility in the protocol "Investment in Health Gain for Healthy Living" and drawn attention to the advice contained in "The Effective Health Care Bulletin on the Management of Subfertility" by York university and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists publication "Infertility—Guidelines for Practice".

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without compulsory redundancy.

Welsh Health Development International

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the countries mentioned in the letter to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), of 11 October, where Welsh Health Development International has health care consultancy contracts *(a)* either on its own or in partnership and *(b)* where it has already completed such contracts on its own or in co-operation; and what impact WHDI has had in promoting Welsh manufactured or researched medical products and services.

Mr. Redwood: Welsh Health Development International has completed health care consultancy contracts in Bahrain, Hungary, Kenya, Lithuania and Poland. It is currently working on contracts in Hong Kong and Bulgaria.

Its role has been primarily in the provision of management services.

Bryngias Tunnels Bypass

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the original date for the completion of the Brynglas tunnels bypass; and what is now the expected date.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The original contract completion date for the M4 Brynglas tunnels and A4042 Malpas road relief scheme was 20 March 1994. Extensions of time have been awarded giving a current contract completion date of 4 December 1994. Further extensions have been claimed by the contractor and the completion date is currently under review.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements have been made to second departmental staff to the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Register of Public Appointments

Mr. Hanson: to ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of the public advertisements and subsequent administration of the Register of Public Appointments since instigation.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 2 December 1994]:* The cost of advertisements in July 1993, designed to attract new candidates for addition to the Welsh Office register of candidates for public appointments—DROCA—was £8,300. These advertisements produced 1,000 extra people for the list, which now numbers around 5,000. DROCA has been in existence for many years, and it is not possible to identify the costs of its administration since its establishment.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Incidents

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of prison incidents during the period from 1 January 1994 to date in which prisoners were removed to other prisons because of the serious nature of the incident; and if he will list the prisons involved.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 30 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about prison incidents from 1 January 1994 in which prisoners were removed to other prisons due to the serious nature of the incident.

The information requested is not recorded centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Payments

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average and median time his Department has taken to pay suppliers in each of the last 12 months; and what proportion of bills took more than six weeks to pay.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is not held centrally and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost. However, Departments are required to provide details of their annual payment performance in their departmental reports. In its 1995 annual report, the Home Office expects to report payment performance in excess of 90 per cent. in accordance with agreed contractual conditions or, where no such contractual conditions existed, within 30 days of receipt of goods and services or the presentation of a valid invoice.

Chief Superintendent David Golding

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date he arranged the meeting on 6 October with Chief Superintendent David Golding; who attended the meeting; where it was held; to whom the expenses were charged; and what guidance was given to Chief Superintendent David Golding on the contents of his speech for the next day.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Secretary did not have a meeting with Chief Superintendent David Golding on 6 October. He had meetings with Chief Superintendent Golding on 4 October, on the eve of the Superintendents Association conference, which they both addressed on 5 October. Those engagements were arranged by correspondence on 22 November 1993. A before-dinner meeting on 4 October was attended by the Home Secretary, Chief Superintendent Golding and Chief Superintendent David Clark. An after-dinner meeting on 4 October was attended by the Home Secretary and the executive committee of the Superintendents Association. The meetings were held at the Bosworth Hall hotel, Market Bosworth, the location of the Superintendents Association conference. The Home Office met the costs of the Home Secretary's travel to the hotel and overnight accommodation. He was the guest at dinner of the Superintendents Association. No guidance was given on the contents of Chief Superintendent Golding's speech.

Poll Tax

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been imprisoned twice for failure to pay poll tax.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 30 November 1994:

> The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many persons have been imprisoned twice for failure to pay poll tax.
>
> Between 1990 and 31 October 1994 some 19 persons were received twice into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales for non-payment of poll tax.

Police Station Interviews

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Law Society on its studies of the psychology of police station interviews and of safeguarding vulnerable suspects including the mentally ill; and if he will study the Law Society's advice to solicitors with a view to issuing advice to the police.

Mr. Maclean: The Law Society is represented on the Home Office working group set up in response to recommendations by the Royal Commission on criminal justice to review the appropriate adults scheme. It has also commented during the public consultation stage on the draft revised codes of practice issued under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. It remains to be considered if, as a result of those two exercises, further guidance should be issued to the police about vulnerable suspects.

Aggravated Trespass

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases have so far been brought under the aggravated trespass provisions of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

Mr. Maclean: Cautioning and court proceedings data under sections 68 and 69—summary offences of aggravated trespass—of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 will not be available until autumn 1996.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hunt protesters have been arrested under aggravated trespass regulations contained in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 in Devon and Cornwall.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of people arrested for specific offences is not collected centrally.

Information on cautioning and court proceedings data under sections 68 and 69—summary offences of aggravated trespass—of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 will not be available until autumn 1996.

Murder

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the law on murder.

Mr. Maclean: Murder is a common law offence. The Home Affairs Select Committee has announced its intention to review the mandatory life sentence for murder and the case for a discretionary life sentence. In addition, it will examine the "year and a day rule" as it applies to murder. That rule is also being reviewed by the Law Commission. We look forward to receiving the reports of both bodies.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the medical foundation for the care of victims of torture regarding asylum seekers who are being detained in detention centres and mainstream prisons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I met representatives of the Medical Foundation on 15 September 1994. On 3 October, it wrote to the Home Secretary and to me following up items discussed at that meeting and enclosing copies of its report "A Betrayal of Hope and Trust: Detention in the United Kingdom of Survivors of Torture". I wrote to it on 15 November responding to the issues which it had raised.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Somali refugees are currently seeking asylum in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: As at 30 September 1994—the latest date for which the information is available—there were an estimated 975 applications for asylum from Somali nationals outstanding.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many refugees are currently being detained under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 has no provision for the detention of an asylum seeker. The provision for the powers of detention are contained within the Immigration Act 1971. However, at 18 November 1994, a total of 654 people who had sought asylum were detained. That figure includes people awaiting the setting of directions for removal following the refusal of the application, as well as those whose application was under consideration or subject to appeal.

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by country of origin the total number of applications for asylum entry into the United Kingdom in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and in the first six months of 1994.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information on the number of applications for asylum received in the United Kingdom, by nationality for the period 1990 to 1993, is published in table 2.2 of the Home Office statistical bulletin issue 17/94 "Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 1993", a copy of which is available in the Library. Information for the first six months of 1994 is provided in the table.

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by location of application and nationality, 1 January 1994 to 30 June 1994.

Nationality	*Number of principal applicants 1994 (January-June)*		
	Total applications[2]	*Applied at port*	*Applied in country*
Europe			
Bulgaria	65	5	60
Romania	115	20	90
Turkey	1,035	295	740
Former USSR	275	25	250
Former Yugoslavia	715	155	560
Other	230	75	160
Total	2,435	570	1,865
Americas			
Colombia	195	125	70
Other	295	80	215
Total	490	205	285
Africa			
Angola	245	70	175
Congo	10	5	5
Ethiopia	360	105	255
Ghana	1,030	195	835
Kenya	755	520	235
Nigeria	1,750	165	1,585
Sierra Leone	660	225	435
Somalia	705	325	380
Sudan	155	35	120
Togo and Ivory Coast	375	208	165
Uganda	170	45	120
Zaire	365	165	200
Other	825	215	610
Total	7,400	2,280	5,120
Middle East			
Iran	220	55	165
Iraq	225	95	130
Lebanon	105	35	70
Other	280	115	160
Total	825	300	525
Asia			
China	145	70	75
India	890	90	800
Pakistan	800	75	725
Sri Lanka	1,250	695	560
Other	400	145	255
Total	3,480	1,075	2,410
Other, and nationality not known	105	105	—
Grand Total	14,730	4,540	10,190

[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest 5 with '*' = 1 or 2 and '..' = unavailable.

[2] Figures do not include applications made overseas.

Al Fayed Brothers

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to take decisions on the applications for British citizenship by *(a)* Mr. Ali Al Fayed and *(b)* Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: As my right hon. and learned Friend made clear in his public statement on 24 October 1994 he has asked me to deal with those applications, and I hope to reach a decision on them in the reasonably near future.

EU Asylum Applications

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent meeting of European Union Justice Ministers concerning common rules for handling asylum applications; and if he will place in the Library the statement after the meeting.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: At its meeting on 30 November and 1 December, the Justice and Home Affairs Council did not conclude consideration of the draft resolution on minimum guarantees for asylum procedures. The draft resolution and the Government's explanatory note on it were made available to Parliament on 10 November in accordance with the Government's proposed procedures for consultation with Parliament on title VI matters, and the Government will make available the final text once it has been agreed by the Council.

Speeding

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions the police brought last year for speeding in a built-up area where the upper speed limit is 30 mph; and if he will provide a breakdown of the speeds at which the motorists were driving.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidelines he has issued regarding prosecution for speeding in a built-up area where the motorist is driving between 30 mph and 40 mph.

Mr. Maclean: None. The way in which speed limits are enforced is an operational matter for chief officers of police.

Wiltshire County Constabulary

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of *(a)* police officers and *(b)* civilian employees in the Wiltshire county constabulary for each year since 1979.

Mr. Maclean: The information is set out in the table.

Wiltshire Constabulary - Police and civilian strength since 1979

As at 31 December

Year	*Police*	*Civilian staff*
1979	1,007	246
1980	1,032	255
1981	1,042	256
1982	1,031	262
1983	1,030	270
1984	1,029	290
1985	1,028	306
1986	1,037	351
1987	1,096	370
1988	1,093	396
1989	1,119	435
1990	1,157	447
1991	1,212	473
1992	1,262	490
1993	1,273	483

Immigration

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigrants entered the United Kingdom despite failing to meet the various entry requirements in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and the first six months of 1994 by country of origin.

Mr. Maclean: Comprehensive information is not available. The numbers of persons who had applied for asylum at the ports and subsequently been given exceptional leave to enter in 1992–93 outside of the immigration rules are given in tables 4.1 and 4.2 of the Home Office statistical bulletin in "Asylum Statistics, United Kingdom, 1993", issue 7/94, a copy of which is in the Library. Corresponding data for 1990–91 are not readily available. The total for the first half of 1994 was 825, provisional figures.

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the figures for 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and for the first six months of 1994, of successful applications for entry to this country by immigrants of all descriptions; and if he will provide a statistical breakdown of their countries of origin.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information on grants of entry clearance by country where the application was made is published in table 2.1 of the Home Office command paper "Control of Immigration: Statistics United Kingdom 1993" issued on 18 August 1994—Cm 2637, HMSO—a copy of which is in the Library.

Passports

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether British citizens of the European Union must necessarily carry a passport when travelling from the United Kingdom to another member state of the EU.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Yes, if the British citizen wishes to be assured of entry to another member state. Community law requires member states to allow citizens of the Union to enter their territory simply on production of a valid identity card or passport.

Appropriation Accounts

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish the 1993–94 appropriation accounts.

Mr. Howard: Volume 7 of the 1993–94 appropriation accounts will be laid before the House of Commons and published once the Comptroller and Auditor General has completed his audit work. At present, this is expected to be in January 1995.

Nuclear Crime

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals were put forward on solutions to nuclear crime by Her Majesty's Government to the Economic Union Justice Council on 30 November to 1 December, what proposals on this matter were received from other member states; if he will place copies of such proposals in the Library; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of the meeting.

Mr. Howard: The Justice and Home Affairs Council on 30 November to 1 December considered proposals for the article K4 committee for priority measures for implementing the Berlin declaration on increased co-operation in combating drugs crime and organised crime in Europe. These included a proposal that all the states concerned should ratify the convention on the physical protection of nuclear material concluded in the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency and opened for signature on 3 March 1980. The Council agreed that the measures recommended should be taken forward by the article K4 committee.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Howard: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 Departmental report, to be published in late February-early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies.

Miscarriages of Justice

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the High Court judgment on disclosure by the Home Office of material relating to alleged miscarriages of justice.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Transcripts of judgments are public documents and copies may be obtained from the shorthand writers. I understand that the approved text of the judgment in this case will become available shortly.

Young Offenders

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to use the military corrective training centre at Colchester as a model for young offenders in prison institutions and detention centres.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 1 December 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Alan Meale, dated 30 November 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about what plans there are to use the Military Corrective Training Centre at Colchester as a model for young offenders in prison institutions and detention centres.

Prison Service staff have visited the corrective training centre in Colchester, as well as establishments operating vigorous and demanding regimes in the United States of America. We are interested in applying relevant and effective aspects of these regimes in our young offender institutions, but it would not be possible simply to use the Military Corrective Training Centre as a model without modification in a civilian establishment.

HEALTH

NHS Managers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to ensure that NHS managers are capable of undertaking basic financial tasks; and that those who do not are dismissed.

Mr. Malone: Where necessary, candidates for national health service management posts are required to demonstrate financial skills. Every NHS organisation decides what necessary training to give staff to develop financial skills. Where managers consistently fail to demonstrate any necessary skills, it is an option to dismiss them.

Mental Health (Race Bias)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations or reports she has received alleging a race bias in the mental health system; what has been her response; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: None. But consultation by the mental health task force with service users has led to the issuing of advice to purchasers, "Black Mental Health: A Dialogue for Change" and a video on good practice "Different Cultures, Different Needs". Copies of this advice and video are available in the Library. I was pleased to launch them on 22 November.

Medical Register

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to discuss with the General Medical Council its policies on reinstating doctors to the medical register.

Mr. Malone: None.

General Medical Council

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who appoints the lay members of the General Medical Council.

Mr. Malone: Lay members are nominated by the Crown on the advice of the Privy Council.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will reduce the maximum interval between general practitioner referral and hospital treatment to three months by 1997; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: The Government have made good progress in reducing waiting times for hospital treatment and will continue to do so within the resources available.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give the average waiting times for ophthalmic in-patient treatment for each year since 1985.

Mr. Malone: Information on average waiting times by specialty is not available centrally. Data on numbers of people waiting by specialty and national health service trust are given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England", copies of which are available in the Library.

Birmingham and Midland Eye Hospital

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress is being made in respect of a replacement for the Birmingham and Midland eye hospital when the lease of the present building expires.

Mr. Sackville: Work started on site in September on a development to replace services currently provided at the Birmingham and Midland eye hospital. Construction is under way and is on schedule for commissioning in March 1996. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. N. R. Thompson, chairman of City hospital national health service trust, for further details.

General Practitioners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health is she will list by regional health authority the current general practitioners who are listed under section 12(2) of the Mental Health Act 1983; at what intervals they are reviewed; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally. Responsibility for approving doctors under section 12(2) of the Mental Health Act 1983 was delegated to regional health authorities. Approval lasts for five years and can be extended if the criteria laid down in departmental guidance, HC(90)21, are met. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Community Care

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to collect information on, or to monitor the policies on which local authority social services departments base their charges for non-residential community care services;

(2) what plans she has to monitor the impact of local authority social services departments' charging policies in respect of non-residential community care services on individual disabled people.

Mr. Bowis: It is for local authorities to assess the needs of their local population and to ensure that all policies, including those for charging, meet those needs equitably and effectively.

Social Workers

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many social workers there are *(a)* per 100 residents and *(b)* per 100 residents over 65 years of age in each shire county.

Mr. Bowis: The information requested, calculated per 10,000 residents and relating to staffing as at 30 September 1993, is shown in the table.

County	*Number of social workers per 10,000 population aged 65 and over*	*Numbers of social workers per 10,000 total population*
Avon	43.7	7.2
Bedfordshire	50.5	6.3
Berkshire	40.1	5.0
Buckinghamshire	30.2	3.7
Cambridgeshire	31.8	4.5
Cheshire	39.6	5.9
Cleveland	46.3	6.5
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	22.5	4.5
Cumbria	33.9	6.0
Derbyshire	36.8	6.0
Devon	28.8	5.8
Dorset	18.1	4.1
Durham	26.4	4.2
East Sussex	35.5	8.0
Essex	31.6	5.1
Gloucestershire	27.6	4.8
Hampshire	25.7	4.0
Hereford and Worcester	31.9	5.2
Hertfordshire	32.2	4.7
Humberside	30.1	4.9
Isle of Wight	31.8	7.4
Kent	37.1	6.1
Lancashire	27.7	4.7
Leicestershire	42.9	6.3
Lincolnshire	22.5	4.1
Norfolk	23.1	4.4
Northamptonshire	25.9	3.7
Northumberland	34.2	5.8
North Yorkshire	23.2	4.1
Nottinghamshire	38.3	6.0
Oxfordshire	39.9	5.6
Shropshire	22.9	3.6
Somerset	30.4	5.8
Stafordshire	44.4	6.5
Suffolk	24.5	4.3
Surrey	24.8	4.0
Warwickshire	34.0	5.3
West Sussex	18.4	3.8
Wiltshire	30.5	4.7

Source:

Department of Health staffing return SSDS001 and Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid-1993 population estimates.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those members of each NHS trust in England who have disclosed private interests.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

It may be obtained from individual national health service trusts which are required to keep registers of members' interest and make them available to the public.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with district auditors concerning the financial operations of national health service trusts.

Mr. Sackville: The primary relationship of district auditors is with the national health service trusts they audit. Department of Health officials have occasional contact with district auditors on financial issues affecting NHS trusts, mostly via the Audit Commission.

Census Statistics

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce legislation which would allow personal census information to be used for purposes other than those associated with the generation of census statistics; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to introduce such legislation.

Staff Rules

Mr. Merchant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the staff rules of her Department were last revised.

Mr. Sackville: The last amendment to the staff rules was issued on 20 August 1991. The Department is currently preparing a new staff handbook incorporating the existing staff rules which will be issued shortly.

Mr. Merchant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what delegation of authority for disciplinary matters is provided for in her Department's staff rules.

Mr. Sackville: The permanent head of the Department has responsibility for all disciplinary matters. He remains personally involved in all disciplinary cases at grade 5 level and above but disciplinary powers relating to members of staff at grade 6 and below are delegated depending on the grade of the member of staff concerned.

Gipsies and Travellers

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what provisions she has made for the welfare and health of gipsies and travellers following the enactment of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994;

(2) what discussions she has had with her colleagues regarding the needs of gipsies and travellers following the enactment of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.

Mr. Bowis: Gipsies and travellers are entitled to the same health and welfare services as the rest of the population. These rights are not affected by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. The Department funds some special projects designed to help their access to primary health care.

NHS Pay

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the British Medical Association regarding *(a)* the principles of local pay determination and *(b)* linking pay to performance.

Mr. Malone: Discussions have taken place and are continuing with the British Medical Association on our proposals for the introduction of local pay arrangements in the national health service and the modification of the distinction awards scheme.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the representatives of nursing staff regarding pay increases and conditions.

Mr. Malone: Discussions are continuing within the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council about local pay arrangements for 1995–96.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has had regarding the effects on pay agreements negotiated on a local basis with particular regard to regional inequalities.

Mr. Malone: Representations from employers have welcomed the opportunity provided by locally negotiated pay to respond flexibly to labour market conditions and differing working arrangements. Those received from organisations representing national health service staff have argued for retention of national rates of pay.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure that any statement regarding national health service pay is made to the doctors and nurses and other employees organisations before departmental press releases are issued.

Mr. Malone: Press statements are used by the Department to convey quickly key messages or key facts to the press and through them to their readers. On the infrequent occasions when national health service pay is the subject of a departmental press release it is normal practice for organisations representing doctors and nurses and professional bodies and trade unions representing other employees to be informed in advance.

Efficiency Gains

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how proposed efficiency gains will *(a)* fund pay increases and *(b)* benefit patients.

Mr. Sackville: In 1995–96, the hospital and community health services will have the benefit of an increase in Government spending on revenue of 1.3 per cent. real terms, and of efficiency gains of at least 3 per cent., equivalent to a further £600 million. This combination of new money and efficiency gains will allow for service growth and reasonable staff pay rises.

Hospital and community health services will expand by around 4 per cent. in 1995–96, provided that pay rises are earned through increased efficiency. This will enable the health service to make further progress on waiting times, as well as tackling other challenges identified in the priorities and planning guidance for 1995–96, notably improvements in mental health services cancer services, and maternity care.

Quangos

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for reducing *(a)* the number of and *(b)* the cost of quangos in the health service.

Mr. Malone: Plans to merge district health authorities and family health services authorities into single authorities and to abolish regional health authorities on 1 April 1996 have been laid before parliament.

These changes will result in savings of approaching £150 million per year.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many local quangos there are in the health service; and how many people are involved in them in an administrative capacity;

(2) how many quangos there are in the health service *(a)* in each region and *(b)* by such smaller area as is available.

Mr. Malone: The table gives details of the number of national health service bodies in the geographical areas covered by each of the eight regional health authorities.

Region	*RHAs*	*DHAs*	*FHSAs*	*Trusts*	*Special Trustees*	*SHAs*	*Total*
North Thames	1	15	12	57	15	4	104
South Thames	1	16	10	60	4	0	91
Trent	1	10	8	41	2	0	62
West Midlands	1	15	11	47	1	0	75
North West	1	17	16	62	0	0	96
Northern and Yorkshire	1	15	16	57	3	0	92
Anglia and Oxford	1	10	8	46	0	1	66
South and West	1	12	9	49	1	1	73
Total	8	110	90	419	26	6	659

Key:

Regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health services authorities, operational NHS trusts, special trustees and special health authorities.

Information on the number of people involved locally in an administrative capacity is not available centrally.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by her Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years;

(2) what is the budget allocated by her Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality or opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Sackville: Data are collected only on members of staff who are registered disabled; numbers employed as at 1 July for each of the last five years are set out in the table:

Year	*Number*	*Per cent. of workforce*
1990	29.0	0.6
1991	34.5	0.7
1992	74.5	1.0
1993	68.0	1.3
1994	67.0	1.45

Part-time staff counted as half units.

In addition, there were a number of other staff with a disability but who were not registered.

It is not possible to make accurate forward projections at present since the Department is undergoing reorganisation with a view to achieving a significant reduction in staffing levels. However, the Department and its associated agencies remain committed to the employment of people with a disability.

The Department draws up an annual equal opportunities action plan to address equality issues for all staff including those with a disability taking into account the objectives of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people. A separate budget is not held for this purpose but funds are made available from relevant budgets as and when needed. The Department's equal opportunities unit has a complement of five staff. In each of the Department's agencies and the national health service executive in Leeds, a member of staff in their personnel units has responsibility for equal opportunities.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the implications of the proposed direct payments to disabled people for the future availability of local authority care services for other groups of service users and carers.

Mr. Bowis: We propose that local social services authorities should, subject to Parliament's approval, be allowed to make direct cash payments to disabled people in lieu of community care services for which they are assessed as having a need. It is for local authorities to determine the type and range of services they provide in response to assessed needs and there is no reason why direct payments in themselves should affect the availability of care services for other groups.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her proposal to make direct payments to disabled people will allow them to purchase care services from local authorities.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) on 24 November at columns *332–33*. We will be working with the key interests in the months ahead to firm up the details of this proposal, which has been widely welcomed.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will include in her proposals on direct payments to disabled people requirements for the registration and inspection of domiciliary care.

Mr. Bowis: No, these are separate issues.

Quarry House, Leeds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total annual cost of providing first-class British Rail season tickets for staff based at Quarry house, Leeds.

Mr. Sackville: Two first-class British Rail season tickets are currently provided at an equivalent annual cost of £20,232.30.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out numbers, by grade, of staff who have moved from London to Quarry house, Leeds.

Mr. Sackville: Some 522 staff in the national health service executive and the National Health Service Estates agency have moved from London to Leeds on permanent transfer terms. The grade breakdown is:

Grade	*Number of staff*
G1A	1
G3	5
G4	—
G5	20
G6	17
G7	99
SEO	72
HEO	139
EO	128
AO	38
AA	3
Total	522

Parkinson's Disease

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to establish a code of good practice and suitable protocols for the treatment of Parkinson's disease; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Clinical guidelines on Parkinson's disease, together with good practice and clinical protocols, are a matter for the relevant health care professionals.

District health authorities and general practitioner fundholders are responsible for purchasing services for people with Parkinson's disease. The Parkinson's Disease Society, with which I am in frequent contact, produced helpful draft guidance for health purchasers earlier this year entitled "Parkinson's Disease: Meeting a Need". This includes guidance on good practice.

Junior Doctors

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will review the demands, in terms of working hours, made on junior doctors in hospitals in Birmingham, Bristol and Southampton; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: The new deal on junior doctors' hours, copies of which are available in the Library, provides for a phased programme of action to reduce junior doctors' contracted hours and hours of work.

Our regional task forces, including those covering Birmingham, Bristol and Southampton, constantly review progress towards the targets for reducing hours. They are in regular contact with all hospitals to give support and to monitor implementation. Part of this process is to assess with hospitals the need for further action to reduce juniors' working hours. Action is also monitored nationally and I receive regular progress reports from each task force.

National Blood Authority

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish in full the responses to the National Blood Authority consultation on the future of the blood service; and if she will arrange for an independent analysis of the replies to be undertaken and published.

Mr. Sackville: These are matters for the National Blood Authority, which has undertaken a thorough and widespread consultation on its proposals. The results will be carefully considered before decisions are made.

Drugs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to reduce the national health service drugs bill.

Mr. Malone: A wide range of measures is in place to encourage efficient and cost-effective prescribing and to ensure the national health service pays reasonable prices for medicines.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her calculation of the total number of people who have become addicted to medicinal drugs during the past 15 years; and how many of them remain addicted.

Mr. Bowis: A patient is considered to be addicted to a medicinal drug on the basis of a clinical diagnosis by a doctor. Information on the number of such diagnoses is not available centrally.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her calculation of the numbers of people who died as the result of the use of medicinal drugs in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows the number of people who have died as a result of poisoning by drugs, medicaments, and biological substances—[1]ICD 960–979—in the last 10 years in England and Wales, under the headings of accidental, suicide and self-inflicted injury, and injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted. Whether or not these were prescribed drugs is not recorded at death. However, most of the categories of these substances are available only on prescription. Major exceptions are "analgesics, antipyretics and antirheumatics"—[1]ICD 965—and "other unspecified drugs and medicaments"—[1]ICD 977.

ICD number[1]	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
960–979	2,019	1,917	1,792	1,892	1,817	1,959	1,712	1,771	1,791	1,971
965	737	726	652	698	688	675	646	716	753	875
977	290	258	253	290	304	290	255	286	294	312

[1] International classification of diseases, 9th revision.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her calculation of the cost of medicinal drugs that were *(a)* wrongly prescribed and *(b)* prescribed and not used in each of the past five years.

Mr. Malone: Information on drugs wrongly prescribed or prescribed and not used is not available.

Palliative Care

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the responsibilities of health authorities with regard to the funding of palliative care.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities are responsible for contracting with those who provide specialist palliative care services in order to meet the health needs of their populations.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will specify the funding received for palliative care by individual authorities in each of the last five financial years.

Mr. Sackville: The information required is not available in the form requested. Central funding received by regions for palliative care in each of the last five financial years is shown in the table. This does not include funding from other national health service resources.

Region	*1990–91 £000s*	*1991–92 £000s*	*1992–93 £000s*	*1993–94 £000s*	*1994–95 £000's*
Yorkshire	602	1,276	2,892	3,446	3,788
Northern	530	1,124	2,329	2,712	3,012
Trent	756	1,603	3,443	4,019	4,304
Mersey	420	890	1,940	2,356	2,489
Oxford	365	774	1,737	1,966	2,128
East Anglia	317	672	1,589	1,922	2,129
Wessex	462	979	2,513	2,861	3,025
North East Thames	697	1,478	2,807	3,410	3,864
North West Thames	596	1,263	2,469	2,848	3,240
South East Thames	658	1,395	3,233	3,664	4,000
South West Thames	520	1,102	2,473	2,913	3,145
North Western	697	1,478	3,105	3,846	4,099
South Western	532	1,128	2,835	3,408	3,648
West Midlands	848	1,798	3,828	4,560	4,858
Total	8 million	16.96 million	37.2 million	43.9 million	47.7 million

Transport of Bodies

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will instruct all hospital trusts that when transporting the bodies of stillborn babies or bodies of other people who have died only national health service vehicles or undertakers should be used.

Mr. Sackville: It is for individual trusts to establish appropriately sensitive local policies for any arrangements which they may need to make for the transport of a body. If, to take account of local circumstances, trusts wish to draw on differing sources of transport, they should be conscious of the need to specify and ensure compliance with procedures which accord proper sensitivity and dignity.

Complaints

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many medical complaints were heard in England in each of the past five years; and in what percentage of cases complaints of patients were upheld.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by her Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating her estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate she has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Sackville: We have announced that by 31 March 1997 the number of staff in the Department, excluding the agencies, will reduce by 21 per cent.—some 715 posts—compared with 1 April 1994. No decision has yet been made on the distribution of this reduction by grade or location or the spread over time.

The Department has launched a voluntary retirement and severance scheme which closes on 31 January 1995 with the aim of avoiding compulsory redundancy.

As announced in the Budget statement, administration spending for the Department as a whole will decline by 18.8 per cent. in real terms by 1997–98. This figure includes savings from wages and associated costs.

All the above figures exclude the staff and costs of regional health authorities which, subject to legislation, will become regional offices of the national health service executive on 1 April 1996.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that all purchasing health authorities contract with providers for a comprehensive infertility investigation and treatment service.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service provides a range of treatments for subfertility. Decisions about the resources to be made available for these services must be left to individual health authorities as they are in the best position to determine priorities in the light of local needs and circumstances. Advice is available to health authorities and clinicians in two publications drawn to the attention of the NHS in 1992; these are the "Effective Health Care Bulletin" on management of subfertility, published for the NHS management executive by a consortium of Leeds and York universities and the research unit of the Royal College of Physicians, and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists publication "Infertility—Guidelines For Practice".

Copies of the publications are available in the Library.

Trauma (Research)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the letter to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West from the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), of 20 September 1994, if she has now received the report from the medical care research unit at the university of Sheffield evaluating the trauma unit research project at the North Staffordshire hospitals NHS trust in 1991; and if she will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has received a draft of the preliminary findings of the evaluation. There remain significant analyses to be conducted before the researchers can draw conclusions. The final report is expected in March 1995.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

13.**Ms Estelle Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to change the eligibility criteria for housing benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: The measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 30 November will save taxpayers' money, help get people back to work and encourage those claiming housing benefit to make informed and responsible choices about where they live.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the number of people eligible for housing benefit who do not claim; and what action his Department is taking to ensure a higher level of take-up.

Mr. Roger Evans: Responsibility for the administration of housing benefit lies with individual local authorities who are in the best position to undertake local publicity about it. Information about housing benefit is also available at all Benefits Agency and Employment Service agency offices.

Latest estimates of housing benefit take-up, which are for 1990 and 1991, indicate that between 93 per cent. and 97 per cent. of available benefit is being claimed by between 90 per cent. and 95 per cent. of those eligible. Further information on take-up estimates can be found in "Income Related Benefits—Estimates of Take-up in 1990 and 1991" published on 25 March 1994, a copy of which is in the Library. Estimates for the take-up of income-related benefits in 1992 are due to be published in the new year.

Benefit Changes (Europe)

15. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in which European countries changes to welfare benefits are taking place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Most other European countries are taking action to curb the growth of expenditure on social protection. In many cases they are being forced to do so by financial crises.

In the United Kingdom we have approached the problem in a systematic way which is enabling us to protect the most vulnerable while not outstripping the nation's ability to pay.

Many other countries around the world are pursuing similar objectives.

Pensions

16. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he will take steps to increase choice in pensions.

Mr. Arbuthnot: We propose to introduce age-related rebates to make contracted-out occupational money purchase schemes and appropriate personal pensions attractive across a wider age range.

In addition, personal pension holders will no longer be forced to buy an annuity as soon as they take their tax-free lump sum. They will be able to draw an income from their fund each year and defer annuity purchase until a time of their choosing up to the age of 75.

Maxwell Pensioners

17. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he next expects to meet Sir Peter Webster to discuss help for the Maxwell pensioners.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Government have already provided very substantial help to the Maxwell pensioners, but we are not a party to any of the claims Sir Peter Webster is seeking to resolve. It follows that Ministers are not holding discussions with him, although we naturally hope that there will be an outcome favourable to the pensioners.

Family Income Supplement

18. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annual spending on family credit; and what the spending on family income supplement was in 1979.

Mr. Roger Evans: The published forecast for family credit expenditure for 1994–95 is £1,276 million. This is 18 times more in real terms than the £24 million spent on family income supplement in 1978–79.

Habitual Residence Test

19. **Mr. Rooney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many applicants for income support were denied benefit under the habitual residence test in its first three months of operation.

Mr. Roger Evans: Provisional figures from the Benefits Agency indicate that 6,388 applicants failed to satisfy the habitual residence test. Approximately 2,300 of these were asylum seekers and were entitled to income support under the urgent cases provisions.

Invalidity Benefit

20. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress he has to report on the introduction of medical procedures for eligibility for invalidity benefit.

Mr. Hague: Regulations relating to incapacity benefit, including those setting out the new arrangements for the medical assessment of incapacity, were laid on 24 November. The proposals for the new medical assessment were outlined in a report published on 28 September. Work is continuing on the detailed administrative and medical procedures for the new benefit and appropriate training programmes for staff are being put in place. The new benefit will be introduced on 13 April 1995.

Benefit Changes

21. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if partners of unemployed benefit claimants will be able to work for up to 24 hours a week without losing entitlement to benefit following his proposed changes to the benefit system.

Mr. Roger Evans: Entitlement to the income-related element of jobseeker's allowance will not be lost where partners work fewer than 24 hours a week.

Partners' hours will have no effect on entitlement to the contributory element of jobseekers allowance.

Incentives to Work

22. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what role work incentives play in his review of the benefit system.

Mr. Roger Evans: Reinforcing incentives to work is the central theme of the review. The far-reaching package of new measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 30 November at column *1205* demonstrate our continued commitment to that objective.

Asbestos

23. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many former Ministry of Defence employees are currently drawing benefit associated with their exposure to asbestos.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is not available.

Compensation Recovery Unit

24. **Mr. Hutton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the work of the compensation recovery unit.

Mr. Roger Evans: The compensation recovery unit was set up in 1990 following new legislation to ensure that costs which ought to be borne by those liable to pay compensation do not fall on the taxpayer.

Child Care Allowance

25. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the number of families in respect of which a parent will return to work as a result of the introduction of a child care allowance in family credit.

26. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimates he has made of the number

of families who will benefit from the introduction of a child care allowance in family credit.

Mr. Roger Evans: We estimate that, in the long term, around 50,000 people will take up work as a direct result of the introduction of the new help with child care charges in family credit, disability working allowance, housing benefit and council tax benefit. Most of these will benefit through family credit.

Incentives to Work

27. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he plans to include a back to work bonus in his reforms of the unemployment benefits.

Mr. Roger Evans: Yes, we plan to introduce a back to work bonus so that unemployed claimants who undertake part-time work while they are on benefit can receive a lump sum payment of up to £1,000 when they leave benefit to start work.

Child Support Agency

28. **Ms Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he plans to implement the recent recommendations of the Social Security Committee on the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: We are still evaluating the contents of the Select Committee's report and we will respond in due course with proposals for change. No final decisions have yet been taken.

Social Security Card

29. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he plans to introduce a social security card for the payment of benefits.

Mr. Arbuthnot: In May my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced plans to move as rapidly as possible to an automated system for paying benefit at post offices. That will reduce costs for taxpayers, be more secure for customers and guarantee the future of post offices.

Disabled People

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to improve the opportunities open to disabled people.

Mr. Hague: The proposals I announced on 24 November include measures to tackle discrimination across the board, in employment, goods and services, education, transport and the provision of community care. They represent a comprehensive programme for enhancing the independence of disabled people.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Hague: The number of registered disabled people employed in the Department at 1 July 1994 was 1,574. This represented 1.8 per cent. of all staff. The information requested for earlier years is contained in the magazine "Independent", copies of which are in the Library. Projected figures are not available.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Hague: Departmental expenditure in support of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people cannot be quantified. The associated costs include modification to buildings and accommodation, staff training, and personnel and line management support and cannot be disaggregated.

The number of staff or staff hours equivalent allocated to achieve the programme for action cannot be estimated. Successful implementation requires the commitment not only of equal opportunities officers but of recruitment, training and personnel officers, together with individual line-managers throughout the Department.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what meetings he has had with people with learning difficulties to discuss the Government's forthcoming legislative proposals for disabled people.

Mr. Hague: Since I became Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, I have met many organisations covering a wide range of disabilities, including the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation. I shall shortly be meeting People First, an organisation run by people with learning difficulties, and have already met some of its members.

Child Care (National Insurance)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had about the financial burden on working parents likely to be caused by the levying of national insurance contributions on employer-funded child care outside the workplace.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on 23 November, *Official Report*, column *172*.

Staff Bus, Quarry House

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total annual cost of the special bus provided to take staff between Leeds station and Quarry house, Leeds.

Mr. Roger Evans: A total of £23,224.36.

Habitual Residence Test

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discretion local Benefits Agency staff have to authorise benefit payment to British citizens returning to the United Kingdom who are appealing against decisions to withhold benefit under the habitual residence test; are such British citizens and those guaranteed indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom eligible to apply for crisis payments; what benefits such people are eligible to apply for; and if he will list those publications published by his Department which give advice on such benefit eligibility.

Mr. Roger Evans: Adjudication officers do not have discretion to authorise benefit payments pending an appeal. British citizens who fail the habitual residence test may apply for a social fund crisis loan if, in an emergency or as a consequence of a disaster, they face serious risk to health and safety, and payment of a crisis loan is the only way of alleviating the situation.

Eligibility for other benefits will depend on a person's individual circumstances. There is a wide range of information leaflets covering eligibility for benefits, all of which are available free of charge from local offices of the Benefits Agency.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what instructions he has issued to Benefits Agency local staff about the application to British citizens returning to the United Kingdom of the habitual residence test; and what is his assessment of the numbers of such British citizens who have, to date, been refused benefit under the habitual residence test.

Mr. Roger Evans: No special guidance has been issued about British citizens. In the first three months of the test's operation, 1,053 initial decisions on British citizens have been negative, representing 13 per cent. of the British citizens who were asked about their habitual residence.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to reply to the letter, dated 18 November, from Jane Hughes, deptuy manager, and Rubina Burhan, Asian advice worker, of Bradford citizens advice bureau, concerning the habitual residence test; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: I sent a reply on 2 December 1994.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to review the implementation of the habitual residence test, with particular reference to the effects on British citizens and their dependents, especially children; what representations he has received on these matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: All policy changes are kept under review. I have received a number of letters from Members of Parliament and the public about the test.

Unemployment

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the current annual figures for money spent from public funds on people *(a)* unemployed for six months, *(b)* unemployed for between six months and 12 months, *(c)* unemployed for between one year and two years, *(d)* unemployed between two years and three years and *(e)* unemployed between three years and four years; and what are the numbers of unemployed people in these five groups.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested on expenditure is not available in the form requested. The benefit costs of those in the five groups cannot be separated from the planned total expenditure on unemployed people, which for the year April 1994 to April 1995 is £10.11 billion[1]. The numbers of unemployed claimants is in the table[2].

Duration of current spell of unemployment	*Thousands Numbers of unemployed claimants*
Six months or less	1,057
Over six months and up to 12 months	538
Over 12 months and up to two years	437
Over two years and up to three years	228
Over three years and up to four years	141

Source:

Half-yearly analysis of Unemployed Claimants—May 1994.

Notes:

[1] The information is taken from table 5 of the 1994 departmental annual report, a copy of which is in the Library. Expenditure for unemployment benefits is made up of unemployment benefit and principal income-related benefits and payments from the social fund to unemployed people and their families.

[2] Figures are based on 5 per cent. sample.

Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand.

Figures are for a point in time.

Occupational Pensions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the proportion of the work force in companies with occupational pension schemes who do not make any contributions; and what is his assessments of the consequences of this estimate for future pensions decisions.

Mr. Arbuthnot: In 1991, the latest year for which figures are available, 1,180,000 members of private sector occupational pension schemes, or 18 per cent. of all members of such schemes, did not make any contributions.

It is for employers who run occupational pension schemes to decide whether or not members of their schemes pay contributions to the schemes, and the level of any such contributions.

[Source: Ninth survey by the Government Actuary, 1991].

Medical Tribunals

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what advice he has given to medical appeals tribunals regarding the weight they should give to reports by independent consultants when assessing applications for disability benefits for prescribed industrial diseases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: No advice is given by me to medical appeal tribunals.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in late February-early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without redundancies.

Housing Benefit (Thamesmead)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the implications for tenants of Thamesmead Town Ltd. of the new measures for housing benefit outlined on 30 November.

Mr. Roger Evans: The proposals announced by the Secretary of State will apply to all tenants in the deregulated private rented sector, including tenants of Thamesmead Town Ltd. who newly claim housing benefit after October 1995 or for existing cases who change address after this date. We will consult interested groups, including representatives of the Association of Local Authorities on the details of the proposals.

Pensioners

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of people who are eligible for occupational pension payments at retirement age but who have had their monthly pension payments substantially reduced as a result of those provisions of the Data Protection Act 1988 which prevent his Department from informing the Paymaster General that the persons concerned have reached retirement age and that pensions concerned should remain inflation-proofed.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Such information is not available.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EU Energy Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what matters were discussed and what decisions taken, with what votes, at the EU Energy Council on 29 November.

Mr. Eggar: The Council considered several issues and received reports from the Commission on matters of interest. Significant progress was made on electricity liberalisation, the energy charter treaty and deregulation. I represented the United Kingdom.

Council conclusions on electricity liberalisation were agreed establishing a number of important principles, notably the introduction of competition in generation, and the unbundling of accounts. It also required the Commission to undertake a thorough study of the alternative sole purchaser model as a possible equivalent to negotiated third party access.

I stressed the UK's commitment to opening up energy markets and emphasised the importance of access to networks and of allowing distributors, as well as large industrial users, to choose suppliers.

The Council reached political agreement on a list of projects of common European interest for energy trans-European networks in preparation for a formal decision on the energy network guidelines once the opinion of the European Parliament has been received. This is expected shortly.

Council conclusions were agreed calling for the commission to submit a green paper on the need for a Community energy policy and continue dialogue with member states and industry representatives. The green paper is now expected to be issued later this month. I attach particular importance to the close involvement of industry in the continuing debate on this issue and my Department will maintain close contact with UK industry.

Council conclusions on the energy charter treaty were agreed noting its importance and calling for the Community to sign the treaty in Lisbon on 16 and 17 December. I welcome the progress made towards the completion of this important Community initiative, which will open up important trade and investment opportunities for British business in the independent states of the former Soviet Union and countries of central and eastern Europe.

The Council adopted conclusions on energy deregulation which called upon the Commission to review existing legislation in the energy sector, and to submit where appropriate proposals for simplifying and reducing it.

The Council called for further consideration to be undertaken of a Commission proposal for Thermie II, which is concerned with support for the demonstration and dissemination of results of near-market energy technology projects.

The Commission was requested to submit proposals on energy efficiency standards for fridges and freezers.

There were no formal votes by the Council.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade to what extent the costs of the Stoy Hayward reports on the Insolvency Service mentioned in his answer of 1 November, *Official Report*, columns *1018–19*, remain confidential; and to what extent they have been disclosed in response to inquiries.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The answer given on 1 November, *Official Report*, columns *1018–19*, referred to the indicative costs given by the organisations which responded to Stoy Hayward. Although the detail of those responses remains confidential, the range of them has been disclosed to the departmental and agency trade union side. The range was:

Price (£)	*Type of firm*	*Type of work*
2,250–2,500	Accountancy	From order
5,200 (Companies)	Accountancy	From order
1,750 + disbursements	Accountancy	From order
600 + disbursements	Accountancy	From order
2,000	Accountancy	From order
500 + disbursements	Accountancy	From order
960–1,340	Accountancy	From order

Steel Imports

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the amount in tonnage and in cash terms of steel coil and steel slabs imported into the United Kingdom in 1993 and in 1994.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is in the table.

UK Imports of Steel Coils and Slabs

	1993		*January–June 1994*	
	£ million	*'000 tonnes*	*£ million*	*'000 tonnes*
Steel coils	358.0	934.8	164.6	470.4
Steel slabs	4.6	4.7	3.7	3.1

Source:
Eurostat.

Advisory Bodies

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Government's response to each subject of advice from the Advisory Committee on Arbitration Law listed in his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *649*.

Mr. Heseltine: The only publication mentioned in my answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *649*, was the consultation document published by my Department in co-operation with the departmental Advisory Committee on Arbitration Law. That consultation document was issued by Government. There is therefore no Government response to be made.

Arbitration Bill

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the timetable for consultation on the draft Arbitration Bill.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department issued a consultation document on the draft Arbitration Bill on 3 February 1994. The deadline for responses was extended from 30 June as stated in the document to 31 July 1994.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. Heseltine: None. Civil servants may provide briefing of a factual nature for Ministers on matters relating to their own Departments. In addition, Ministers, in preparing for a constituency speech, can draw on material produced by their Department during the normal course of business.

Hartburn Property Services

Mr. Devlin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his northern regional office is taking to assist Hartburn Property Services of Stockton-on-Tees to expand and move premises.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Mr. P. Leng of T/A Hartburn Property Services submitted an application for a regional enterprise grant to the Government office for the north-east on 22 July 1994. A grant offer was made on 5 August 1994 and accepted by the applicant on 15 August 1994. The company's first claim is currently awaited.

Dual-use Goods and Techniques

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library the operational annexes to the intergovernmental decision on the control of exports of dual-use goods and techniques by the EU.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I shall do so when the intergovernmental decision, and the annexes which it covers, have been formally adopted by all member states. Adoption is expected shortly.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The needs of staff with disabilities are taken fully into account in designing personnel and other policies affecting staff generally. It is therefore difficult to separate out budgetary and staffing figures in the way requested.

However, the DTI has an annual budget of currently £18,000 for 1994–95 to help fund the cost of specialist non-IT equipment for disabled staff in HQ division and Government offices. The Department also meets the cost of other needs where appropriate—for example, specialist IT equipment, adaptions to buildings. The Accounts Services Agency, the Insolvency Service, the Laboratory of the Government Chemist and the National Weights and Measures Laboratory fund these costs for their staff. This is in addition to financial assistance available to disabled staff from the Department of Employment's access to work scheme.

The number of staff allocated to achieve the objective of the programme of action cannot be fully estimated, since successful implementation will require the commitment not only of equal opportunities staff but of other specialists—for example, recruiters-trainers and individual line managers—throughout the organisation. However, the equivalent of 3.9 full-time staff are currently employed directly on equal opportunities work, including disability issues.

The chief executives of Companies House, the National Engineering Laboratory, the National Physical Laboratory, the Patent Office and the Radiocommunications Agency will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Historical data on the number of disabled staff employed by the Department, including its executive agencies, were published in the magazine "Independent" on Friday 18 March 1994. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

The Department—including Accounts Services Agency, the Insolvency Service, the Laboratory of the Government Chemist and the National Weights and Measures Laboratory—employs 253 disabled staff who have chosen to declare their disability. This represents 3.1 per cent. of total staff.

Although the Department does not produce projections for its future employment of disabled people, it is committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all, whether employees or job applicants.

The chief executives of Companies House, the National Engineering Laboratory, the National Physical Laboratory, the Patent Office and the Radiocommunications Agency will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from David Durham to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 5 December 1994:

You recently tabled two Parliamentary Questions for priority written answer, and I have been asked to respond direct to you as Chief Executive of Companies House Executive Agency.

PQ 32N: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years; and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objective of the Programme of Action to Achieve Equality of Opportunity in the Civil Service for Disabled People.

Estimate × 5 years

	Years 1–2 Per cent.	*Years 2–5 Per cent.*
1—Grade 7	5	2.5
1—HEO	10	15.0
1—HEO	20	10.0

There is no separate budget but elements are incorporated into other section budgets.

PQ 33N: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

The record of disabled employees at Companies House for the past five years is not available.

The employment of registered and non-registered staff with disabilities as at October 1994 is 2.7 per cent. (actuals 29). Projected figures are not available, but Companies House is committed to improving on present figures and will strive to meet any new targets set by Government. The Agency will continue to ensure that all applicants with disabilities are given equal opportunities to apply and compete for employment.

Letter from W. Edgar to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 5 December 1994:

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS: EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED PERSONS

In response to your two questions to Departments, the records for this Agency shows:-

(i) Three disabled people are currently employed here, 1.2 per cent. of the total staff.

(ii) On the subject of Equal Opportunity, the Agency is committed to the programmes of its parent Department, the DTI. Agency Personnel staff have responsibilities as Equal Opportunities Officers. One Higher Executive Officers spends about 5 per cent. of her time on such matters, supervised by a Gd. 7.

Letter from Dr. Peter Clapham to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 5 December 1994:

I am writing in response to your questions to the President of the Board of Trade regarding (i) the number and percentage of disabled people employed by DTI and its Agencies over the past five years: and the projected figures for the next five years, and (ii) the budget allocated by DTI and its Agencies over the next five years: and the number of staff or staff hours equivalent that have been allocated to achieve the objective of the Programme for Action to Achieve Equality of Opportunity in the Civil Service for the Disabled People.

(i) The National Physical Laboratory currently employs 33 disabled staff who have chosen to declare their disability. This represents 4.7 per cent. of the Laboratory's total staff.

NPL has only recently taken on delegated responsibility for equal opportunities, including disability issues, and it is not possible to break down previous years' figures on an Agency basis. I understand that DTI centrally will be providing details of the overall Departmental position for 1990–1993.

Whilst the Laboratory does not produce projections for its future employment of those with a disability it is committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all, whether employees or job applicants.

(ii) The needs of disabled staff are taken fully into account in designing personnel and other policies affecting staff generally. It is, therefore, difficult to separate out budgetary and staffing figures in the way requested.

Expenditure in support of the Programme for Action to Achieve Equality of Opportunity in the Civil Service for Disabled People includes cost elements associated with, for example, training, special equipment, and modification of buildings and accommodation and cannot be disaggregated. This is in addition to financial assistance available to disabled staff from the Department of Employment's "Access to Work" scheme.

The number of staff or staff hours equivalent to be allocated to achieve the objective of the Programme for Action cannot be estimated, since successful implementation will require the commitment not only of equal opportunities officers but also of other human resource specialists, recruitment and training officers and individual line managers throughout the Laboratory.

I hope the above provides the information you require.

Letter from P.R.S. Hartnack to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 5 December 1994:

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS NUMBERS 32N AND 33N

I refer to the above questions which the President of the Board of Trade has passed to me in order to answer on behalf of the Patent Office, an Executive Agency of the Department of Trade and Industry.

DTI has already provided a reply in respect of historical data on disabled staff but I can add that 28 members of Patent Office staff, representing 3.05 per cent. of the total, have chosen to declare their disability. Projected figures are unavailable but the Agency is committed to achieving equal opportunity for all, whether employees or applicants.

The Patent Office does not have a separate budget specifically for the Programme of Action to Achieve Equality of Opportunity for Disabled People and as any expenditure in support of it includes cost elements associated with training, accommodation, special equipment, modification of buildings etc it cannot be disaggregated.

Likewise the number of staff or staff hours equivalent allocated to achieve the Programme's objectives cannot be estimated, since successful implementation will require the commitment of not only equal opportunities staff but also of line managers and other specialist staff. 15 per cent. of the equivalent of a full time member of staff is, however, devoted to equal opportunities issues within this Agency.

Letter from Jim Norton to Mr. Kevin McNamara, dated 5 December 1994:

EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE

I am replying on behalf of the Radiocommunications Agency to your two written questions to the President of the Board of Trade about the employment of disabled people.

To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Of the 544 staff currently employed in the Agency there are 17 registered and non-registered disabled staff who have chosen to declare their disability. This represents 3.1 per cent. of total staff.

The Agency only received responsibility from the Department of Trade and Industry for equal opportunity matters on 1 October and we do not therefore have any historical information of our own. I understand that DTI will provide you with figures on the past overall position of disabled staff in DTI for 1990–93.

We have not made any projections about the number of disabled staff which the Agency will employ over the next five years, however, the Agency is committed to achieving equality of opportunity in employment for all.

To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated Agencies for each of the next five years; and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objective of the Programme for Action to Achieve Equality of Opportunity in the Civil Service for Disabled People.

You also asked about the budget for disabled staff, although we have not allocated a specific budget we do our best to meet any specialist needs for example equipment, building adaption. This is in addition to financial assistance available to disabled staff from the Department of Employment "Access to Work" scheme.

The number of staff or staff hours equivalent allocated to achieve the objective of the Programme for Action cannot be estimated since implementation will require the commitment not only of equal opportunity staff but also of other personnel and training staff and individual managers throughout the organisation. However, two staff in the Personnel Section work on equal opportunity matters for part of their time. They are charged with taking forward action in the Agency on all equal opportunities matters including those which affect disabled people.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date he appointed Baroness Miller of Hendon as a member of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; on whose recommendation she was appointed; what relevant experience she has for the appointment; what time she is expected to devote each month to her work in this capacity; what annual payment is made; what official meetings she has attended in each year since her appointment; and what relevant interests she has which may conflict with her work as a member of the commission.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Baroness Miller of Hendon resigned as a member of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission shortly after being made a life peer in 1993. She had originally been appointed on 3 March 1992 in view of her wide range of business experience. While at the commission, she made an important contribution by serving a number of inquiries working six days a month for an initial salary of £11,900. Before he appoints a member to serve on a particular inquiry, the chairman of the commission asks members to disclose any interests which might give rise to conflicts.

Video Games

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he has received the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of video games, referred in January of this year; and if he will publish the report;

(2) what action he proposes to take in the light of the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of video games, with reference to the freedom to retail through any outlet, and import conditions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of video games in the United Kingdom was received on 14 November 1994. The Department of Trade and Industry's publicly stated time scale for publication of monopoly reports is eight to 10 weeks.

I will make an announcement once the report has been published.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Heseltine: The information requested is not yet available. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in late February-early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should, as far as possible, be achieved without redundancies.

Dounreay

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes there have been in funding for *(a)* the AEA Dounreay project and *(b)* the health physics surveyor team at Dounreay.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 30 November 1994]:* The DTI provided funding of £48.6 million for the UKAEA Dounreay site in 1993–94. This consisted of £23.9 million for decommissioning and radioactive waste management, and £24.7 million for the prototype fast reactor programme. An additional £20.7 million income from electricity generation contributed to PFR operating costs.

The anticipated DTI funding for the site in 1994–95 is about £67 million. This consists of £61 million for decommissioning and radioactive waste management, £5 million for nuclear site operations and £1 million for prototype fast reactor closure experiments.

The size of the health physics team, hence its cost, is a management matter for the UKAEA.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) on what grounds there have been planned reductions in the health physics survey staff or team at Dounreay;

(2) what has been the size of the health physics monitoring shift team in the past two years; and what it will be from 1 January 1995.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answers 30 November 1994]:* These are management matters for UKAEA.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will investigate the consequences for radiation safety at Dounreay of the proposed reduction in the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's monitoring programme.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 30 November 1994]:* The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's health physics monitoring programme is set at a level which ensures the safety of the work force and the public. This activity is subjected to rigorous independent scrutiny by the regulators—the nuclear installations inspectorate and Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate, and I therefore see no grounds to investigate the current programme.

DEFENCE

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Freeman: The number and percentage of registered disabled staff employed by the Ministry of Defence and its agencies over the past five years are set out below. Projected figures are not available.

Date	*Number of registered disabled staff*[1]	*Percentage of total civilian staff*[2]
1 July 1990	1,209	0.9
1 July 1991	1,163	0.9
1 July 1992	1,103	0.8
1 July 1993	1,366	1.1
1 July 1994	1,317	1.1

[1] Part-time staff counted as half units.

[2] In recent surveys, 3.7 per cent. of total MOD civilian staff recorded some form of disability for which they are not registered.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years; and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Freeman: Responsibility for achieving the objectives of the programme for action is widely spread among staff in the Ministry of Defence. Those involved include: policy staff, personnel managers, trainers, building managers, welfare officers, a network of assistant disabled persons liaison officers and line managers and colleagues of staff with disabilities. It is therefore impossible to quantify the number of staff hours expended on this work. For the same reason, it is not possible to identify the costs involved.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not yet available. My Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the departmental report, to be published early next year.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should, as far as possible, be achieved without redundancies.

Market Testing

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the projected annual savings as a result of the market testing of health provision for British forces services; and if will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: We are currently considering what activities related to health provision should be subjected to competition. We expect that, where we decide to compete activities, annual savings of at least 15 per cent. should be achievable.

United States Bases

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who attended a meeting, called by officials in his Department on 22 September, which discussed incursions at United States bases in the United Kingdom and United Kingdom concerns about actions taken by American security police on bases in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: This was a private meeting between representatives of the United Kingdom and United States Governments.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has made to the American military and civil authorities to stop American military handcuffing or blindfolding British citizens who enter military bases within the United Kingdom; what instructions he has issued to his Department's police to stop American military personnel from taking such actions; and what penalties can be imposed on his Department's police if they fail to stop American military personnel from taking such action against civilians entering bases.

Mr. Soames: There is regular and close liaison between United Kingdom and United States authorities on all policing matters. No specific instructions are issued to my Department's police to deal with the circumstances outlined. MOD police act in accordance with the law and the powers conferred upon them. They are a disciplined force and any complaints against them are processed in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the potential danger arising from intruders entering weapons storage areas at United States bases in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Internal security arrangements at United States bases in the United Kingdom and assessments of the potential dangers arising from intruders entering weapons storage areas at these bases are matters for the United States authorities.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidelines for his Department's police actions which was passed in March to United States military personnel based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Soames: It is not my Department's policy to comment on operational security matters or to release related documents.

RAF Lakenheath

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements are being made to install a barrier to the entrance of RAF Lakenheath.

Mr. Soames: There are currently no plans to install a barrier to the entrance of RAF Lakenheath.

Military Police

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if United States authorities have indicated whether they wish his Department's police to be transferred from Upper Heyford to Croughton; how many of his Department's police have been offered for transfer; and what would be the total cost to his Department of any such transfer.

Mr. Soames: There are currently no plans to deploy Ministry of Defence police to RAF Croughton.

Bosnia

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF pilots in line for service in Bosnia have so far refused to volunteer for conduct after capture courses.

Mr. Soames: No RAF aircrew in line for service in Bosnia have refused to participate in these course.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy in respect of service in Bosnia for RAF pilots who refuse to volunteer for conduct after capture courses.

Mr. Soames: We consider that it is in the interests of RAF aircrew whose duties may take them over Bosnia to undertake these courses, but, in the event of a refusal to undergo the training, appropriate action would be considered in light of the particular circumstances of the case.

Defence Contractors

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, column *360*, if he will give the date on which Airwork Ltd. was placed on the list of contractors requiring special attention; and if it has now been removed from that list.

Mr. Freeman: Airwork Ltd. was placed on the list of contractors requiring special attention on 21 May 1993. The current entry on the list reflects the change of name and ownership.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, column *360*, on which date each contractor was placed on the list of contractors requiring special attention; and which of them have since won contracts with his Department.

Mr. Freeman: One in 1988, two in 1990, one in 1991, four in 1993 and two in 1994. It is my Department's policy not to contract with listed contractors for work similar to that which gave rise to concerns about their quality management.

Road Transport Regulations

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last revised the joint service road transport regulations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The current edition of the joint service road transport regulations was issued in 1988. There have been seven amendments since publication, the last one being dated January 1994. The complete revision of the document is currently being undertaken in order to maintain alignment with current road transport regulations and to cover extra responsibilities that will devolve to lower management levels as a result of further disaggregation of funding for vehicle procurement and maintenance to user commands. This new edition is expected to be published by 1 April 1995.

Royal Marines Reserve

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the future of the Royal Marines Reserve.

Mr. Soames: My Department has received a number of representations from hon. Members and other interested parties. No decisions on the future size and shape of the Royal Marines Reserve have been taken.

Consultants

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of the consultants, with the amounts they received, who were paid in connection with preparing documents for the privatisation of the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth.

Mr. Freeman: Since October 1993, a number of consultants have provided my Department with advice on the proposed privatisation of Devonport dockyard and Rosyth dockyard, as shown in the table:

Firm	*Subject*
Coopers and Lybrand	Financial and business
Allott and Lomax[1]	Civil engineering
AEA Technology Consultancy Services (SRD)[1]	Nuclear Safety
Simmons and Simmons	Legal advice relating chiefly to Devonport
Brodies WS	Legal advice relating chiefly to Rosyth
Fuller Peiser	Property valuation
Kleinwort Benson	Commercial
Rust Environmental	Environmental survey at Devonport
Kenchington Ford	Environmental survey at Rosyth

[1] These firms were engaged under subcontract to Coopers and Lybrand.

Details of payments made to individual firms are commercially confidential.

Mr. Gerald James

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Government Department currently holds the diaries, business and personal papers of former Astra Holdings plc chairman, Mr. Gerald James; and on what grounds their return is being refused.

Mr. Soames: I have nothing to add to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 21 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *554*.

Training Sorties

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many training sorties were flown by each type of RAF aircraft from Goose Bay during 1994; and how many of these were at low level.

Mr. Soames: RAF aircraft have flown 1,299 training sorties during the 1994 flying season at Goose Bay—22 by Hercules aircraft and 1,277 by Tornado GR1s. Precise details of how many of the sorties were at low level are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Very few, however, would not have involved an element of low flying.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many training sorties were flown by each type of RAF aircraft from Eielson air force base, Alaska, during 1994; and how many of these were at low level.

Mr. Soames: RAF aircraft have flown 396 training sorties from Eielson air force base, Alaska during the 1994 flying season—20 by Hercules aircraft, 174 by Tornado GR1s, 201 by Tornado F3s and one by a Sentry AEW1. All of those sorties were conducted at low level, apart from the Sentry AEW1 flight and one Tornado F3 sortie.

West Freugh Airfield

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft, and of what types, were involved in the high intensity air activity from West Freugh airfield on 27 September; what was the purpose of the activity; and what were the minimum altitudes authorised.

Mr. Soames: Five Harrier GR7 and two Harrier T4 aircraft undertook training sorties from West Freugh airfield on 27 September. The minimum authorised height for the purpose of this exercise was 250 ft.

Low Flying

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates, locations, aircraft type and nationality, and nature of the breach, for all breaches of low flying regulations established following RAF police investigations, since 1990.

Mr. Soames: Details of breaches in 1993 are listed on pages 35 and 36 of the House of Commons Defence Select Committee report, HC 314 of Session 1993–1994, on low flying. Details of a further six breaches which occurred in 1993 but were not included in the report are set out. Of these, three were omitted in error from the evidence provided to the Committee; in the other three cases, details of the RAF police investigations were not known until this evidence had been provided. The details of breaches in other years are not recorded and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Date	*Location*	*Numbers and type of A/C*	*Nationality*	*Nature of breach*
4 February 1993	Beverley N. Humberside	1×Gazelle	RAF	Hull aero club avoidance area.
1 April 1993	Ingleton N. Yorkshire	1×F16	Belgian Air Force	Ingleton Quarry temporary avoidance.
23 August 1993	RAF Alconbury	2×Mirage	Belgian Air Force	Unauthorised flight within UKLFS.
20 September 1993	Caerlaverock Dumfries and Galloway	2×Tornado	RAF	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area.
6 October 1993	Caerlaverock Dumfries and Galloway	2×Jaguar	RAF	Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust avoidance area.
16 November 1993	Lairg Sutherland	1×Jaguar	RAF	Temporary avoidance area owing to rock blasting.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints about low flying were submitted to the RAF police for further investigation in each year since 1990.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 1 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *905–6*.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the Farleton Fell hang gliding site ceased to be a military low flying avoidance area.

Mr. Soames: The avoidance area was removed on 6 October 1988 at the request of the British Hang Gliding Association, since the level of flying activity there had been much reduced.

Skyguard Radars

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total number of Skyguard radars in operational service with the Royal Air Force; and what role is performed by each.

Mr. Soames: There are two Skyguard radars in operational service with the RAF. Their primary role is in support of the RAF's low-flying monitoring task; they have a secondary role of electronic warfare training at RAF Spadeadam.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the number of Royal Air Force aircraft observed by Skyguard low flying monitoring radars during sorties over Germany over the last three years.

Mr. Soames: We have no information on observations of RAF aircraft made by German Skyguard radars other than those cases when an infringement of the German low flying regulations was detected and notified, the details of which are as follows:

1989—6
1990—21
1991—3
1992—5
1993—1
1994—none to date

We have been notified of no infringements other than those detected by Skyguard.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the operating base for the Skyguard radar used for monitoring low flying was moved from RAF Waddington to RAF Spadeadam; and what is the designation of the unit now responsible for operating the radar.

Mr. Soames: The move of the Skyguard radars to RAF Spadeadam occurred on 18 April 1994. The designation of the unit responsible for operating the radars is: Skyguard Section (Facilities Flight) RAF Spadeadam.

Departmental Land

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual cost to his Department for the land it uses in Otterburn, Northumberland in *(a)* rent payable to landowners, *(b)* any compensation payments and *(c)* any disturbance payments.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is given:

	1994 £	*1993* £	*1992* £
Rents paid—including licence fees	48,774	48,775	36,385
Compensation	[1]20,968	16,474	24,239
Disturbance	N/A	10,081	10,310

[1] Figures only available to end of November 1994.

N/A = Not available

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 6 December 1994

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Accounts

Mr. Barnes: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list the names of the loss-making companies owned by the Church Commissioners, giving in each case the amount of money lost by these companies in the last financial year.

Mr. Alison: The Commissioners own shares in 44 subsidiary undertakings, of which the 12 most significant are listed in their annual report and accounts. In 1993, the Commissioners' total recognised capital and revenue gains and losses amounted to a net gain of £294.1 million. Within this total, five subsidiary companies incurred losses amounting to £472,000 as follows.

	£
Deansbank Atlanta Inc	398,000
Cricklewood Estates (Investments) Ltd.	21,000
Cedarvale Ltd.	20,000
Cricklewood Trading Estates Ltd.	17,000
CEDIC Ltd.	16,000

Mr. Barnes: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make it his policy to release the full accounts of the Church Commissioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: I refer the hon. Member to the answers that I gave the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 5 December.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Secret Files

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department further to his answer of 30 November to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers), *Official Report*, column 695, concerning secret files held by his Department, how many of *(a)* the three top secret files and *(b)* the 124 secret files contain information about past or potential applicants for judicial posts from the ranks of (i) the Bar and (ii) the Law Society; how many contain information about serving judges; and how many contain information about retired judges.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None.

Legal Aid

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will take measures to ensure that legal aid is not provided for the wealthy.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is anxious to ensure that legal aid is directed to those whose need is greatest. He is considering what changes, if any, might need to be made to the financial conditions for legal aid, and expects to issue a consultation paper shortly seeking views on some specific proposals.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

BBC

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, what response he has received to the White Paper, "The Future of the BBC", Cm 2621.

Mr. Dorrell: Comments on the White Paper were invited by 31 October. Ninety-four organisations and 109 individuals have sent in their views. I am placing a list of the organisations in the Libraries of the House. I will carefully consider all the comments received before reaching final conclusions.

Public Lending Right Scheme

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, what will be the rate per loan payable to authors under the public lending right scheme in February 1995 in respect of loans of their books by public libraries from July 1993 to June 1994.

Mr. Dorrell: The Registrar of Public Lending Right has proposed to me, on the basis of the size of the fund this year and of information about loans of books by local library authorities, that the rate per loan for the payments which will be made under the public lending right scheme next February should remain 2p. In the light of consultation with interested organisations, I have agreed to the registrar's proposal.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Research Councils

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the annual salary of the Director-General of the research councils; and if he will make a statement on the work of the Director-General since his appointment.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The annual salary of the Director-General of research councils is £75,000 with the possibility of an annual lump-sum non-pensionable performance bonus of up to 20 per cent. of salary. Since taking up appointment in January 1994, the Director-General has carried out the functions set out in paragraphs 3.26–3.28 of the White Paper, "Realising Our Potential".

EMPLOYMENT

National Vocational Qualifications

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost of producing the National Council for Vocational Qualifications annual report of September 1994.

Mr. Paice: The cost of producing the annual report for 1993–94 published by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications in September 1994 was £32,218.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many full national vocational qualifications have been awarded in the current year and in each year from 1992; at which levels these awards were made; and how many, at each level, were awarded in construction, engineering, manufacturing, health and social care, business administration, accounting and financial services and management respectively.

Mr. Paice *[holding answer 28 November 1994]*: Figures for the number of national vocational qualifications awarded in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are collected by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. Figures are not readily available in the format requested. The statistical data laid out in the 11 occupational areas under which NCVQ collects information is shown in the following tables:

National vocational qualifications awarded 1992–1994[1]

Occupational areas/NVQ level	1992 L1	1992 L2	1992 L3	1992 L4	1992 L5	1993 L1	1993 L2	1993 L3	1993 L4	1993 L5	1994[1] L1	1994[1] L2	1994[1] L3	1994[1] L4	1994[1] L5	Totals
Tending animals plants and land	1,490	1,221	0	0	0	2,437	1,895	5	0	0	2,333	2,504	125	2	0	12,012
Extracting and providing natural resources	0	781	0	0	0	1	1,715	0	0	0	58	2,602	1	0	0	5,158
Construction	0	3,057	4,609	0	0	2,954	12,557	4,467	3	0	4,175	9,014	4,475	0	0	45,311
Engineering	630	5,965	1,551	448	0	999	10,691	1,819	435	0	2,506	15,004	3,532	596	0	44,176
Manufacturing	186	2,218	1,970	0	0	543	2,225	3,184	0	0	1,322	3,334	3,917	0	0	18,899
Transporting	23	79	114	0	0	0	445	51	0	0	1	911	73	0	0	1,697
Providing goods and services	8,655	25,820	1,108	1	0	12,405	31,095	1,138	3	0	9,177	23,962	750	6	0	114,120
Providing health, social care and protective services	13,351	3,594	50	0	0	3,568	7,529	284	0	0	3,244	9,577	921	0	0	42,298
Providing business services	23,413	45,271	2,350	6,190	118	25,032	48,802	5,218	7,082	241	21,209	37,903	6,755	9,863	653	240,100
Communicating	0	0	3	4	0	0	0	2	16	0	0	0	2	49	0	76
Developing and extending knowledge and skill	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	74	18	0	0	0	174	100	2	369
Totals	47,928	88,006	11,756	6,643	118	47,939	116,954	16,242	7,557	241	44,025	104,811	20,725	10,616	655	524,216

All figures represent the numbers of NVQ awards that have been made by Awarding Bodies and notified to NCVQ, there is a variable delay between the award of the certificate to an individual and the notification of that award to NCVQ.

[1] The figures for 1994 represent only those awards notified until the end of the third quarter.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

HIV and AIDS

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of Government funding has been allocated *(a)* bilaterally, *(b)* multilaterally and *(c)* through non-governmental organisations to support HIV and AIDS programmes outside the United Kingdom for each year since 1976.

Mr. Baldry: Expenditure figures on HIV/AIDS are available for the 1986–87 financial year onwards reflecting the fact that most developing countries started HIV/AIDS programmes in or after 1987, the same year that the World Health Organisation's global programme on AIDS was established.

ODA expenditure on HIV/AIDS: 1986–87 to 1993–94

Expenditure shown as a percentage of total spending on HIV/AIDS	*1986–87*	*1987–88*	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*Total*
Bilateral[1]	—	19.6	12.5	28.0	22.8	20.9	25.3	20.2	22.0
Multilateral[1] (WHO/GPA)	70.0	74.2	65.9	60.5	62.4	62.0	53.7	55.6	61.0
Non-governmental organisations[1]	30.0	6.2	21.6	11.5	14.8	17.1	21.0	24.2	17.0
Total expenditure on HIV/AIDS (£'000)	357	7,074	3,893	7,690	7,652	8,033	9,252	10,881	54,832

Notes:

[1] Percentage of total annual expenditure is shown for bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental support.

The bilateral figures relate to expenditure on projects which are exclusively HIV/AIDS related, and includes contributions to National AIDS Control Programmes via WHO trust fund mechanisms.

No separate bilateral expenditure figures for HIV/AIDS are available before 1987–88.

Advance payments to WHO/GPA were made in 1987–88 of £2.25 million and in 1993–94 of £1.9 million

Indonesia

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the projects on which British aid to Indonesia has been spent in the last two years; and what was the value in each case.

Mr. Baldry: The projects supported under the British aid programme to Indonesia on which there has been expenditure in the last two years are listed in the table. This shows the aid programme allocation for each project and the expenditure on each in the last two financial years.

	Expenditure (£ thousands)		
Sector and Project	*Allocation*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
(A) Renewable National Resources			
Rice Development Project	1,659	110	64
Cloves Disease Research	706	11	6
Coastal Fisheries—University of Diponegoro	384	159	30
Animal Health Phase 4	1,687	742	381
Coastal Prawn Culture	1,298	313	298
Regional Physical Planning, Map Improvement and Training Project	655	46	0
Forestry Senior Management Team	1,793	434	574
Forestry Conservation	1,984	425	565
Forestry Training	2,454	368	785
Forestry Research	2,644	418	654
Provincial Forest Management	1,800	0	366
(B) Energy—Gas			
Gas Distribution—Phase 1	4,193	40	0
Gas Distribution—Phase 2	5,509	1,177	1,587
Support to LEMIGAS (Petroleum Authority)	4,762	1,373	431
(C) Education			
Active Learning and Professional Support at Primary level	1,708	470	477
Libraries, Books and Information Development Project	747	223	29
English Language Teaching at the National level	1,325	514	192
English Language Teaching in Government Institutions	1,789	613	408
Biotechnology	428	98	73
(D) Mining and Geological Exploration			
South Sumatera Geological Survey Project	2,261	516	331
Ombilin Coal Mine Training School	377	36	0
(E) Public Administration and Finance			
Assistance to Regional and Local Government Finance	905	370	310
Police Management Training	713	268	126
Indonesian Civil Service Training Institute (LAN) Assistance to Public Admin	120	51	21
(F) Public Works			
Survey and Mapping Advisers Project	400	4	0
Local Consultants/Professional Engineers Training Project	1,735	232	370
(G) Energy—Electric Power			
Bali Power Study	305	44	0
Electricity Authority (PLN) Training Project Phase 2	1,162	117	0
Electricity Authority (PLN) Training Project Phase 3	1,202	330	373
Mini Hydros	5,610	596	302
(H) Projects financed from the Aid and Trade Provision			
Steel Bridging (Phase I)	6,642	366	397
Navigational Aids	6,386	370	416
Bandung Television Studio	9,734	562	632
Scattered Diesels	5,891	377	409
Cigading Port Extension	13,266	774	829
Radio Studios Rehabilitation	5,040	304	304
Cigading/Serpong Railway	24,690	553	[1]2,257
Citayam/Cibinong Railway	20,105	850	505
Radio Communication System for the Ministry of Forestry	34,111	1,421	1,384
Western Universities Equipment	13,671	654	814
Flight Simulator	4,659	139	211
Bali and Medan Airport Security	10,455	501	628
Jambi Power Station	5,345	139	280
Steel Bridging (Phase II)	3,669	197	218
Shortwave Radio Transmitters	26,911	815	1,373
(I) Training			
Training in the United Kingdom	(Annual)	1,498	1,125

[1]Under-collection by ECGD in 1992–93

Rwanda

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many loans requested by Rwanda from the World bank and the IMF since 1989 are being withheld until repayments on existing loans are resumed.

Mr. Baldry: All 13 active loans, of which eight have been approved since 1989, from the World bank and one IMF structural adjustment facility programme are currently under suspension. The bank has an emergency reconstruction loan under preparation.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when and under what conditions loans were disbursed to Rwanda by the IMF and the World bank after 1989.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is as follows:

International Development Association (IDA) credits approved 1990–93

Date	
March 1990	Public enterprise reform
May 1990	Transport sector
December 1990	Communications
April 1991	Education sector
June 1991	Structural adjustment
June 1991	Population
June 1992	Food security and social action
February 1993	Energy sector rehabilitation

Note:

Loans under implementation which were approved before 1990 are not included.

IMF	
April 1991	SAF (structural adjustment facility) programme

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are Rwanda's outstanding debts to *(a)* the World bank *(b)* the IMF and *(c)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry: As at the end of June 1994, Rwanda had a total of $474 million in loans disbursed and outstanding to the World bank, SDR8.76 million to the IMF and no debt currently owed to the United Kingdom. Arrears to the World bank totalled $9.5 million. The bank has received firm indications of support from a number of bilateral donors to assist in clearing these arrears.

TREASURY

Debt Relief

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the levels of debt relief for low-income countries for each year since 1991–92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The amount of official bilateral debt relief that the United Kingdom has given low-income countries each year since 1991–92 is as follows:

	Debt Rescheduled (£m)	*Debt Reduction (£m)*
1991–92	558.41	347.29
1992–93	113.43	61.57
1993–94	11.49	115.27
Total	683.33	524.13

Internet

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to expand the provision of information via the Internet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury's Internet service was launched on 15 November 1994. The information currently provided includes news releases, speeches, minutes of the Chancellor's monthly monetary meetings with the Governor of the Bank of England, reports of the panel of independent forecasters and details of the fundamental expenditure review of Treasury running costs.

The Budget speech and related material were made available on the Internet for the first time this year. More information will be added in due course.

The Treasury Internet service can be accessed via the following addresses:

	Address
Email mailing lists	maillist @hm-treasury.gov.uk
Email file transfer	ftpmail @hm-treasury.gov.uk
File transfer (FTP)	ftp.hm-treasury.gov.uk
World Wide Web	http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk
Email for help	info @ hm-treasury.gov.uk

Building and Civil Engineering Benefit Scheme

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when his Department last conducted a review of the taxation arrangements for the building and civil engineering benefit scheme.

Sir George Young: Information about the tax affairs of particular taxpayers, including individual pension schemes, is confidential.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the current operation of the building and civil engineering benefit scheme.

Sir George Young: A number of representations have been received asking that members of this scheme be permitted to contribute to personal pensions and retirement annuities.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury has not financed any refurbishment work in the buildings it occupies in Parliament street or Allington Towers. Responsibility for any such work would fall to Property Holdings.

Income Statistics

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many persons in the United Kingdom had annual pre-tax incomes of *(a)* more than £400,000 and *(b)* between £200,000 and £400,000 at the latest date for which figures are available; and how many such people there were in 1973 and 1983, taking account of changes in prices.

Sir George Young: The table provides estimates of numbers of individuals for 1992–93, the latest year for which information is available at such high levels of income, and for 1983–84 and 1973–74.

	Pre-tax income range (adjusted for changes in prices) £200,000–£400,000 Thousands	*Above £400, 000 Thousands*
1992–93	16	4
1983–84	3	1
1973–74	4	1

The income ranges used for 1983–84 and 1973–74 have been adjusted to take account of changes in retail prices up to 1992–93.

Income Tax Bands

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what would be the total aggregate cost in a full year of raising the upper limit of the lower rate income tax band from £3,200 to £10,000 and the upper limit of the basic rate band to £30,000 assuming no change in personal allowances from those announced in the Budget;

(2) what would be the total cost in a full year of raising the upper limit of the lower rate income tax band from £3,200 to £10,000 assuming no change in personal allowances from those announced in the Budget.

Sir George Young: Based on assumptions in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" 1995–96, the full-year cost, at 1995–96 income levels, of extending the width of the lower-rate band to £10,000 is estimated to be £5.3 billion. If the basic rate limit were also increased to £30,000, the total cost would be £6.9 billion. These costs do not take into account any behavioural changes which might result for the introduction of the new regime.

Gross Debt Interest

Mr. Denzil Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assumptions for interest rules underlie the Red Book projections for general Government gross debt interest of £26.6 billion for 1996–97.

Mr. Nelson: It is not conventional to publish market-sensitive projections such as interest rates.

EEC Contributions

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total amount paid in contributions *(a)* net and *(b)* gross to the EEC since 1972.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on Tuesday 29 November, *Official Report*, columns *608–10*.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what plans Her Majesty's Customs and Excise has to increase the technical assistance it provides to overseas administrations.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Customs intends, on a full cost recovery basis, to increase the amount of technical assistance which it provides on the existing Government-to-Government basis and in association with business. This would include the secondment of skilled staff to firms providing services in the areas of customs and indirect taxation.

This expansion will help to improve the opportunities for consultancy and training delivered on overseas development aid programmes. It will also increase the advice that we can give the emerging democracies of central Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and to drug-source countries. It will extend the United Kingdom's influence around the world, thereby adding to the indirect benefits which can be produced for our economy.

Public Service Pensions

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to increase public service pensions from April 1995.

Mr. Aitken: Under the legislation governing them, public service pensions are increased annually by the same percentage as state earnings-related pensions, additional pension. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced on 29 November, *Official Report* column *629-30*, that additional pension will be increased by 2.2 per cent., in line with the annual increase in the retail prices index up to September. Public service pensions will therefore be increased by 2.2 per cent. from 10 April 1995. Pensions which have been in payment for less than a year will receive a pro-rata increase.

Disabled People

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the budget allocated by his Department and associated agencies for each of the next five years for, and how many staff or staff hours equivalent have been allocated to achieve the objectives of, the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* Expenditure by the Treasury and its associated agencies in support of the programme for action to achieve equality of opportunity in the civil service for disabled people comprises a number of cost elements in respect of staff numbers, training, recruitment advertising, special equipment, modification of buildings and accommodation. This expenditure cannot be disaggregated from that allocated to other items in the Department's and agencies' equal opportunities budgets. The number of staff or staff–hours equivalent allocated specifically to achieve the objectives of the programme for action cannot be estimated, since successful implementation will require the commitment not only of equal opportunities officers and disabled persons officers but of a variety of staff in the personnel function together with individual line managers.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number and percentage of disabled people employed by his Department and associated agencies over the past five years; and what are the projected figures for the next five years.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* Figures are available only for those staff who are registered as disabled, but the Treasury and its associated agencies employ a number of people with disabilities who have chosen not to register. The information in respect of the number of registered disabled people for the years 1990 to 1994 is shown in the table. Projected figures are not available.

Registered disabled staff

	HMT		*PAYMASTER*		*CSO*[1]		*ROYAL MINT*		*VALUATION OFFICE**	
	Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
1990	30	1.0	35	3.9	—	—	21	2.1	—	—
1991	29	1.0	34	3.7	16	1.5	20	2.0	59	1.1
1992	26	0.9	31	3.2	16	1.4	14	1.3	48	0.9
1993	12	0.6	29	3.2	24	1.8	14	1.4	63	1.2
1994	12	0.9	27	3.2	24	1.7	15	1.5	65	1.3

[1] Information is not available prior to 1991 when the CSO and Valuation Office became Executive Agencies.

Taxation

Dr. Howells: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the total raised in Wales from forms of taxation, other than income tax and VAT, *(a)* in 1990, *(b)* in 1991, *(c)* in 1992, *(d)* in 1993 and *(e)* in the first six months of 1994;

(2) what was the total raised in Scotland from forms of taxation, other than income tax and VAT, *(a)* in 1990, *(b)*

in 1991, *(c)* in 1992, *(d)* in 1993 and *(e)* in the first six months of 1994.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not available.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Internet

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to provide information via the Internet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The broadband communications Command Paper, published on 22 November, was the first Command Paper to be made available on Internet. DTI press notices are already available on Internet. The DTI Internet cable is:

http://www.open.gov.uk/dti/broadband_comms.htm.

The Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency recently announced an initiative on the wider use of Internet in government. Department officials are considering how effective Internet would be for the distribution of departmental information.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many civil servants since 4 May 1979 have left the Export Credits Guarantee Department and have within two years joined companies engaged in contracts with his Department.

Mr. Needham: Since 4 May 1979, 82 civil servants have, following their retirement or resignation from ECGD, obtained prior approval under the civil service rules governing outside business appointments to join companies that have business contacts with the Department.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration is given to human rights in the allocation of cover by the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Needham: The ECGD's function is to underwrite payment risks associated with capital goods and project exports. A separate export licensing process takes account of broader issues such as the human rights record of overseas Governments. The issue of export licences is the responsibility of the DTI's export licensing unit. ECGD's cover is conditional on export licences being obtained where required.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make available a complete list of all payments made under the auspices of the Export Credits Guarantee Department in relation to defence contracts signed from 1979 onwards with *(a)* Jordan, *(b)* Saudi Arabia, *(c)* Oman, *(d)* Kuwait, *(e)* Brunei, *(f)* Malaysia and *(g)* Indonesia.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* The ECGD's information systems, which reflect the Department's business needs, do not provide such a sectoral analysis. Extracting the data with reasonable accuracy would involve disproportionate expense.

Advisory Bodies

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Overseas Projects Board in each of the last three years.

Mr. Needham: The Overseas Projects Board met five times in 1992, four times in 1993 and three times in 1994, including one scheduled for 7 December. The DTI provides a small secretariat. The only costs are those associated with arrangements for meetings, which are marginal. The board provides advice to Ministers and to Government officials in plenary meetings and, occasionally, in smaller ad-hoc groups. It does not currently produce submissions and reports.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the engineering technology advisory committee in each of the last three years.

Mr. Eggar: The engineering technology advisory committee—ETAC—was established in 1990 to advise the DTI on its support policy for engineering technology. Its only report was produced in 1993 and contained the committee's views on future strategy in this area.

The committee met on six occasions from 6 September 1991 until its dissolution in October 1993. Secretarial support for it was provided by the Department. The actual expenditure incurred by the 14 members of the Committee related to travel expenses only and amounted to a total of £4,918.70 over its two-year life.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the monitoring committee on misleading price indications in each of the last three years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The monitoring committee on misleading price indications was disbanded in May 1993. The committee reported to Ministers in December 1991 and subsequently convened once in February 1992 to discuss its report with the then Minister for Consumer Affairs. A working group formed from the committee to examine service charges in hotels and restaurants met once, in February 1992, and reported to Ministers in August 1992. Both the committee and the working group were chaired and serviced by officials from the Department of Trade and Industry. No other costs were incurred.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Over the past three years we have carried out only three refurbishment projects. These are listed by year of completion:

Year	*Project*	*£ Thousands*
1991–92	No projects completed in this year	
1992–93	No projects completed in this year	
1993–94	Partial refurbishment of Ashdown House to enable additional staff to be accommodated following the closure of 1–19 Victoria Street	4,532
	Full refurbishment of Kingsgate House to convert to open plan accommodation	4,211
	Refurbishment of sub-standard parts of Eastcote site	720

Car Sales

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what new proposals for the deregulation of car sales dealing the European Commission has made; and what is the United Kingdom Government's policy on those proposals.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The European Commission has put a number of proposals to member states to renew and amend Commission regulation 123/85, which governs the selective and exclusive dealership agreements for motor vehicles. These proposals would prohibit a number of restrictions on competition which are permissible under the current regulation in order to increase the competition in the trade. They would, in particular, provide dealers with the opportunity to sell more than one make of vehicle on sites which were separate and distinct. Restrictions on dealers advertising outside their contract territory would be prohibited. Dealers would also be permitted to purchase spare parts from any source, provided that they were of equivalent quality.

The Government welcome these proposals, which are in many respects similar to the recommendations contained in the 1992 Monopolies and Mergers Commission report. Member states have put their views on the draft to the Commission, which will consider whether to amend the text before publishing the draft for public consultation shortly.

Rowntree

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what factors Her Majesty's Government took into account when Nestlé took over Rowntree; what representations he has received on the performance of this company with particular reference to United Kingdom based employment since that take over; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Director General of Fair Trading's advice to the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry remains confidential. All relevant factors were taken into account in reaching the decision not to refer this merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in May 1988. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has received no representations specifically concerning employment matters at Nestlé since the merger.

Fuel Bills

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many customers have been disconnected by British Gas for non-payment of bills in the most recent year for which he has figures; and what was the figure in the last year before privatisation.

Mr. Heseltine: The number of disconnections by British Gas for non-payment of bills for the year to the end of June 1994 was 15,420. This compares with 42,468 disconnections in the year to the end of September 1986.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many customers have been disconnected by regional electricity companies for non-payment of bills in the most recent year for which he has figures; and what were the figures in the last year before privatisation.

Mr. Heseltine: Disconnection figures are kept by the Office of Electricity Regulation. However, I can confirm that 3,297 electricity customers were disconnected by regional electricity companies in 1993—the lowest number on record. In comparison, 67,421 customers were disconnected in the 12 months to 31 March 1990.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how prices, including VAT, for domestic consumers of electricity have changed in *(a)* the past 10 years and *(b)* the past two years.

Mr. Heseltine: Between the third quarter of 1984 and the third quarter of 1994, prices of electricity, including VAT, for the domestic consumer have increased by 54.7 per cent. in cash terms and fallen by 4.7 per cent. in real terms. Between the third quarter of 1992 and the third quarter of 1994, prices have increased by 4.2 per cent. in cash terms and fallen by 1.1 per cent. in real terms. These price trends are published regularly in the Department of Trade and Industry's statistical bulletin, "Energy Trends", table 28.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how prices, including VAT, for domestic consumers of gas have changed in *(a)* the past 10 years and *(b)* the past two years.

Mr. Heseltine: Between the third quarter of 1984 and the third quarter of 1994, prices of gas, including VAT for the domestic consumer, have increased by 30 per cent. in cash terms and fallen by 20 per cent. in real terms. Between the third quarter of 1992 and the third quarter of 1994, prices have increased by 4 per cent. in cash terms and fallen by 1.3 per cent. in real terms. These price trends are published regularly in the Department of Trade and Industry's statistical bulletin, "Energy Trends", table 28.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 1 December *Official Report,* column *809* what was the number of successful applications for regional selective assistance in each development and intermediate area in the north-west.

Mr. Eggar: The information is given in the table:

Travel to work area	*Number of offers made (1 April 1993–1 March 1994)*
Accrington and Rossendale	21
Barrow-in-Furness	12
Blackburn	22
Bolton and Bury	40
Liverpool	63
Manchester	73
Oldham	18
Rochdale	19
Sheffield	1
Whitehaven	1
Widnes and Runcorn	15
Wigan and St. Helens	38
Wirral and Chester	26
Workington	14
Total	363

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number of *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful applications for regional selective assistance in each development and intermediate area in London and the Eastern region for the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Eggar: The information is given in the table for London, the south-east and eastern regions.

Travel to work area	*Offers made*[1]	*Applications rejected*[1]
Clacton	3	1
Great Yarmouth	3	2
Harwich	1	0
Wisbech	4	0
Heathrow	3	0
London	3	0
Dover and Deal	1	0
Folkestone	3	1
Hastings	2	0
Isle of Wight	7	0
Sittingbourne and Sheerness	7	0
Thanet	3	0
Total	40	4

[1] 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the special advisers employed by his Department in each of the last five years indicating when they *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department and the annual salary they received.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 1 December 1994]:* Salaries for special advisers are negotiated individually in relation to their previous earnings, and are confidential. They are, however, normally paid on a special advisers' salary spine of 34 points, ranging from £19,503 to £67,609. Appointments are non-pensionable, and the salary spine reflects this.

I also seek advice from time to time on an unpaid and informal basis from Sir Peter Levene.

Hallmarking

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to European Union proposals affecting the hallmarking of silver; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 2 December 1994]:* In negotiations on the proposed European Union directive, the Government continue to argue for the preservation of traditional third-party hallmarking arrangements for precious metals, including silver. The Government are opposed to the principle of manufacturers' marking, which would also be allowed under the directive as drafted.

Nursery Furnishings

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what steps he took to verify that toxic fire retardant chemicals used in nursery furniture were not harmful to babies before the regulations came into force;

(2) what tests Government laboratories undertook on the toxicity of fire resistant chemicals in nursery furniture, and their likely effect on babies prior to the introduction of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 25 November 1994]:* The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, as amended, do not require the use of specific fire retardants. The regulations are made in terms of a series of ignition resistance tests for different furniture components. Under section 10—the general safety requirements—of the Consumer Protection Act 1987, it is the responsibility of the manufacturer to use materials which are reasonably safe having regard to the circumstances of their use. However, before introducing the regulations the Department ascertained both from industrial research and advice from the Department of Health that there was a number of safe ways in which manufacturers could comply with the regulations.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what tests DTI laboratories are currently carrying out on the toxicity of cot mattresses.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 25 November 1994]:* The theory that flame retardants in cot mattresses and covers released noxious gases, and that this caused sudden infant death syndrome, was thoroughly investigated by an expert working group set up by the chief medical officer of health in 1990. The working group concluded that this theory was not supported by the evidence and a copy of its report—the Turner report—has been placed in the Library of the House.

The chief medical officer of health has recently set up another working group of experts to study the questions which were raised by research contained in the Rubens Institute study. The Department will closely follow their deliberations.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee if he will make it his policy to enable hon. Members who use the parliamentary data and video network to have access via the Internet to the United Kingdom Government world wide web server known as "open.gov.uk."

Mr. Waller: The Information Committee is shortly to consider the possibility of enabling Members who use the parliamentary data and video network to have access via the Internet to the United Kingdom Government world wide web server known as "open.gov.uk". The Committee will need to satisfy itself that there can be adequate safeguards of the parliamentary data and video network and hence of hon. Members' computer systems. Any proposals for additional expenditure will also need to be considered by the Finance and Services Committee as appropriate.

Old Palace Yard

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what is his latest estimate of he total cost of the works taking place at 7 Old Palace Yard; and what is its future planned use.

Mr. Ray Powell: In return for allocating its planned accommodation in 7 Millbank to this House, the other place has assumed control of 6 and 7 Old Palace Yard. The cost of works and the future use of the building are matters for that House.

ENVIRONMENT

Rent-to-mortgage Scheme

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many local authority properties in each local authority have been sold under the rent-to-mortgage scheme.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: So far, local authorities in England have reported two completed rent-to-mortgage sales. One sale took place in east Devon and the other in the City of London. About 40 applications are still being processed.

Wolves and Hybrid Wolves

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many import permits were issued for *(a)* wolves and *(b)* hybrid wolves entering the United Kingdom for each of the last four years; and what was the total number of (i) wolves and (ii) hybrid wolves involved.

Sir Paul Beresford: In 1991, my Department issued one permit under the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora—CITES—allowing the import, by a zoo, of two grey wolves, canis lupis occidentalis, from Canada for breeding purposes.

Zoos

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Federation of Zoological Gardens of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to discuss the effectiveness of the Zoo Licensing Act 1984.

Sir Paul Beresford: On 4 October 1994, officials from my Department chaired a meeting of the Department's standing advisory group, which includes senior representatives of the Federation of Zoological Gardens of Great Britain and Ireland. The meeting considered a number of issues relating to the operation and management of zoos in the United Kingdom.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a White Paper before introducing legislation based on proposals contained in the consultation paper, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions".

Mr. Atkins: The only specific proposals for legislative change were those in paragraph 194 of the consultation document, relating to the regulatory powers of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. The necessary amendments to the Radioactive Substance Act 1993 have been included in the Environment Bill, which received its First Reading on Thursday 1 December in another place.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his timetable for acting upon recommendations contained in the consultation document, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions".

Mr. Atkins: A statement of future policy will be made in due course.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether local authorities, the Local Authorities Waste Disposal Contractors Association or private owners of refuse tips will have the right to refuse radioactive waste from authorised disposers under proposals contained in the consultation document, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions".

Mr. Atkins: Under section 18 of the Radioactive Substances Act 1993, local authorities have a duty to accept radioactive waste for controlled burial if the regulatory bodies authorise disposal to sites provided by them. The consultation document contained no proposals to alter or extend this duty.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the differences between proposals contained in the consultation document, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions", with regard to the disposal of radioactive waste from the nuclear industry, and the proposals considered in 1987 for the disposal of such waste at four sites; and what considerations underlay the decision to withdraw the 1987 proposals.

Mr. Atkins: The four sites referred to were investigated by UK Nirex Ltd. to ascertain their suitability for the development of a shallow repository for radioactive waste. The consultation document's proposals in relation to near-surface disposal concern British Nuclear Fuels' existing facility at Drigg in Cumbria and the controlled burial of low-level waste in landfill sites. The decision by Nirex to end its investigations in 1987 is a matter for the company.

Water Metering

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what have been the financial costs of undertaking trials with compulsory water metering organised by his Department and Ofwat; what has been *(a)* the amount and *(b)* the proportion of the costs met from public funds and water charges; and what other trials with alternative water sewerage charging systems have been sponsored or supported by his Department.

Mr. Atkins: The national metering trials cost £19 million. The Department of the Environment funded just under half this amount. The water companies involved funded the rest. There are no proposals to undertake trials on other alternative charging methods.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on the Director General of Ofwat's statement that 33 per cent. of domestic households will be metered by 2015.

Mr. Atkins: The Director General's forecast assumes the continuation of metering on a selective or voluntary basis. Metering encourages customers to avoid waste and would therefore contribute to the sustainable use of water in the longer term. It encourages action to reduce leakage and excessive water abstraction. It would reduce the need to build costly and environmentally intrusive reservoirs. The Director General estimates that metering, leakage reduction and reduced demand from industry should limit demand for water in 2015 to the present level.

Water and Sewerage Services

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on what best estimates the ratio between fixed and variable costs in the water industry were the K factors for water supply determined in the 1994 periodic review, both in general and for each company;

(2) on what best estimate of the ratio between fixed and variable costs were the K factors for the delivery of a sewerage service determined in the 1994 periodic review, both in general and for each company.

Mr. Atkins: This is a matter for the Director General of Water Services.

Toxic Materials

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what precautions are being taken to protect local populations from possible emissions from sites being used for experimental work on the use of toxic materials as fuels, following the United States Environmental Protection Agency's recent report on the toxicity of very low level dioxins and in particular their effect on foetal development.

Mr. Atkins: I announced Government policy on the burning of substitute fuels in kilns on 23 June 1994, *Official Report*, column *261-2*. Strict conditions of compliance with agreed trials schedules, progress reports, control procedures and continuous monitoring have been put in place. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is responsible for protecting the environment under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and has been closely supervising these tests.

Results obtained so far indicate no cause for concern. The emissions of dioxins and heavy metals are well within the limits that HMIP will impose on incinerators. Milk monitoring by MAFF for dioxins has indicated no ill effects from the burning of Cemfuel.

HMIP is keeping a close watch on the emissions from the trials and will shut them down if the environment is being damaged.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what EC waste regulation procedures apply to the sites which are currently being used for experimental work on the use of toxic materials as fuels.

Mr. Atkins: To the extent that these materials are judged to constitute waste, the relevant requirements of Council directive 75/442/EEC on waste, as amended by 91/156/EEC, will apply. Plants for the production of cement and rotary kiln lime production are categories of process subject to the Council directive 84/360/EEC on the combating of air pollution from industrial plants.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites are currently being used for experimental work on the use of toxic materials including chloro-cresol as fuels; and if he will list existing and proposed sites, their exact locality and the chemicals involved.

Mr. Atkins: The only plant undertaking trials with substitute fuel whose specification contains chloro-cresol is Redland Aggregate's plant at Thrislington, West Cornforth, Ferryhill, County Durham.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what regulations and monitoring procedures the sites currently being used for experimental work on the use of toxic materials as fuels are operating.

Mr. Atkins: Environmental protection control in England and Wales is effected by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Trials of the substitute fuels in kilns are being carried out under this Act.

In carrying out the trials the operators must comply with the following monitoring requirements.

Before trials commence, satisfactory data on baseline operations must be provided to HMIP. This must include not only emission data but also kiln operating characteristics.

Only those substitute fuels that meet a specification agreed in advance with HMIP may be used. All deliveries must meet the specification.

Continuous monitors for particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and oxygen, calibrated to HMIP satisfaction must be installed.

Manual sampling and analysis of other pollutants such as heavy metals and dioxins must be provided.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Yvonne Sleightholme

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will carry out the recommendations made by Judge Stephen Tumim in respect of Yvonne Sleightholme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 6 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the recommendations made by Judge Stephen Tumin in respect of Yvonne Sleightholme in the report of his short inspection of Durham in September 1992.

Miss Sleightholme was convicted of the murder of her former fiance's wife and sentenced to life imprisonment in May 1991. She had an unsuccessful appeal against her conviction in January 1992. She is currently serving her sentence on the female wing of Durham prison. Following her arrest Miss Sleightholme became blind and in his report Judge Tumim commented on the justification for holding her at Durham and suggested that a transfer to Askham Grange open prison in York would make visiting easier for her elderly parents.

As a life sentence prisoner Miss Sleightholme will not be considered for a transfer to an open prison until her first formal review by the Parole Board. This review is not until September 1997 when she will have been detained for seven years. It will then be the Parole's duty to decide what risk she presents to the public and whether she is suitable to be transferred to an open prison. This decision will be based on the reports submitted on Miss Sleightholme during her time in prison, written by staff who will have been able to assess her risk over a prolonged period through a series of interviews, review boards and outside activities.

Despite Miss Sleightholme's blindness there is certainly no prospect of her being moved to an open prison in the foreseeable future. While it could be argued that it is unlikely that a blind person would be able to escape, even from an open prison, Miss Sleightholme is known to have many supporters who believe she is innocent and it is conceivable that they could assist her. I also understand that there remains considerable animosity towards Miss Sleightholme within the victim's community. As far as her own safety is concerned, it would therefore probably not be in her best interests to be moved to an open prison close to her home area so soon after the offence was committed.

Durham continues to be the most appropriate establishment for Miss Sleightholme not because of the security of the prison but because of the more enclosed and protective environment it offers. Durham provides safer surroundings for a blind person and Miss Sleightholme is receiving professional training in mobility and rehabilitation. It also has prison staff with the training and experience to help a life sentence prisoner through the early stages of their sentence.

Miss Sleightholme has been offered the opportunity to be transferred to New Hall prison near Wakefield to be closer to her home area. However, she remains reluctant to go there as she feels the establishment is too dispersed. She has asked to remain at Durham until the Parole Board have recommended her transfer to open prison and will have the opportunity to extend her mobility training outside the prison as her review approaches.

Police

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the annual budget and the number of police officers for each police authority in each year since 1970.

Mr. Maclean: The table gives information from 1978–79 for each police authority's expenditure and the number of officers for each force as at 31 March. Details for 1970 to 1978 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Police Expenditure and Strength since 1980

£ thousands

Force	*Expend 1978–79*	*Strength 1978–79*	*Expend 1979–1980*	*Strength 1979–80*	*Expend 1980–81*	*Strength 1980–81*	*Expend 1981–82*	*Strength 1981–82*
Avon and Somerset	26,266	2,825	33,984	2,892	40,187	2,953	48,099	3,011
Bedfordshire	9,298	902	12,087	943	14,537	961	16,909	984
Cambridgeshire	10,183	1,064	13,556	1,081	15,370	1,091	18,088	1,131
Cheshire	16,130	1,778	20,242	1,789	25,839	1,839	29,724	1,847
City of London	10,405	829	12,528	840	15,747	846	17,739	855
Cleveland	12,589	1,334	13,453	1,420	19,098	1,478	23,188	1,474
Cumbria	9,310	1,056	13,071	1,093	15,013	1,108	17,014	1,121
Derbyshire	16,635	1,563	20,825	1,793	25,747	1,821	29,429	1,776
Devon and Cornwall	25,313	2,660	36,158	2,651	39,566	2,720	46,539	2,713
Dorset	10,706	1,128	15,024	1,154	16,908	1,169	19,323	1,166
Durham	12,805	1,312	16,464	1,324	18,689	1,334	20,870	1,342
Dyfed-Powys	7,615	910	10,016	926	11,698	932	13,709	920
Essex	21,554	2,461	30,034	2,567	36,413	2,596	41,825	2,631
Gloucestershire	9,073	1,076	11,401	1,105	14,178	1,123	16,267	1,129
Greater Manchester	61,431	6,419	78,914	6,713	94,541	6,929	111,678	6,957
Gwent	8,511	965	10,971	967	12,826	972	15,014	964
Hampshire	27,361	2,949	36,187	3,039	40,580	3,052	48,798	3,062
Hertfordshire	14,747	1,462	18,564	1,487	21,859	1,534	25,497	1,559
Humberside	18,177	1,849	23,293	1,917	27,780	1,954	32,384	1,947
Kent	27,048	2,724	34,910	2,863	41,732	2,862	48,830	2,862
Lancashire	27,482	3,097	37,289	3,100	43,544	3,154	50,924	3,152
Leicestershire	15,652	1,701	20,444	1,702	22,886	1,717	27,538	1,728
Lincolnshire	11,870	1,171	14,803	1,176	16,964	1,179	19,972	1,179
Merseyside	41,306	4,427	56,102	4,525	65,823	4,597	78,120	4,631
Norfolk	11,194	1,223	14,187	1,249	16,709	1,246	19,904	1,268
Northamptonshire	8,976	905	11,279	920	13,588	982	15,991	1,006
Northumbria	30,694	3,272	39,727	3,317	45,341	3,339	53,592	3,329
North Wales	11,672	1,268	15,362	1,275	17,233	1,293	20,060	1,286
North Yorkshire	12,544	1,342	17,066	1,352	19,586	1,355	22,685	1,354
Nottinghamshire	19,811	2,117	29,020	2,145	29,644	2,241	35,953	2,252
South Wales	26,219	2,936	35,086	3,056	41,527	3,065	49,634	3,103
South Yorkshire	24,470	2,546	32,134	2,704	38,511	2,865	44,973	2,868
Staffordshire	18,328	1,978	22,955	2,051	27,887	2,096	32,304	2,086
Suffolk	11,060	1,064	13,952	1,130	16,643	1,119	19,478	1,120
Surrey	14,249	1,440	18,534	1,512	21,785	1,586	25,581	1,587
Sussex	25,153	2,758	33,118	2,782	37,572	2,820	43,746	2,829
Thames Valley	27,646	2,639	35,967	2,802	43,458	3,093	50,747	3,098
Warwickshire	7,839	841	10,427	895	12,599	915	14,957	922
West Mercia	16,478	1,743	21,812	1,847	25,626	1,925	31,058	1,926

Police Expenditure and Strength since 1980

£ thousands

Force	*Expend 1978–79*	*Strength 1978–79*	*Expend 1979–1980*	*Strength 1979–80*	*Expend 1980–81*	*Strength 1980–81*	*Expend 1981–82*	*Strength 1981–82*
West Midlands	56,096	5,981	74,446	6,243	87,014	6,549	102,556	6,679
West Yorkshire	44,131	4,727	57,909	4,805	68,645	5,084	77,773	5,147
Wiltshire	8,952	997	11,309	1,002	13,689	1,030	16,342	1,040
Metropolitan Police	296,881	22,214	381,673	22,804	452,730	24,006	552,224	25,429

Police Expenditure and Strength since 1980

£ thousands

Force	*Expend 1982–83*	*Strength 1982–83*	*Expend 1983–1984*	*Strength 1983–84*	*Expend 1984–85*	*Strength 1984–85*	*Expend 1985–86*	*Strength 1985–86*
Avon and Somerset	53,642	2,970	56,860	2,997	61,191	2,982	65,919	2,958
Bedfordshire	18,637	985	20,202	1,006	21,893	990	22,278	985
Cambridgeshire	20,201	1,137	21,902	1,138	24,252	1,137	26,832	1,136
Cheshire	32,299	1,839	35,283	1,830	37,123	1,799	37,755	1,806
City of London	19.791	828	21,179	806	22,646	789	24,396	774
Cleveland	25,718	1,454	27,993	1,470	29,468	1,446	31,029	1,470
Cumbria	19,338	1,107	21,098	1,114	21,996	1,092	25,769	1,127
Derbyshire	33,601	1,757	35,593	1,772	58,084	1,752	40,154	1,753
Devon and Cornwall	51,413	2,730	55,810	2,724	60,118	2,722	64,862	2,739
Dorset	21,743	1,174	24,502	1,175	26,344	1,160	29,418	1,199
Durham	23,882	1,328	26,456	1,302	35,647	1,279	28,150	1,293
Dyfed-Powys	15,052	927	16,301	921	19,134	910	18.813	930
Essex	45,843	2,641	51,218	2,624	55,150	2,650	57,904	2,666
Gloucestershire	18,282	1,137	20,331	1,143	22,398	1,132	23,320	1,146
Greater Manchester	124,367	6,996	128,994	6,917	138,094	6,736	147,491	6,768
Gwent	16,379	963	18,455	962	20,120	964	20,619	978
Hampshire	55,261	3,075	59,333	3,073	62,962	3,057	68,241	3,062
Hertfordshire	28,371	1,554	30,325	1,562	32,703	1,562	34,572	1,565
Humberside	37,196	1,965	38,736	1,961	59,701	1,913	43,976	1,933
Kent	53,688	2,882	58,170	2,829	75,696	2,833	66,276	2,870
Lancashire	55,798	3,155	60,062	3,128	65,008	3,029	66,740	3,021
Leicestershire	30,829	1,723	36,603	1,729	48,047	1,695	37,382	1,737
Lincolnshire	21,879	1,178	22,761	1,182	23,562	1,146	25,594	1,139
Merseyside	85,488	4,631	92,766	4,603	101,430	4,588	103,660	4,543
Norfolk	22,292	1,261	24,428	1,268	26,161	1,248	27,628	1,263
Northamptonshire	18,652	1,003	20,608	1,019	24,345	1,015	23,450	1,025
Northumbria	61,413	3,325	65,907	3,349	76,618	3,295	78,227	3,357
North Wales	22,314	1,296	25,200	1,290	27,838	1,271	27,567	1,253
North Yorkshire	25,912	1,366	26,952	1,359	41,355	1,332	29,410	1,361
Nottinghamshire	41,139	2,249	47,464	2,229	90,852	2,150	47,427	2,210
South Wales	55,399	3,091	59,667	3,071	66,756	3,073	68,001	3,066
South Yorkshire	51,215	2,863	56,295	2,860	86,208	2,866	63,589	2,848
Staffordshire	36,679	2,080	39,519	2,090	43,328	2,066	44,521	2,087
Suffolk	21,375	1,123	22,770	1,123	24,335	1,129	26,836	1,121
Surrey	27,978	1,589	30,269	1,582	32,312	1,590	34,673	1,614
Sussex	50,905	2,810	52,030	2,800	56,261	2,803	57,617	2,790
Thames Valley	56,747	3,123	64,274	3,176	68,839	3,259	75,787	3,297
Warwickshire	16,607	919	17,903	910	29,906	921	21,922	929
West Mercia	35,622	1,916	38,613	1,920	41,578	1,919	43,851	1,939
West Midlands	112,962	6,673	121,870	6,679	129,488	6,544	141,015	6,520
West Yorkshire	88,548	5,145	94,912	5,109	109,004	4,991	106,412	5,145
Wiltshire	17,856	1,029	19,628	1,035	21,757	1,034	23,270	1,043
Metropolitan Police	718,458	26,499	795,376	26,706	861,052	26,751	748,660	26,813

Police Expenditure and Strength since 1980

£ thousands

Force	*Expend 1986–87*	*Strength 1986–87*	*Expend 1987–1988*	*Strength 1987–88*	*Expend 1988–89*	*Strength 1988–89*	*Expend 1989–90*	*Strength 1989–90*
Avon and Somerset	70,292	3,009	76,356	3,013	83,093	3,014	95,221	3,094
Bedfordshire	24,085	984	26,507	999	29,011	1,025	32,079	1,050
Cambridgeshire	27,661	1,142	30,675	1,171	33,312	1,187	38,444	1,193
Cheshire	43,386	1,830	47,201	1,837	49,327	1,879	57,810	1,870

Police Expenditure and Strength since 1980

£ thousands

Force	*Expend 1986–87*	*Strength 1986–87*	*Expend 1987–1988*	*Strength 1987–88*	*Expend 1988–89*	*Strength 1988–89*	*Expend 1989–90*	*Strength 1989–90*
City of London	26,549	771	28,222	787	30,891	801	35,285	799
Cleveland	35,131	1,462	38,836	1,466	42,613	1,470	46,995	1,467
Cumbria	27,055	1,118	29,810	1,141	32,320	1,135	35,858	1,166
Derbyshire	43,105	1,777	48,502	1,790	51,652	1,784	58,972	1,795
Devon and Cornwall	73,315	2,774	76,630	2,787	85,227	2,849	93,697	2,852
Dorset	33,140	1,202	34,195	1,234	38,058	1,251	42,908	1,269
Durham	31,020	1,307	34,,182	1,329	36,841	1,351	41,893	1,375
Dyfed-Powys	20,699	932	23,831	917	25,293	931	29,522	935
Essex	65,161	2,718	73,266	2,728	78,974	2,746	92,207	2,822
Gloucestershire	25,187	1,152	28,035	1,153	31,071	1,166	36,299	1,170
Greater Manchester	160,950	6,780	174,925	6,965	189,973	6,935	213,529	6,992
Gwent	22,213	973	24,096	979	27,170	996	30,444	1,008
Hampshire	75,583	3,098	82,274	3,103	91,177	3,167	100,459	3,154
Hertfordshire	38,428	1,579	40,851	1,603	47,394	1,638	51,968	1,657
Humberside	48,175	1,964	52,566	1,953	58,417	1,992	63,700	1,995
Kent	70,993	2,879	78,338	2,908	89,907	2,985	98,455	2,984
Lancashire	73,268	3,314	84,703	3,139	88,410	3,177	99,392	3,201
Leicestershire	41,811	1,712	45,464	1,735	49,660	1,745	57,279	1,769
Lincolnshire	27,964	1,173	30,242	1,168	34,108	1,194	37,548	1,188
Merseyside	113,410	4,598	121,405	4,647	133,864	4,689	147,251	4,714
Norfolk	31,135	1,312	33,806	1,308	37,817	1,340	42,875	1,363
Northamptonshire	26,508	1,047	28,953	1,093	32,928	1,095	37,553	1,126
Northumbria	85,207	3,402	92,058	3,467	98,274	3,508	110,667	3,529
North Wales	30,257	1,286	32,961	1,300	36,812	1,327	41,084	1,337
North Yorkshire	32,625	1,353	34,785	1,372	40,650	1,370	43,887	1,379
Nottinghamshire	53,428	2,226	55,547	2,252	60,048	2,298	68,609	2,316
South Wales	72,723	3,100	78,957	3,126	86,312	3,102	97,275	3,135
South Yorkshire	66,255	2,862	73,135	2,912	80,007	2,940	91,700	2,923
Staffordshire	49,111	2,113	53,772	2,135	59,282	2,164	65,688	2,187
Suffolk	28,972	1,166	30,787	1,188	34,912	1,181	40,113	1,194
Surrey	37,804	1,609	41,221	1,649	45,755	1,636	52,623	1,645
Sussex	64,897	2,830	68,290	2,894	78,147	2,946	84,408	2,949
Thames Valley	85,349	3,421	95,496	3,490	104,334	3,600	119,989	3,659
Warwickshire	22,867	965	25,399	979	27,8[illegible]3	969	31,761	975
West Mercia	47,219	1,929	51,616	1,946	55,443	1,948	62,268	1,991
West Midlands	151,675	6,656	166,971	6,639	185,032	6,761	206,518	6,855
West Yorkshire	115,178	5,142	129,109	5,184	149,384	5,278	167,025	5,260
Wiltshire	25,998	1,044	28,074	1,095	30,904	1,101	35,676	1,130
Metropolitan Police	810,228	26,890	879,803	27,688	965,151	28,058	1,076,767	28,362

Police Expenditure and Strength since 1980

£ thousands

Force	*Expend 1990–91*	*Strength 1990–91*	*Expend 1991–92*	*Strength 1991–92*	*Expend 1992–93*	*Strength 1992–93*	*Expend 1993–94*	*Strength 1993–94*
Avon and Somerset	102,351	3,092	111,509	3,081	124,322	3,068	132,421	3,033
Bedfordshire	35,599	1,105	39,212	1,093	44,210	1,168	47,958	1,151
Cambridgeshire	42,364	1,201	47,116	1,250	50,027	1,265	55,776	1,263
Cheshire	62,370	1,895	66,960	1,874	72,966	1,908	79,593	1,902
City of London	37,074	813	40,820	808	44,246	825	49,858	893
Cleveland	51,560	1,489	54,802	1,477	59,802	1,478	63,156	1,429
Cumbria	39,961	1,184	45,080	1,179	49,501	1,196	51,698	1,174
Derbyshire	61,261	1,741	66,048	1,706	75,750	1,830	78,207	1,820
Devon and Cornwall	105,660	2,873	117,436	2,898	128,271	2,910	136,654	2,914
Dorset	49,024	1,281	52,006	1,289	55,644	1,302	57,564	1,297
Durham	44,964	1,368	48,589	1,389	53,226	1,381	57,065	1,383
Dyfed-Powys	30,878	935	35,150	947	38,896	967	41,518	965
Essex	104,703	2,889	115,540	2,898	125,833	2,936	134,545	2,937
Gloucestershire	40,236	1,162	44,611	1,174	48,067	1,149	50,295	1,159
Greater Manchester	228,550	7,014	248,813	7,061	272,190	7,060	296,016	6,967
Gwent	33,286	999	36,682	1,009	38,965	1,004	41,406	993
Hampshire	111,152	3,179	124,970	3,211	135,434	3,275	143,157	3,270
Hertfordshire	58,743	1,666	62,868	1,965	68,523	1,700	72,520	1,682
Humberside	69,697	1,998	77,396	2,026	84,119	2,032	88,934	2,039
Kent	109,013	3,005	128,734	3,074	137,696	3,146	143,045	3,145
Lancashire	108,135	3,212	122,019	3,198	128,669	3,207	138,730	3,170
Leicestershire	61,274	1,818	68,366	1,845	72,784	1,805	75,852	1,825

Police Expenditure and Strength since 1980

£ thousands

Force	*Expend 1990–91*	*Strength 1990–91*	*Expend 1991–92*	*Strength 1991–92*	*Expend 1992–93*	*Strength 1992–93*	*Expend 1993–94*	*Strength 1993–94*
Lincolnshire	41,597	1,209	47,235	1,196	51,065	1,200	54,121	1,205
Merseyside	160,697	4,689	178,884	4,621	189,280	4,669	202,485	4,693
Norfolk	48,115	1,405	54,100	1,414	59,064	1,440	62,209	1,447
Northamptonshire	40,084	1,139	45,499	1,158	50,617	1,199	53,410	1,170
Northumbria	121,364	3,541	132,826	3,464	136,534	3,563	154,875	3,598
North Wales	44,725	1,349	50,700	1,347	55,897	1,360	58,387	1,352
North Yorkshire	47,396	1,387	51,679	1,398	58,444	1,393	61,464	1,318
Nottinghamshire	75,709	2,336	82,629	2,331	89,507	2,327	95,723	2,328
South Wales	106,257	3,137	118,537	3,168	127,300	3,176	130,885	3,131
South Yorkshire	94,778	2,991	103,166	3,008	117,544	3,032	124,637	3,023
Staffordshire	74,272	2,217	82,163	2,176	87,742	2,179	93,993	2,208
Suffolk	43,008	1,209	48,069	1,218	50,731	1,241	54,460	1,208
Surrey	57,125	1,657	63,421	1,706	70,879	1,693	74,649	1,669
Sussex	92,991	2,969	106,178	2,984	115,114	3,008	119,678	3,009
Thames Valley	134,111	3,714	149,414	3,772	160,512	3,840	173,938	3,908
Warwickshire	36,082	1,020	39,842	990	42,489	1,020	46,084	1,046
West Mercia	68,707	2,026	77,230	2,034	82,670	2,054	89,633	2,059
West Midlands	229,256	6,876	250,816	6,941	284,274	6,953	292,273	7,014
West Yorkshire	181,186	5,268	197,226	5,087	208,784	5,037	219,225	5,046
Wiltshire	40,885	1,165	46,215	1,221	51,400	1,265	53,547	1,264
Metropolitan Police	1,197,964	28,230	1,339,605	28,154	1,453,959	27,867	1,515,054	27,699

Murders and Manslaughters

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of *(a)* murders and *(b)* manslaughters (i) with or (ii) without diminished responsibility, recorded in each year since 1970 in each police force area, indicating the sex of the victims and the numbers of these crimes where there is still no conviction.

Mr. Maclean: The tables show for 1982 to 1993 the number of offences of homicide involving (i) male victims and (ii) female victims by outcome. Information for earlier years is not available, and information for each police force area separately could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The third table gives the information which can be provided on the total number of homicides recorded by the police, by police force area and year for 1982 to 1993.

Offences initially recorded as homicide by outcome (Female victims)

England and Wales

Number of offences

Outcome	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Offences initially recorded as homicide	268	239	254	272	272	250	244	244	237	307	258	245
Offences no longer recorded as homicide[1]	10	12	13	16	19	16	18	21	23	19	22	14
Offences currently recorded as homicide[1]												
Decided at court to be homicide:												
Murder	77	72	79	90	96	92	81	88	75	89	71	46
Sec 2 manslaughter	70	51	53	51	48	39	40	43	36	47	45	25
Other manslaughter	46	50	53	58	53	45	57	49	48	66	61	30
Infanticide	4	4	1	1	1	—	3	1	3	3	4	2
Total	197	177	186	200	198	176	181	181	162	205	181	103
Court decision pending	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	7	79
Proceedings not initiated or concluded without conviction:												
Suspect found by the court to be insane	1	1	4	2	2	1	—	1	—	2	3	1
Suspect died	1	2	—	2	2	1	1	2	3	6	1	2
Suspect committed suicide	33	22	31	32	32	36	30	22	27	39	25	26
Proceedings discontinued or not initiated	5	2	7	7	3	4	2	2	2	6	1	2
Total	40	27	42	43	39	42	33	27	32	53	30	32

Offences initially recorded as homicide by outcome (Female victims)

England and Wales *Number of offences*

Outcome	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Currently no suspect:												
All suspects acquitted	3	5	2	2	3	2	6	4	6	11	3	3
No suspects charged	18	18	11	11	13	14	6	11	14	13	15	14
Total	21	23	13	13	16	16	12	15	20	24	18	17
Total offences currently recorded as homicide	258	227	241	256	253	234	226	223	214	288	236	231

[1] As at 5 August 1994; figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts, or as further information becomes available.

Offences initially recorded as homicide by outcome (Male victims)

England and Wales *Number of offences*

Outcome	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Offences initially recorded as homicide	350	313	365	353	388	436	401	382	426	419	424	430
Offences no longer recorded as homicide[1]	51	58	69	73	75	70	78	80	82	76	66	55
Offences currently recorded as homicide[1]												
Decided at court to be homicide:												
Murder	85	81	86	77	109	105	93	91	102	99	119	70
Sec 2 manslaughter	38	32	31	24	34	46	34	39	45	35	36	28
Other manslaughter	114	99	126	118	118	148	137	102	117	134	117	91
Infanticide	2	7	1	7	2	1	4	—	1	2	2	1
Total	239	219	244	226	263	300	268	232	265	270	274	190
Court decision pending	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	3	10	18	142
Proceedings not initiated or concluded without conviction:												
Suspect found by the court to be insane	—	1	—	1	1	2	—	5	1	—	4	—
Suspect died	2	—	2	—	3	—	1	—	3	1	1	2
Suspect committed suicide	16	9	9	15	14	22	13	13	8	10	14	3
Proceedings discontinued or not initiated	6	7	10	9	2	8	3	1	4	5	3	3
Total	24	17	21	25	20	32	17	19	16	16	22	8
Currently no suspect:												
All suspects acquitted	6	7	4	7	9	14	10	13	24	20	17	8
No suspects charged	30	12	27	22	21	20	28	37	36	27	27	27
Total	36	19	31	29	30	34	38	50	60	47	44	35
Total offences currently recorded as homicide	299	255	296	280	313	366	323	302	344	343	358	375

[1] As at 5 August 1994; figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts, or as further information becomes available.

Offences of homicide recorded by the police[1] by police force area and year

England and Wales *Number of offences*

Police force area	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Avon and Somerset	9	14	9	15	12	18	8	8	10	15	11	19
Bedfordshire	3	11	7	4	7	9	7	8	6	6	12	4
Cambridgeshire	1	4	4	5	6	6	10	3	6	4	8	4
Cheshire	6	11	7	6	10	5	12	6	6	11	11	13
Cleveland	10	5	10	4	5	9	8	11	10	10	8	7
Cumbria	6	4	1	3	6	3	4	3	5	4	4	4

Offences of homicide recorded by the police[1] *by police force area and year*

England and Wales *Number of offences*

Police force area	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Derbyshire	6	7	8	8	4	4	6	9	4	9	8	9
Devon and Cornwall	10	17	13	11	11	13	12	8	12	18	13	16
Dorset	2	4	8	4	7	1	4	3	5	6	11	4
Durham	5	8	7	3	5	3	4	5	6	4	7	10
Essex	10	6	16	20	15	13	14	14	11	13	6	12
Gloucestershire	4	1	3	7	4	1	1	12	2	12	3	9
Greater Manchester	28	23	37	28	38	45	49	35	28	49	46	41
Hampshire	14	8	9	15	19	15	8	8	11	12	12	17
Hertfordshire	11	6	7	4	7	10	11	9	5	9	5	6
Humberside	14	6	8	9	5	8	12	11	9	11	6	4
Kent	9	15	23	14	20	25	18	21	18	19	16	24
Lancashire	12	13	17	18	11	27	23	21	17	21	10	25
Leicestershire	8	7	3	9	6	7	5	6	11	11	6	9
Lincolnshire	6	3	3	3	4	8	3	6	2	8	3	2
London, City of	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	3	1
Merseyside	19	14	11	15	20	15	21	17	19	21	22	15
Metropolitan Police District	192	149	164	187	210	193	148	176	184	184	172	159
Norfolk	5	4	7	5	12	4	7	5	12	10	9	5
Northamptonshire	5	8	9	5	10	11	4	5	4	5	9	7
Northumbria	10	17	26	19	17	19	14	19	27	28	24	31
North Yorkshire	16	2	4	5	5	6	3	10	5	3	9	6
Nottinghamshire	9	9	12	12	12	11	11	10	13	27	14	16
South Yorkshire	14	19	14	13	12	11	18	16	21	15	20	20
Staffordshire	12	5	8	4	11	4	8	9	11	8	4	9
Suffolk	2	9	5	6	5	5	4	9	6	2	5	3
Surrey	3	1	5	2	4	12	7	5	6	11	8	5
Sussex	11	8	20	16	18	14	12	21	19	20	16	13
Thames Valley	17	16	23	21	17	37	18	16	18	17	16	19
Warwickshire	5	6	1	5	—	9	5	4	3	2	4	3
West Mercia	8	14	8	6	9	8	7	5	10	11	6	15
West Midlands	45	43	49	45	42	38	44	31	37	40	56	40
West Yorkshire	30	24	29	26	25	31	26	33	43	34	34	27
Wiltshire	6	7	4	2	4	5	5	6	11	4	7	5
Dyfed-Powys	4	5	1	6	1	3	7	6	9	4	8	4
Gwent	9	3	3	9	7	6	6	7	3	5	7	3
North Wales	11	3	8	6	1	5	10	3	3	5	10	9
South Wales	11	10	10	11	17	11	20	20	21	17	18	16
England and Wales	618	550	621	616	661	688	624	641	669	725	687	670

[1] Because of differences in recording practice the figures in this table do not always agree exactly with those given in the other tables.

Mohammad Riaz

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what prison sentence he has set for Mohammad Riaz; what was the trial judge's recommendation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The period for retribution and deterrence in this case was originally set in 1988. At the time, the trial judge recommended 10 years, the Lord Chief Justice of the day recommended a minimum period of 16 years and the Minister then set a period of 20 years. In doing so, he would have had regard to the statement by Sir Leon Brittan, as Home Secretary in 1983, that terrorists and certain other specified categories of murderer could normally expect to serve at least 20 years.

Following the Doody judgment of June 1993, the above details were disclosed to Mr. Riaz. He subsequently made representations and his case was considered afresh in December 1993. My right hon. and learned Friend concluded that there were no grounds to justify disapplying the policy set out in the Brittan statement. He therefore confirmed the existing period of 20 years.

Transitional Crime

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on proposals put forward by the United Kingdom to, and decisions taken at, the United Nations ministerial conference on organised transnational crime, held in Naples 21 to 23 November.

Mr. Maclean: The conference, which was attended by representatives of 138 countries, was convened by the United Nations for the purpose of examining the problems and dangers posed by organised transnational crime in all regions of the world and of identifying the most effective forms of international co-operation for its prevention and control. The conference adopted a political declaration and a global action plan. The political declaration sends a clear message about the determination of the international community to co-operate to tackle the problem of organised transnational crime and stresses the need for assistance to the developing countries and countries in transition against the threat which organised crime may pose to their social and economic development.

The global action plan emphasises the national, legislative and other measures which may be effective in dealing with organised transnational crime and commends the adoption and implementation of all states of the international instruments which are already available to strengthen efforts against such crime—for example, in relation to money laundering and control of the proceeds of crime. It also recommends that the UN's commission on crime prevention and criminal justice should seek the views of states on the feasibility and value of developing an international convention or conventions against organised transnational crime.

In a separate resolution, the conference acknowledged an offer by the Italian Government to organise and host, at their own expense, an international task force, which would examine the feasibility of an Italian proposal for setting up an international training centre for law enforcement and criminal justice personnel. The results of the task force's work will be submitted to the fourth UN commission on crime prevention and criminal justice next year.

The United Kingdom delegation, which I led, played its full part in the conference, and the Government fully support the conference conclusions. Copies of the political declaration, the global action plan and the resolution will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Ian Lumb

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if the United Kingdom branch of Interpol has received a report on attempts to locate Mr. Ian Lumb;

(2) if he will meet the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen to discuss the case of Mr. Ian Lumb; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when his Department last discussed the case of Mr. Ian Lumb with the Greater Manchester police;

(4) if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which his Department intervenes in police operational matters.

Mr. Maclean: Police operational matters are entirely the responsibility of individual chief constables.

Home Office officials consulted Greater Manchester police and the United Kingdom National Central Bureau of Interpol about the case of Mr. Ian Lumb on 1 December 1994.

The United Kingdom National Central Bureau of Interpol has not received a report on attempts to locate Mr. Ian Lumb.

In all the circumstances, I do not believe that a meeting would contribute towards the efforts of the police to locate Mr. Lumb, and I cannot add to the information that the hon. Member has already been given.

Metropolitan Police Committee

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applicants there were for membership of the Metropolitan police committee; and when the appointments will be announced.

Mr. Maclean: One hundred and six applications have been received from persons wishing to be considered for membership of the Metropolitan police committee. The Home Secretary announced during the debate on the policing of London on 2 December that Sir John Quinton will chair the committee. The other 11 members will be appointed shortly, in consultation with the chairman.

Extending Baton

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces in England and Wales have undertaken trials of the extending baton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Twelve forces in England and Wales conducted trials of the expandable side-handled baton between 1 March and 31 May. Six forces have trialled other types of expandable baton. I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply on 23 November, *Official Report*, column *158-9*.

Asylum

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum cases are currently pending which are of more than six years duration; and for what reasons they have taken so long to process.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: At 31 October 1994—the latest date for which the information is available—the estimated number of applications outstanding is 53,300. Information on the number of these cases waiting longer than six years and the reason for the delay is not collated centrally.

Knife Offences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of convictions in magistrates courts covering the Greater London area over the carrying of a knife as an offensive weapon in each of the last three years.

Mr. Maclean: The information is given in the table.

Number of offenders convicted at magistrates' courts in the Metropolitan Police District and City of London Police Force Areas and England and Wales for offences involving carrying weapons 1991–1993

Area/Offence	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Metropolitan Police District			
Carrying of offensive weapons without lawful authority or excuse[1]	860	632	663
Carrying article with blade or point in public place[2]	736	750	771
City of London			
Carrying of offensive weapons without lawful authority or excuse[1]	12	11	6
Carrying article with blade or point in public place[2]	1	3	4
England and Wales			
Carrying of offensive weapons without lawful authority or excuse[1]	3,499	3,200	2,808
Carrying article with blade or point in public place[2]	1,736	1,846	1,853

[1] Prevention of Crime Act 1953, Section 1. May include a small number of offences involving truncheons etc.

[2] Criminal Justice Act 1988, Section 139.

Shotgun Certificates

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many shotgun certificates were issued by Welsh police forces in each year from 1989 to 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is published annually in Home Office statistical bulletins, "Firearms certificate statistics, England and Wales", table 4, copies of which can be found in the Library. The bulletin references are: 26/90, 23/91, 19/92, 23/93 and 22/94.

Police Authorities

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the budgeted capital expenditure cost for setting up each of the new police authorities of England and Wales; and if he will list any planned items of capital spending over £10,000 by any of the new police authorities in their first year.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not centrally available. Police authorities are not required to notify the Home Office of detailed expenditure plans.

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much will be spent on members' allowances by the new police authorities of England and Wales in their first year; and how much was spent on members' allowances by the old police authorities of England and Wales in their final year.

Mr. Maclean: The allowances paid to councillor and independent members of new police authorities depend on the amount of work they undertake on behalf of the authority. If all members undertake sufficient work to claim the maximum amount of allowances available, the total expenditure would be £1,863,000 in a financial year.

Magistrate members of new police authorities may claim a financial-loss allowance and the total expenditure will depend on the amount of their loss.

Existing police authorities are part of the local government structure. Information is not held centrally about the level of allowances paid to existing councillors.

Pepper Sprays

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the use of pepper sprays on deportees;

(2) whether the use of capsicum pepper sprays was considered during the joint Home Office and Metropolitan police review of deportation procedures.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Those conducting the joint Home Office and Metropolitan police review of deportation procedures were aware of the existence of capsicum pepper sprays. However, such sprays have never been used in connection with removal from the United Kingdom and they were not referred to in the conclusions of the review, a copy of which was placed in the Library on 12 January 1994.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what analysis he has made of the reasons for the increases in crime levels from 1987 to 1992 shown in the 1993 crime statistics.

Mr. Maclean: Changes in crime levels are regularly monitored through analysis of recorded crime rates and the British crime survey. Successive studies over a long period have shown a wide range of factors which can influence levels of recorded crime, including the willingness of victims to report offences and the availability of opportunities to commit crime.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what comparison he has made of the rate of increase in crime in England and Wales and other developed nations between 1987 and 1992.

Mr. Maclean: Information showing international comparisons of the rate of increase in recorded crime was published for the first time, in "Criminal statistics, England and Wales, 1993" on 2 November 1994. A copy of table 1.2 follows:

Table 1.1 Crimes (1) recorded by the police - main developed countries

Country	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*Percentage increase* *1987–92*	*1991–92*
England and Wales	3,892,200	3,715,800	3,870,700	4,543,600	5,276,200	5,591,700	44	6
Northern Ireland	63,860	55,890	55,417	57,200	63,500	67,532	6	6
Scotland	481,230	469,986	493,385	535,864	592,774	589,562	23	–1
Republic of Ireland	85,358	89,544	86,792	87,658	94,406	95,391	12	1
France	3,170,970	3,132,694	3,266,442	3,492,712	3,744,112	3,830,996	21	2
Belgium	293,631	314,778	336,377	353,492	382,667	386,474	32	1
Germany	4,444,108	4,356,726	4,358,573	4,455,333	(2)5,302,796	(2)6,291,519	(3)—	—
Austria	391,291	400,621	423,025	457,623	468,832	502,440	28	7
Netherlands	1,042,120	1,056,740	1,066,130	1,052,510	1,083,730	1,168,490	12	8
Norway	198,877	220,338	237,319	235,256	223,122	234,992	18	5
Sweden	949,367	955,043	1,003,910	1,076,289	1,045,306	1,051,770	11	1
Denmark	524,323	536,880	536,564	527,421	519,755	563,821	8	8
Finland	317,290	336,595	391,259	438,094	391,940	393,109	24	—
Portugal(4)	251,588	252,204	261,931	281,200	315,300	332,344	32	5
Italy	1,867,035	1,894,327	2,053,522	2,501,640	2,647,735	2,390,539	28	–10
Greece	303,182	311,179	287,177	330,803	—	—	'9	—
U.S.A(5)	13,509,000	13,923,000	14,251,000	14,756,000	14,873,000	14,438,000	7	–3

Table 1.1 Crimes [1] recorded by the police - main developed countries

Country	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*Percentage increase 1987–92*	*Percentage increase 1991–92*
Canada[5]	2,368,956	2,390,007	2,425,936	2,627,193	2,899,006	2,848,091	20	–2
Japan	1,577,954	1,641,310	1,673,268	1,636,628	1,707,877	1,742,366	10	2
Australia[5]	1,070,367	1,987,273	1,125,661	1,149,478	1,274,893	1,273,948	19	—
New Zealand	406,627	418,928	425,623	449,479	484,507	499,003	23	3

Notes:

[1] More serious offences. In many countries defined as against the 'penal code' or 'criminal code' and excludes less serious crimes (misdemeanours). The range of offences covered differ between each country and some countries (eg Portugal) acknowledge double counting in the collection of such statistics. Comparisons based upon absolute figures are therefore misleading.

[2] Includes former East Germany in 1992 but part of East Germany in 1991.

[3] 1987–1990 only.

[4] FBI Uniform Crime Index covering murder and non-negligent manslaughter, manslaughter by negligence, forcible rape, robbery, assault, burglary, larceny - theft of motor vehicles, theft and arson, but excludes offences such as drugs, included in other countries figures.

[5] Data for financial years 1992 = 1991–92 etc.

Source:

Mainly statistical contacts in each country.

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total cost to Devon and Cornwall police of providing escorts and protection for those transporting live animals for export from Millbay docks in Plymouth.

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the chief constable that police officers have been deployed at Millbay docks to prevent the possibility of a breach of the peace. Police officers are not being used to escort loads to the docks.

The operation began on 28 November, and continues whenever necessary. No estimate has been made of the total cost, but the force is handling the matter by redeployment of officers and extra costs to the police budget are not expected.

Prisoners (Drugs)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates of British prisons without a previous involvement with hard drugs have died in prison from heroin or methadone use or became infected with HIV in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 24 November 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 6 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners without a previous involvement with hard drugs who have died from heroin or methadone, or who became infected with HIV in each of the past ten years.

I am afraid that the information requested is not available.

WALES

Unemployment

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have been unemployed for two years or more up to the latest available date.

Mr. Redwood: In October 1994 the number of claimants in Wales who had been unemployed for over two years was 23,398.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many long-term unemployed people there are in *(a)* Clwyd and *(b)* Alyn and Deeside.

Mr. Redwood: In October 1994 the number of claimants who had been unemployed for more than 52 weeks in Clwyd and Alyn and Deeside were 4,538 and 785 respectively.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in each county of Wales under the age of 24 years have been out of work for more than a year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The number of claimants aged 24 and under, who at October 1994 had been unemployed for more than 52 weeks, for each county in Wales, are shown in the following table:

County	*Persons*
Clwyd	869
Dyfed	724
Gwent	1,338
Gwynedd	790
Mid Glamorgan	1,727
Powys	144
South Glamorgan	1,517
West Glamorgan	998

Source:

NOMIS.

Since October 1993 the total number of claimants in this category in Wales has fallen by over 16 per cent.

Drug Misuse

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what procedures he has instituted to monitor the expenditure and effectiveness of the £2.3 million divested by his office to local health authorities in Wales for the prevention of drug misuse this year.

Mr. Richards: Action to tackle drug misuse is included in the annual plans of health authorities and is a priority for attention in 1995-96. Achievements against health plan objectives are monitored regularly by the Welsh Office and are discussed at annual review meetings with health authorities.

Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to assist women and to promote their training on their return to the labour market after having children.

Mr. Richards: The eligibility rules for training for work allow women returning to the labour market to enter the programme immediately provided that an individual has not been in the labour market for a continuous period of two years for domestic reasons.

The out of school childcare grant initiative is stimulating the childcare market in Wales for school-age children by pump-priming the setting up costs of after school and holiday arrangements.

The Welsh Office provides a grant to Chwarae Teg to assist its work in expanding the role of women in the workforce by raising awareness of equal opportunities and encouraging good practice by employers.

More generally, the consultation document, "People and Prosperity: A Challenge to Wales" has stimulated debate about developing the potential of women in the workforce. My right hon. Friend will shortly be publishing an action plan to follow up "People and Prosperity".

Water Rates

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the subject of the level of water rates in Wales in 1991, 1992, 1993 and the current year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The numbers of representations received are as follows:

1991: 31

1992: 25

1993: 44

1994: 37

Council House Sales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will permit Alyn and Deeside district council to use 100 per cent. of the moneys accrued from the sale of council houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: As between debt redemption and new expenditure, Alyn and Deeside district council is able to use 100 per cent. of the moneys accrued from the sale of council houses.

Beaches

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many beaches in Wales have been awarded a blue flag to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Since the scheme's introduction in 1987, a total of 14 blue flags have been awarded to beaches in Wales.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many blue flag awards were awarded to Welsh beaches in each year from 1991 to 1993.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is as follows:

1991: 3

1992: 2

1993: 3

Entertainment Budget

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was his Department's budget for entertainment in each year from 1990 to 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Expenditure figures for Welsh Office hospitality were given in my answer to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) 24 October, *Official Report*, column *421–22*.

Youth Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of those leaving youth training today gained qualifications in Wales; and what was the figure two years ago in each of the counties of Wales.

Mr. Richards: The information is not available in the format requested. Youth training is delivered by the seven training and enterprise councils in Wales, whose boundaries do not correspond with the eight counties. West Wales TEC covers the counties of both west Glamorgan and Dyfed; North West Wales TEC covers the county of Gwynedd plus the districts of Rhuddland and Colwyn of the county of Clwyd; North East Wales TEC covers the remaining districts of Clwyd.

The following figures therefore relate to the areas served by the seven TECs and to the last two years for which information is available. Figures for 1990–91 are not comparable.

Proportion of qualifications gained by those leaving youth training

	April 1991–March 1992		*April 1992–March 1993*	
TEC	*All Leavers Per cent.*	*Completers Per cent.*	*All Leavers Per cent.*	*Completers Per cent.*
Gwent	34.2	48.5	45.5	78.4
Mid Glamorgan	38.3	53.9	47.8	79.4
North East Wales	41.2	31.4	89.4	94.0
North West Wales	43.5	58.2	40.8	67.7
Powys	30.3	39.2	31.4	64.9
South Glamorgan	28.1	45.4	39.1	71.7
West Wales	32.8	46.0	40.6	59.9
Wales	35.8	50.3	46.7	72.4

Source:

Employment Department YT Follow-up Survey.

Library Books

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average cost per head of the population for expenditure on library books in each of the counties of Wales.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is given in the following table:

Gross current expenditure on library books by county area, 1992–93(1)

	£ per head
Clwyd	1.36
Dyfed	2.46
Gwent	1.54
Gwynedd	1.59
Mid Glamorgan	3.65
Powys	1.57
South Glamorgan	2.03
West Glamorgan	1.87

Source:

Local authority outturn returns.

Note:

(1) Expenditure on books which has been identified separately from other library expenditure. Includes expenditure by those district councils which provide library services.

Housing Associations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many tenancies were provided by housing associations in each of the districts and boroughs of Wales in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on new lettings and re-lettings in the financial year 1993–94 are set out in the following table, taken from the report of the Welsh Federation of Housing Associations. It includes transfers by existing tenants to a new address—where no new tenancy is created—and mutual exchanges—transfers between existing tenants of different social landlords. Lettings in sheltered accommodation are included, but not lettings for special needs. The table also excludes shared ownership and deferred ownership tenancies.

Lettings by local authority districts in 1993–94

Local Authority	*Tenancies*
Aberconwy	174
Afan	114
Alyn and Deeside	135
Arfon	223
Blaenau Gwent	209
Brecknock	95
Cardiff	1,793
Carmarthen	155
Ceredigion	160
Colwyn	167
Cynon Valley	330
Delyn	182
Dinefwr	147
Dwyfor	91
Glyndwr	145
Islwyn	221
Llanelli	208
Lliw Valley	150
Meirionnydd[1]	38
Merthyr Tydfil	354
Monmouth	200
Montgomery	227
Neath	127
Newport	615
Ogwr	368
Preseli	168
Radnor	103
Rhondda	228
Rhuddlan	244
Rhymney Valley	281
South Pembrokeshire	106
Swansea	931
Taff-Ely	260
Torfaen	384
Vale of Glamorgan	330
Wrexham Maelor	287
Ynys Mon	90
Total	[2]10,040

[1] Provisional figure.

[2] Includes Transfers (1,423) and exchanges and Exchanges (550).

Tree Preservation

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of whether tree preservation order policy is sufficient to enable local authorities to protect woodland areas in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government have recently reviewed various proposals for changes to the present arrangements for tree preservation. We have concluded that the system in use now enables local planning authorities to provide sufficient protection to woodlands and that they should continue to be able to place preservation orders on woodlands. Copies of the Government's conclusions on the review are available in the Library of the House.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the jobseeker's allowance scheme as it may affect Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The introduction of the jobseeker's allowance will help unemployed people in Wales into jobs, will help to secure better value for money for taxpayers and will improve services for unemployed people themselves.

Horticulture

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed on a full-time basis in horticulture in Wales at the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information is not available on the numbers of people working specifically in horticulture. However, according to the 1993 June agricultural and horticultural census there were, at 1 June, 558 people working whole-time on main holdings classified as horticultural holdings whole-time refers to those workers whose main occupation is farming and who work, on average, more than 39 hours per week. A holding is classified as horticultural if more than two thirds of its standard gross margin results from horticultural enterprises. Results at this level of detail are not yet available for the June 1994 census.

Council House Building

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many council houses were built in 1993 by each of the local authorities in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is published in table 2.6 of "Welsh Housing Statistics No. 14 1994", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. Housing associations are able to attract private finance contributions in building housing. In 1991 the Welsh Office set a target of housing associations providing 10,000 homes over three years and this target has been exceeded.

Agriculture

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were directly employed in agriculture in Wales at the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Provisional results from the 1994 June agriculture and horticultural census show that there were an estimated 64,500 people working on holdings in Wales on 1 June. This total comprises: all farmers, partners and directors and their spouses; salaried managers; family and hired workers normally employed on a holding for some part of each month throughout the year, and any seasonal or casual workers employed at the time of the census. The figure includes estimates for small holdings not surveyed in the June census.

Job Vacancies

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many job vacancies there are in the county of Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: There were 1,758 unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in Clwyd on 7 October 1994. This represents an increase of 7 per cent. on the October 1993 figure. The vacancy figures do not represent the total number of vacancies. Latest estimates suggest that nationally about one third of all vacancies are notified to jobcentres; and about one quarter of all placings are made through jobcentres.

Tranquillisers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of people who have been treated for addiction to tranquillisers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: The Welsh Office has no information on which to base an estimate of the number of people who have been treated for addiction to tranquillisers.

NHS Staffing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of redundancies among national health service staff *(a)* by grade and *(b)* by reason for each of the last five years.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Operating Theatre Sessions

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many operating theatre sessions have been cancelled in each region in each of the last five years.

Mr. Richards: The number of operating sessions cancelled and unused, for Wales and each district health authority area, is given in the following table.

	1989–90	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Clwyd	309	392	225	629	834
East Dyfed	255	154	179	215	252
Gwent	551	753	639	451	796
Gwynedd	189	281	208	223	279
Mid Glamorgan	2,005	700	1,181	1,010	789
Pembrokeshire	62	51	103	117	144
Powys	14	13	9	13	24
South Glamorgan	2,082	1,984	962	1,326	1,348
West Glamorgan	554	414	538	500	206
Wales	6,021	4,742	4,044	4,484	4,672

Colleges of Further Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish any details for the latest available three years of increases in salaries of *(a)* principals, *(b)* other senior staff and *(c)* junior staff of colleges of further education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: The salaries of staff in further education colleges were the responsibility of the local education authorities until 1 April 1993. Since that date, it has been a condition of grant to the Further Education Funding Council for Wales that the sector takes into account the Government's requirements on public sector pay. However, colleges are free to negotiate their own pay and conditions arrangements with their employees. Details of salaries are not held centrally, although it is also a condition of grant to the funding council that the institutions it funds must disclose the salaries of senior staff in their annual accounts. The first set of accounts for the colleges since they became independent will be for the period 1 April 1993 to 31 July 1994.

Osteoporosis

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many instances there have been in the last year of patients with osteoporosis at the Wrexham Maelor hospital having *(a)* a limb or *(b)* more than one limb accidentally broken while in the hospital.

Mr. Richards: While this is a matter for the Wrexham Maelor Hospital NHS trust, I understand that during 1994 3 patients with osteoporosis have suffered a fracture of a limb with, sadly, one of these suffering fractures of two limbs.

School of Governors

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide the most up to date figures on all the costs relating to the preparation, publishing and distribution of all literature and letters sent to *(a)* governors of grant-maintained schools and *(b)* governors of all schools.

Mr. Richards: This information is not available.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has already received from health authorities on their plans to meet the standards required in the code of practice for the identification and assessment of children with special educational needs; and what guidance he has sent them to ensure that the additional needs of all children are met whether or not they have statements.

Mr. Richards: In response to the code of practice, planning guidance was issued in DGM(94)96 which advises health authorities to agree with local authorities the provision to be made for children, including those with special educational needs.

Commissioners' health plans should be submitted to the Welsh Office by the end of March 1995 for consideration and approval by the Department.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the level of capital spending per pupil per annum at constant prices at *(a)* grant-maintained and *(b)* local authority schools in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Robin Squire: The latest available information on outturn expenditure and pupil numbers implies per capita expenditure on grant-maintained, voluntary aided and local authority schools as in the table. The figures are in 1993–94 prices.

	Grant maintained schools £	*Local authority schools £*	*Voluntary aided schools £*
1984–85	—	86.6	49.3
1985–86	—	88.6	59.0
1986–87	—	95.0	50.0
1987–88	—	102.4	55.7
1988–89	—	127.1	70.4
1989–90	157.2	144.7	88.1
1990–91	203.4	125.9	90.5
1991–92	104.3	122.1	84.5
1992–93	108.3	117.6	102.1
1993–94	157.6	N/A	100.7

(1) It is not possible to make a direct comparison between per pupil expenditure at local authority, voluntary aided and grant maintained schools because of the differences in the capital spending regimes under which the three types of school operate. For example, grant-maintained and voluntary schools are liable to VAT whereas local authority schools are outside the scope of VAT.

Physical Education

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many submissions were made to the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority on its consultation paper on the national curriculum proposals at key stage 4; how many expressed a view on physical education; and how many submissions expressed a view on the imposition of compulsory participation in competitive team games, indicating the numbers of (i) those in favour and (ii) those against.

Mr. Forth: The total number of written responses on the proposals for physical education was 4,072, of which 173 agreed that it should be compulsory for 14 to 16-year-old pupils to be taught a competitive game, while 529 disagreed. In weighing all the responses, including those views expressed at conferences, and in reaffirming the proposal, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority took the view that pupils' and schools' choices were not unduly restricted, that it ensured progression throughout compulsory schooling in a key activity, and that it reflected existing practice in most schools. The total number of responses on the national curriculum proposals at key stage 4 is not available.

Disabled Students' Awards

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the number of disabled students' awards in each of the last three years; and what has been the cost in each year.

Mr. Boswell: The number and gross value of disabled students' allowances made by local education authorities in England and Wales as part of mandatory awards in the academic years 1990–91, 1991–92 and 1992–93—the latest year for which figures are available—are shown in the table:

Number[1] and gross value of disabled students' allowances—England and Wales: 1990–91 to 1992–93

Academic year	*Number of allowances*	*Gross value of allowances £ million*
1990–91[2]	640	0.9
1991–92	1,430	2.0
1992–93	2,490	3.7

[1] The table shows the number of awards, not the number of students. Students can receive more than one type of disabled students' allowance.

[2] Data for 1990–91 are incomplete and are not directly comparable with the two later years.

South Tyneside College

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the salary of the chief executive of South Tyneside college.

Mr. Boswell: This information is not collected by the Department. The Further Education Funding Council guidelines on accounting policies recommend that colleges should disclose the emoluments of the principal and other senior postholders in their accounts, which are publicly available.

Child Maintenance

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what considerations led to the inclusion of payments for child maintenance ordered by the courts under the Children Act 1975 or the Children Act 1989 as being eligible for deduction against gross income when calculating residual income for mandatory grant assessment purposes and the exclusion of payments for child maintenance made under the Child Support Act 1991;

(2) how many parents benefit from the provision in the Education (Mandatory Awards) (No. 2) Regulations 1993 enabling the deduction from gross income of child maintenance payments ordered in the courts in order to calculate residual income for grant purposes.

Mr. Boswell: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

SCOTLAND

A8

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the A8 between Baillieston and Newhouse to be upgraded to motorway standard; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The line orders and compulsory purchase order for the section of the M8 motorway between Baillieston and Newhouse were published in November 1993 and May 1994, respectively. Those proposals are being taken forward in phases and, subject to the satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the availability of finance, it is provisionally planned that the first of these, from Drumpark junction to Chapelhall, will start between April 1995 and March 1997.

Sheep Annual Premium

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for what reasons Scottish farmers have not yet been paid the sheep annual premium payments for this year that are due to them.

Mr. Lang: I refer the right hon. Member to the answers that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary responsible for agriculture and the environment gave to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 24 November, *Official Report*, column *343*.

Factory Units, Glasgow

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many factory units Glasgow development agency has constructed since its inception.

Mr. Stewart: Details of the provision of industrial premises by local enterprise companies is a matter for Scottish Enterprise and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Secret Files

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* top secret and *(b)* secret files his Department holds.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 30 November 1994]:* The most recent estimates show that there are around 35 top secret and around 800 secret paper files held within my Department. That is less than 0.06 per cent. of all paper files currently held.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* The information requested is not yet available. My Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the 1995 departmental report, to be published in early March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should as far as possible be achieved without compulsory redundancies.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Public Expenditure

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the allocation to individual programmes in Northern Ireland of the public expenditure totals announced on 29 November.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: In his unified Budget statement on 29 November, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced total public expenditure planning figures for the Northern Ireland programme. I have now decided on the allocations to individual programmes as shown in the following table. Copies of a more detailed statement have been placed in the Library. Those allocations reflect my assessment of how best to distribute the Northern Ireland public expenditure totals in response to local needs and circumstances.

Programme

			£ million
	1995–96	*1996–97*	*1997–98*
Northern Ireland Office:			
Law, Order, Protective and Miscellaneous Services	889	890	880
Northern Ireland Departments:			
Northern Ireland Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Services and Support	137	140	140
Industry, Trade and Employment	460	440	440
Energy	56	40	30

Programme

	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98
			£ million
Roads and Transport	176	180	180
Housing	246	250	260
Environmental and Miscellaneous Services	231	220	220
Law, Order and Protective Services (Fire Service)	41	40	40
Education, Arts and Libraries	1,354	1,390	1,410
Health and Personal Social Services	1,510	1,550	1,580
Social Security Administration	161	160	160
Other Public Services	61	60	60
NI Block (excluding Social Security Benefits)	5,320	5,360	5,390
Social Security Benefits	2,224	2,330	2,450
NI Block	7,544	7,690	7,840
National Agriculture and Fisheries Support	172	180	190
NI Programme	7,716	7,880	8,020

Notes:

(1) Figures are rounded to nearest £1 million in 1995–96 and to nearest £10 million in 1996–97 and 1997–98.

(2) The figures for 1995–96 will form the basis for preparation by Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office of Main Estimates for the coming year. These will be presented to Parliament in due course.

National Insurance Numbers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what undertaking his Department gave to the Data Protection Registrar that the national insurance number would be restricted to tax and benefit-related purposes; if he has been able to keep to that undertaking; what plans he has to introduce legislation to allow the use of the number by the private sector in the Province; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moss: The Data Protection Registrar has been advised that it is departmental policy to restrict use of the national insurance number to national insurance, tax and social security benefit related purposes. As to the application of that policy, a private sector organisation has requested permission to use the national insurance number for personal injuries claims purposes and this is being considered within the terms of the policy. There are no plans to introduce legislation to allow the use of the national insurance number by the private sector.

Urban Development Grants

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many urban development grants have been approved in each of the district council areas by the International Fund for Ireland since this fund commenced operations in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The International Fund for Ireland is administered by an independent board appointed jointly by the two Governments. All decisions on disbursements by the fund are a matter for that board and questions regarding disbursements should be directed to the fund's chairman, Mr. William T. McCarter, PO Box 2000, Belfast, BT4 3SA. I understand, however, that the fund provides full details of all offers of assistances in its annual reports, copies of which are available in the Library. In addition, I have arranged for a copy of the right hon. Gentleman's inquiry to be forwarded to the chairman of the fund.

Rate Collection Agencies

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations took place in respect of the recommendations to close eight regional rate collection agencies and to centralise housing benefit in Belfast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moss: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Rate Collection Agency under its chief executive, Mr. D. W. Gallagher. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. W. Gallagher to Mr. Eddie McGrady, dated 6 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply to your Question about consultations in respect of the recommendations to close 8 local Rate Collection offices and to centralise Housing Benefit in Belfast.

The recommendations were drawn up after widespread consultation within the management tiers of the RCA. The fact that they became public knowledge very quickly after they had been made known more widely to Agency staff precluded any outside consultation. Since the news became public, there have been representations from Members of Parliament, District Council Officers, and members of the public.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much in criminal injuries compensation has been paid to victims of IRA disciplinary procedures in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years and 1994 to date.

Sir John Wheeler: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Compensation Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Denis Stanley. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. A. Stanley to Mr. Austin Mitchell, dated 6 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply to your recent Question about criminal injuries compensation in Northern Ireland.

The Compensation Agency has no way of ascertaining the motives of a victim's assailants until the outcome of any subsequent prosecution is known. As there would have to be a high degree of speculation in respect of the many cases where the assailants are unknown or where no prosecution has taken place, the Agency could not accurately compile the information you seek.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful.

Security Expenditure

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide details of the reduction in expenditure on law, order and protective services from the £56,963,966 outturn for the year 1993–94 to the forecast of £39,709,000 for the year 1994–95.

Sir John Wheeler: The forecast figure for 1994–95 of £39,709,000 under law, order and protective services referred only to expenditure on fire services which is borne on the Northern Ireland consolidated fund. The outturn figure for 1993–94 was £38,947,000. Expenditure on other law, order and protective services—for example, police and prisons—is borne on the United Kingdom consolidated fund. The outturn figure used in the Northern Ireland financial statement includes prior year fire service cash issues from the Northern Ireland consolidated fund and, incorrectly, cash issues for water and sewerage. The classifications used in the Northern Ireland financial statement are currently under review.

Social Security Expenditure

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide further details on the difference between his Department's forecast for social security expenditure of £279,751,000 during the year 1993–94 and the official outturn of £1,350,527,594.

Sir John Wheeler: The figures in the question are taken from the Northern Ireland financial statement, which is an abstract based on cash issues from the Northern Ireland consolidated fund. There were inconsistencies in the classification of social security and Social Security Agency expenditure in table IV of the statement, and these resulted in the discrepancies referred to. The classifications used are currently under review. The figures for cash issues for social security and Social Security Agency expenditure, taken together, were however correct.

Disabled People

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to establish a commission on disability with enforcement powers and the capacity to make compensation payments for disabled people who have been discriminated against; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moss: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, 24 November, *Official Report*, columns *740–44*. Detailed proposals will be contained in a policy statement to be published, in addition to a Bill, in the near future. It is the Government's intention that policy and legislation in Northern Ireland will be consistent with that elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Trials

Mr. Peter Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further progress has been made to reduce delays in coming to trial in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The arrangements we have put in place in recent years to reduce delays are yielding clear benefits, although we must and will continue to seek further ways of attacking the problem.

I set out on 23 November last year, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Belfast, South, (Rev. Martin Smyth) *Official Report*, columns *19–20*, the results of the first year's operation of the scheme introduced in 1992 to reduce the time defendants spent on custody awaiting trial on indictment for scheduled cases. I also announced a reduction to 11 months in the overall target set by the scheme for cases to move from first remand to arraignment, the formal start of the trial, and its extension to non-scheduled cases tried on indictment.

I can now report on the scheme's first two years of operation, up to 30 June 1994. Overall, 86 per cent. of defendants in custody awaiting trial in scheduled cases who had reached arraignment had met the overall reduced target of 11 months; and 95 per cent. of such defendants in non-scheduled cases did so. Figures for the average time taken to process scheduled cases show a substantial improvement since the introduction of the scheme. In 1991, the last full year before its introduction, average aggregated time from first remand to arraignment for defendants remanded in custody on scheduled charges was 44 weeks; in the two years ending 30 June 1994, the average for such cases in the scheme was 35 weeks, an improvement of 20 per cent. It is too early yet to present reliable comparative figures for non-scheduled cases.

I believe that those results are much to the credit of the agencies which have operated the scheme, and we have decided to extend its life until at least the end of June next year.

The results do, however, also reflect the fact that there are a significant number of cases in Northern Ireland of a particularly complex nature, whose preparation is necessarily prolonged. Nevertheless I believe that it is important to explore all further means by which delay may be averted. My Department, in partnership with others more directly involved in the criminal justice process in Northern Ireland, is therefore investigating ways in which procedures may be further streamlined.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Welsh Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General on what grounds the Crown Prosecution Service decided not to proceed with prosecutions for fraud or embezzlement in respect of the Welsh health promotion authority.

The Attorney-General: The evidence was insufficient to justify criminal proceedings.

Extradition

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Attorney-General on what occasions and for what purposes he has intervened with the Irish Attorney-General about the conduct in respect of the extradition warrant in force in respect of Brendan Smyth.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the written answers I have given to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) on 21 November, *Official Report*, columns *37-38*, 25 November, *Official Report*, columns *388-89* and 28 November, *Official Report*, column *512*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when British Government Ministers have visited Indonesia since 1979; and on what dates.

Mr. Goodlad: Since 1979, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers have made the following visits to Indonesia:

Name	*Date*
Mr. Blaker	September–October 1979
Secretary of State	January 1982
Mr. Renton	November 1985
Secretary of State	October 1986
Mr. Renton	December 1986
Lord Glenarthur	September 1987
Mr. Patten	November 1987
Lord Glenarthur	April 1989
Lord Brabazon	June 1990
Lord Caithness	April 1991
Mr. Goodlad	October 1992
Secretary of State	April 1993
Mr. Goodlad	April 1994

No central record is kept in the FCO of overseas travel by Ministers from other Government Departments.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

Foreign and Commonwealth Office main building (old public offices, Whitehall)

Year	*£*
1991–92	12,973,778
1992–93	11,150,596
1993–94	12,564,053

The above figures represent a series of contracts within a rolling programme. This is the first comprehensive restoration and refurbishment of this grade I listed building since 1875. On completion in March 1997 it will provide 25 per cent. more space, allowing leased buildings to be given up, thus reducing future running costs and improving operational efficiency.

Hanslope Park, Buckinghamshire
(i) Building 15 (workshops, technical stores, some offices)

Year	*£*
1991–92	137,882
1992–93	2,122,575
1993–94	322,527

This facility was originally erected in 1958. The expenditure listed here has been on re-roofing, structural repairs, replacement of all services and re-configuration of internal space.

(ii) Building 20 (workshops, stores, some offices)

Year	*£*
1991–92	77,297
1992–93	340,204
1993–94	25,852

This is a grade II 17th century listed building. This expenditure was for re-roofing, structural repairs and replacement of all services. The courtyard has also been roofed over to provide additional internal space.

Overseas Diplomatic Residences

Mrs. Clywd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value of each overseas diplomatic residence owned by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested will not be available until the systematic valuation of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's overseas estate is further advanced. This work, at present being planned, is in preparation for the introduction of revised Government accounting methods—resource accounting—later in the 1990s.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of upkeep of each overseas diplomatic residence owned by Her Majesty's Government in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of renting each overseas diplomatic residence not owned by Her Majesty's Government in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested is not immediately available. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it has been obtained.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the allegations that Vietnamese boat people being returned form Hong Kong to Vietnam in September 1994 were sedated and placed in straitjackets.

Mr. Goodlad: To prevent injury to themselves and others, two Vietnamese migrants were sedated and placed in straitjackets before their repatriation from Hong Kong to Vietnam on 22 September 1994. This measure was based on a medical decision, taken after the two migrants had been hospitalised with self-inflicted injuries.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guidance is issued to entry clearance officers at British overseas posts as to the gross weekly income sufficient for *(a)* a male spouse sponsor and *(b)* a female spouse sponsor, each with up to two children, to maintain a spouse applying to join his or her spouse in the United Kingdom without recourse to public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Entry clearance officers are not given instructions on the gross weekly income necessary to meet the maintenance requirements of the immigration rules: each case is considered on its individual merits, having regard to the total financial resources available and likely to become available to the parties. These vary considerably from case to case. Entry clearance officers are further guided by the rulings of adjudicators, the tribunal and the higher courts.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what social security, and other public financial assistance, is deemed public funds by entry clearance officers when considering applications by spouses to enter the United Kingdom for settlement with their spouse; what will be the effect of the Chancellor's Budget statement on the assessment of such public funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: In line with the statement of changes in immigration rules laid before the House on 23 May 1994, the following are deemed public funds by entry clearance officers:

(a) housing under part III of the Housing Act 1985, part II of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 or part II of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988;

(b) income support, family credit, council tax benefit and housing benefit under Part VII of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992; and

(c) income support, family credit, and housing benefit under the Social Security Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992.

This list was not altered by the Chancellor's Budget statement.

UN Year of Tolerance

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has for Her Majesty's Government to contribute to the United Nations year of tolerance in 1995.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government have no plans at present to engage in specific activity to mark the United Nations year of tolerance in 1995. While we are content that non-governmental organisations should play an active role in the activities of the year, it is not our policy, given heavy demands on public expenditure, to commit scarce resources to the marking of United Nations years dedicated to specific themes.

Zaire

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what contribution he has given to the UN Secretary General's report concerning security arrangements in the refugee camps in the Kivu region of Zaire; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will give support to the UN Secretary General's proposed security force for the refugee camps in Kivu, Zaire.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The President of the United Nations Security Council issued a statement on 30 November in response to the UN Secretary General's report on the refugee camps. The United Kingdom played a constructive role in the negotiation of that statement, which it fully supports. A copy has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

UNESCO

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the changes in *(a)* administration and *(b)* policy in UNESCO since Britain ceased to be a member.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Since the United Kingdom ceased to be a member in 1985, we have recognised that some welcome changes have taken place both in the organisation's administration and overall policy. This includes budgetary reform and the carrying out of good work in its programme sectors. But this is not to say that nothing remains to be done. We were, for example, disappointed that little progress was achieved at the recent executive board session in which the board failed to deal adequately with proposals—including one to stop subsistence payments to board members and one relating to the size of board membership—which would lead to a more efficient and cost-effective governing body.

We are keeping the question of our return to UNESCO closely under review but as of yet have taken no decision.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with *(a)* the United States of America Government, *(b)* other EU countries and *(c)* the Secretary-General of UNESCO about the renewal of Britain's membership of UNESCO.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have not had any discussions with the United States of America Government, other EU countries or with the Secretary-General of UNESCO about the renewal of Britain's membership of UNESCO. However, my officials, here and in Washington and Paris, are in regular contact with their US counterparts and those in Paris keep in touch with their EU counterparts on a regular basis.

We are keeping the question of a return to UNESCO under close review. For the moment, however, we have taken no decision.

Murmansk Naval Base

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when British officials last visited the Murmansk naval base; under what auspices they were present; and from which Government agencies they were drawn.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The main naval base in the Murmansk region is in Severomorsk, some 15 km to 20 km from Murmansk. Royal Navy officers visited Severomorsk on 5 June at the invitation of the commander of the Russian northern fleet. On 22 October officers of the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and HM diplomatic service, and 11 British veterans visited Murmansk at the invitation of the regional governor.

UN Rapid Deployment Force

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) of 24 November, *Official Report*, column *305*, if he will make it his policy to raise co-operation with a UN standby force planning team at any meeting of EU Foreign Ministers.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom's policy is to encourage all those member states of the United Nations which have been approached by the UN Secretary General to co-operate with his UN standby force planning team. We do not intend to raise this issue at any meeting of EU Foreign Ministers.

Peacekeeping

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards the establishment of peacekeeping skills centres at certain African military staff colleges; which staff colleges are expected to be involved; and if his

Department will provide financial or personnel resources for this initiative.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary proposed in his speech to the UN General Assembly on 28 September that the international community should, working through the Organisation of African Unity and the UN, set up a structure of support systems running from early warning and preventive diplomacy through to peacekeeping deployments. As part of this framework, he mentioned that regional peacekeeping skills centres might be established in certain locations in Africa. These proposals have been enthusiastically welcomed by the UN and the OAU and by the African countries which we have consulted. We are working with African countries and other troop contributors on detailed proposals for discussion in both organisations. Decisions on the location of any skills centres will depend on the outcome of those discussions.

International Organisations (Financial Contributions)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's current financial contribution to the United Nations and to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the 1993 calendar year—the most recent figures available—the United Kingdom's financial contribution to the United Nations was £312,116,430. This included both assessed and voluntary contributions.

The United Kingdom's current financial contribution to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe is £1.5 million.

East Timor

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what visits to East Timor have been made by diplomatic staff attached to the embassy in Jakarta at any time since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad *[holding answer 30 November 1994]:* Since 1979, embassy staff in Jakarta have visited East Timor on the following occasions:

Month	*Year*
October/November	1980
December	1984
January	1988
February; March; October	1989
February; September; November	1991
April	1992
March; May (twice); November	1993
January; August; September	1994

TRANSPORT

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to implement a noise control scheme governing aerodromes.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) on 30 November, *Official Report*, column *763–4*.

Fishing Vessels (Inspections)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many inspections have been completed, region by region, since 1 April 1994, in respect of fishing vessels over 12 m; how many vessels have been issued with a valid certificate; and how many are currently outside the three month validation period.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Ms Joan Walley, dated 6 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the inspection and certification of fishing vessels.

In view of the reference to certification I have assumed that the first part of the Question refers to surveys, rather than inspections, of fishing vessels of 12 metres and over. The attached table shows, by District, the number of vessels of 12 metres and over which completed survey and in respect of which a UK Fishing Vessel Certificate (UKFVC) was issued during the period 1 April to 30 October 1994.

Turning to the final part of the Question, I am afraid I do not understand the reference to a "three month validation period". If you could clarify the request I would be happy to try to provide the information you seek.

United Kingdom Registered Fishing Vessels not holding a valid UKFVC (as at 1 November 1994)

District	UKFVC expired 0–3 months	UKFVC expired 3–6 months	UKFVC expired over 6 months	Totals
East of Scotland	17	5	13	35
West of Scotland and Northern Ireland	29	28	14	71
North West of England and Wales	6	7	11	24
North East and East of England	9	3	6	18
London	3	6	3	12
South and South West of England	13	3	30	46
Totals	77	52	77	206

UK Fishing Vessel Certificates (UKFVCs) issued between 1 April and 30 October 1994

District	UKFVCs issued 1 April 1994–30 November 1994
East of Scotland	211
West of Scotland and Northern Ireland	85
North West of England and Wales	17
North East and East of England	53
London	13
South and South West of England	54
Totals	433

Fishing Vessel Safety Rules

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that copies of the fishing vessel safety rules of 1975 are *(a)* publicly available and *(b)* distributed to representatives of the South Western Fish Producers Organisation.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Ms Joan Walley, dated 6 December 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about the public availability of copies of the Fishing Vessels (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975.

The Rules were published as Statutory Instrument 1975 No. 330. Copies of Statutory Instruments are normally available to the public through HMSO Bookshops but SI 1975 No. 330 is now out-of-print. However, photo-copies of out-of-print Parliamentary, statutory and regulatory publications can be obtained through HMSO Books (Photocopies Section), PO Box 276, London SW8 5DT at a cost £4.70 (inc. VAT) per complete copy required.

I will arrange for this information to be passed on to the Chief Executive of the South Western Fish Producers Organisation and also to the Fishermen's Federations.

Northolt Airport

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the report of the Adam Smith Institute on Northolt airport; and if he will make a statement about the number of business, civilian and military flights.

Mr. Norris: I have taken note of the institute's report, "Plane Common Sense". We are considering responses to the recent consultation paper on increasing business use of RAF Northolt.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the cost involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Norris: The list of refurbishment works undertaken by my Department is as follows:

Building and Location	*Nature of Refurbishment*	*1992–93 £*	*1993–94 £*	*1994–95 £*
Test Centre Hayes	Internal Alteration	15,000	—	—
Test Centre Barnet	Major Alteration	46,500	—	—
DSA Cardington	New Windows	42,000	—	—
Test Centre Hither Green	New Windows and Cladding	18,000	—	—
Test Centre Barking	Major Internal Alteration	—	23,000	—
Test Centre Nottingham	Major Internal Alteration	—	26,000	—
Test Centre Saltcoats	Major Alterations	—	—	20,000
AAIB Farnborough	New Windows in Computer Room	4,113	—	—
AAIB Farnborough	Update Flight Data Room	—	3,550	—
MSA Cardiff	Upgrade Toilets	—	24,500	—
MSA Newcastle	Upgrade Security System	—	4,000	—
MSA Orpington	Energy efficient lighting	—	—	6,500
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency Swansea	Upgrade 16th Floor	445,000	—	—
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency Swansea	Upgrade F Block and convert to stores	—	280,000	—
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency Swansea	Upgrade Microfilm Library and post facilities	—	—	100,000
Vehicle Registration Office Gloucester	Major Internal Alteration	—	100,000	—
DOT HQ Lambeth Bridge House London	Office	14,000	—	—
DOT Eastcote Office Services	Accommodation Rationalisation	26,000	—	—
DOT HQ Romney House London	Record Service Rationalisation	17,000	—	—
Highways Agency St Christopher House London	Accommodation Rationalisation	—	723,000	—
DOT Personnel Unit Westgate House Newcastle	Accommodation Rationalisation	—	12,700	—
DOT Personnel Unit County House Bristol	Accommodation Rationalisation	—	22,400	—
DOT Personnel Unit 5 Ways House Birmingham	Accommodation Rationalisation	—	40,600	—
DOT Personnel Unit Howard St Bedford	Accommodation Rationalisation	—	1,500	—
DOT Personnel Unit City House Leeds	Accommodation Rationalisation	—	16,000	—
HMCG Ballywater	Conversion of CRE to garage and training room	24,000	—	—
HMCG Killough	Conversion of boathouse to IRT Station	16,500	—	—
HMCG Portrush	Conversion of Jackstay House to training room	6,000	—	—
HMCG Milford Haven	Replace felted roof with fibre glass	2,200		
HMCG Swansea	Alterations to Operations Room	500	—	—
HMCG Forth	Operations Room	25,500	—	—
HMCG Dover	Operations Room and Office	50,000	—	—
HMCG Dover	Security Barrier	11,000	—	—
HMCG Deal	Office upgrade	22,000	—	—
HMCG Ventnor IoW	Renew floor, windows and ceilings	21,000	—	—
HMCG St Ives Gwennap Head	Enhance security	5,000	—	—
HMCG Penzance	Change garages to Sector Base	31,000	—	—
HMCG Brixham	Upgrade ventilation and domestic facilities	33,000	—	—
HMCG Looe	Conversion to include training room	6,000	—	—
HMCG Porthscatho	Upgrade to provide domestic facilities	15,000	—	—
HMCG Highcliffe	Window replacement	25,000	—	—
HMCG Benbecula	Convert garage to training room	—	22,000	—
HMCG Tarbert Harris	Convert garage to training room	—	16,000	—
HMCG Lamlash	Convert garage to training	—	12,000	—
HMCG Yarmouth	New rest area	—	6,100	—
HMCG Liverpool	Renew kitchen units and toilet floors	—	1,400	—
HMCG Liverpool	Replace windows	—	2,000	—
HMCG Aberdeen	Operations Room	—	30,000	—
HMCG Bawdsey	Security fence	—	5,000	—
HMCG Lee on Solent	Upgrade fire alarm system	—	5,000	—
HMCG St Mary's Scilly	Refurbish old tower and domestic facilities	—	50,000	—
HMCG Falmouth	Staff rest room and registry facilities	—	13,000	—
HMCG Highcliffe	Refurbish training area	—	45,000	—
HMCG Dover	Refurbish toilets and mess room	—	4,000	—
HMCG Dover	Conference Room	—	10,000	—
HMCG SAR Flight Solent	Kitchen, mess and showers	—	6,000	—
HMCG Thames	Internal refurbishment	—	25,000	—
HMCG Oban	Convert Station Office to Emergency Planning Room	—	—	7,000
HMCG Tobermory	Convert CRE storage to training room	—	—	16,000
HMCG Yarmouth	Heating and cooling system	—	—	29,400
HMCG Tyne Tees	Ceiling and lighting	—	—	13,500
HMCG Presili	Enlarge and modernise	—	—	15,000
HMCG Liverpool	Convert storeroom to office	—	—	5,000
HMCG Milford Haven	Improve acoustics in Operations Room	—	—	5,000
HMCG South Cumbria	Replace windows, upgrade kitchen and toilets	—	—	25,000
HMCG Shetland	Operations Room	—	—	33,000
HMCG Forth	Upgrade ventilation	—	—	10,000
HMCG Thames	New windows, fire alarm, toilets and showers	—	—	13,000
HMCG Thames	Air-conditioning to Operations Room	—	—	12,000
HMCG New Romney	Energy control switching	—	—	2,000
HMCG Totland IoW	Toilets and heating	—	—	5,000
HMCG Lee on Solent	Shower and conference room	—	—	7,000
HMCG Littlehampton	Improve security	—	—	2,000
HMCG St Austell	Improve facilities and partitioning	—	—	8,000
HMCG Brixham	Provide conference room	—	—	15,000
HMCG Highcliffe	Canteen and offices	—	—	50,000
Vehicle Inspectorate Berkeley House Bristol	Upgrade security of entrance and reception area	—	25,000	—
Vehicle Inspectorate Berkeley House Bristol	Ground floor toilets and disabled facilities	—	10,000	—

Building and Location	*Nature of Refurbishment*	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £	*1994–95* £
TAO Portcullis House Manchester	Resite and upgrade public counter	8,925	—	—
TAO Portcullis House Manchester	Ground floor entrance and foyer	40,496	—	—
TAO 83 Princess St Edinburgh	Finance and Admin offices	32,600	—	—
TAO 83 Princess St Edinburgh	Entrance, reception, personnel and passenger sections	18,000	—	—
TAO Caradog House Cardiff	Typing pool, Finance, Admin and Goods Operators Licensing	—	62,363	—
TAO Cumberland House Birmingham	Carpeting and blinds	—	29,112	—
TAO Cumberland House Birmingham	Furniture upgrade	—	69,804	—
TAO Hillcrest House Leeds	Double glazing, new doors, lights and ceiling	6,024	—	—
TAO Hillcrest House Leeds	Carpeting and blinds	6,316	—	—
TAO Hillcrest House Leeds	Partial interior reconstruction	4,714	—	—
TAO Hillcrest House Leeds	Traffic Commissioners, Clerks and Board Rooms	5,900	—	—
TAO Hillcrest House Leeds	Court Room, Typing Pool and glazing	—	—	53,660

Vehicles (Definitions)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a definition of mowing machine as listed in the leaflet INF 27 issued by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Mr. Norris: A mowing machine, not defined in legislation, is considered to be a vehicle designed and constructed purely for cutting grass.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide a definition of the terms digging machine, works truck, concessionary trailer and agricultural machines, listed in the leaflet INF 27 issued by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is as follows:

"digging machine" is a vehicle designed, constructed and used on public roads, only for digging trenches, or for any kind of excavating or shovelling work.

"works truck" is a goods vehicle designed for use in private premises and is used on public roads only for carrying goods in the immediate vicinity of premises or the site of road works.

"concessionary trailer" is an administrative term referring to trailers hauled by showmen's vehicles as opposed to trailers pulled by other heavy good vehicles (HGVs).

"agricultural machine" is an umbrella tax class for the following:

- locomotive ploughing engines
- tractors
- agricultural tractors
- agricultural engines
- fisherman's tractors

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many meetings he has had with local authority associations to discuss the imposition of vehicle excise duty on local authority vehicles, including mowing machines, gritters and snowploughs.

Mr. Norris: None.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the meetings he has had with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution on the imposition of vehicle excise duty on lifeboat haulage vehicles; and what consideration has been given to the increased financial and administrative burden this will place on the RNLI.

Mr. Norris: None.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide an estimate of the number of vehicles in each of the new tax classes, special vehicles, special concessionary and emergency vehicles, set out in leaflet INF 27 issued by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

Mr. Norris: The number of vehicles in each of the proposed new tax classes is as follows:

special vehicles class	92,000
special concessionary	281,000
emergency vehicles class	39,000

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the extra financial burden on the farming industry as a result of his decision to introduce vehicle taxation for agricultural machines.

Mr. Norris: Taxation is a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. In his Budget statement, he announced no change to the rate of duty for agricultural machines, which remains at £35.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of meetings he has had with representatives of the emergency services to discuss the imposition of vehicle excise duty on some emergency vehicles; and what consideration has been given to the increased financial and administrative burden.

Mr. Norris: None.

Passenger Rolling Stock

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the number of units, class and age of all passenger rolling stock used on *(a)* Kent coastal lines, *(b)* the former Network SouthEast south-eastern division and *(c)* the former Network SouthEast area as a whole in November 1989, November 1991, currently and the expected age profile in November 1995.

Mr. Watts: The full set of information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Motorway Lighting

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent cost benefit research his Department has carried out for lighting on motorways.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency, I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. David Chidgey, dated 6 December 1994:

You asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent cost benefit research his Department has carried out for lighting on motorways. As this is an operational matter for the Highways Agency, I am replying to your question.

> Current policy on motorway and trunk road lighting rests on a statement in 1986 by the then Minister for Roads and Traffic, on which I attach a copy. You will see that the decision whether lighting should be provided is always based on an economic assessment of the costs and benefits throughout the life of the proposed lighting scheme, together with a full assessment of environmental factors. Account is also taken of any significant unquantifiable road safety factors.
>
> The cost benefit appraisal is similar in form to those conducted for other highway investment proposals, and takes into account the same values, for example on the costs of accidents. No specific research on road lighting appraisal has been undertaken recently, although the effectiveness of road lighting and other measures in reducing accidents is kept under review.

Vehicle Safety

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the monitoring and preventive measures carried out directly or indirectly by his Department, or other agencies, giving their locations and frequency for the routine safety testing of commercial and heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Norris: The Vehicle Inspectorate conducts checks on the adequacy of commercial and heavy goods vehicle operators' maintenance arrangements every five years prior to the renewal of licences. Other ad-hoc checks on maintenance are made when the operator seeks a variation to his licence or when a vehicle is prohibited following a roadside spot check and there is evidence of a significant failure of maintenance. About 60,000 vehicles each year are inspected for roadworthiness as part of these checks.

Commercial and heavy goods vehicles are tested for roadworthiness each year at the Vehicle Inspectorate's heavy goods vehicles testing stations or at other premises designated for annual testing.

About 150,000 other roadworthiness enforcement spot checks are carried out on vehicles in service either at the roadside or in the inspectorate's heavy goods vehicle testing stations.

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish figures, derived from the Vehicle Inspectorate or elsewhere showing the extent to which vehicle mechanical faults or defects were significant contributory factors in the cause of serious road accidents involving lorries and other heavy goods vehicles in each of the last full five years.

Mr. Norris: Data on accidents involving heavy goods vehicles with likely contributory defects were obtained from all Vehicle Inspectorate examinations at the request of the police where a contributory defect was alleged or suspected. The inspectorate's sample is, therefore, biased towards vehicles with defects and includes slight injury and damage only as well as fatal and serious accidents. For comparison purposes, the column "All reported HGV accidents"—data taken from the Department's annual publication, "Road Accidents Great Britain"—also includes slight injury and damage-only accidents.

Year	*All reported HGV Accidents*	*HGVs examined by Vehicle Inspectorate after accidents*	*HGVs examined with defects considered likely to have contributed to the accident*[1]	*Percentage of HGVs with likely contributory defects*[1]
1989	17,894	710	176	24.7
1990	16,524	707	154	21.7
1991	15,235	725	184	25.3
1992	14,496	(616)	111	18
	—	725 (109)	[1]9	[1]8.2
1993	14,416	565	[1]23	[1]4.1

[1] Since late 1992 Vehicle Examiners have been asked to state specifically where in their judgement the defect definitely contributed to or caused the accident.

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what co-ordination of policy exists between his Department and the metropolitan and county police authorities for the random roadside checks on heavy goods vehicles for ascertaining their operational safety; and what uniformity of practice obtains in this area.

Mr. Norris: All police forces support Vehicle Inspectorate roadside enforcement checks by providing police officers to stop vehicles. At the start of each year, the inspectorate's area managers liaise locally with forces to agree road check programmes. Most police forces also employ specially authorised officers who can prohibit vehicles with defects which render them dangerous. Many of these officers have been trained by the Vehicle Inspectorate and all use the same manual for deciding which defects are prohibitable.

Smoking

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to reduce tobacco smoking *(a)* on public transport and *(b)* in restaurants.

Mr. Norris: The Government continue to support and encourage the voluntary introduction of smoking policies on public transport and in public places, including restaurants. When a suitable opportunity arises, we will also bring in legislation to allow taxi drivers to refuse a passenger who is smoking. The provision of no-smoking areas is becoming more widespread in line with changing public attitudes to smoking and the dangers of passive smoking.

Dulwich College Toll Road

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what statutes govern the management of the toll road on the Dulwich college estate; what representations she has received about them; and if she will bring forward proposals to amend them to provide for greater participation by local residents in decisions on the management of the toll road and decisions affecting local residents whose homes are subject to the scheme of management.

Mr. Norris: College road, Dulwich, is a private road managed under the royal charter which established the estate in 1619. It is not the responsibility of the Department of Transport or of the local highway authority and I understand that no statutory provisions apply specifically to its management. We have no plans to alter that situation.

Taxis

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for any deregulation of the taxi trade.

Mr. Norris: These matters were covered in the report of the Transport Select Committee on taxis and private hire vehicles. The Government hope to reply to the Select Committee very shortly.

Shipping (Safety)

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of the Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents' report following the investigation by Oceaneering Technologies into the wreck of M V Derbyshire.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend is considering the chief inspector's submission. His deliberations will include consideration of placing relevant material in the Library in due course.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the frequency of inspection of United Kingdom merchant ships by the underwriters.

Mr. Norris: The frequency of inspection by underwriters of merchant ships of any flag is a commercial decision for the organisations involved.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he intends to take to raise the standards of safety on United Kingdom merchant ships; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We believe that the standards of safety on United Kingdom registered merchant vessels are among the highest in the world. We shall continue to maintain and, where necessary, to raise those standards by national or international action.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the outcome of the discussions with the European Transport Ministers on the loss of the Estonia and related matters including safety standards of roll-on roll-off ferries.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport's statement on the Transport Council, of 30 November *Official Report* columns *659–60*. The Government will play an active role in the development of the detailed initiatives on ferry safety both in the European Community and at the International Maritime Organisation.

Channel Tunnel Rail Freight

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he intends to take to ensure that railway wagons running to and from the channel tunnel are not overloaded.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 1 December 1994]:* Prime responsibility for this matter rests with the railway operators concerned. The design, construction and designated use of wagons assists proper loading. Weighing equipment is provided at the loading points for bulk materials whose density can give rise to loading problems.

The goods carried on international freight services do not come into this category. Before such services are handed over to the driver, the train is signed off by a railway loads inspector. Drivers can decline to accept the train if they are not satisfied that weights have been properly declared.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he intends to take to prevent channel tunnel freight trains from exceeding speed limits within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 1 December 1994]:* Prime responsibility for this matter rests with the railway operators concerned. The train reporting system shows the time trains pass certain signals, and radar equipment can be deployed if there is a suspicion of speeding. The Railway (Safety Critical Work) Regulations 1994 prohibit an employer from allowing any of his employees to carry out safety critical work unless they are competent and fit. Exceeding vehicle or line speed limits is also a severe disciplinary offence.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Household Incomes

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average equivalent household income at April 1994 prices for *(a)* the poorest 20 per cent. and *(b)* the richest 20 per cent. from the latest households below average income analysis, before and after housing costs, in 1979, 1981, 1987, 1988–89, 1990–91, 1991–92, according to economic status categories (i) single or couple self-employed, (ii) single, in full-time work, (iii) couple, both in full-time work, (iv) couple, one in full-time, one in part-time work, (v) couple, one in full-time work, one unemployed or not employed, (vi) couple, one or both in part-time work, (vii) single retired pensioner, (viii) couple, both retired pensioners, (ix) single, unemployed or non-employed, (x) couple, both unemployed or non-employed, (xi) three or more adults, all unemployed or not employed and (xii) others.

Mr. Burt: The information is provided in the tables. It should be noted that the results do not track the income of individuals over time but compare the average median income for each group in each year shown. Changes in the average for each group over the whole period —1979 to 1991–92—are more reliable than those over shorter periods.

Care should be taken in the use of these single estimates as some are based on a small number of cases. Estimates which are particularly uncertain are shown in brackets. These are based on a sample of less than 100 benefit units.

Median equivalised household income of bottom and top quintiles for selected groups (in £'s per week in April 1994 prices)

	1979 **Bottom**	*1979* *Top*	*1981* **Bottom**	*1981* *Top*	*1987* **Bottom**	*1987* *Top*
Before Housing Costs						
Single or couple self-employed	[3](91)	[3](412)	92	414	89	522
Single in full-time work	143	328	140	348	163	462
Couple both in full-time work	187	378	172	374	202	500
Couple one in full-time work one in part-time work	132	277	127	294	154	379
Couple one in full-time work one unemployed or not employed	113	272	108	285	121	346
Couple one or both in part-time work	[3](72)	[3](243)	[3](63)	[3](260)	[3](88)	[3](335)
Single retired pensioner	91	227	96	231	99	269
Couple both retired pensioners	90	207	94	224	103	291
Single unemployed or non-employed	79	213	85	226	89	242
Couple both unemployed or non-employed	[3](60)	[3](168)	[3](56)	[3](148)	[3](82)	[3](174)
Others[1]	[3](87)	[3](242)	[3](96)	[3](261)	97	301
Three or more adults all unemployed or not employed[2]	[3](58)	[3](208)	[3](85)	[3](175)	[3](79)	[3](243)
After Housing Costs						
Single or couple self-employed	[3](75)	[3](358)	74	388	61	458
Single in full-time work	125	301	122	314	140	420
Couple both in full-time work	158	324	149	328	172	430
Couple one in full-time work one in part-time work	110	241	108	258	129	334
Couple one in full-time work one unemployed or not employed	95	234	91	247	97	294
Couple one or both in part-time work	[3](57)	[3](217)	[3](53)	[3](230)	[3](69)	[3](311)
Single retired pensioner	83	213	86	222	88	276
Coupled both retired pensioners	75	188	81	205	88	274
Single unemployed or non-employed	63	190	69	203	66	210
Couple both unemployed or non-employed	[3](39)	[3](143)	[3](43)	[3](124)	[3](56)	[3](153)
Others[1]	[3](75)	[3](217)	[3](76)	[3](239)	75	290
Three or more adults all unemployed or not employed[2]	[3](39)	[3](145)	[3](68)	[3](157)	[3](57)	[3](160)

Notes:

[1] This group includes singles in part-time work and some pensioners.

[2] This group is selected on the basis of individuals in such households whereas all others are based on individuals in benefit units.

[3] Bracketed figures are particularly uncertain as they are based on less than 100 samples benefit units. Ninety-five times in 100, the true value will lie within a given range. As an example, for the bottom quintile of single or couple self-employed in 1979 this will be £76 to £100, before housing costs, in April 1994 prices. For the bottom quintile of three or more adults all unemployed or not employed in 1979 the range is £40 to £94, before housing costs, in April 1994 prices.

Median equivalised household income of bottom and top quintiles for selected groups in (£'s per week in April 1994 prices)

	1988–89 **Bottom**	*1988–89* *Top*	*1990–91* **Bottom**	*1990–91* *Top*	*1991–92* **Bottom**	*1991–92* *Top*
Before Housing Costs						
Single or couple self-employed	87	565	76	581	84	575
Single in full-time work	173	467	168	497	172	494
Couple both in full-time work	210	518	222	584	226	588
Couple one in full-time work one in part-time work	162	396	161	409	162	433
Couple one in full-time work one unemployed or not employed	126	387	124	424	126	441
Couple one or both in part-time work	[3](84)	[3](358)	[3](77)	[3](397)	[3](77)	[3](339)
Single retired pensioner	96	289	98	319	101	335
Couple both retired pensioners	101	295	100	336	107	351
Single unemployed or non-employed	83	249	83	269	86	265
Couple both unemployed or non-employed	67	204	[3](67)	[3](201)	68	198
Others[1]	101	334	94	355	97	356
Three or more adults all unemployed or not employed[2]	[3](78)	[3](210)	[3](73)	[3](172)	[3](74)	[3](179)
After Housing Costs						
Single or couple self-employed	56	494	41	511	50	510
Single in full-time work	150	424	144	454	147	455
Couple both in full-time work	183	452	185	517	192	521
Couple one in full-time work one in part-time work	135	348	135	359	134	377
Couple one in full-time work one unemployed or not employed	103	337	96	371	99	381
Couple one or both in part-time work	[3](70)	[3](324)	[3](43)	[3](370)	[3](50)	[3](313)
Single retired pensioner	86	299	90	333	93	346
Couple both retired pensioners	88	283	87	329	89	346
Single unemployed or non-employed	57	229	60	242	56	240
Couple both unemployed or non-employed	51	172	[3](38)	[3](170)	34	169
Others[1]	85	321	80	341	79	349
Three or more adults all unemployed or not employed[2]	[3](49)	[3](186)	[3](53)	[3](142)	[3](49)	[3](148)

Notes:

[1] This group includes singles in part-time work and some pensioners.

[2] This group is selected on the basis of individuals in such households whereas all others are based on individuals in benefit units.

[3] Bracketed figures are particularly uncertain as they are based on less than 100 sample benefit units. Ninety-five times in 100, the true value will lie within a given range. As an example, for the bottom quintile of single or couple self-employed in 1979 this will be £76 to £100, before housing costs, in April 1994 prices. For the bottom quintile of three or more adults all unemployed or not employed in 1979 the range is £40 to £94, before housing costs, in April 1994 prices.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average equivalent household income at April 1994 prices for *(a)* the poorest 20 per cent. and *(b)* the richest 20 per cent. from the latest households below average income analysis, before and after housing costs, in 1979 and 1991–92 for (i) single, unemployed, no children, (ii) couple both unemployed or not employed, no children, (iii) single, unemployed with child(ren), (iv) couple, unemployed with child(ren), (v) three or more adults, all unemployed or not employed, no children, (vi) three or more adults, unemployed or not employed, with child(ren) and (vii) others with children.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the tables. It should be noted that the results do not track the income of individuals over time but compare the average, median, income for each group in each year shown. Changes in the average for each group over the whole period—1979 to 1991–92—are more reliable than those over shorter periods.

Care should be taken in the use of these single estimates as some are based on a small number of cases. Estimates which are particularly uncertain are shown in brackets, these are based on a sample of less than 100 benefit units.

In some cases, sample numbers are too small to make any estimate. The second table shows the sample numbers for each group.

Median equivalised household income of bottom and top quintiles for selected groups (in £'s per week in April 1994 prices)

	1979 Before Housing Costs Bottom	*1979 After Housing Costs Top*	*1979 Before Housing Costs Bottom*	*1979 After Housing Costs Top*	*1991–92 Bottom*	*1991–92 Top*	*1991–92 Bottom*	*1991–92 Top*
Single, unemployed, no children	[3](75)	[3](204)	[3](56)	[3](188)	70	270	35	244
Couple both unemployed or not employed, no children	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[3](71)	[3](277)	[3](40)	(253)
Single, unemployed with child(ren)	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—
Couple unemployed with child(ren)	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[3](66)	[3](134)	[3](34)	[3](111)
Others with children[1]	108	262	91	229	109	406	85	349
Three or more adults, all unemployed or not employed, no children[2]	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[3](69)	[3](191)	[3](32)	[3](160)
Three or more adults, unemployed or not employed with child(ren)[2]	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—	[4]—

[1] This group includes couples with one or more employed/self-employed and singles in employment/self-employment.

[2] This group is selected on the basis of individuals in such households whereas all others are based on individuals in benefit units.

[3] Bracketed figures are particularly uncertain as they are based on less than 100 sample benefit units. Ninety five times in 100, the true value will be within a given range. As an example, for the bottom quintile of single, unemployed, no children in 1979 the range is £56 to £90 before housing costs and £42 to £71 after housing costs, in April 1994 prices.

[4] Denotes that no reliable estimate can be made because sample number of benefit units is too small.

Approximate number of sample benefit units for each group

	1979	*1991–92*
Single, unemployed, no children	30	140
Couple both unemployed or not employed, no children	10	40
Single, unemployed with child(ren)	less than 5	10
Couple unemployed with child(ren)	10	50
Others with children[1]	500	750
Three or more adults, all unemployed or not employed, no children[2]	20	70
Three or more adults, unemployed or not employed with child(ren)[2]	less than 5	10

[1] This group includes couples with one or more employed/self-employed and singles in employment/self-employment.

[2] This group is selected on the basis of individuals in such households whereas all others are based on individuals in benefit units.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish tables to show, for each Child Support Agency office, *(a)* what percentage of maintenance assessments are incorrect, *(b)* how many phone calls are lost, *(c)* the number of phone calls which fail to get through to the CSA office, *(d)* the number of complaints received and *(e)* the number of complaints outstanding.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ann Chant to Mr. Mark Fisher, dated 6 December 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the performance of the Child Support Agency in relation to maintenance assessments; telephone calls and complaints.

Monitoring indicates that too many assessments are inaccurate and the Agency is examining closely its checking procedures. Information is not yet available for publication.

During August and September this year a Central call handling system was introduced throughout the Agency's six Centres. Abandoned calls result when the customer is put on the queuing system but hangs up before getting through. Between 3 September and 30 September 1994 the number of such abandoned calls is as follows:

Centre	*Calls abandoned*
Belfast	7,845
Birkenhead	1,927
Dudley	14,326
Falkirk	2,653
Hastings	7,826
Plymouth	8,723
National Enquiry Line	388
Total	43,688

From April 1994 to September 1994, over 9,700 complaints had been received which required a written reply. At the end of September fewer than 3,300 were awaiting a reply. We do not differentiate between complaints about the operations of the Agency and those concerning child support legislation.

From the beginning of September a new system of data collection was introduced and in the future information will be available broken down by Agency Centre.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the amount of arrears involved under orders made by the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ann Chant to Mr. Ted Rowlands, dated 6 December 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the amount of arrears owed to the Child Support Agency.

As at the end of September 1994, the Agency had arrangements with absent parents to pay child maintenance debt totalling an estimated £22.9 million. An estimated £2 million of the arranged debt was overdue and thus was in arrears.

In addition, an estimated £266.8 million of child maintenance had been assessed but no agreement to pay had been reached with the absent parent. In such cases the Agency clarifies the amount owed by each individual absent parent, and then contacts them to reach an acceptable agreement to pay the appropriate amount.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Grants and Loans (Refusal)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the refusal rate for community care grants and social fund loans for each of the last five years by region.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is set out in the tables. It is by Benefits Agency territories.

The main reason that community care grants are refused is because the applicant fails to meet the eligibility criteria.

Southern Territory

Type	*Refusal rate per cent.*
1990–91	
Community Care Grants	61
Budgeting Loans	41
Crisis Loans	8
1991–92	
Community Care Grants	73
Budgeting Loans	41
Crisis Loans	10
1992–93	
Community Care Grants	75
Budgeting Loans	39
Crisis Loans	13
1993–94	
Community Care Grants	75
Budgeting Loans	37
Crisis Loans	15
1994 to October	
Community Care Grants	77
Budgeting Loans	37
Crisis Loans	19

Wales and Central Territory

Type	*Refusal rate per cent.*
1990–91	
Community Care Grants	62
Budgeting Loans	39
Crisis Loans	7
1991–92	
Community Care Grants	74
Budgeting Loans	39
Crisis Loans	8
1992–93	
Community Care Grants	74
Budgeting Loans	38
Crisis Loans	12
1993–94	
Community Care Grants	75
Budgeting Loans	38
Crisis Loans	21
1994 to October	
Community Care Grants	77
Budgeting Loans	38
Crisis Loans	18

Scotland and Northern Territory

Type	*Refusal rate per cent.*
1990–91	
Community Care Grants	62
Budgeting Loans	39
Crisis Loans	8
1991–92	
Community Care Grants	75
Budgeting Loans	42
Crisis Loans	12
1992–93	
Community Care Grants	75
Budgeting Loans	42
Crisis Loans	17
1993–94	
Community Care Grants	76
Budgeting Loans	42
Crisis Loans	17
1994 to October	
Community Care Grants	77
Budgeting Loans	42
Crisis Loans	25

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. Hague: None. Civil servants may provide briefing of a factual nature for Ministers on these matters relating to their own Departments. In addition, Ministers, in preparing for a constituency speech, can draw on material produced by their Department during the normal course of business.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was the amount of cold weather payments for each of the last two years in the United Kingdom and in Wales;

(2) what locations in Wales are used as a basis for the decision on cold weather payments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: The Meteorological Office weather stations used for the cold weather payments scheme in Wales are: Aberporth, Cilfynydd, Mumbles, Rhoose, Trawsfynydd and Valley.

Some 2.5 million payments were made in the United Kingdom at a cost of nearly £15 million in 1992–93 and 2.1 million payments were made at a cost of nearly £12.4 million in 1993–94. No payments were made in Wales during the last two years.

Quarry House

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out *(a)* the initial estimated cost and *(b)* the final cost of building Quarry house, Leeds.

Mr. Roger Evans: When the contract for the construction of Quarry house was awarded, it was estimated that the contract price, plus a contingency for design development, would total around £57 million. The final account agreed with the contractor is £55,361,264.

War Pensioners

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will list those local authorities which under the Social Security Act 1992 disregard only the statutory minimum first £10 of any war widow's pension or war disablement pension when calculating housing or council tax benefit;

(2) if he will list those local authorities which under the Social Security Act 1992 disregard *(a)* up to 25 per cent. *(b)* 26 per cent. to 50 per cent. *(c)* 51 per cent. to 75 per cent. and *(d)* 76 per cent. to 100 per cent. of war widow's pension or war disablement pension when calculating housing or council tax benefit.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is not currently available in the form requested.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the savings from raising the housing benefit taper from 65 per cent. to *(a)* 70 per cent. *(b)* 75 per cent. and *(c)* 80 per cent.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is in the table:

Housing benefit taper Per cent.	*Estimated savings £ millions*
70	185
75	345
80	485

Source:

Estimates based on the 1990–91–92 Family Expenditure Surveys, uprated to 1994–95 benefit levels and prices. Savings rounded to the nearest £5 million.

PRIME MINISTER

Collective Responsibility

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister how many hon. Members are currently covered by the doctrine of collective responsibility.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

All 108 members of the Government are bound by collective responsibility. The position of parliamentary private secretaries is set out in paragraph 47 of "Questions of Procedure for Minsters", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

President Mubarak of Egypt

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the proposals put to him by President Mubarak of Egypt relating to the Egyptians working in Libya, the responsibility for the Lockerbie bombing of Pan Am 103, and the lifting of UN sanctions against Libya.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

President Mubarak made no such proposals.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 December.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the Budapest summit of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister what officials met Mr. Mohamed Al Fayed at 10 Downing street on 3 April 1985 and 7 January 1985; and what were the issues discussed.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

Both meetings were with the Prime Minister's private secretary for overseas affairs and discussed meetings the Prime Minister was shortly to have with the Sultan of Brunei.

The meetings took place on 3 April 1985 and on 7 January 1987, and not as previously stated to the hon. Member.

Scott Report

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will make it his policy to publish the Scott report before 28 July 1995; and if he has yet formed a decision as to the appropriate price to be charged for the report and its related documents;

(2) if he will make it his policy that the price of the published Scott report be kept to a minimum.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

As my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister stated when he announced the terms of reference for the inquiry, *Official Report*, 16 November 1992, columns *74–75*, Sir Richard Scott will be entirely free to decide on the publication of his report. The inquiry will report to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

It is too early to comment on the price of the report.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the special advisers employed by his Department in each of the last five years indicating when they *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department and the annual salary they received.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 1 December 1994]:* I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is as follows:

	(a)	*(b)*
Sir P. Cradock	January 1984	June 1992
Professor B. Griffiths	October 1985	November 1990
Mr. G. R. J. Guise	September 1986	November 1990
Mrs. T. Gaisman	February 1987	February 1989
Mr. G. D. Bourne	March 1988	December 1989
Mr. A. J. Dunlop	June 1988	November 1990
Mr. I. Whitehead	June 1988	August 1990
Mr. H. Harris-Hughes	February 1989	April 1992
Mrs. A. Ponsonby	February 1989	November 1990
Mr. R. Harris	January 1990	November 1990
Mrs. S. Hogg	December 1990	to date
Miss B. Wallis	December 1990	May 1992
Mr. N. True	January 1991	to date
Mr. J. Hill	February 1991	March 1992
Mr. R. A. Rosling	February 1991	November 1993
Lord Poole	May 1992	July 1994
Sir R. Braithwaite	June 1992	December 1993
Mr. D. Green	June 1992	to date
Mr. K. Ramsay	June 1992	to date
Miss A. Warburton	January 1994	to date

Salaries for special advisers are negotiated individually in relation to their previous earnings, and are confidential.

HEALTH

Drug Tests

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to compel drug manufacturers to disclose the results of tests on the safety and effectiveness of drugs.

Mr. Sackville: This information is required by the United Kingdom licensing authority, which has an overriding obligation to safeguard public health. It is supplied in confidence to the Medicines Control Agency and we have no plans to require companies to make it publicly available.

Dental Services

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to improve dental health among children.

Mr. Malone: The Department has published an oral health strategy for England which sets a number of objectives relating to the further reduction in caries in children. Carrying forward dental health is a matter for health authorities.

The Department has made available £1 million for oral health education for 1994–95. Thirty-six proposals have been approved. A second tranche is currently being considered.

Victoria Hospital

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she next plans to visit Lichfield to discuss developments at Victoria hospital.

Mr. Sackville: I am aware of the excellent work done at the Victoria hospital, Lichfield and of the Premier Health national health service trust's plans for further development of the hospital. I look forward to visiting the hospital in the future.

General Practitioner Support

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the level of support given by family health service authorities to single-handed general practitioners; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: This year, we have made available £674 million of cash-limited moneys to family health services authorities to support general practitioners, including single-handers in the provision of practice premises, staff and computers. Next year the amount will increase to £710 million, a 2 per cent. real increase.

Hepatitis C

Mr. Benton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to compensate those who have contracted hepatitis C from contaminated blood products.

Mr. Sackville: We have great sympathy for those who may have become infected with hepatitis C from contaminated blood products, but have no plans to make payments to patients who may have been infected with hepatitis C as a result of national health service treatment.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about compensation to those who have been infected with hepatitis C.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to make payments to those who have been infected with hepatitis C.

Single-sex Wards

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to review the provision of single-sex wards in hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities and national health service trusts must make their own decisions about the use of single sex-wards, but should ensure that all patients are treated in such a way that their dignity, privacy and religious and cultural beliefs are respected. Under a new standard in the revised and expanded patients charter to be published in the new year, patients can expect to be told in advance if they will be treated in a mixed-sex ward. This will allow them to discuss their worries with the hospital, which will, where possible, take account of their views.

Health Statistics

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the change in the number of *(a)* district health authorities and *(b)* regional health authorities since March 1991; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: In March 1991, there were 189 district health authorities and 14 regional health authorities. The numbers are now 110 and eight respectively.

This is part of our programme for achieving more effective health authorities, linking primary and secondary care, streamlining management structures and improving the health of the population.

Hospital Medicines

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support her Department is giving to the dissemination of information concerning hospital medicines; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Product information for all licensed medicines is available in data sheets produced by the manufacturers and authorised by the licensing authority and in the British National Formulary, which is sent free to all doctors. In addition, there is now a requirement that manufacturers of all newly licensed medicines supply leaflets written for patients, for older medicines leaflets will be phased in over five years unless requested sooner. For licensed medicines used in hospital, leaflets will be supplied by the pharmacy on request.

Herbal Remedies

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy on the future availability of herbal remedies.

Mr. Sackville: The position of herbal medicines is safeguarded. The exemption from product licensing requirements for certain herbal medicines under section 12 of the Medicines Act 1968 will continue. This applies to existing and new products which fall within the terms of the exemption. The exemptions and public health safeguards under section 56 of the Act also remain.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been waiting for treatment longer than one year in the United Health area of south Humberside.

Mr. Malone: The information requested is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England", copies of which are available in the Library. The latest published data are for March 1994.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding any risk to human health from bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Sackville: We have received a number of representations on bovine spongiform encephalopathy. There is no scientific evidence that BSE presents a risk to human health.

Smoking

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much is spent on health education to reduce smoking among those under 16.

Mr. Sackville: In 1994–95, £1.4 million has been allocated to the Health Education Authority's anti-smoking programme aimed specifically at teenagers. In addition, £12 million has been earmarked for the three-year national health education campaign on smoking. Particular emphasis will be placed on addressing parents, whose smoking habits and attitudes have a vital influence on smoking by their children.

Schools are required to provide education about the dangers of smoking. They allocate resources accordingly from the funding devolved to them. Expenditure on health education programmes in schools is not available centrally.

Health authority health promotion units are also involved in local campaigns to dissuade teenagers from smoking; however, detailed information on expenditure on these activities is not available centrally.

Joint Commissioning Authorities

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has had concerning the size of population and geographical area to be covered by joint commissioning authorities.

Mr. Malone: We have received a number of representations, including correspondence from my hon. Friend.

Health Service Pay

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had in the last month with doctors, nurses and other health service staff on the next pay round.

Mr. Malone: The Health Departments, and organisations representing doctors and dentists, nurses and midwives and staff in professions allied to medicine, have each recently presented evidence to the national health service review bodies about pay in 1995–96. Discussions are continuing in the nursing and midwifery staffs negotiating council, the professions allied to medicine and related grades of staff—professional and technical A—council and with the British Medical Association about local pay arrangements. Agreements have recently been reached in the Whitley councils for other staff which include pay increases for 1994–95 together with an enabling provision for local pay schemes.

Hospital Statistics

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the total cost of closing Guy's hospital; and what is the estimated annual cost of running both Guy's hospital and St. Thomas's hospital.

Mr. Malone: There are no plans to close Guy's hospital. The consultation document "Looking to the Future", issued by Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham health commission on 14 November, gives details of the various options and running costs under consideration for developing better health services in south-east London. Copies of the document are available in the Library.

Copyright

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will summarise the legal advice she has received as to whether the use of the NHS number is protected by Crown copyright; if she will place a copy of that advice in the Library; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The new national health service number develops a system that has been in place since the commencement of the NHS. The NHS number system is Crown copyright and, as such, unauthorised use can be pursued in the context of Crown copyright and intellectual property rights in general. This position has been confirmed by departmental solicitors. We do not consider it appropriate to publicise advice received in the manner suggested.

Private Patient Income

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *84*, when she expects to be able to publish information on private patient income for 1993–94.

Mr. Sackville: Private patient income by region for 1993–94 is shown in the table.

Private patient income

Area	*1993–94 £000*
Northern	1,539
Yorkshire	447
Trent	1,853
East Anglian	1,291
N W Thames	5,794
N E Thames	10,049
S E Thames	1,747
S W Thames	966
Wessex	1,878
Oxford	7,113
South Western	488
West Midlands	3,903
Mersey	2
North Western	3,710
SHAs	25,611
NHS Trusts	109,918

Source:

Annual accounts of regional, district and the London postgraduate teaching hospitals. Trust Accounts summarisation schedules of National Health Service trusts.

Note:

Figures are provisional.

Management Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for which years since 1980 her Department required NHS authorities to operate with a total management cost of less than 4 per cent.

Mr. Malone: None.

Community Care

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the different policies adopted by local authority social services departments when levying charges for non-residential community care services.

Mr. Bowis: Local authorities are not required to inform the Department of their charging policies for non-residential social services. In January 1994, an advice note was sent to all directors of social services about the factors that need to be considered when authorities devise their charging policies, including ensuring that charges are reasonable for the generality of users and that the financial circumstances of individual users are recognised. Copies of the advice note are available in the Library.

Reciprocal Health Arrangements

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those countries with which the United Kingdom has reciprocal health arrangements; and what plans she has to review the arrangements.

Mr. Malone: The United Kingdom has reciprocal health care arrangements with Anguilla, Australia, Austria, Barbados, Belgium, British Virgin Islands, Bulgaria, Channel Islands, Czech Republic, Denmark, Falkland Islands, Finland, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, Isle of Man, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Montserrat, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovak Republic, Spain, St Helena, Sweden, Turks and Caicos Islands, the republics of the former USSR, excluding Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and Yugoslavia and all its successor states.

We have no current plans to extend the list to other countries or territories.

Burnley Health Care NHS Trust

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what payment in lieu of notice or remuneration likely from potential employment was offset against the payment made to the former chief executive of Burnley Health Care NHS trust;

(2) what assessment she has made of compliance with her Department's guidance and codes of practice in the events surrounding the resignation of the chief executive of Burnley Health Care NHS trust;

(3) if details of the calculation made on the termination of the contract of the former chief executive of Burnley Health Care NHS trust followed the guidance set out in NHS circular Tel (94)3.

Mr. Malone: National health service trusts have full power under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 to make payments in connection with the termination of employment of their staff. The severance payment to the former chief executive of Burnley Health Care NHS trust was made in accordance with the terms of her contract, which predated Tel (94)2, the Department's guidance on such payments, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what reasons the former chief executive of Burnley Health Care NHS trust gave for her resignation;

(2) which members of the board of Burnley Health Care NHS trust were consulted by the former chairman on the settlement agreed with the former chief executive on her resignation;

(3) what consideration was given by Burnley NHS Health Care trust to the renewal of the three-year rolling employment contract of the former chief executive Mrs. Maggie Aikman.

Mr. Malone: These are matters for Burnley Health Care national health service trust.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assurances the NHS Executive has received from the former chairman of Burnley Health Care NHS trust that the payment of termination of the contract of the former chief executive was made with regard to probity and value for money, applying the guidance and principles of public accountability; and what response has been given;

(2) what letters she wrote to the former chairman of Burnley Health Care NHS trust prior to his resignation on his position as chairman; and if she will deposit such letters in the Library.

Mr. Malone: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State wrote privately to the then chairman of Burnley Health Care national health service trust on 15 and 23 November 1994 asking him to account for his actions. The chairman did not give a substantive reply and resigned.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the policy of the Burnley Health Care national health service trust on termination settlements.

Mr. Malone: This is a matter for the trust, which has full power under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 to make payments in connection with the termination of employment of its staff.

Advertisements

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the regulations concerning advertisements in the *European Journal* when the NHS puts contracts for operations out to tender; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The regulations concerning advertisements in the *European Journal* are the Public Services Contracts Regulations 1993, SI No. 3228.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishment.

Mr. Sackville: Capital expenditure on accommodation excluding furniture by the Department of Health over the last three years totalled £4.4 million in 1991–92, £16.6 million in 1992–93 and £3.7 million in 1993–94. Nearly all this expenditure related to the London accommodation strategy, by which the Department was able to reduce its accommodation in London from 22 buildings to five. Rationalisation of the London estate has made a major contribution to the annual saving of £13 million in the running costs of the Department's offices.

Milk Tokens

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about policy changes by large food chains in connection with the conditions they require in accepting milk tokens; what investigations she has made of this matter; what has been the Government's response; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We are not aware of any such policy changes.

General Practitioners, London

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners are practising in the London implementation zone area at the present time; and how many there were in October 1990.

Mr. Malone: The London initiative zone was created in April 1993 and information for October 1990 is therefore not available. The latest available information on the number of general practitioners in LIZ, relating to October 1993, is as shown.

	Number
Brent and Harrow	148
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	372
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	188
Barking and Havering	74
Camden and Islington	219
City and East London	362
Enfield and Haringey	137
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	103
Greenwich and Bexley	121
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	426
Croydon	106
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	136
Total in London Initiative Zone	2,392

Cancer

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people contract cancer each year in the United Kingdom; and what is the projection for 2015.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 30 November, *Official Report,* column *791.*

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will issue guidance to NHS trusts covering minimum standards in providing cancer and palliative care.

Mr. Sackville: A number of current initiatives are resulting in the production of guidelines aimed at improving standards and quality of care across the whole range of health care, including cancer and palliative care.

Job Losses (Quarry House)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out the numbers, by grade, of the job losses announced on 3 November for Quarry house, Leeds.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service executive will shed 200 posts, not all of which are in Quarry house, in the period up to 31 March 1997. It is likely that there will be reductions in all grades; detailed work has now begun to identify how reductions can be achieved.

NHS Research and Development

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the consultative process will begin relating to the proposed programme of research into the health of elderly people which was identified by the NHS central research and development committee as a priority for research under the NHS research and development strategy.

Mr. Malone: The central research and development committee advised in April 1993 that a review should be conducted into the needs for research into the health of elderly people. It was stated in "Research for Health" in June 1993, copies of which are available in the Library, that such a review would be deferred pending the Medical Research Council's review into the health of the United Kingdom's elderly people. The report of the Medical Research Council's review will be considered by the central research and development committee in due course.

Taste and Smell (Loss)

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will arrange for research to be undertaken into the circumstances leading to people developing a permanent loss of taste or smell, and the treatment and care they subsequently receive; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Commissioning of research of this kind is a matter primarily for the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Toxic Materials

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information and guidance has been given to local medical authorities in areas where sites are currently being used for experimental work on the use of toxic materials including chloro-cresol as fuels;

(2) what information and guidance the Government have issued to local medical authorities on the effect on human health of the release of dioxins caused by the burning of toxic materials.

Mr. Sackville: Controls are in place to ensure that substances discharged into the atmosphere are at levels that have been demonstrated to have no appreciable health effects. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is responsible for controlling the emission of pollutants from major industrial sources.

Detailed guidance to health authorities and trusts has been issued by the Department in four circulars, HRG(93)18, HRG(93)24, HRG(93)38 and HRG(93)56, the latter of which was issued jointly by the Department of the Environment. These advise on roles and responsibilities within the national health service, and on sources of advice for health care staff in the event of a chemical incident causing the release of toxic substances. Copies of the circulars will be placed in the Library.

The national poisons information service is available to provide information to doctors, and, on request, clinical advice, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current yearly cost of maintaining the United Kingdom's nuclear capability.

Mr. Soames: The estimated running cost of the three Polaris boats remaining in the Deterrent patrol cycle for 1993–94 was £110,000,000. The average annual operating cost of Trident over its life is expected to be about £200,000,000 at 1993–94 prices.

RAF Elvington

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he plans to publish a consultation document in respect of the future of RAF Elvington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: There would be no requirement to issue a consultation document to the trade unions in respect of RAF Elvington, as the station is not manned.

Hercules Fleet

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department will formally respond to the British Aerospace proposal to maintain the present Hercules fleet at a lower cost than at present.

Mr. Freeman: The British Aerospace proposal has been given careful consideration and is being taken into account in our appraisal of the way forward for the Hercules rolling replacement programme.

Air Cadets

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to require ministerial approval for any further reductions in excess of the 23 per cent. agreed under "Front Line First" to the air cadet air experience flights budget.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 22 November 1994, *Official Report,* column *135.*

Nagorno-Karabakh

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy towards the participation of United Kingdom forces as part of the deployment of a peacekeeping mission to Nagorno-Karabakh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The possibility of establishing a multinational Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe peacekeeping mission is being discussed at the CSCE summit in Budapest. Any United Kingdom contribution would be judged against a range of factors including whether a political settlement had been reached and whether a clear mandate existed for the mission. It would also need to be considered in the light of our other military commitments.

Peacekeeping Operations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy towards the allocation of a specific amount of money from the defence budget specifically for peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Soames: The funding of peacekeeping operations is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Royal Marines School of Music

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *452*, what is his estimate of additional manpower savings over and above those currently planned that could be made at Portsmouth if the Royal Marines school of music was located elsewhere in respect of *(a)* general administration, *(b)* supplies, *(c)* property management and maintenance, *(d)* catering and accommodation and *(e)* other manpower in each year from 1995–96 to 1999–2000; and what percentage of total costs at Portsmouth these represent.

Mr. Soames: None. There are no plans to employ extra staff in the large Portsmouth naval concentration as a result of the addition of the small musical training facility proposed at HMS Nelson. Nor would it be possible to make staff savings at Portsmouth if the Royal Marines school of music were not to relocate there, since tasks relating to the musical training facility would form only a small percentage of overall duties.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence below what monetary thresholds the costs associated with the option appraisal for the Royal Marines school of music are considered to be negligible and have therefore been excluded from the financial appraisals attached to his consultative document entitled "Future Location of Royal Marines Musical Training".

Mr. Soames: The appraisal aims to include all costs significant enough to affect evaluation or decisions. Generally, we follow the materiality concept defined in the publication "Official Terminology of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants".

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report* columns *450–51*, what are his wastage assumptions by month and by grade at those units to which military personnel would be reassigned if the Royal Marines school of music were to be relocated to Portsmouth in each year from 1996–97 to 1999–2000.

Mr. Soames: The numbers of personnel who would be affected by our proposal are small in comparison with the overall size of the Royal Marines. Such a change would be subsumed within the overall manpower planning process, and wastage assumptions in the level of detail requested would not therefore be necessary.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *451*, what is his estimate of the additional savings in property management costs, both capital and non-capital, that could be made at Portsmouth if the Royal Marines school of music was relocated elsewhere in respect of *(a)* refurbishment to office accommodation, *(b)* decorating and refurbishing married quarters or *(c)* decorating and refurbishing other housing owned by his Department or mess accommodation made available to service personnel in each year from 1995–96 to 1999–2000.

Mr. Soames: An estimated £47,000 per annum would be saved at Portsmouth by a decision not to relocate there. No other savings under the headings indicated would be available specifically by virtue of a decision not to relocate. As shown in the investment appraisal, this compares with an estimated cost of approximately £500,000 per annum were the Royal Marines school of music to remain at Deal.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the costed plans for the refurbishment of the detention quarters at Portsmouth.

Mr. Soames: A detailed statement of requirement for the facilities proposed for a Royal Marines school of music at HMS Nelson in Portsmouth is being prepared, and will in due course be placed in the Library of the House. Beyond the broad order financial figures already indicated, the precise cost of the relevant alterations and refurbishment will of course ultimately be determined by competitive tenders to undertake the work; these figures would be commercial in confidence.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column *622*, if he will make a statement on the steps he has taken to confirm *(a)* the availability of suitably qualified music professors in the Portsmouth area, *(b)* that the remuneration package assumed will be sufficient to recruit, retain and motivate music professors and *(c)* that the costs of recruitment of music professors and other staff will be negligible.

Mr. Soames: Preliminary investigations by the Royal Marines band service show that the recruitment of professors of music under the proposed terms and conditions for a school relocated to Portsmouth would present no difficulties. Portsmouth's relative proximity to London and other fairly large concentrations does not disadvantage it by comparison with Deal. It is confirmed that costs of recruitment are expected to be negligible.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date or dates military personnel would be reassigned to other units if the Royal marines school of music were to be relocated to Portsmouth.

Mr. Soames: Detailed planning for the reassignment of personnel will not take place until a decision on the future location of the Royal Marines school of music has been taken. Posting orders would probably be issued some four to six months before the relocation, but dates of specific postings would be decided taking account of a number of factors on which it is not possible to generalise. The overall aim will naturally be to achieve maximum cost-effectiveness in the use of manpower.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the number of full-time equivalent personnel at Portsmouth who would provide the range of services currently provided by the three mobile non-industrials, 10 non-mobile non-industrials and 54 industrials employed at Deal if the Royal Marines school of music were relocated to Portsmouth.

Mr. Soames: Apart from the music professors and up to 12 other posts to be created at Portsmouth within the RMSM, all tasks presently performed by other staff at Deal as a stand-alone establishment, will be undertaken without increase to the members of staff already needed to support the Royal Navy in the Portsmouth area.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *452*, what is his estimate of the additional savings in running costs that could be made at Portsmouth if the Royal Marines school of music was located or relocated elsewhere in respect of *(a)* heating, *(b)* lighting and *(c)* telecommunications in each year from 1995–96 to 1999–2000; and what percentage of total costs at Portsmouth these represent.

Mr. Soames: Should the Royal Marines school of music not relocate to Portsmouth and the royal naval detention quarters henceforth remain unoccupied as a result, an annual estimated total of £64,000—covering heating, lighting and telecommunications—would be saved. This is less, however, than the comparable expenditure currently incurred at Deal.

Royal Naval Detention Quarters

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report,* column *451,* if he will list for all ongoing and planned refurbishments and new build accommodation projects occurring within a 25 mile radius of the Royal Naval detention quarters in Portsmouth *(a)* the size of the accommodation to be provided in square metres, *(b)* the number of people to be located in the accommodation, *(c)* the estimated costs of the project and *(d)* the estimated start date of the project.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Financial Contributions

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Britain's annual financial contribution to *(a)* NATO *(b)* the Western European Union.

Mr. Soames: For financial year 1993–94, the United Kingdom's financial contributions to the NATO military and infrastructure budgets were £69,129,000 and £82,495,000 respectively. The United Kingdom's contributions to the NATO civil budget and the Western European Union's budget are the responsibility of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Military Training

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the countries that United Kingdom military personnel have visited or will visit to train military students during 1994.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 1 December 1994]:* According to available records, United Kingdom military personnel have visited or will visit the following countries during 1994 to train military students:

Antigua[1]
Bahrain
Barbados[1]
Belize
Bermuda
Brunei
British Virgin Islands
Columbia
Dominica[1]
Egypt
Ghana
Grenada[1]
Jordan
Kenya
Kuwait
Lesotho
Malawi
Malaysia
Mexico
Mozambique
Namibia
Oman
Poland
Saudia Arabia
South Africa
Singapore
St. Kitts-Nevis[1]
St. Lucia[1]
St. Vincent[1]
Swaziland[1]
Trinidad and Tobago[1]
United Arab Emirates
Zimbabwe

Note:

[1] Trained by a team based in Barbados.

In addition, a Royal Marines team has deployed to Latvia in preparation for training the joint Baltic peacekeeping battalion in the new year.

This list covers those countries to which short-term training teams have been, or will be sent in 1994, as well as those countries in which we have resident loan service personnel or longer term British military advisory and training teams. A short-term training team also deployed to Puerto Rico to assist US forces in training the combined Caribbean Community and Common Market contingent—comprising detachments from Jamaica, Antigua, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago—and also contingents from Bangladesh and Guatemala to prepare them for operations with the multinational force in Haiti. In addition, forces on exercise overseas often provide limited training to, or train alongside, the armed forces of the host nation. A central record of such training is not, however, maintained.

Territorial Army

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will complete his review of Territorial Army units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I announced in July that the new role for the Territorial Army would be to act as a general reserve to the Army. It will remain an integral component of our defence forces on mobilisation, and it is intended to make greater use of volunteers in peacetime. We have now completed our examination of the structure of the TA against this background. This process has involved wide consultation, particularly within the TA itself.

We have concluded that our operational requirement necessitates some adjustments to the current balance of arms and services within the TA. Accordingly, we intend to increase the number of sub-units in the Royal Armoured Corps from 17 to 22; in the Royal Logistic Corps from 69 to 86; in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 13 to 16; and in the Adjutant General's Corps from 10 to 11. We propose to reduce the number of rifle companies in the TA infantry from 109 to 87. We intend to maintain the current effective manpower strength of the Special Air Service TA, although there will be some restructuring to enable manpower to be used more flexibly and efficiently. Army medical services units will also be restructured to provide a more flexible capability. In all other arms and services, the number of sub-units will be unaffected.

In the infantry, we shall concentrate the support weapons platoons of the eight battalions currently so equipped into specialist, two company, fire support battalions. These fire support battalions will be available to support all infantry battalions and will, we believe, improve overall infantry training and operational effectiveness. The four battalions which will take on this role are the 5th Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets; the 3rd Battalion, the Prince of Wales' Own Regiment of Yorkshire; the 1/51st Highland Volunteers; and the 3rd Battalion, the Cheshire Regiment. The 1st and 2nd Battalions, the Wessex Regiment, will merge. The 8th Battalion, the Light Infantry, will re-role as a national defence reconnaissance regiment in the Royal Armoured Corps, taking over the current role of the Royal Yeomanry which will become the Army's Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Defence Regiment. The Royal Anglian TA will be reduced from three to two battalions, with elements re-roling to form a new independent transport regiment. All other new sub-units will be newly formed.

The majority of these changes will be implemented by April 1997 within an overall TA size of 59,000 as previously announced. In the months ahead, we shall be considering the implications of these changes for the existing distribution of TA centres.

These plans offer the TA a structure consistent with its new role founded firmly on the operational requirement. They will, I believe, be widely welcomed in the TA.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 7 December 1994

HEALTH

Ward Funds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effect of separate registration of individual ward funds on the income of NHS hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: Individual ward funds are required to be registered only where they constitute separate charities. We have no information on any link between registration and income.

Community Care

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has to demonstrate that the transfer of funding to local authorities for care in the community is keeping pace with the transfer of responsibilities.

Mr. Bowis: Since 1990–91, total resources for community care have risen by 121 per cent. to £5,122.6 million for 1995–96, including an increase of 12.4 per cent. for 1995–96 over 1994–95. In addition, specific grants have been increased for drugs and alcohol, AIDS/HIV and social work training for 1995–96 in line with inflation and increased by some 30 per cent. for mental illness.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she plans to meet representatives of Lancashire county council to discuss the resourcing of care in the community.

Mr. Bowis: I have on various occasions met members and officers of Lancashire county council and Members of Parliament from the area. I have no current plans for further meetings.

Maternity Services

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the organisations who will be consulted about the applicability of the data set to maternity care.

Mr. Sackville: The development of the maternity contract minimum data set will require consultation with all organisations who have an interest in the data set. These will include representatives of the organisations involved in the delivery of maternity services, those involved in the purchasing of maternity services, and of organisations representing the health professionals involved.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the criteria for assessment of the data set for maternity services to be used during the piloting programme.

Mr. Sackville: The criteria for the assessment of the maternity data set will be agreed during the initial stages of its development.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information in respect of the professional group of main care giver the minimum data set for maternity services will record.

Mr. Sackville: The draft contract minimum data set published in October 1993 recommended the inclusion of a data item to record the key professional with overall responsibility for the care programme. The proposed classifications were consultant, general practitioner and midwife.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now make it her policy to keep a record centrally of the resignations or dismissals of chief executives of NHS trusts, together with the reasons for the resignation or dismissal and details of the settlement agreed on termination.

Mr. Malone: No.

NHS Managers

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the definition of proper public scrutiny in respect of confidentiality clauses in employment contracts of general and senior managers in the NHS.

Mr. Malone: Proper public scrutiny in this context means parliamentary scrutiny and judgment about propriety.

Asthma

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to include targets relating to asthma in the "The Health of the Nation" targets programme under review; and when she expects to conclude that review.

Mr. Sackville: "The Health of the Nation" programme is continuously under review. The chief medical officer's working group is considering what further work is necessary on interventions and possible targets, before asthma can be reconsidered for key area status.

Quality (NHS)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has on the extent to which the quality of care provided by the NHS differs from what it was four years ago.

Mr. Malone: The changes we have introduced, including the introduction of a managed market, national health service trusts, the general practitioner fundholding scheme and the patients charter have all contributed to marked improvements in the quality of patient care, by focusing on the development of locally determined services which reflect the needs and wishes of the individuals who use those services. Tangible benefits in terms of patients care include: significant reductions in waiting-times, the development of quality services which effectively reflect local needs and priorities and a greater role for patients in decisions concerning their own health care and treatment.

These improvements have been borne out by the results of the recently published British Social Attitudes Survey, which suggests that, since 1990, the number of people satisfied with the NHS has increased by 10 per cent.

Hypothermia

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths have been caused by, or were associated with, hypothermia among people over *(a)* 65 years, *(b)* 75 years and *(c)* 85 years old in each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information for England and Wales will be placed in the Library.

Cot Mattresses

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she plans a full investigation of the safety of cot and baby mattresses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Dr. Kenneth Calman, the chief medical officer, has set up an expert group to steer further work by the Department on cot deaths. The group will be chaired by Lady Limerick.

Its terms of reference are:

> To review the findings of the report on "Sudden Infant Death Syndrome" (the "Turner Report", 1991) and any subsequent data on hypotheses linking antimony with unexplained deaths in infants; and to advise the CMO on what further studies should be undertaken to investigate postulated causal relationships between chemicals and cot deaths.

The group has been asked to review the available material and to provide the Department with advice as quickly as possible. It will meet shortly.

Waiting Lists

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many patients were waiting for hospital treatment *(a)* in total and *(b)* over 12 months, for each year since 1979;

(2) how many patients had been waiting for hospital treatment for more than a year in March 1991.

Mr. Malone: Information on the numbers of people waiting over 12 months and in total for hospital treatment is shown in the table. There has been a reduction of 66.7 per cent. in the numbers waiting over one year since March 1979.

		Number waiting over one year	*Total waiting*
1979	March	185,195	752,422
	September	197,532	695,726
1980	March	196,983	664,919
	September	187,993	635,881
1981	March	180,774	628,333
	September	180,905	619,393
1982	March	175,554	622,480
	September	192,902	725,865
1983	March	198,546	726,186
	September	205,920	703,755
1984	March	194,614	692,945
	September	189,546	682,599
1985	March	171,197	674,453
	September	160,227	661,249
1986	March	161,326	673,107
	September	164,682	681,901
1987	March	162,273	687,945
	September	209,440	848,022
1988	March	207,925	876,246
	September	219,929	900,051
1989	March	223,311	922,676
	September	218,116	929,056
1990	March	207,860	958,976
	September	202,740	957,533
1991	March	169,761	948,243
	September	155,419	947,842
1992	March	80,585	917,717
	September	80,581	939,740
1993	March	56,877	994,974
	September	71,022	1,032,038
1994	March	64,508	1,065,369
	September[1]	61,693	1,063,302

Note:

[1] Provisional Figures from September 1987 figures include numbers waiting for day case treatment.

Chlamydia Trachomatis Infection

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the review of the Public Health Laboratory Service into the epidemiology and control of chlamydia trachomatis infection will be complete; what representations she has received about this matter; and if she will made a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The paper being prepared by the Public Health Laboratory Service for the Department of Health is a compilation of published and unpublished epidemiologic data concerning:

> the levels of genital chlamydia infection in various population groups in the United Kingdom and abroad;
>
> what is known concerning the health burden resulting from chlamydia;
>
> information that has been gathered in the United Kingdom and elsewhere relating to control strategies and the outcome of those measures.

This paper is a background document. Given the lack of information in this field, it is likely to make recommendations as to the areas of further study which could be undertaken. The paper is in a late stage of development and will be delivered to the Department in the new year.

Covert Video Surveillance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, columns *412-3*, if the use of covert video surveillance at the North Staffordshire hospital is classified as a research experiment.

Mr. Bowis: No; it is one of the range of services available to individual children and like other innovative developments, it is regularly evaluated.

Empty Property

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make use of her Department's empty residential property.

Mr. Sackville: The Department and the national health service follow Government guidelines on the management of their residential estate whereby only property which is required for operational purposes should be retained, and that surplus property should be disposed of as quickly as possible. This may be in the open market, or to housing associations or local authorities. Consideration should be given to short-term or temporary lettings of vacant residential property which is either not surplus, or which cannot be disposed of immediately.

Smoking

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies her Department has undertaken to ascertain whether higher taxes are the most effective and fair means of reducing smoking.

Mr. Sackville: The Government's assessment of the effectiveness of interventions to reduce smoking is based on critical evaluation of the available research evidence. Studies show that an increase of 10 per cent. in the price of tobacco products can be expected to lead to a drop of between 3 and 6 per cent. in tobacco consumption. There is a significant relationship between price and consumption across the range of income groups. This supports the view that raising tobacco taxation is one of the most important parts of any strategy to reduce smoking.

Mental Hospitals (Sales)

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the capital receipts on the sale of mental hospitals over the past six years by region; and what were the consequent current revenue savings by region.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not separately identifiable in the information available centrally.

Tapeworm Infection

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for each of the years 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993, how many people in the United Kingdom *(a)* became infected with the tapeworm echinococcus granulosus and *(b)* died from infection with the tapeworm echinococcus granulosus caught in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: The number of laboratory reports of human echinococcus infection received by the Public Health Laboratory Service communicable disease surveillance centre in 1990–93 are shown in the table. Place of acquisition of the infection is not reported.

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	[1]*1993*
England and Wales	14	5	16	13
Northern Ireland	0	0	0	0
Scotland	0	0	0	1
United Kingdom	14	5	16	14

[1] Data for 1993 are provisional.

There have been no deaths certified as being due to echinococcus granulosus—[1]ICD 122.0, 122.1, 122.2, 122.3, 122.4 in 1990–92. The table below gives the number of deaths in each of the three years due to echinococcus unspecified—[1]ICD 122.8, 122.9—in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Information on whether the infections were acquired in the United Kingdom or abroad is not available. Data for 1993 are not yet available.

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
England and Wales	5	3	3
Scotland	0	0	0
Northern Ireland	0	0	0
United Kingdom	5	3	3

[1] International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for each of the years 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993, what has been the cost to public funds of treatment of infection with the tapeworm echinococcus granulosus.

Mr. Sackville: Echinococcus granulosus—hydatid disease—can be treated either medically or with a combination of anti-helminthic drugs and surgery. It is not possible to estimate the cost to public funds of this treatment.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what have been the main focuses in the United Kingdom of infection with the tapeworm echinococcus since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the focuses of infection with echinococcus granulosus—hydatid disease—is not available. Data on the number of cases are available from laboratory reports made to the Public Health Laboratory Service communicable disease surveillance centre. A total of 34 laboratory reports were made from 19 different laboratories in England and Wales during the period 1991 to 1993. However, as data are provided by reporting laboratory it is not possible to assume focuses of infection from these figures because some laboratories—for example, Cardiff public health laboratory and the London tropical diseases hospital—have particular interest and expertise in this field and cases are referred to them from all over the country. It is also not possible to tell from these reports whether these are new cases or fresh investigations on previously diagnosed cases or what duplication might exist in them.

NHS Probity

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement concerning the Audit Commission's report, "Ensuring Probity in the NHS"; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: We welcome the report's comments that the majority of national health service employees and contractors are honest and diligent. The level of losses through fraud are small compared with the huge amount spent on the health service. We have already taken a number of steps to safeguard NHS funds but have asked the NHS executive to scrutinise the report to see whether any further action is necessary.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy in relation to the provision of non-NHS hearing aids to adults for whom they have been prescribed by medical practitioners on the basis that they are more suitable than NHS hearing aids; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Where no standard range hearing aid meets the medical needs of a patient, an alternative model may be supplied.

Hillingdon Hospital Health Trust

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will call for a report on the suitability of Professor Neil Merritt, vice-chancellor of Portsmouth university, as chairman of the Hillingdon Hospital Health trust; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: No. Hillingdon Hospital National Health Service trust has been very successful, meeting all its financial objectives and achieving eight five star awards in the patients charter league tables.

Organ Donation

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to replace organ donor cards by an opting-out system; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Government believe that giving organs should be a positive, altruistic choice made by individuals or their surviving relatives and not a presumed right on the part of the state. "Opting-out" does not have the support of the majority of the British people and there is no clear evidence that it would improve donation rates. On 6 October this year, we launched the national health service organ donor register; all those wishing to signal their intention to be a donor can now record their names on this central computerised register. The volume of applications is already encouraging.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Corporation

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many jobs the Government estimate are created annually by the approved development programme budget;

(2) what was the average cost to a housing association of compiling a bid for the Housing Corporation's approved development programme for the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Neither my Department nor the Housing Corporation can provide the cost to housing associations of compiling bids for the Housing Corporation's approved programme or the total number of jobs created by the approved development programme.

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the budget of the Housing Corporation is spent on administration.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Housing Corporation's administration costs for 1994–95 represent 1.4 per cent. of its total grant in aid.

Sound Insulation

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how the sound insulation provisions of the building regulations are enforced currently; what plans he has to introduce post-construction testing of building; and what plans he has to introduce standards for impact sound transmission into the regulations;

(2) what is his estimate of the proportion of post-1985 buildings which have sound insulation below the standard generally regarded as reasonable for building regulations purposes.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Reasonable standards of sound insulation between new dwellings were required by the 1985 building regulations, which applied in England and Wales outside London. In 1986, these were extended to cover new dwellings built in London where previously there was no requirement for sound insulation in the London Building Acts. The requirements were further extended in the 1991 building regulations to cover reasonable standards of sound insulation between converted flats. We have no information on the proportion of dwellings built since 1985 where reasonable provision for sound insulation was not required.

The approved document to part E of the building regulations provides guidance on ways of demonstrating compliance, including recommending forms of construction which have been shown to provide a reasonable standard of sound insulation in practice. As with other parts of the building regulations, they are administered by local authorities or approved inspectors who normally assess plans and carry out site visits.

My Department funds a programme of research at the Building Research Establishment to assess how the regulations are operating in practice. As noted above, the provisions for sound insulation were last strengthened in 1991, and they are kept under review. The need for, and the costs, benefits and practical implications of, post-construction testing, and any further provisions for impact sound transmission beyond those already covered by the regulations which might be considered necessary for the purpose of achieving a reasonable standard of health, are included in such reviews.

Rough Sleepers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received regarding the numbers of rough sleepers *(a)* in London and *(b)* outside London; and what representations he has received regarding accommodation provision for them outside London.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The 1991 census is the only national count of people sleeping rough. It found 2,650 people sleeping out in England, of whom 1,197 were in London, with most concentrated in the central London boroughs. Since 1990, the Government's £182 million rough sleepers initiative has been successful in reducing the number of people sleeping rough in central London by around three-quarters; 268 were found in a count undertaken by voluntary sector organisations in May 1994.

My Department receives occasional representations to extend the RSI outside central London. however, the initiative remains targeted on central London because the greatest concentrations of people sleeping rough remain there. Outside central London, it is the responsibility of each local authority to consider the housing needs of all people living in its area, including people sleeping rough, when drawing up its housing strategy. I commend to local authorities the RSI model of co-operation between statutory and voluntary organisations in meeting the needs of people sleeping rough.

Housing Stock

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total asset value of local authority owned housing stock.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Department has no direct data on the value of dwellings owned by local housing authorities.

However, for the purpose of setting guideline rents for housing revenue account subsidy, the value of each authority's stock is estimated, based on the pre-discount prices of recent right-to-buy purchases. For the year 1994–95, the total of these estimates for all English housing authorities was £151.43 billion.

Homelessness

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidelines are issued to local authorities regarding their statutory duty to house homeless 16 and 17-year-olds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I refer the hon. Member to chapter 6 of the "Homelessness Code of Guidance to Local Authorities", third edition, 1991, issued under section 71 of the Housing Act 1985, a copy of which is in the Library.

Building Control Fees

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what change has been made to building control fees for *(a)* local authority building control and *(b)* the National Housebuilding Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Changes to the fees local authorities charge for their building control work were made in the Building (Prescribed Fees) Regulations 1994, which came into force on 1 October 1994. The fees chargeable by the National House Building Council as an approved inspector are a matter for it.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if local authorities will be allowed to refuse authority for the disposing of radioactive waste from the nuclear industry under the proposals contained in the consultation paper, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions";

(2) if the proposals in the consultation document, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions" will allow radioactive waste to be deposited in tips owned privately or by the Local Authorities Waste Disposal Companies Association.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 6 December at column *132*.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what means he intends to take to ensure the ability of private owners of tips to comply with all necessary requirements before allowing the depositing of radioactive waste on such tips under proposals contained in the consultation document, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions".

Mr. Atkins: The Government's consultation document "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions" proposed that there might be advantage in encouraging waste producers to make greater use of the burial of low-level radioactive waste at landfill sites. This remains only a proposal, however, and there are no plans in relation to specific sites. The Government are considering the responses to the consultation document and will make a statement of future policy in due course.

Pollution Prosecutions

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all prosecutions, and their outcome, initiated over the past three years in England and Wales by *(a)* Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution, *(b)* the National Rivers Authority, *(c)* the London Waste Regulation Authority and *(d)* local waste authorities.

Mr. Atkins: I will write to the hon. Member.

Scrap Metal

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to provide exemptions from waste management licensing for the recovery of scrap metal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: On 8 November I published a consultation paper setting out our proposals for exemptions from waste management licensing under part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for the recovery of scrap metal and the dismantling of waste motor vehicles. The consultation paper invited comments by 5 December and proposed that waste management licensing should apply to these activities from 1 January 1995.

It is clear from the responses I have received that the period of transition to the new system is a matter of concern to both the industry and waste regulation authorities. There are two main reasons for this concern. The first arises from section 77(2) of the 1990 Act. Under the terms of this provision, licences issued under part I of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, which are in force when the new system is implemented, will be treated as site licences under part II of the 1990 Act. The second is the need for the industry and waste regulation authorities to have time to consider any regulations which are laid before Parliament, and the related statutory guidance on licensing, before the new system comes into force.

I recognise the importance of both these issues to the industry and waste regulation authorities. I have decided, therefore, that waste management licensing under part II of the 1990 Act should apply to the recovery of scrap metal and the dismantling of waste motor vehicles from 1 April 1995. I have made the necessary amendment to the commencement order to give effect to this decision.

I will now conclude my consideration of the responses to the consultation paper with the aim of laying the regulations providing any exemptions, and publishing the related statutory guidance on licensing, as early as possible in the new year.

Sustainable Development

Mrs Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the consultation recently carried out by his Department on the setting up of the United Kingdom round table on sustainable development.

Mr. Gummer: My Department issued a consultation paper on 21 October, inviting comments before 17 November. Some 134 responses had been received by 25 November, including 50 from business and industry, 21 from environmental groups and 10 from local government. A list of responses will be lodged in the Libraries of both Houses and in the Department of the Environment library.

Most of the responses received were supportive of the proposals in the consultation paper, and many offered helpful suggestions that expanded upon the proposals we had made. Some 95 of the responses commented on membership, and 37 suggested topics for the round table's work programme. In the light of this response, and the need to consider all of the suggestions fully before proceeding, I have decided to call the first meeting of the round table early in the New Year, rather than on 13 December, which was mentioned as a possibility in the consultation document.

Dealing with the Public

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to update the index to the explanatory material on how his Department deals with the public which he first made available last July.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I have today made available the first update of the index to the explanatory material on my Department's dealings with the public. This index will continue to be regularly updated, demonstrating my Department's commitment to open government. I have placed a copy of the index in the Library of the House and it is also available from my Department's libraries and from the Government offices for the regions.

EMPLOYMENT

Computer Malfunctions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the cost to date of reimbursing employees in his Department who ran up overdrafts and bank charges due to computer malfunction in his Department in July; if he will list by month for the last 24 months the number of occasions similar computer malfunctions have occurred and the cost to his Department on each occasion; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The cost of reimbursing employees due to a late payment of Employment Department group salaries in July 1994 was £28,969. The only other similar occurrence in the last 24 months was in February 1993 when the cost was £25,980. A complete review of the systems of control has been undertaken which should make it unlikely that a similar problem could occur again.

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the plans of his Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which he intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the world wide web server, "open. gov. uk" or any specific departmental server.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has no firm plans to place information on the Internet.

Portable Machines

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received regarding European Commission proposals to harmonise the voltage of portable tools and machines on construction sites.

Mr. Oppenheim: The European Commission has made no such proposals.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of jobs lost and gained and his explanation of why and how from membership of the EEC since 1972.

Mr. Oppenheim: I refer the hon. Member to the replies given to him by my right hon. Friend the Economic Secretary on 17 March, *Official Report*, column *822* and 30 June, *Official Report*, column *680*; by my hon. Friend the Paymaster General, on 25 November, *Official Report*, column *468* and by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 29 November, *Official Report*, column *583*.

EDUCATION

Disabled Children

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when all schools will be fully accessible to disabled children.

Mr. Forth: It is impracticable to place a timetable on the Government's commitment to improvements in the accessibility of schools. The Government consider that by far the most effective and affordable way to improve access steadily is to ensure that the needs of disabled people are provided for when buildings are designed or constructed. That is why my Department will shortly be consulting on the upgrading of its constructional standards which will mean that all new schools and extensions would be fully accessible to disabled people. Parental choice will continue to play a fundamental part in the decision as to where children are educated and existing school buildings may be rendered accessible accordingly.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the shortfall between resources allocated to local education authorities in 1994–95 and the bids made by them; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The 1994–95 local authority grant settlement allowed for local education authorities to spend £17,087 million on education in that year. This was distributed between authorities through the standard spending assessment mechanism, and through a limited range of specific grants. Bids related only to some of the specific grants, which totalled less than 2 per cent. of the settlement for education. Local authorities also bid for credit approvals in respect of capital projects.

Grant-Maintained Schools

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many copies of the video, "Grant-Maintained Schools: Our Children, Our Choice", have been distributed; what conditions they are distributed under; whether they are *(a)* on sale, and if so, how many copies have been sold, *(b)* on loan, and if so, how many copies have been borrowed and how many have been returned or *(c)* are free;

(2) what was the production cost of the video, "Grant-Maintained Schools: Our Children, Our Choice"; how many copies have been made; and what was the total cost of the videos.

Mr. Robin Squire: The video "Our Children, Our Choice" cost some £48,000 to produce, and 10,000 copies have been made at a further cost of £16,000, giving a total cost of £64,000.

About 6,000 copies have been distributed to date. Copies are made available free in response to requests; they are not loaned. A few copies have been returned, but the Department does not have a record of the precise number.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishment.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is as follows:

	1991–92 £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
(Mowden Hall Teachers Pensions Agency premises)	102,000	1,738,000	83,000
(Mowden Hall Departmental premises)	103,000	45,000	36,000
Vincent House	74,000	4,000	2,000
Corporation House	2,000	4,000	2,000
Enterprise House	2,000	—	7,000
Total	283,000	1,791,000	130,000

(1) All figures are rounded to nearest £000.

(2) Refurbishment work at the Teachers Pensions Agency premises at Mowden Hall included external and internal fabric and a new ventilation system.

(3) Refurbishment work at all other DFE premises listed included internal adaptations of erecting and demounting walls, replacing light fittings and redecoration.

PRIME MINISTER

EU Anti-fraud Budget

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if he will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the size of the European Union's anti-fraud budget.

The Prime Minister: As I made clear following my meeting with the French Prime Minister at Chartres, I will insist that discussion of all aspects of fraud and irregularity against the Community budget is given a high priority at the Essen European Council.

Security and Intelligence Services

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about the staff counsellor for the Security and Intelligence Services.

The Prime Minister: Sir Philip Woodfield KCB CBE has served as staff counsellor for the Security and Intelligence Services since November 1987. He will retire from the post on 31 March 1995, and I express the Government's gratitude to him for the way in which he has established this very sensitive post and fulfilled the duties of it. Sir Christopher France GCB, currently permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence, will succeed him as staff counsellor from 1 April 1995.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe summit in Budapest.

The Prime Minister: I represented the United Kingdom at the summit meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Budapest on 5 to 6 December, accompanied by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

The meeting adopted the Budapest summit declaration; and separate declarations on the 50th Anniversary of the termination of world war II, and on Baltic issues. It also adopted 10 decisions on different aspects of the CSCE's work.

These decisions embraced strengthening the CSCE; regional issues; further development of the capabilities of the CSCE in conflict prevention and crisis management; code of conduct on politico-military aspects of security; further tasks of the CSCE forum for security co-operation; principles governing non-proliferation; a common and comprehensive security model for Europe for the 21st century; the human dimension; the economic dimension; and the Mediterranean.

Copies of all of these documents will be placed in the Library of the House.

The CSCE is no longer just a conference. Its role has widened since the end of the Cold War. Under the Budapest decision on "Strengthening the CSCE", its title will change from 1 January 1995 to "The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, CSCE". This change of title has been accompanied by some structural changes which are set out in the relevant decision.

Among its other decisions, the summit:

—initiated planning for a CSCE-led peace-keeping operation in Nagorno-Karabakh. Deployment of a multi-national CSCE peace-keeping force will depend on progress towards a political settlement, on United Nations Security Council backing, and on the requisite military preparation;

—adopted measures to strengthen the CSCE in its central role of conflict prevention;

—reinforced, as a result of a British initiative, the CSCE's arrangements for dealing with the problem of minorities and other human rights questions;

—set out standards for the democratic control of armed forces, in a new code of conduct;

—added to military confidence building measures, including provisions for the exchange of information on all conventional forces.

At a separate ceremony in Budapest on 5 December, Ukraine acceded to the non-proliferation treaty. On behalf of the United Kingdom, I extended to Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine the nuclear security assurances which we have given in the past to other non-nuclear weapon states. Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin extended the same assurances on behalf of the United States of America and the Russian Federation.

In the margins of the conference, I had discussions with many of the CSCE heads of Government, including the Presidents of the Czech Republic, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine and the United States; the German Federal Chancellor; and the Prime Ministers of Hungary, Norway and Turkey.

The future development of the North Atlantic Alliance was one of the subjects mentioned in many speeches to the conference, and also during my bilateral meetings. It was a point of particular concern to the Russian delegation. I explained to President Yeltsin that our aim, which was widely supported by our partners in NATO and the European Union, was to extend to the east the prosperity and stability which members of the European Union and NATO now enjoy. That was why both organisations were developing their links with the countries of central and eastern Europe. NATO had commissioned a study of the principles of enlargement, but had taken no decisions yet on which countries might join the organisation or when. It was very important for NATO to build up its relationship with Russia, and we therefore hoped that the Russian Government would soon sign their agreement with NATO on the "Partnership for Peace" programme. It was common ground that there should be no new dividing line across Europe.

The dominant political issue at the summit was the conflict in Bosnia. CSCE decisions are adopted by consensus, and because of differences of view between certain participants, a draft declaration on Bosnia was not adopted. However, the chairman of the conference spoke for many delegations in issuing, in his personal capacity, a call on all warring parties in Bosnia, and particularly in Bihac, to end the fighting, declare a ceasefire and allow free access of humanitarian assistance throughout Bosnia.

My right hon. Friend, the Foreign Secretary, will be making a statement separately to the House on Bosnia, taking account of discussions during the Budapest summit.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Aid

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has discussed with his right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer the shift of resources from poverty-focused direct aid to commercially tied projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: No. The primary emphasis of the aid programme continues to be to assist development and thereby alleviate poverty. Over 90 per cent. of aid allocatable by income group has gone to low income and lower middle income countries since 1990–91.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total amount of *(a)* bilateral and *(b)* multilateral aid in (1) cash and (ii) real terms in 1983 and 1993; and what were the percentages in each case.

Mr. Baldry: The information is as follows:

Gross public expenditure on aid (£ thousands)

	1993–94 Cash price	*Percentage of total*	*1983–84 Cash price (expressed in 1993–94 prices)*	*1983–84 Real terms*	*Percentage of total*
Bilateral	1,304,515	56.60	554,730	936,332	52.19
Multilateral	1,000,079	43.40	508,111	857,644	47.80
Total	2,304,594		1,062,841		

Note:

Administrative costs and flows from ODA to CDC are excluded.

Aid and Trade Provisions

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 23 November 1994, *Official Report,* column *199,* which British companies have received contracts, and what value these contracts have been, as a result of ATP projects approved for funding since June 1993.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is as follows:

		£ million	
Project	*Company*	*Export value*	*Atp value*
1993			
Railways Double Tracking	Transmark	1.964	0.982
Tetouan gas turbines	John Brown Engineering Ltd.	65.000	10.925
Bombay and Delhi airports	Cossor Electronics Ltd.	4.105	1.437
1994			
Muela Hydropower project	Kvaerner Boving Ltd.	9.550	4.775
Chickens processing plant phase II	Humatt Engineering Ltd.	8.990	4.227
Kundasale Strategic Study	Sir Alexander Gibb and Partners Ltd.	0.093	0.093
Santiago Traffic Control	Siemens Plessey Controls	2.372	0.831
Mini Hydros	Balfour Beatty Projects and Engineering Ltd.	15.019	4.121

Education Projects

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much was spent in cash and real terms in each of the last five years on education projects in *(a)* developing countries outside the Commonwealth and *(b)* developing countries in the Commonwealth, by the European Union; and what was the extent of British funding for these projects.

Mr. Baldry: EC commitments to education programmes in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries under the fourth Lomé convention—1991 to date—have totalled 199.2 mecu or £155.3 million. The United Kingdom share of these programmes, funded through the European Development Fund, is 16.37 per cent.

Education commitments to Asia in 1993 totalled 173 mecu or £134.9 million, and to Latin America 16.2 mecu or £12.6 million. The United Kingdom share of these costs, financed through the Community Budget, will be around 16 per cent.

Disaggregated figures by individual Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries are not available. As these commitments will spend over a number of years it is also not possible to give annual expenditure figures in real and cash terms.

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all infrastructure projects in Indonesia that are assisted by aid from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry: The following infrastructure projects are presently being funded from the United Kingdom's aid programme to Indonesia.

Shortwave Radio Transmitters
Steel Bridging Phase II
Citayam-Cibinong Railway
Cigading-Serpong Railway
Samarinda Power Station
Cikampek-Padalarang Toll Road
Cikampek-Cirebon Railway (Double Tracking)

European Union Development Council

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed at the European Union Development Council in Brussels on 25 November.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey represented the United Kingdom at the Council. There was extensive discussion of the situation in Rwanda. An action programme totalling 67 mecu, or £52 million, was endorsed and the importance of national reconciliation underlined. Further progress was made on co-ordination between Community and member state aid programmes, notably through agreement on joint guidelines on food, security and education. There were also useful exchanges of view on the state of play on the mid-term review of the Lomé convention, future assistance to South Africa and evaluation.

TRANSPORT

British Transport Police

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his plans as to the future employer of the British Transport police.

Mr. Watts: The Government have decided that the BR board will continue as employer of the BTP for the foreseeable future. The role of employer will eventually pass to the British Transport police committee, when a suitable legislative opportunity can be found.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in whom the ownership and control of the British Transport police will be vested following the flotation and privatisation of Railtrack.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 29 November 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) earlier today.

Road Signs, London

Mr. Lamont: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what progress is being made on the project to replace the road signs on London's primary route network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Highways Agency has awarded a trial contract for the replacement of route direction signs on primary routes in west London, mainly along the A4. This follows extensive consultation carried out by the Highways Agency to develop a signing system which will better serve drivers needing to make journeys within the M25.

The trial contract, which has been awarded to Ringway Ltd., will be used to validate the designs, work methods and materials to be used in the main signing project contracts which follows.

The first of the four main project contracts is due to be let next autumn with a view to the re-signing project being substantially completed by the end of 1997.

Poor signing causes drivers to lose their way, wasting both time and money. The new signs will give clearer, simpler and consistent directions. This important project will help drivers and assist traffic movement in the capital.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list for each county council its capital expenditure on public transport as a percentage of its capital expenditure on roads.

(2) if he will list for each county council *(a)* its capital expenditure on roads and *(b)* its capital expenditure on public transport.

Mr. Watts: The figures for 1993–94, as reported by local authorities in their transport policies and programme submissions for 1995–96, are set out in the following table.

Expenditure for 1993–94—All figures in £000

Authority	*TSG eligible major highway works*	*Non-TSG eligible major highway works*	*Structural maintenance of principal road carriageways*	*Structural maintenance of bridges*	*Local roads safety schemes*	*Other minor highway works*	*Major public transport schemes*	*Public transport minor works*	*Total highways*	*Total public transport*	*Total transport*	*Public transport as percentage of highways*	*Parking*	*Total capital*
Avon	13,800	0	2,492	2,163	630	3,329	142	113	22,414	255	22,669	1.1	0	22,669
Bedfordshire	1,511	0	1,154	2,240	1,066	1,315	0	82	7,286	82	7,368	1.1	0	7,368
Berkshire	1,978	0	1,901	1,127	955	408	0	121	6,639	121	6,490	1.9	300	6,790
Buckinghamshire	1,735	1,938	2,207	638	753	666	0	0	7,937	0	7,937	0	0	7,937
Cambridgeshire	2,406	0	2,597	2,603	2,972	1,067	0	0	11,645	0	11,645	0	367	12,012
Cheshire	17,572	34	7,422	2,902	505	2,008	495	47	30,443	542	30,985	1.7	297	31,282
Cleveland	5,918	0	2,310	423	671	409	0	546	9,731	546	10,277	5.3	0	10,277
Cornwall	7,623	0	2,404	1,695	408	3,107	0	163	15,237	163	15,400	1.1	35	15,435
Cumbria	2,663	0	2,240	1,985	625	1,459	0	0	8,972	0	8,972	0	155	9,127
Derbyshire	4,233	0	1,810	1,192	390	8,032	986	115	15,657	1,101	16,758	6.6	733	17,491
Devon	5,730	1,317	4,164	1,402	1,311	5,146	0	1,764	19,070	1,764	20,834	8.5	1,430	22,264
Dorset	4,755	0	1,295	570	833	1,785	0	50	9,238	50	9,288	0.5	0	9,288
Durham	6,464	818	1,273	1,120	501	1,539	0	0	11,715	0	11,715	0	14	11,729
East Sussex	3,218	1,833	2,174	1,864	356	2,880	0	0	12,325	0	12,325	0	192	12,517
Essex	10,279	378	2,507	1,813	2,334	5,396	0	22	22,707	22	22,729	0.1	0	22,729
Gloucestershire	5,045	0	1,474	756	486	2,223	0	370	9,984	370	10,354	3.6	0	10,354
Hampshire	26,762	34	4,646	1,654	1,420	2,673	0	707	37,189	707	37,896	1.9	0	37,896
Hereford and Worcester	3,115	0	1,914	842	507	2,044	0	0	8,422	0	8,422	0	77	8,499
Hertfordshire	11,282	0	2,870	2,294	1,184	4,269	0	101	21,899	101	22,000	0.5	0	22,000
Humberside	10,910	3,167	3,869	1,998	651	884	0	20	21,479	20	21,499	0.1	720	22,219
Isle of Wight	0	0	966	607	414	1,155	0	0	3,142	0	3,142	0	5	3,147
Kent	60,900	0	7,753	1,943	1,175	3,416	0	240	75,187	240	75,427	0.3	0	75,427
Lancashire	12,339	23	2,160	5,962	1,869	3,289	142	1,012	25,642	1,154	26,796	4.3	75	26,871
Leicestershire	5,998	0	2,060	911	641	1,706	986	37	11,316	1,023	12,339	8.3	0	12,339
Lincolnshire	5,329	0	2,440	2,501	463	2,894	0	5	13,627	5	13,632	0	0	13,632
Norfolk	2,709	2,728	6,251	2,861	2,431	2,174	0	389	19,154	389	19,543	2	479	20,022
Northamptonshire	3,514	1,260	4,122	1,476	1,004	1,262	0	8	12,638	8	12,646	0.1	171	12,817
Northumberland	3,013	0	2,296	4,566	422	368	0	0	10,665	0	10,665	0	235	10,900
North Yorkshire	8,232	0	4,470	3,082	1,699	3,731	0	74	21,214	74	21,288	0.3	791	22,079
Nottinghamshire	5,076	769	3,577	2,203	1,047	9,680	2,910	1,677	22,352	4,587	26,939	17	1,048	27,987
Oxfordshire	1,917	63	1,281	1,214	1,444	259	0	0	6,178	0	6,178	0	0	6,178
Shropshire	3,122	0	1,750	2,154	363	4,189	0	91	11,578	91	11,669	0.8	0	11,669
Somerset	4,022	0	1,734	1,292	351	2,450	0	0	9,849	0	9,849	0	0	9,849
Staffordshire	5,837	0	6,442	1,674	577	2,618	0	0	17,148	0	17,148	0	0	17,148
Suffolk	629	1,316	3,153	2,378	1,357	6,222	0	800	15,055	800	15,855	5	601	16,456
Surrey	22,215	0	3,133	4,536	2,502	3,438	0	0	35,824	0	35,824	0	0	35,824
Warwickshire	332	0	1,204	2,348	994	785	0	51	5,663	51	5,714	0.9	54	5,768
West Sussex	3,125	95	1,872	558	855	2,190	0	0	8,695	0	8,695	0	495	9,190
Wiltshire	1,749	0	0	152	675	1,573	0	0	4,149	0	4,149	0	83	4,232

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the plans of his Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which he intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the world wide web server "open.gov.uk" or any specific departmental server.

Mr. Norris: The Department has no plans to make information available on the Internet. This will be considered as part of a review of publication arrangements.

Vehicle Licensing

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the proportion of commercial and heavy goods vehicles operating illegally on British roads by carrying no licence, insurance or taxation disc.

Mr. Norris: A sample roadside check held earlier this year in the south-east and Metropolitan traffic area indicated that about 8 per cent. of vehicles stopped illegally had no operator's licence. However, the exercise was targeted on vehicles thought likely to be offending the regulations, so the estimate may be considerably higher than the true national proportion of such vehicles.

We have no reliable estimate of the proportion of commercial and heavy goods vehicles operating without insurance.

A roadside survey conducted in 1989 found that some 2.4 per cent. of goods vehicles were operating without VED. An up-to-date estimate based on a survey conducted in summer 1994 will be published shortly.

Trains (First Aid)

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 25 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *381*, what information he has on the extent to which the requirement for passenger trains to carry first aid kits is complied with; and if he will investigate the absence of a first aid kit on a train travelling from Basingstoke to Reading on 24 October when Matthew Burridge was injured.

Mr. Watts: All passenger trains are checked daily to ensure that they are carrying first aid kits in sealed containers. Any used equipment must be replaced before trains are allowed to leave a depot.

I understand that in the case of the incident concerning Mr. Matthew Burridge, on 24 October, the train in question was carrying a first aid kit. The kit was not used as the conductor had radioed ahead to Reading station for medical assistance, which was given following arrival at the station three minutes later.

Drivers Hours

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations that responded to his consultation paper on the deregulation of drivers' hours.

Mr. Norris: We have not issued a consultation paper on the deregulation of our national rules on driver's hours, but we sought views from a number of bodies on the operation of the present rules. The organisations included HGV and bus operators, trades unions, trade associations, enforcement agencies, road safety groups and public utilities.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list, by country of origin and, where appropriate, the third country passed through, the number of asylum seekers arriving at Heathrow Airport during *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994;

(2) if he will list, by port of entry the number of asylum seekers arriving in the United Kingdom during *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994.

(3) if he will list, by country of origin and, where appropriate, the third country passed through and the number of asylum seekers arriving in the United Kingdom during *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The available information on the number of asylum seekers applying for asylum in the United Kingdom by port of entry for the period 1993 to end—October 1994 is given in table A. Information prior to 1993, and by nationality is not available.

Information for the period 1992 to end—October 1994, on the number of asylum seekers applying for asylum in the United Kingdom, by location of application and nationality, is given in table B.

Statistical information about the country through which asylum seekers pass is not available.

Table A

Applications[1] for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by port of entry, 1993 to end—October 1994.

	1993	*1994 January—October*
Heathrow	5,300	6,400
Terminal 1	600	1,000
Terminal 2	1,500	2,000
Terminal 3	2,000	2,200
Terminal 4	1,200	1,200
Gatwick	900	800
North	400	400
South	500	500
Other port	1,100	1,200
Total port applications	7,300	8,500

[1] Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred; sub totals are rounded independently and may not appear to add up to the component parts.

Table B

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by location of application and nationality, 1992 to end-October 1994

Number of principal applicants

	1992			*1993*			*1994 (January-October)*		
Nationality	*Total applications*[2]	*Applied at port*	*Applied in country*	*Total applications*[2]	*Applied at port*	*Applied in country*	*Total applications*[2]	*Applied at port*	*Applied in country*
Europe and Americas									
Bulgaria	180	5	170	100	10	90	160	15	145
Colombia	280	120	160	380	200	175	320	210	110
Poland	90	45	45	155	95	55	245	85	160
Romania	305	30	275	370	105	265	270	55	215
Turkey	1,865	695	1,165	1,480	655	830	1,740	520	1,215
Former USSR	270	25	245	385	45	340	480	45	435
Former Yugoslavia	5,635	2,180	3,455	1,830	260	1,565	1,140	235	905
Other	275	50	230	585	200	385	780	275	505
Total	8,895	3,150	5,745	5,280	1,570	3,710	5,135	1,440	3,695
Africa									
Algeria	..	..	..	305	40	265	755	95	660
Angola	245	50	195	320	140	180	470	115	355
Benin	15	—	15	..	..	..	5	—	5
Burkina Fasco	5	*	5	..	..	..	..	..	..
Cameroon	40	10	30	70	10	60	65	5	55
Chad	15	*	10	..	..	..	..	..	..
Congo	15	—	15	5	5	*	..	..	..
Ethiopia	680	115	565	615	150	465	645	130	515
Gabon	15	—	15	5	—	5	..	..	..
Ghana	1,600	175	1,425	1,785	400	1,385	1,670	345	1,325
Ivory Coast	310	45	270	330	105	230	665	420	250
Kenya	110	20	90	630	435	195	1,605	620	385
Liberia	100	45	50	90	55	35	115	70	50

Table B

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by location of application and nationality, 1992 to end-October 1994

Number of principal applicants

Nationality	*1992* Total applications[2]	Applied at port	Applied in country	*1993* Total applications[2]	Applied at port	Applied in country	*1994 (January-October)* Total applications[2]	Applied at port	Applied in country
Nigeria	615	95	520	1,665	220	1,450	3,350	325	3,020
Sierra Leone	..	..	..	1,050	220	830	1,665	945	720
Somalia	1,575	890	685	1,465	675	785	1,390	585	805
South Africa	40	15	30	60	20	40	75	35	40
Sudan	560	80	480	300	40	260	275	65	215
Togo	35	5	30	40	10	35	45	5	40
Uganda	295	150	140	585	385	210	285	80	205
Zaire	880	440	435	635	340	295	630	300	335
Other	490	80	410	320	135	190	695	250	445
Total	7,630	2,220	5,410	10,295	3,380	6,915	13,805	4,390	9,415
Middle East									
Iran	405	90	315	365	105	260	445	115	330
Iraq	700	240	465	495	270	225	435	190	245
Lebanon	380	160	220	285	145	140	180	60	125
Other	495	95	400	370	120	250	570	285	290
Total	1,980	580	1,395	1,520	640	880	1,630	645	985
Asia									
Afghanistan	..	..	..	..	..	..	275	210	65
Bangladesh	165	60	105	160	15	140	..	..	..
China	330	10	320	215	85	130	295	170	125
India	1,450	145	1,305	1,275	105	1,165	1,625	205	1,420
Pakistan	1,700	65	1,630	1,125	85	1,040	1,455	150	1,305
Sri Lanka	2,085	1,205	880	1,965	1,050	915	2,020	1,115	905
Other	375	235	140	440	290	155	415	30	390
Total	6,100	1,720	4,380	5,175	1,630	3,545	6,085	1,875	4,210
Nationality not known	—	—	—	100	100	—	115	115	—
Grand Total	24,605	7,675	16,930	22,370	7,320	15,050	26,765	8,465	18,305

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[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest 5 with '*'= 1 or 2 and '..'= unavailable

[2] Figures do not include applications made overseas.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers who could be removed from the United Kingdom to France have been allowed to remain in the United kingdom because the Immigration Service judged that entry into France would be refused during *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994.

Mr. Nicholas baker: The information requested is not available. It is the practice of the Immigration Service to remove all failed asylum seekers unless there are exceptional,compelling or compassionate circumstances.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers removed from the United Kingdom to France have been returned to the United kingdom by the French authorities; and on what grounds during *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is not available for the period before the enactment of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993. Eleven asylum seekers were returned to the United Kingdom by the French authorities in the period 26 July 1993 to 31 December 1993. Sixty-two asylum seekers were returned in the period 1 January 1994 to 31 October 1994. Information relating to the grounds for their return is not available.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum appeals have been lodged; how many have been determined; how many have been rejected; and how many of the applicants whose appeals have been rejected have been removed from the United kingdom during *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The available information is that in the period 1 January to 31 October 1994, about 8,500 appeals against a refusal of asylum have been received and about 1,900 appeals determined by adjudicators. Of the 1,900 determined, about 80 per cent. have been dismissed. Information prior to 1994 is not available.

Information on the number of asylum seekers removed in 1992, 1993 and 1994 is given in the table. Information on the number of asylum seekers removed after having either an appeal against removal under the Immigration Act 1971 or under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 dismissed is not separately identified in the statistics.

Removals and voluntary departures[1] of asylum applicants, excluding dependants, 1992 to end-October 1994.

	Number
1992	1,345
1993	1,820
1994 (Jan-Oct)	1,605

[1] figures exclude voluntary departures in deportation cases prior to February 1994.

Compensation Orders

Mr. Michael: To ask the secretary of State for the Home Department how many compensation orders were made by the courts in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1992 and *(d)* 1993; what was the total value of compensation ordered to be paid in each of these years; and what number and percentage of compensation orders made in each of these years were paid in full (i) within 12 months of the making of the order, (ii) within two years and (iii) within three years.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of offenders ordered to pay compensation and the total amount ordered is given in the following table.

Information is not collected centrally on when and on how much of the compensation is paid.

Number of offenders orders to pay compensation for all offences[1] and the total amount ordered by type of court 1990–1993

England and Wales *£ thousands*

Court/Year	*Number of offenders ordered to pay compensation*	*Total amount*
Magistrates' courts		
1990	117.2	18,431.4
1991	102.7	17,804.1
1992	97.5	16,499.5
1993	90.2	15,602.8
Crown Court		
1990	12.4	[2]20,484.4
1991	10.1	8,581.7
1992	8.8	9,811.3
1993	6.3	7,301.5

[1] Excluding summary motoring offences.

[2] Includes a small number of extra large amounts of compensation ordered for fraud and forgery offences.

Pre-sentence Reports

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the inquiries conducted by his Department or by HM inspectorate of probation since 1 October 1992 into the use by judges and magistrates of pre-sentence reports on offenders and into the arrangements for their delivery by the probation services of England and Wales; and if he will place copies of all such reports in the Library.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Home Office research and planning unit has undertaken a survey of criminal justice agencies' experience of the operation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which included questions seeking the views of sentencers about the usefulness of pre-sentence reports. The unit has also undertaken a more specific survey of judges' and magistrates' satisfaction with services provided by probation staff, including the preparation of pre-sentence reports. Both are due to be published shortly.

As an addition to the general probation area inspection programme, HM inspectorate of probation has conducted two inquiries since 1 October 1992 which bear specifically on the arrangements for the provision of the pre-sentence reports. The report of the criminal Justice Act 1991 inspection was published in 1993; and the report on the quality and provision of expedited pre-sentence reports prepared for the Crown Court by the probation service was published earlier this year. Copies of both reports are already in the Library.

Police Authorities

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the budgeted total administration costs for each of the new police authorities of England and Wales in their first year; and how much was spent on administration in total by each of the old police authorities of England and Wales in their final year.

Mr. Maclean: It will be for each of the new police authorities to determine its budgetary requirements for 1995–96. The new police authorities are currently being established and the budgets have not yet been set. Details of the administration costs of existing police authorities are not held centrally.

Mohammed Riaz

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the prison sentence being served by Mohammed Riaz in Long Lartin prison; what was the recommendation of the trial judge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The period for retribution and deterrence in this case was originally set in 1988. At that time, the trial judge recommended 10 years. The Lord Chief Justice of the day recommended a minimum period of 16 years. The Minister then set a period of 20 years. In doing so he would have had regard to the statement by Sir Leon Brittan, as Home Secretary in 1983, that terrorists and certain other specified categories of murderer could normally expect to serve at least 20 years.

Following the Doody judgement of June 1993, the above details were disclosed to Mr. Riaz. He subsequently made representations and his case was considered afresh in December 1993. My right hon. and learned Friend concluded that there were no grounds to justify disapplying the policy set out in the Brittan statement. He therefore confirmed the existing period of 20 years.

Racial Violence and Harassment

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding racial violence and harassment.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Home Office has received a number of representations from individuals and organisations condemning racial violence and harassment. It has also received the report of the Home Affairs Committee's inquiry into racial attacks and harassment, to which it gave its response on 20 October, a copy of which is in the Library. The Government continue to condemn racial violence and harassment and are committed to taking effective action to deal with it.

Animals (Drowning)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances downing is permitted as an acceptable or humane method for killing animals.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: There are no circumstances in which the drowning of a conscious animal would be accepted as humane. Drowning is not one of the methods of humane killing of laboratory animals listed in schedule 1 to the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. A scientific case would have to be made out before it could be authorised under section 5 of that Act.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. Howard: None.

Child Abusers

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what continuing treatment and counselling facilities are available in north-west England for those convicted of child abuse but now released into the community.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Area probation services run a range of programmes for those convicted of a sexual offence who have been sentenced to a community sentence or who are undergoing a period of supervision following their release from custody.

Participation in such programmes may be made a condition of release on licence, as may attendance on a psychologist, psychiatrist or medical practitioner. Information about individual service provision is not kept centrally.

Prisoners (HIV)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has of cases of HIV-positive prisoners acquiring the infection in prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 7 December 1994.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about what evidence there is of cases of HIV positive prisoners acquiring the infection in prison.

There has been one documented case of a prisoner who became infected with HIV whilst within the prison system in England and Wales. This case, which was referred to in a reply from Lord Ferrers, the then Minister of State at the Home Office to a Question from Lord Kilmarnock on 6 July 1994 (WA81).

Life Imprisonment

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what changes have been made in the review procedures in cases of persons sentenced to life imprisonment.

Mr. Howard: Two of my predecessors as Secretary of State, the right hon. Sir Leon Brittan and my right hon. Friend the member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) made statements in 1983 and 1987 respectively, about the review arrangements for life sentence prisoners. Under those arrangements, the first review by the Parole Board takes place three years before the expiry of the period thought necessary to satisfy the requirements of retribution and deterrence—commonly referred to as "the tariff". However, no life sentence prisoner is detained for more than 17 years without a Parole Board review of his or her case, even where the period in question exceeds 20 years. The Secretary of State also reviews the case of every life sentence prisoner who has been detained for 10 years.

From now on, all life sentence prisoners will have a Parole Board review three years before the expiry of their tariff. Since all prisoners will now know the length of their tariff and also the date of this review, I consider that the automatic review at the 17-year point no longer serves any useful purpose. The 17-year review will therefore be discontinued, save in respect of those existing prisoners for whom such a review has already been fixed.

This means that the review three years before the expiry of the tariff will be the first review for all prisoners. The setting of a review at this point is intended to allow sufficient time for preparing the release of those life sentence prisoners who may be considered an acceptable risk. This is subject, in the case of mandatory life prisoners, to the question of the public acceptability of early release.

In recent years, successive Secretaries of State have recognised that, for the majority of life sentence prisoners, a period in open prison conditions is generally vital in terms of testing the prisoner's suitability for release and in preparing him or her for a successful return to the community. It is, therefore, now normally the practice to require the prisoner to spend some time in open conditions before release and to arrange a further review while the prisoner is in an open prison for a formal assessment of his or her progress. I intend to continue with this practice and the first Parole Board review will therefore normally serve the purpose of assessing the prisoner for open conditions.

The purpose of the 10-year ministerial review is to consider whether there are any grounds for bringing forward the date of the first review by the Parole Board. This review is now redundant as far as discretionary life sentence prisoners are concerned since their cases are dealt with in accordance with the arrangements introduced by part II of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. However, the 10-year ministerial review will continue to take place for mandatory life sentence prisoners.

In addition, I have decided that for those life sentence prisoners for whom it is decided that the requirements of retribution and deterrence can be satisfied only by their remaining in prison for the whole of their life, there will in future be an additional ministerial review when the prisoner has been in custody for 25 years. The purpose of this review will be solely to consider whether the whole life tariff should be converted to a tariff of a determinate period. The review will be confined to the considerations of retribution and deterrence. Where appropriate, further ministerial reviews will normally take place at five-yearly intervals thereafter. Existing prisoners who fall into this category and who have already served 25 years or more in custody will not be disadvantaged. Their cases will be reviewed by Ministers as soon as is practicable and after any representations they may wish to make.

As I announced in reply to a question by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) on 27 July 1993, *Official Report*, columns *863-65*, successive Secretaries of State have been, and I continue to be, willing to consider any written representations by life sentence prisoners about their tariff. They will also continue to be afforded the opportunity to submit such written representations at the beginning of the sentence and before I have formed a view as to the appropriate period in question.

Group 4 Security Services

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints he has received about Group 4 security services in the past year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have received very few complaints about Group 4 in the last year, either for its work with the Prison Service or the Immigration Service. The exact number of complaints could be ascertained only at disproportionate cost.

There is evidence that Group 4 has been performing very well in its contracts with the Home Office. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons praised the quality of staff at HMP Wolds, which is managed by Group 4, and said the prison was "very nearly an enormous success".

The court escorting service provided by Group 4 provides better value for money, costing 24 per cent. less than the previous system. Escapes from escort are now over 40 per cent. lower than when the service was provided by the police and Prison Service, despite the fact that the number of remand prisoners has increased significantly, therefore necessitating more escort journeys.

A recent Home Office survey of customers in the east midlands and Humberside, where Group 4 provides the court escort and custody service, has shown high levels of satisfaction amongst the police, prisons and courts. Some 86 per cent. were either satisfied or very satisfied with Group 4's overall performance and 90 per cent. of court staff rated Group 4's performance as better, or at least as good as, the service that went before. Some 83 per cent. of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that Group 4 had settled into its job well in the first year of operation.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many complaints he has received from people living in England about low-flying military aircraft in 1991, 1992, 1993 and during the current year;

(2) how many complaints about low-flying military aircraft he has received from people living in Wales in 1991, 1992, 1993 and during the current year;

(3) how many complaints he has had about low-flying military aircraft from people living in the north of Ireland during 1991, 1992, 1993 and the present year;

(4) how many complaints he has received from people living in Scotland about low-flying military aircraft in 1991, 1992, 1993 and during the current year.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*England*	*Wales*	*Scotland*
1991	3,412	791	643
1992	4,401	904	990
1993	4,141	556	1,041
1994[1]	3,899	592	996

[1] Up to 30 November 1994.

Most low flying in Northern Ireland is of an operational nature, with only a limited number of training sorties. Complaints arising from this activity are dealt with locally, and no central record is available of the number received.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed by or attached to the Defence Export Services Organisation.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *778-79*.

Airfields

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of his Department's airfields are occupied by United States forces; what is the form of tenure; and which ones are now surplus to requirements.

Mr. Soames: The United States Air Force currently operates four of my Department's airfields at the main operating bases of RAF Alconbury, RAF Lakenheath and RAF Mildenhall, and the standby deployment base of RAF Fairford. United States visiting forces are based in the United Kingdom under the general provisions of the NATO status of forces agreement 1951 and the visiting forces act 1952. These airfields will remain available for as long as, in the opinion of both the UK and US governments, the presence of the United States visiting forces at them is considered desirable in the interest of common defence. The airfield at RAF Alconbury is no longer required for USAF operations and the station will become a non-flying base by 31 March 1995.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is not available centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the number of British service personnel convicted by a civilian court for a criminal offence in Cyprus in each of the last three years; and if he will list the offences concerned.

Mr. Soames: Details of Royal Air Force personnel convicted of criminal offences by a civilian court in Cyprus since 1992 are as follows:

Year	*Number*	*Charge*
1992	6	Five cases of drink-related driving offences. One public order offence.
1993	12	All cases of drink-related driving offences.
1994	7	Six cases drink-related driving offences. One case of larceny.

The Army maintains central records of the numbers of personnel convicted of criminal offences by a civilian court in Cyprus only where, if convicted, personnel receive a penal sentence. No such cases were notified in 1992 or 1993, but there have been two cases in 1994; one individual was charged with cheque fraud and the other with criminal damage.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the number of British service personnel court-martialed in Cyprus in each of the last three years; and if he will give the offences on which they were charged.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Number*[1]	*Charge*
1992	6	Drinking on duty and stating a falsehood.
		Possession of a weapon and ammunition and escaping from custody.
		Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm (OABH).
		Burglary (seven charges) and theft.
		Impaired Driving.
		Nuisance phone calls.[2]
1993	9	Unauthorised phone calls.
		Attempted arson/arson.
		Common assault and assault OABH.
		Four cases of Assault OABH.
		Obtaining property by deception, avoiding liability by deception (two charges) and forgery.[3]
		Theft.
1994	16	Improperly entering the female accommodation.
		False accounting.
		Common assault and assault OABH.
		Three cases of drink-related driving offences.
		Two cases of disobedience to standing orders.
		Two cases of assault OABH.[3]
		Failing to provide a specimen of breath after an accident.[2]
		Theft.
		Two cases of absence without leave.
		Wounding.
		Theft (two charges), false instrument (eight charges) and forgery (3 charges).

Notes:

[1] Figures exclude courts material held in Cyprus but where the offences were committed elsewhere.

[2] Found not guilty.

[3] One found not guilty.

Cambridge Military Hospital, Aldershot

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the estimate for the cost of building a new hospital on the site of the Cambridge military hospital, Aldershot, including the refurbishment of the existing building;

(2) what plans he has for the listed buildings on the site of the Cambridge military hospital;

(3) what is the estimated cost of closing the Cambridge Military hospital.

Mr. Soames: Essential rebuilding and refurbishment works costs which would be necessary if the Cambridge military hospital were to become the tri-Service core hospital are estimated at over £66 million. Final decisions on disposal or redevelopment of the hospital site have not yet been made and any future plan will take account of listed buildings. Residual running and rundown costs of the site following closure are estimated at £1.1 million in the financial year 1996–97 and thereafter about £0.383 million a year against an anticipated overall saving from the defence costs study proposal of some £50 million a year.

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what estimate has been made of the additional cost of treating service men and women from the Aldershot Garrison at Haslar;

(2) what is the estimated cost of transferring the staff and equipment from the Cambridge military hospital to Haslar.

Mr. Soames: Service personnel from Aldershot garrison might be treated in future either at Haslar or one of the new Ministry of Defence hospital units. Until these are selected, no precise travel or treatment cost comparisons can be made. Similarly, transfer costs for medical staff now at the Cambridge military hospital cannot be calculated until the location of the new Ministry of Defence hospital units, where some will serve, is known. Estimated equipment transfer costs, net of disposal receipts, are not available at this stage of the defence costs study implementation process. It is assumed, however, that any such costs will be minimal and will be far outweighed by the assessed overall savings to the Defence budget accruing from the reorganisation of the defence medical services of some £50,000,000 a year from 1996–97.

Military District Hospitals

Mr. Critchley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the most recent estimated cost of establishing and running each of the proposed military district hospital units.

Mr. Soames: At Derriford, where arrangements to establish a unit are most advanced, the capital expenditure committed by my Department to the project has been £5 million and estimated total annual running costs are approximately £6.5 million. The capital and annual running costs of the two new proposed Ministry of Defence district hospital units will depend upon the state of facilities and the costs at the host district general hospital selected. Decisions on the location of the two new military district hospital units, and therefore whether or not capital work will be required, have not yet been made.

RAF Elvington

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he has yet made a decision as to whether RAF Elvington is surplus to his Department's requirements; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consideration he has given to the future of RAF Elvington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The future requirement for RAF Elvington is being examined at present. No decisions have been taken, but if no defence use is identified the site will be disposed of in the normal way.

HMS Raleigh

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officers from other countries have received retinue briefings at HMS Raleigh in the last five years; how much income was received; how many officers came from each country; and how much each country paid.

Mr. Soames: According to available records, there have been no instances of officers from other countries receiving retinue briefings at HMS Raleigh during the last five years.

Arms Exports

Mr. Olner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arms are currently being exported from the United Kingdom and for which countries they are destined.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the armaments sold to Indonesia between 1986 and 1994, and the financial value of these sales.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) on 28 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *501*.

Positive Vetting

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many past and present elected representatives have been positively vetted by his Department; how many have requested to see their own positive vetting files; and how many have subsequently corrected entries on their files as a result.

Mr. Freeman: None.

LSD Experiments

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the nature and purpose of the medical and psychological screening of service volunteers who were tested with LSD at Porton Down;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 21 November 1994, *Official Report*, columns *55–6*, which outside organisations or industrial firms were involved in the LSD tests; and what accidents or mishaps occurred during these experiments with LSD;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 21 November 1994, *Official Report*, columns *55-6*, under which defence agreement was the LSD provided to Porton Down by the then United States army chemical centre at Edgewood in Maryland; what quantity was provided; and in which years was it provided;

(4) pursuant to his answer of 21 November, *Official Report*, columns *55-6*, what follow-up medical checks have been carried out on the mental and physical health of the 72 service volunteers tested with LSD at Porton Down; how many of these volunteers were checked after they left Porton Down; how often these checks were carried out; and who carried them out.

Mr. Soames: These are matters for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive, CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Dr. Graham Pearson to Dr. David Clark, dated 7 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Defence about work carried out by the Ministry of Defence with LSD at Porton Down have been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment (CBDE) is to carry out work to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of that programme, evaluation is carried out of chemicals that may be utilised by an aggressor as a chemical warfare agent.

3. In order to carry out this work, it is necessary to use Service volunteers to:

a. Assess the ability of Service personnel to function with new equipment and procedures.

b. Develop medical countermeasures to protect Service personnel

c. Evaluate the effects of very low and medically safe concentrations of chemical warfare agents on the ability of unprotected personnel to operate normally.

No studies involving volunteers are carried out unless there is a clear military need and a detailed protocol has been reviewed and approved by an independent Ethics Committee in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Royal College of Physicians.

4. Volunteers on arrival at CBDE Porton Down are given a full medical examination, have the study explained to them in lay terms by an officer who is not involved in the study, are advised that they may leave the study at any stage without any explanation and at the end of the study are given a further medical examination to ensure that they have suffered no harm. In addition, there is no history of Service doctors in their units seeking advice from CBDE Porton Down on any subsequent illnesses that may have been reported by volunteers. Medical screening is part of the standard medical examination to ensure that no pre-existing medical condition could be aggravated by participation in any trial and consists of standard medical tests. The standard medical examinations consists of a full medical history, a full clinical examination and an electro cardiogram.

5. The same approach is adopted for psychological screening in order to ensure that a short acting, potent psychotropic drug such as LSD could not aggravate a pre-existing mental disorder. This screening and testing also forms an important part of the scientific assessment of the effects of such drugs so that pre-dose normal effects can be compared to those short term effects seen following administration. The psychological tests employed were the standard psychology tests used in research which were the Maudsley Personality Inventory (MPI), Raven's Progressive Matrices (RPM) and the Heron, Allport-Vernon and Taylor personality and intelligence tests.

6. In my earlier answer to you of 21 November 1994 (*Official Report*, Columns *54-56*) I stated that one of the sources of the LSD used in the work and studies carried out at CBDE was the then US Army Chemical Centre at Edgewood, Maryland. According to our records we received 10 grams of LSD in December 1965 and 10 grams in June 1966. The LSD was provided under the American, British, Canadian and Australian Armies (ABCA) agreement Quadripartite Working Group (QWG) on NBC defence.

7. No external organisations or industrial firms were involved with the LSD tests undertaken at Porton Down between 1962 and 1971. According to our records no accidents or mishaps occurred with experiments with LSD. At the end of the study all the volunteers would have been given a medical examination and in addition there is no history of Service doctors in their units seeking

advice from CBDE Porton Down on any subsequent illnesses that may have been reported by volunteers who took part in the volunteer programme. Indeed, CBDE Porton Down has no evidence that participation in volunteer studies over the past 40 years have resulted in any harm to those concerned.

8. From time to time, Service volunteers have been recalled so that checks on their medical health can be made. There is no particular frequency or pattern to such recalls. In addition some volunteers return voluntarily to CBDE to take part in subsequent unrelated studies. It would require a disproportionate effort to search our records to see if any of the 72 Service volunteers had returned subsequently to CBDE for further studies.

9. I should add that the Ministry of Defence is very grateful to all Service personnel who have served as volunteers in studies at CBDE Porton Down as their participation has been vital to ensuring that the members of the UK Armed Forces are provided with the most effective protective measures possible against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. Such studies are vital to the defence of the realm and we are very grateful to the Servicemen who have helped achieve the high standards of protection that are available for the members of the UK Armed Forces.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the functions and objectives of the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee provided advice to the Department of Trade of Industry and the former Science and Engineering Research Council on research and development requirements in advanced manufacturing. The committee was disbanded on 31 March 1994. The committee's terms of reference in respect of the SERC and the DTI were as follows:

DTI

To identify and update the R and D industrial and technological innovation requirements in the area of advanced manufacturing;

to advise on the objectives, balance and strategy for Departmental expenditure on R and D in the area of advanced manufacturing;

to advise DTI on the allocation of funds necessary to secure those objectives; to consider and advise on proposals referred by the DTI to the Committee; and to make recommendations to DTI on longer-term or more speculative programmes; and

to propose measures which would further the application of science and technology within advanced manufacturing.

SERC

To advise on the development of the SERC programme and on the resources that should be provided for it;

to monitor the SERC programme generally and advise on its implementation;

to approve SERC expenditure within the powers delegated to the Committee; and

to make reports on its activities as required by SERC.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee in each of the last three years.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Responsibility for servicing the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Committee rested with the Science and Engineering Research Council before the Committee was disbanded on 31 March 1994.

	1992	*1993*	*1994*
Number of meetings held	8	6	1
Budgeted expenditure	0	0	0
Actual expenditure	0	0	0

The AMTC was a joint committee of the Department of Trade and Industry and the SERC. It was jointly serviced by the DTI and the SERC, with DTI in the lead until 31 September 1993, and the SERC thereafter. No report was published by the Committee. Its advice was channelled through the internal organisation of the DTI and the SERC.

Science

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures his Department is taking to promote public understanding of science.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Office of Science and Technology will be spending in 1994–95 about £1 million on initiatives designed to improve public understanding and appreciation of the contribution that science, engineering and technology make to our society. These initiatives support work in schools through such schemes as the CREST—creativity in science and technology—awards and young engineers clubs. They also promote science, engineering and technology among the wider public through major events like the national science and engineering week, the British Association's science festival and the Edinburgh international science festival.

Next Steps Initiative

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress of the next steps initiative.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Government today published the fifth "Next Steps Review"—Cm 2750. It brings together information on the 102 agencies within Government, and the executive organisations of HM Customs and Excise and the Inland Revenue, which now constitute 62 per cent. of the civil service.

Within central Government, agencies are delivering the citizens charter commitment to improved customer service and value for money. The review highlights how, under the charter, agencies focus on the needs of the users of their services and gives examples of what individual agencies have achieved. Thirty charter marks have been awarded to agencies in the first three years of the competition, reflecting the commitment of agency chief executives and their staff to high standards of customer service.

The review reports the targets set for agencies and their performance against them in 1993–94 and lists key targets for 1994–95. In 1993–94, agencies met around 80 per cent. of their key targets, compared with 77 per cent. last year. Most targets have also become progressively more demanding year on year.

The Government's aim is that every public service should be provided in the most appropriate and cost-effective way. All the executive functions of the civil service are therefore being examined against the following tests: whether they need to continue to be performed at all; whether they need to remain the responsibility of Government; where the Government do need to remain responsible for an activity, do the Government have to carry out the task or can they buy in from outside providers; and whether they should become the responsibility of an agency within Government. The review reports further progress in this work.,

Once established, agencies are subject to periodic review, now normally after five years of operation. To ensure that the widest possible range of views are taken into account, both the initial examination of an activity and these reviews are publicly announced, including through the next steps review. The review also demonstrates many ways in which agencies are entering into partnership with the private sector, for example, by contracting out existing work to the private sector under a partnership arrangement or through joint ventures.

Over the last six years, the next steps initiative has fundamentally altered the way in which the civil service is managed. It is a key part of the programme of change outlined in the White Paper "The Civil Service: Continuity and Change". The White Paper also proposed extending throughout the civil service many of the principles of next steps, including maximum clarity about objectives and targets, delegation of management responsibility and a clear focus on outputs and outcomes. The aim is a flexible and cost-effective civil service well-equipped to provide support for Ministers on policy matters and in the management of public services which meet the needs of their users.

Information Technology Advisory Board

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Information Technology Advisory Board in each of the last three years.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Information Technology Advisory Board was a joint committee of the DTI and the Science and Engineering Research Council. It was disbanded in March 1994.

Financial Year	*1991–92* *£000*	*1992–93* *£000*	*1993–94* *£000*
Number of meetings held	6	5	4
Budgeted Expenditure[1]	30,712	36,599	38.457
Actual Expenditure[1]	30,955	37,152	38,026
Secretariat arrangements	shared equally between DTI and SERC at official level		

[1] Excludes postgraduate training and support costs which were operated centrally.

Advisory Arrangements: ITAB received external advice from joint SERC/DTI committees comprising of scientific and technical experts from academe and industry. The Committees drew on peer review referees and other expert advice when planning their programmes and assessing proposals for funding. In addition, membership of ITAB was designed to reflect different aspects of the technology chain.

Reports and Submissions:

Annual Reports—1991, 1992, 1993: a comprehensive summary of ITAB activities.

The Government Strategy for IT—1993: sets out the aims, objectives and remit of ITAB and its advisory Committees.

The Impact of IT—1994: published after ITAB was disbanded. Illustrates achievements and practical impact of the former joint programmes in an industrial and social context.

Submissions: annual contribution to the SERC PES submission.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Buildings Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, figures for refurbishment projects costing more then £5,000 are available.

A total of £111,600,423 was spent on refurbishing the DSS estate during the last three years.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he intends to take to ensure that Mr. Peter Stevenson, Ref. 7000102373, will have his maintenance payments reassessed by the Child Support Agency in the very near future and be paid the rebate due.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Chid Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Tony Ward to Mr. Tim Devlin, dated 7 December 1994:

In the absence of Miss Chant, I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about your constituent Mr. Peter Stevenson.

Mr. Stevenson's maintenance liability was reassessed on 1 December 1994. On the evidence received, there is no indication that there has been an overpayment of child maintenance.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cold weather payments have been paid out in the Manchester region for each of the past three years.

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of the social fund, which includes cold weather payments, is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 6 December 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of Cold Weather Payments made in the Manchester region in the past three years.

Cold Weather Payments are dependent on temperature data supplied by designated weather stations. In the Manchester region, this is the Meteorological Weather Station situated at Manchester Airport. In 1993–94, the temperatures recorded at Manchester Airport were not low enough to satisfy the conditions for Cold Weather Payments.

Details of the Cold Weather Payments made in the Manchester area during 1991–92 and 1992–93 are available from the statistical information already held in the Library.

I hope this reply has been helpful.

Anti-fraud Work

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been *(a)* the personnel and other cost of anti-fraud work and *(b)* the amount recouped as a result of anti-fraud work in each year since 1979.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The administration of fraud work is a matter for Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 6 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the costs of anti-fraud work and the amounts recovered as the result of such work since 1979.

Not all of the information you requested in available. Prior to the formation of the Benefits Agency (BA), most anti-fraud work was integrated with benefit claims processing and other mainstream local office activities and separate cost data was not kept. However, the bulk of investigations are now carried out by separately managed units - know as Fraud Sectors - which report to Area Directors rather than District Managers. Other investigations are conducted by the BA's separate Organised Fraud command. These organisational changes have enabled estimated costs of the main anti-fraud effort to be published in the two most recent BA Annual Fraud Reports. The figures are:

1992–93	£72.4m	includes estimated £6.4m accommodation costs for Sector Fraud Teams, which are normally minor occupants of premises.
1993–94	£69.0m	excludes accommodation costs for Sector Fraud Teams.

Estimated benefit savings from anti-fraud work during the same period were £558m (1992–93) and £654m (1993–94). Recoveries of benefit overpaid, including fraud cases, totalled £38m (1992–93) and £80m (1993–94). Information relating to the amount of benefit recovered directly as a result of anti-fraud work is not readily available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Appeals

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if it is the practice for his Department to refuse to make benefit payment in line with the ruling of the Social Security Commissioner where such rulings are the subject of appeal to either the United Kingdom or European courts; how many such benefits are currently affected; and how much money in each case is being withheld from claimants.

Mr. Roger Evans: It is our practice to suspend payment in cases which are the subject of an appeal to the courts or in cases where benefit would be affected by the outcome of such an appeal. There are currently a number of appeals which have resulted, or may result, in suspension of benefit. The benefits affected are income support, family credit, severe disablement allowance, invalidity benefit, invalid care allowance, attendance allowance and the care component of disability living allowance. The average weekly amount involved in the family credit cases is £20.39. No information is available on the amount involved in other cases.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women are currently being paid reduced invalidity benefit because they have reached retirement age; how many have appealed against this reduction; how many have applied to be treated as cases of hardship; and how many such applications have been accepted.

Mr. Hague: The only figures available are those being kept as a result of the case of Mrs. Rose Graham.

At the end of March 1994, the latest date for which information is held, 41,560 women were being paid reduced rate invalidity benefit because they had reached state pension age.

A total of 1,604 hardship applications had been received; 994 hardship applications had been accepted and the suspension lifted.

Information is not held on the total number of appeals received and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list each of the *(a)* non-means-tested benefits and *(b)* means-tested benefits run by his Department; and if he will give the number of claimants and dependants covered by each benefit at the latest available date.

Mr. Hague: The information available is in the table.

figures rounded to the nearest thousand[2]

Benefit	*Claimants total £ thousands*	*Total adult dependants £ thousands*	*Total child dependants £ thousands*	*Date of enquiry*
Non-means tested benefits				
Attendance Allowance	996	n/app	n/app	March 1994
Child Benefit[1]	6,883	n/app	12,496	November 1994
Child's Special Allowance[1]	[2]99	n/app	[2]127	December 1993
Disability Living Allowance[4]	1,400	n/app	n/app	August 1994
Guardians Allowance[1]	[2]1,977	n/app	[2]2,486	December 1993
Invalid Care Allowance	261	5	33	September 1994
Industrial Death Benefit	22	n/app	1	September 1994
Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit[4]	209	n/app	n/app	April 1993
Invalidity Benefit[3]	1,580	457	120	April 1993
Maternity Allowance[3]	40	[2]100	n/av	April 1992
Non Contributory Retirement Pension[4]	28	n/av	n/av	March 1994

figures rounded to the nearest thousand[2]

Benefit	*Claimants total £ thousands*	*Total adult dependants £ thousands*	*Total child dependants £ thousands*	*Date of enquiry*
One Parent Benefit[1]	902	n/app	1,424	November 1994
Other Industrial Injuries Benefits	1	n/app	n/app	March 1994
Reduced Earnings Allowance/Retirement Allowance[6]	155	n/app	n/app	April 1993
Retirement Pension[6]	10,090	92	25	March 1994
Sickness Benefit[5]	147	24	n/app	April 1993
Severe Disablement Allowance[5]	316	4	3	April 1993
Unemployment Benefit[4]	541	73	n/app	May 1994
Widows Benefit[6]	330	n/app	84	March 1994
War Pension	306	n/app	2	September 1994
Means tested benefits				
Council Tax Benefit[9, 3]	5,253	1,618	2,751	31 May 1993
Disability Working Allowance	[2]4,536	[2]1,767	[2]3,289	July 1994
Family Credit[4]	542	308	1,103	April 1994
Housing Benefit[9, 3]				
Rent Rebate	3,050	838	1,889	May 1993
Rent Allowance	1,480	270	643	May 1993
Income Support[4]	5,791	1,231	3,028	February 1994

Notes:

[1] Total claimants reflects the total of families in receipt and the child dependents reflect the children in those families.

[2] Denotes where the actual unrounded figures have been Shown Sample Size is 100 per cent. unless indicated:

[3] Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claims.

[4] Based on a 5 per cent. sample of awards.

[5] Based on a 4 per cent. sample of awards.

[6] Based on a 10 per cent. sample with an allowance for late returns for industrial injuries disablement benefit and reduced earnings allowance.

[7] Number of assessments in payment not recipients.

[8] Benefit replaced attendance Allowance for persons under 65 years and mobility allowance for 5 April 1992.

[9] Includes a small number of cases where the claimant is eligible for council tax benefit but the actual amount payable is nil after non-dependant deductions have been accounted for.

Expenditure Levels

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the annual percentage changes in social security expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product in each year since 1979 cumulatively.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

Total benefit expenditure 1978–79 to 1993–94 as a percentage of GDP

	Total benefit expenditure £ billion[1]	*Money GDP £ billion*[2]	*Benefit expenditure as percentage of GDP*
1978–79	15.9	173.7	9.15
1979–80	18.8	208.6	9.01
1980–81	22.7	237.7	9.55
1981–82	27.7	261	10.61
1982–83	31.6	285.8	11.06
1983–84	35.3	310	11.39
1984–85	38.3	332.1	11.53
1985–86	41.8	364.9	11.46
1986–87	44.9	392.7	11.43
1987–88	46.7	434.8	10.74
1988–89	47.3	484.1	9.77
1989–90	50.1	525.8	9.53
1990–91	56.2	556.8	10.09
1991–92	65.3	580.8	11.24
1992–93	74.7	604.8	12.35
1993–94	80.9	639	12.66

[1] The growth of social security.

[2] Financial Statement and Budget Report 1995–96.

Residential Care Homes

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time of residence of people in a long stay part 3 home *(a)* in the private sector and *(b)* in the voluntary sector.

Mr. Roger Evans: Data on the length of stay in residential homes is not collected by this Department.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Industrial Development

Mr. John Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what new industries from overseas were sited in England, Wales and Scotland, respectively, in each year between and including 1971 to 1980; and what major expansions or new plants of existing industries were set up or announced during the same years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The total number of projects in England, Scotland, and Wales respectively in 1979 were 119, 28 and 18. Similarly, the number of projects in 1980 were 88, 31 and 16 respectively. These figures are based on information provided to the Department's invest in Britain bureau by companies themselves at the time of their decision to invest. Foreign investors are under no obligation to inform the IBB of their investment decisions.

No records exist for years before 1979 and a more detailed breakdown of the figures for 1979 and 1980 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Advisory Bodies

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Advisory Council on Research and Development for Fuel and Power in each of the last three years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Advisory Council on Research and Development for Fuel and Power met seven times in 1992 and five times in 1993, before it was dissolved in October of that year. Secretariat duties were carried out by DTI officials. There were no advisors. ACORD's budget covered principally member's travel and subsistence expenses and meeting costs. These cost the Department some £3,300 in 1992–93 and 2,500 in 1993–94.

ACORD's remit was to offer views on the energy Research and Development programmes of the Department and of British Coal and Nuclear Electric. The council's views were communicated to Ministers by means of a letter from the chairman after each meeting. ACORD was responsible for commissioning "Energy Paper 61", an appraisal of United Kingdom energy technologies, which was published in May 1994.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Industrial Development Advisory Board in each of the last three years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on the board's activities is published each year in the Industrial Development Act 1982 annual report, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

The estimated cost of administrative support provided for the board by the Department was £20,000 in 1993–94.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the coal task force in each of the last three years;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Advisory Committee on Coal Research in each of the last three years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The following table details the activities of the Advisory Committee on Coal Research and its predecessor, the Coal Task Force.

Coal task force/advisory committee on coal research meetings

Financial year	*Number of meetings (C= CTF A= ACCR)*	*Proposals to Committee*	*Strategy papers reviewed*	*Information papers discussed*	*Cost of running Committee £ k*	*Total programme spend £ million*
1990–91	2C	0	2	2	7.0	11.40 (outturn)
1991–92	4C	13	1	4	14.0	4.67 (outturn)
1992–93	2C	6	1	4	7.0	3.93 (outturn)
1993–94	2C 2A	12	7	5	14.0	7.83 (outturn)
1994–95 (to date)	3A (+2 planned)	5	5	6	10.5	7.5 (budget)

Notes:

[1] This excludes small value proposals, which are dealt with by committee members by post.

The Coal Task Force was inaugurated on 22 November 1990. The last meeting of the Coal Task Force was on 16 July 1993.

The Advisory Committee on Coal Research was inaugurated on 11 November 1993.

Secretariat and administrative support to these committees is provided by ETSU as part of the programme management arrangements which ETSU provides to the DTI.

An annual progress report for the DTI is agreed by the committee at the end of each financial year: copies of reports for 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 are available in the House of Commons Library.

The budget for the ACCR in financial year 1994–95 is £17.5k.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee in each of the last three years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Offshore Industry Liaison Committee has met twice in each of the last three years. The secretariat is provided by the offshore supplies office.

The committee has no advisors or budget and has not published any reports or submissions.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Energy Advisory Panel in each of the last three years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Energy Advisory Panel met for the first time on 23 November 1993 and has met six times to date; once in 1993 and five times so far in 1994. Three more meetings are expected to be held in the current financial year. Secretariat duties are carried out by DTI officials, but no advisors to the panel have been engaged. The panel's budget covers principally members' travel and subsistence expenses and meeting costs. These were some £3,400 in 1993–94 and £5,000 in 1994–95 to date.

The panel has contributed to the production of the Government's annual energy report, published in June 1994, but it has not produced specific reports or submissions.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the advisory committee for the Joint Environmental Markets Unit in each of the last three years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Joint Environmental Markets Unit advisory committee met for the first time in March 1994 and has had two further meetings since then. The secretariat for the advisory committee is drawn from the staff of JEMU. The committee has no allocated budget; committee members are entitled to claim travel and subsistence in accordance with the DTI's rules for external members of advisory committees. No formal reports or submissions have been produced.

Indonesia

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the value of British arms sales to Indonesia in each of the last 15 years at current prices.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central, (Mr. Fatchett) on 24 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *300*.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the financial value of United Kingdom exports to Indonesia in the last year for which figures are available; and if he will list the products.

Mr. Needham: The latest annual information is published in the December 1993 issue of business monitor MM20, "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Table 4 gives United Kingdom exports by country and product.

Domestic Coal Consumers Council

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he intends to exercise his powers under section 24 of the Coal Industry Act 1994 to abolish the Domestic Coal Consumers Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the light of the privatisation of British Coal and the alternative arrangements for the representation of domestic coal consumers' interests which the coal trade is developing, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has decided to abolish the council on 28 February 1995, when the members' current terms of appointment expire. The members are being informed accordingly.

The necessary order abolishing the council as of 28 February 1995 will be made in due course.

The coal trade, under the umbrella of the Chamber of Coal Traders, is establishing alternative private sector consumer arrangements. Progress has already been made with the establishment of a quality grading system by the Solid Fuel Association and the publication by the approved coal merchants scheme of a consumer charter. In addition, the Solid Fuel Association and HETAS—heating equipment testing and approval scheme—are working together to ensure that consumers have access to competent installers and approved appliances. Improvements to the body of consumer protection legislation, the keystones of which are the Trade Descriptions Act 1968 and the Consumer Protection Act 1987 continue to be made: the General Product Safety Regulations 1994 came into effect on 3 October.

To ensure that the smooth transition towards private sector arrangements is maintained, my right hon. Friend has appointed the out-going chairman of the council, Mrs. Ann Scully, to advise him on progress. Mrs. Scully will be assisted by Mr. Donald Mockett and Mr. Douglas Barrett MBE, who will offer local advice on the interests of consumers in Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively. The terms of reference of the advisory group are:

> — to advise on such further specific arrangements as may need to be established in the interests of domestic coal consumers following the sale of British Coal and its subsidiaries;
>
> — in particular, to assist in developing with coal producers, coal merchants and other organisations in the coal trade arrangements by them for the continuation of fume checks, and the establishment of commercial arrangements for the resolution of complaints, the maintenance of quality standards and dissemination of information and advice about the safe burning of solid fuel; and
>
> — to report by 30 September 1995.

The Government recognise the enormous contribution which the Domestic Coal Consumers Council's members have made to protecting the interests of domestic coal users over the last 50 years, particularly during the passage of the Coal Industry Act 1994. But the market has changed and the time has come to place responsibility for users' interests where they should lie—with the coal trade. Mrs. Scully and her co-advisers will be able to assist the trade in this.

Aerospace Exports

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the amount of cash earned by exports by the United Kingdom aerospace industry in each year since 1989, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The value of exports by the United Kingdom aerospace equipment manufacturing and repairing industry, defined as group 364 of the standard industrial classification, 1980 is given in the following table:

Year	*UK export £ billion*
1989	7.2
1990	7.4
1991	7.3
1992	6.9

The information for 1993 is due to be published soon in the CSO's business monitor series MQ10, "Overseas Trade analysed in terms of industries".

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals are in hand to outsource the operational responsibility for the management and supervision of pipelines or outfalls that are or have been used for the disposal of nuclear waste from AEA sites in Dorset.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Responsibility for this activity currently rests with the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority Government division's radioactive waste services. Government division announced in September that it intends to contractorise the operation as part of its strategy for creating a more competitive market in decommissioning and waste management services. It will continue, however, to determine the programme of work and ensure that the operations are carried out consistent with safety and environmental requirements. Government division is currently considering options for taking forward the process of contractorisation in consultation with employee representatives.

Official Receivers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *1131*, what is his definition of official receivers' case administrative work.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The case administration work of official receivers covers the functions exercised in relation to the estates of insolvent companies and individuals rather than those functions which relate to official receivers' investigatory and regulatory roles.

Disqualification Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of disqualification returns or reports submitted by insolvency practitioners during the past four years, and what proportion of disqualification returns or reports submitted by official receivers during the same period, have resulted in disqualification orders being made against directors.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The answer is as follows:

Insolvency Practitioner Cases

Financial year	*Total number submitted*		*Number of orders*
	Returns	*Reports*	
1991–92	15,615	3,602	146
1992–93	18,233	3,901	211
1993–94	16,124	3,727	194
1994–95[1]	7,698	1,927	90

[1] to 31 October 1994

The number of cases reported on relate to the number of companies, whereas the number of disqualification orders made relate to the number of directors disqualified. The figures cannot be related to each other as it can take a number of years from when the report is submitted to the date when the order is made.

Official receiver reports

Financial year	*Total number of reports submitted*	*Number of orders*
1991–92	2,402	155
1992–93	2,657	182
1993–94	3,532	147
1994–95[1]	1,537	48

[1] to 31 October 1994

The number of cases reported on are quoted in terms of the number of companies. The number of disqualification orders made relate to the number of individual directors disqualified. The figures cannot be related to each other as it can take a number of years for a disqualification order to be made following the submission of a report.

The number of unfitted returns for individual directors in official receivers cases is not held.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many initial unfit conduct reports made, pursuant to the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 and submitted by *(a)* insolvency practitioners and *(b)* official receivers were rejected for not being evidentially strong enough in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The answer is as follows:

Insolvency practitioner reports

Financial year	*Total number of reports submitted*	*Number rejected*
1991–92	3,602	3,796
1992–93	3,901	3,320
1993–94	3,727	3,604
1994–95[1]	1,927	1,774

[1] To 31 October 1994.

The number rejected for a particular year does not bear any relation to those reports actually submitted for that year. Whilst a high proportion will be rejected in the year that the report was submitted—approximately 70 to 75 per cent.—some will not actually be rejected for some time due to the time taken to investigate the matter further.

The totals for rejections also include those not proceeded with because of parallel criminal proceedings, the bankruptcy of the potential respondent or the discovery of evidence which would refute or mitigate the allegation of misconduct.

Official receivers reports

Financial year	*Total number of reports submitted* *Without full report*	*With full report*	*Number of full reports rejected*
1991–92	2,166	236	31
1992–93	2,536	121	32
1993–94	3,425	107	13
1994–95[1]	1,443	94	12

[1] To 31 October 1994.

The total rejections for a particular year relate only to the cases which have been submitted with a full report. Some of them will also related to cases which have been submitted in an earlier financial year.

The rejection figures include those which have not been proceeded with because there are already criminal proceedings afoot, the individual concerned has become bankrupt, or there has been evidence discovered which would refute or mitigate the allegations of misconduct.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria he will use to determine whether or not a pilot scheme will be implemented to evaluate the costs and benefits of contracting out parts of the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Any decision to contract out official receivers' functions will be made on the basis of value for money. A pilot scheme would be appropriate if it were felt that the practical details of a contract needed to be tested.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the resources which it will be necessary to provide to the Insolvency Service Agency to concentrate its investigative role if the recommendations of Stoy Hayward Consulting are implemented in full, indicating the numbers of professional and administrative civil servants.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: No assessment has yet been made of the resources that would be needed to enable the Insolvency Service to pursue its investigative role. In any decision to contract out the administrative work of official receivers' offices, the resource implications of all residual work will be considered.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he will include in the specifications to contract out the initial interview of bankrupts and directors of companies in compulsory liquidation to ensure that they are conducted by adequately qualified staff in the private sector.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: My officials are currently in the process of inviting firms to tender for a contract to work up a specification, bid documentation and evaluation criteria to enable the work of official receivers to be contracted out in the event that such a decision is taken. As part of this work, the successful contractor will be asked to determine performance criteria for all aspects of any work to be contracted out, including the initial interviews of bankrupts and company directors.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to consult insolvency practitioners, trade associations, chambers of trade and commerce and other interested bodies over his proposal to contract out part of the official receiver's statutory functions.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Any contracting out of the official receivers' functions would require them to be consulted pursuant to section 69(3) of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994. I and my officials have received representations from a variety of sources on this issue and expect to receive further representations if any decision to proceed with contracting out is made.

British Gas

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the percentage of the revenue base of British Gas which is unregulated and open to competition.

Mr. Eggar: Approximately 40 per cent. of British Gas's revenue base is in the competitive sector. In 1993, the British Gas Group turnover totalled approximately £11.2 billion. The tariff sector, which is both regulated by Ofgas and a monopoly business, accounted for approximately £6.5 billion, leaving around £4.8 billion revenue, or 40 per cent., derived from the competitive sector.

Competitiveness

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November, *Official Report,* column *583,* if he will publish any evidence that British industry's level of competitiveness has changed relative to the rest of the EEC since 1979.

Mr. Needham: The Government's White Paper "Helping Business To Win"—Cm 2563—set out a detailed analysis of the improvements in British industry's competitive position relative to our international competitors since 1979. The White Paper contained a formidable agenda of actions and initiatives committing the Government to work with industry to build on this success.

Environmental Advice

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answers of 30 November, *Official Report,* column *706,* regarding the provision of environmental advice, if he will specify the advice he received from each organisation.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* Consultation of other Departments and organisations took place on the understanding that the information provided would be treated in confidence. This is our established practice with regard to consultation on blocks offered for licensing.

Officials took account of the concerns of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Countryside Council for Wales, regarding the ecological status of the area. It was agreed that blocks could be offered and special conditions should be attached to each licence. These special conditions have been agreed with, among others, the Department of the Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the JNCC, which has consulted the CCW.

Coal Board Properties

Mr. Enright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guarantees have been given in respect of the rights of the owners of former Coal Board properties within the curtilage of the pits.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 6 December 1994]:* The Coal Industry Act 1994 has preserved the rights of claimants in respect of subsidence under the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991.

Regional Development Funding

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those public projects which received European regional development funding and were subsequently privatised over the last 10 years, indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 24 November 1994]:* The bodies that have been privatised during the last 10 years and received European regional development funding for projects were British Gas, British Telecommunications and the Electricity Boards. The dates and amounts of grants are listed in the following table:

British Telecom	£
1984	
17 May	
Manchester	102,000
17 September	
Newcastle	1,058,400
North Tyneside	1,118,400
South Tyneside	405,600
South Tyneside	1,355,100
South Tyneside	116,700
Sunderland	560,100
Middlesborough	274,800
Durham	1,194,300
Darlington	230,400
Darlington	300,000
Northumberland	210,600
Northumberland	24,900
Bradford	895,200
Rotherham	231,600
Doncastor	394,200
Barnsley	201,000
Redruth/Hayle	872,700
Liskeard/ Newquay/Roche	1,070,700
Birmingham	96,900
Birmingham	298,800
Birmingham	935,400
Birmingham	688,500
Birmingham	85,200
Birmingham	111,900
Birmingham	233,400
Birmingham	29,100
Birmingham	647,400
Birmingham	506,400
Birmingham	488,400
Coventry	38,700
Coventry	175,500
Wolverhampton	577,500
Wolverhampton	77,400
Wolverhampton	905,400
Wolverhampton	83,400
Walsall	560,400
West Bromwich	122,400
Birmingham	541,800
Liverpool	102,600
Wirral	24,000
Liverpool	38,700
Liverpool	38,100
Liverpool	31,500
Liverpool	159,600
Liverpool	95,400
Sefton	87,000
Sefton	97,200
St. Helens	63,900
St. Helens	54,900
Sefton	704,700
Wirral	669,300
Liverpool	139,200
Liverpool	732,300
Liverpool	45,300
Liverpool	74,700
Liverpool	391,200
Rossendale	18,000
Rochdale	29,400

Electricity Companies	£
1984	
17 September	
Burnley	79,500
Wigan	816,600
1985	
24 January	
Blaydon	74,100
Hull	45,000
Hull	30,900
Torridge	25,600
Tavistock	46,500
Lynton	259,800
30 September	
(Various)	889,500
1986	
29 January	
Rossendale	1,830,000
1987	
27 January	
Manchester	255,000
The Wrekin	80,500
1988	
27 January	
Chester	440,000
Salford	76,000
(Various)	436,000
Manchester	45,000
Hartlepool	512,500

British Gas	£
1984	
12 January	
Washington	48,000
17 May	
Sheffield	58,800
17 September	
Barnsley	619,500
Bradford	43,800
Halton	151,200

British Gas	*£*
1985	
24 January	
Consett	28,800
Rotherham	811,500
Bideford	88,500
Birmingham	18,200
Blackburn	116,400
Liverpool	134,400
Rochdale	66,600
30 September	
Sheffield	643,500
Bradford	39,500
Bradford	28,000
Wolverhampton	430,000
Halton	29,250

Argentina

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on present trading relations with Argentina; and what has been the import/export level during the last five years.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* Our trade relations with Argentina continue to develop strongly. Not only are our exports growing rapidly but some of our best-known companies have invested over US$1 billion in Argentina over the last two years. In addition, there have been a growing number of trade missions to Argentina, including one which I led in July 1994.

Figures for visible United Kingdom exports to and imports from Argentina over the last full five years and in 1994 to end September are:

	£ million						
	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*Jan–Sept 1993*	*Jan–Sept 1994*
UK exports	13.6	36.0	69.7	118.7	179.3	115.3	163.7
UK imports	99.0	144.2	135.6	124.6	141.1	98.3	131.3
Balance	–85.4	–108.2	–65.9	–5.9	38.2	17.0	32.4

Source:
Overseas Trade Statistics of the UK

NORTHERN IRELAND

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Ms Hoey: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to set up a centre for myalgic encephalomyelitis in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Moss: There are no plans at present to set up such a centre.

Wild Animals Legislation

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to extend the control of wild animals legislation to, or to propose similar legislation for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Moss: There are no plans at present to introduce legislation to extend the control of wild animals. In Northern Ireland the keeping of non-domestic animals is controlled under public health and animal welfare legislation. Native species of wild animals are subject to the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which among other things controls the keeping of protected species listed in the order.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Sir John Wheeler: I am aware of none. Civil servants may provide briefing of a factual nature for Ministers on matters relating to their own Departments. In addition, Ministers in preparing for a constituency speech can draw on material produced by their Department during the normal course of business.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps will be taken to prevent the erosion of hill livestock compensatory allowances and restore the HLCA rates to 1992–93 levels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The recently announced decision that HLCA rates for 1995 would remain at their 1994 levels was taken following the Government's completion of the annual review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands. The rates announced apply throughout the United Kingdom. The same procedure will apply again next year.

Voluntary Organisations

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to revise the Hurd principles as they apply to the activities of voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have no plans at present to revise what has come to be known as the Hurd policy but I will of course keep the policy under review in the light of developments in Northern Ireland.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what plans he has to publish details of the targets of the Child Support Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moss: The Child Support Agency will publish its 1994–95 business plan today. Copies will be placed in the House.

The targets that I have set for the Child Support Agency for 1994–95 are as follows:

- —50 per cent. of people with care of children making eligible applications to the Child Support Agency to have maintenance arranged;
- —a score of 65 out of 100 on an index of client satisfaction with the agency's service, as determined by an independent survey;
- —annual benefit savings of £10.2 million;
- —to manage the agency's resources so as to deliver its business plan within a total budget of £5.7 million;
- —by the end of March 1995, no more than 55 per cent. of outstanding maintenance applications to be over 13-weeks-old, no more than 25 per cent. over 26-weeks-old, and no more than 1 per cent. over 52-weeks-old.

The agency is making a number of operational and procedural changes this year which should significantly improve performance. The new targets take this expected improvement into account. They are higher than the agency's achievements last year; and they will be challenging but they should be achievable.

Labour Statistics

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what estimate he has made of the reduction in the number of persons by grade and gender employed by his Department and associated offices and agencies, nationally and regionally over the next three years, as a result of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement of 29 November, indicating which branch, agency and region will be affected and stating his estimate of the number of job losses in each year which will be by *(a)* natural wastage, *(b)* voluntary redundancy and *(c)* compulsory redundancy; and what estimate he has made of the yearly total of savings in wages and associated costs as a result of these reductions in each Department, branch and agency.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* The information requested is not yet available. It is likely, however, that further reductions will be necessary over and above the 500 voluntary redundancies in the Northern Ireland civil service which will take place before 31 March 1995. The Department's staffing plans for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 will be set out in the departmental report, to be published on 10 March 1995.

The Government's aim has been, and will continue to be, that reductions in the size of the civil service should, as far as possible, be achieved without compulsory redundancies.

TREASURY

Insurance Premium Tax

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the insurance premium tax applies to insurance policies taken out to protect mortgage interest payments against the risk of sickness or unemployment.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In common with most other forms of general insurance, policies taken out to protect mortgage interest payments against the risk of sickness or unemployment are subject to insurance premium tax.

Betting Duty

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assessment he has made of the potential impact on general betting duty receipts of the introduction of Sunday racing;

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact on general betting duty receipts of the deregulation of licensed betting offices up to and including those measures announced by the Home Secretary in July 1994;

(3) what assessment he has made of the potential impact on general betting duty receipts of the removal of restrictions on advertising of licensed betting offices.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No such assessment has been made.

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rate of general betting duty receipts and the total revenue from that tax in each of the last five years.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The rate of general betting duty and the total revenue received in the last five years are as follows:

Rate of duty—

On-course—no liability to general betting duty from 29 March 1987

Off-course—12 July 1981 to 1 April 1992—8 per cent.
1 April 1992 to present—7.75 per cent.

Receipts

	£ million
1989–90	458.7
1990–91	479.1
1991–92	482.1
1992–93	473.7
1993–94	494.9

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact on general betting duty receipts of the introduction of evening opening of licenced betting offices.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: General betting duty receipts for the months April to August, using 1992 as a baseline, increased by 11.7 per cent. in 1993 and 16.1 per cent. in 1994. General betting duty receipts for the fiscal year 1993–94 were 4.5 per cent. up on 1992–93 and those for 1994–95 will be approximately 6 per cent. up.

VAT Refunds

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 22 November, *Official Report,* column *71,* if he will publish a table showing, for each recognised sport where VAT payments have been refunded to non-profit making organisations supplying sporting services, *(a)* the name of the sports clubs or associations and *(b)* the value of the VAT refunded.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. I regret that this information is either not available or confidential.

Taxation Revenue

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of total Government taxation revenue was raised by the taxation of inherited wealth and income in each year since 1979.

Sir George Young: The information requested is given in the table. Inheritance tax is charged on estates passing on death, and on certain lifetime gifts and settled property.

Financial year	*Inheritance tax[1] as a percentage of total government taxation[2]*
1979–80	0.6
1980–81	0.5
1981–82	0.5
1982–83	0.5
1983–84	0.5
1984–85	0.5
1985–86	0.6
1986–87	0.7
1987–88	0.7
1988–89	0.6
1989–90	0.7
1990–91	0.6
1991–92	0.6
1992–93	0.6
1993–94	0.6

Footnotes:

[1] Includes small residual receipts from estate duty and receipts from capital transfer tax. Estate duty was replaced by capital transfer tax in 1975 which was in turn replaced by inheritance tax in 1986.

[2] Taxes on income, on expenditure, on capital, rates/community charge/council tax, royalties and social security contributions.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the direct revenue yield in a full year at 1994–95 levels of income from restricting *(a)* personal allowances, *(b)* relief from pension contributions and *(c)* other reliefs to relief at (i) 25p and (ii) 20p, giving in each case the number of people affected.

Sir George Young: Estimated full-year yields at 1994–95 income levels based on a projection of the 1992–93 survey of personal incomes and other survey data in line with the assumptions in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1995–96" are given in the table. The figures do not take account of any behavioural effects which might result from the introduction of such changes, and show the yield from restructuring each allowance or relief separately. If two or more were restricted the total yield would be greater than the sum of individual figures.

	Restriction to			
	Basic Rate		*20p*	
Effect of restricting	*Yield £ million*	*Numbers affected millions*	*Yield £ million*	*Numbers affected millions*
(a) Personal allowances	1,450	3.3	5,600	26.1
(b) Relief for pension contributions	680	1.9	1,330	11.5
(c) Other reliefs	140	0.7	n/a[1]	n/a

[1] Information on reliefs given at source is not available from the Survey of Personal Incomes so it is not possible to estimate the effect of restricting other reliefs to 20 per cent.

EU Anti-fraud Budget

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what arguments were advanced at the Council of Finance Ministers in favour of reducing the anti-fraud budget at its meeting in November; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Commission's preliminary bid for anti-fraud lines in the 1995 budget was for 133.1 mecu, or £103.8 million which was a reduction of 6.1 mecu, or £4.8 million, over the budget for 1994. This is due to a reduction in one-off studies and start-up costs and capital expenditure in agriculture. But the Commission's bid ensured that the amounts for staff and running costs were maintained at their 1994 levels.

The European Parliament sought an increase of 7 mecu, or £5.5 million, over the Commission's bid, made up of: 3 mecu, or £2.3 million, for measures for inspection of animals in the agricultural section; and 3.95 mecu, or £3.1 million, transferred from various programmes to a number of small amounts in administrative expenditure in the operational section of the budget. The latter is contrary to Council policy.

The United Kingdom supported the European Parliament's proposals in this area, although it had considerable sympathy with the Council's view on not creating administrative expenditure lines within the operational expenditure section of the budget because this makes control of the Commission's administration budget more difficult. In the event, the majority's view prevailed and the European Parliament's bid was cut back at the 16 November Budget Council to the Commission's original bid, which both the Commission and the Council considered appropriate for what is required for the fight against fraud. But the majority of the European Parliament's proposals are for non-compulsory expenditure on which final decisions are taken by the European Parliament, and it is still able to reinstate part of this increase in the Budget if it so wishes.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ban the export of certain classes of weapons to Indonesia while violations of human rights continue.

Mr. Goodlad: The export to any destination of arms and other goods listed in the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1994 is prohibited without a licence issued by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. All applications for export licences for defence equipment are considered on a case by case basis in the light of established criteria. In the case of Indonesia, we would not, for example, licence for export equipment likely to be used for internal repression.

Private Consultants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many private consultants were employed by his Department in the last year for which figures are available; and what was the total cost.

Mr. Goodlad: There are three categories of external consultants as defined by the Cabinet Office efficiency scrutiny. This is: "Investigating problems, providing analysis or advice, or assisting with the development of new systems, new structures or new capabilities within the organisation".

The diplomatic wing spent £704,542 on the hire of management consultants, £8,600,000 on the commission of estate and building works consultants and £4,915,000 on technical support in the information technology area. The total number of contracts was 460 at a total cost of £14,219,542.

The aid wing spent £681,123 on the hire of management consultants, £55,000 on IT consultancies and £234,045,056 on consultants involved in the aid programme overseas. The total number of contracts was 1,181 at a total cost of £234,781,179.

Official Entertainment Costs

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of official entertainment in each diplomatic residence owned by Her Majesty's Government in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: The entertainment provision for heads of mission covers activities both at diplomatic residences, whether owned or rented, and elsewhere in the country of accreditation. The cost of entertainment in each residence cannot be disaggregated from the figure for overall entertainment. For the financial years 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 the total FCO expenditure by heads of mission on entertainment was £2,077,868, £2,301,382 and £2,594,023, respectively.

Overseas Travel

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the number and cost of *(a)* first-class tickets, *(b)* business-class tickets and *(c)* economy-class tickets for overseas flights taken by Ministers located in Britain and paid for by his Department, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: Our central records are unable to break down ministerial and civil servants commercial overseas flights. The information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Clwyd : To ask the secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the number and cost of *(a)* first-class tickets, *(b)* business-class tickets and *(c)* economy-class tickets for overseas flights taken by civil servants located in Britain and paid for by his Department, in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: The details for overseas flights by FCO and ODA Ministers and civil servants based in Britain in 1993 and 1994 are:

Class of travel	*Number*	*Cost*
1993		£
First class	293	543,449
Club class	6,825	5,734,311
Economy	1,598	392,460
1994 (January–October)		£
First class	380	437,597
Club class	6,071	5,884,290
Economy	1,281	328,666

Apportioning expenditure between Ministers and civil servants would incur disproportionate cost.

For expenditure incurred in 1992, it is not possible to provide a breakdown by class and mode of travel. Nor is it possible to distinguish between overseas and domestic travel. Total expenditure on official travel by UK-based Ministers and officials in the FCO and ODA that year was £9,291,235.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total cost of overseas flights taken by *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* civil servants located in Britain and paid for by his Department in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: Expenditure for overseas travel in the FCO is as follows:

1992 £10,256,192

This 1992 figure includes all forms of travel—rail, road, ship and air. It is not possible to give a more detailed breakdown.

1993 Commercial and charter flights £7,407,489

1994 Commercial and charter flights £7,454,498

As stated in replies to other written questions, our central records are unable to break down ministerial and civil servants' flights without incurring disproportionate costs.

Drug Production and Trafficking

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution his Department is making to the development of international co-operation against illicit drugs production and trafficking.

Mr. Baldry: The Government's consultative paper "Tackling Drugs Together" launched on 19 October demonstrates the Government's firm commitment to tackling the menace of illicit drugs both at home and abroad.

In his reply of 24 November to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs), my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary set out the action that the Government are taking to improve the effectiveness of international co-operation against drug traffickers. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is actively involved in supporting these activities.

In this context, we have raised the profile and priority of drugs in our bilateral contacts with other countries, taking advantage on ministerial contacts where this would be useful and through our diplomatic missions abroad.

At the multilateral level, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary stressed at the United Nations General Assembly on 28 September that "the international community needs to give full support to the UN International Drugs Control Programme, which has responsibility for leading the global effort in this field. The UN is the best resource for tackling this global menace". We are providing an extra £1.2 million to fund UNDCP projects. This will bring total United Kingdom assistance to other Governments, including through UNDCP to £8 million in this financial year.

The United Kingdom, as chairman of the group of UNDCP major donors, will continue to encourage others to increase their contributions to UNDCP. We are moreover actively encouraging the international financial and development institutions to give higher priority to drugs and crime in their country programmes.

We also play a prominent role in other international meetings, for example in the Dublin group of donors, which seeks to develop a dialogue with governments of producer and transit countries on drugs issues. We are also encouraging the EU to be more active in combating drug trafficking, particularly in areas of intergovernmental co-operation. We have, for example, been at the forefront of efforts to associate countries of central and eastern Europe with EU work on drugs and organised crime and we have taken a leading part in EU efforts to develop co-operation with other neighbouring countries in the Mahgreb and Levant. We are furthermore encouraging the Commonwealth to give the issue of drugs and crime a higher political priority.

Israel

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress there has recently been in allowing Palestinians back to jobs held in Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 20 November the Israeli Cabinet increased by 4,500 the number of work permits available for Palestinians throughout the occupied territories, bringing the total to 33,500.

Prisoners of War, Iraq

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs whether progress has been made on the release of Kuwaiti prisoners since Saddam Hussein recognised Kuwaiti borders; and what representations he has made about their release.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Iraq is beginning to co-operate with the International Committee of the Red Cross in commenting on ICRC case files on missing persons passed to Iraq over 18 months ago. It has so far offered an incomplete response on 127 of the 609 case files. The tripartite commission will meet again on 8 December to review progress and approve the establishment of a technical sub-commission to speed up the substantive review of the case files. We have made it clear to the Iraqi regime that we expect to see substantive progress soon.

Zaire

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to support the United Nations Secretary-General's proposal for a United Nations peacekeeping force to be dispatched to Zaire with the object of securing the delivery of humanitarian aid, protecting British aid workers and ensuring safe passage for those refugees wishing to return to Rwanda.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The President of the United Nations Security Council issued a statement on 30 November in response to the Secretary-General's report on the situation in the refugee camps in Zaire and the proposals put forward in that report. The United Kingdom played a constructive role in the negotiation of that statement, which it fully supports. A copy will be placed in the House of Commons Library shortly.

Syria

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy with regard to arms sales to Syria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The EU arms embargo on Syria was lifted on 28 November. All applications for the sale of arms will be considered on a case by case basis in the light of the international guidelines to which we are committed. These include whether a proposed transfer would be likely to increase tension in the region or contribute to regional instability.

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the present situation in the attempt to find peace in Liberia.

Mr. Baldry: We strongly support the continued efforts by the Ghanaian President Rawlings to encourage a new agreement among the Liberian factions, but are disappointed that the latest round of talks in Accra ended on 29 November without making progress.

A high level UN mission has been visiting Liberia and is due to report to the Security Council shortly. The present mandate of the UN observer mission, UNOMIL, is due to end on 13 January.

Commonwealth Institute

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his responsibility for the work of the Commonwealth Institute in Scotland.

Mr. Baldry: Section 5(2) of the Imperial Institute Act 1925 established a board of governors for the purpose of carrying on the management of the institute under the responsible Minister, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. The chairman of the Commonwealth Institute, Scotland, is a member of the board of governors of the Commonwealth Institute.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests he has received regarding his future role in the continued functioning of the Commonwealth Institute in Scotland and from whom; and what response he gave.

Mr. Baldry: On 28 April 1994, the chairman of the Commonwealth Institute, Scotland requested that the Government provide an annual core grant of £116,000 after March 1996. My noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey informed the chairman on 17 July 1994 that the Government could not meet his request, but that there would be no objection from the Government to the Commonwealth Institute, Scotland requesting the board of the institute in London to make available post-1996 a proportion of its funding.

WALES

Council Tenants

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his policies on anti-social tenants in council housing; and what is his estimate of the number of such tenants.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Policy for dealing with anti-social council tenants is a matter for the housing authorities. The tenants' charter sets out what residents might expect of their council in managing nuisance. Councils are required to inform their tenants about their policy for dealing with anti-social problems. The Welsh Office has provided a grant to Cynon Valley borough council to research and advise on dealing with neighbourhood disputes and disruptive behaviour on council estates. The findings will shortly be made available to other housing authorities in Wales.

Dental Services

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many representations he has received on the subject of the provision of dental services in the NHS in the county of South Glamorgan in the last year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many representations he has received from people living in Gwynedd about the provision of dental services on the NHS in the last year; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many representations he has about the provision of dental services on the NHS in the county of Clwyd in the last year; and if he will make a statement;

(4) how many representations he has received on the subject of provision of dental services on the NHS in Powys in the last year; and if he will make a statement;

(5) how many representations he has received on the subject of provision of dental services on the NHS in the county of Dyfed in the last year; and if he will make a statement;

(6) how many representations he has received on the subject of provision of dental services on the NHS in the county of West Glamorgan in the last year; and if he will make a statement;

(7) how many representations he has received on the subject of provision of dental services on the NHS in the county of Mid Glamorgan in the last year; and if he will make a statement;

(8) how many representations he has received on the subject of provision of dental services on the NHS in the county of Gwent in the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: The following table shows the number of written representations, about NHS dental services, received by the Secretary of State from members of the public and from Members of the House, during the period 1 January 1994 to 30 November 1994. During the same period, 31 questions have been asked by Members of the House about NHS dental services in various parts of Wales.

County	*Number of representations*
Clwyd	7
Dyfed	12
Gwent	2
Gwynedd	41
Mid Glamorgan	4
Powys	6
South Glamorgan	7
West Glamorgan	8

	1989–90		*1990–91*		*1991–92*		*1992–93*		*1993–94*	
	Nursing and midwifery[1]	*In-patient cases*	*Nursing and midwifery*[1]	*In-patient cases*	*Nursing and midwifery*[1]	*In-patient cases*	*Nursing and midwifery*	[1]*In-patient cases*	*Nursing and midwifery*	[1]*In-patient cases*
Clwyd	3,165	63,186	3,174	63,002	3,270	70,191	3,347	73,209	3,327	72,612
East Dyfed	1,947	36,262	2,043	36,879	2,018	39,090	2,052	40,606	2,061	42,480
Gwent	4,060	72,584	4,014	75,349	3,924	74,696	3,864	74,455	3,746	75,452
Gwynedd	1,895	37,858	1,912	37,592	1,920	38,817	1,968	39,567	2,049	40,133
Mid Glamorgan	4,745	87,080	4,777	89,782	4,777	93,566	4,901	96,152	4,808	97,420
Pembrokeshire	696	15,435	677	16,995	708	16,734	747	17,613	760	17,132
Powys	1,086	7,698	1,059	7,993	1,084	8,818	1,044	9,180	1,010	9,217
South Glamorgan	4,300	86,546	4,309	84,392	4,197	88,072	4,378	83,250	4,359	84,105
West Glamorgan	3,018	68,866	3,043	70,489	3,080	70,352	3,181	69,625	3,222	69,811
Wales[2]	24,919	475,515	25,017	482,473	25,050	500,336	25,555	503,657	25,422	508,362

[1] At 30 September. All nursing and midwifery staff (excluding pre-registration learners) are shown: because of the use of local pay scales it is no longer possible to identify qualified nurses separately. Staff employed by (and patients treated in) NHS trusts have been allocated to the health authority area in which the trust is situated.

[2] The nursing and midwifery figure includes staff employed by the Welsh Health Common Services Authority.

Tinnitus

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those counties in Wales where tinnitus sufferers may gain advice and assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: All counties in Wales. Tinnitus sufferers may consult their general practitioners for advice and assistance. The GP may then refer the patient to an ear, nose and throat consultant for further advice or management.

The Welsh hearing institute at the University hospital of Wales, Cardiff provides a specialist service for tinnitus.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he has given to health authorities regarding special provision for people suffering from tinnitus.

Mr. Richards: No central direction has been given as it is a matter for each health authority to decide on the appropriate provision in the light of local health needs and best clinical practice.

Planning Policy Guidance Notes

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to publish versions appropriate for Wales of the Department for the Environment PPG6 on mineral planning, PPG13 on transport, PPG15 on museums and PPG23 on pollution; and when they will be available for public consultation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There has already been consultation in Wales on the draft planning guidance for these issues. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is now considering what guidance is needed for Wales. Consideration will be given as to whether a further round of consultation is necessary.

Recycling

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local authorities have submitted their plans to achieve the target for the recycling of domestic waste; and to what extent each local authority has produced a plan to achieve the targets of the Government.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: All 37 authorities have submitted their draft plans, of which 34 have been approved to date; each plan provides for an increase in recycling activity and will contribute to the Government's target.

Quangos

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will publish the report of KPMG Peat Marwick on the operation of major Welsh quangos; what was the cost of the report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* I am writing to the hon. Member today and placing a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Public Authorities (Rent Payments)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish for the last three years the total amount paid in rent by each department, together with the total amounts for each year.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* Information is not available in the form requested. Where properties are occupied jointly by different Welsh Office departments and groups, costs are not apportioned separately to the administrative units involved. For reasons of commercial confidentiality it is also Government policy not to disclose information about rent levels for individual properties. The total amount of rent paid in each year is:

	£
1991–92	3,469,771
1992–93	3,768,323
1993–94	3,629,326

Darland High School

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will visit Darland high school, Clwyd; and if he will meet the chairman and vice chairman of Darland high school, Clwyd, to discuss the needs of special needs pupils;

(2) if he will visit Darland high school, Clwyd, to discuss with the staff and governors Her Majesty's Government's policies concerning staffing and budgets for high schools.

Mr. Richards: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have any plans at present to visit Darland high school. The budget for any local education authority maintained school is a matter for the authority concerned.

General Practitioners

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the terms of service for general practitioners will next be reviewed.

Mr. Richards: Items included in the general practitioners' terms of service are amended from time to time but there are no plans for a general review.

Information Technology

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what date he has set for the completion of the tendering process for information technology for Welsh local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office issued on 9 November 1994 a consultation paper on the Government's proposals for the extension of competitive tendering to information technology services. This paper proposed that the implementation date for local authorities in Wales should be 1 October 1999.

SCOTLAND

Football

Mr. Maxton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the Scottish Football Association to discuss the future of the national stadium.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend and I meet representatives of the Scottish Football Association from time to time, both formally and informally. Scottish Office officials will shortly be meeting representatives of national stadium committee to hear about the committee's plans for further redevelopment at Hampden Park.

Fuel Poverty

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* other interested parties to discuss the incidence of fuel poverty in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My officials and I regularly meet representatives of local authorities and other interested parties to discuss a range of social and health concerns.

Schools (League Tables)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any proposals to introduce league tables for Scottish Schools; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A wide range of information relating to individual schools in Scotland is already published annually, following our commitment in the parents charter to do so. This covers exam results, school leavers' destinations, school costs and attendance and truancy rates.

Primary Schools

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent per pupil in primary schools in Scotland in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what the figure was in 1978–79, at constant prices.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Current expenditure per primary pupil in 1992–93 was 62 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979. The latest figure is £1,766 per primary pupil.

New information on budgeted school running costs per pupil for 1994–95, for individual primary and secondary schools in Scotland, will be published next week.

Violent Crime

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to tackle the problems of violent crime and drug-related deaths in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The detection and prevention of violent crime will continue to be given a high priority by police forces in Scotland. Forces are also very active in taking measures to curb the acquisition and supply of illicit drugs. Our strategy for tackling the problems associated with the misuse of drugs, including drug-related deaths, is set out in the report of the drugs task force led by my noble and learned Friend, the Minister of State, which was published on 19 October.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to develop value-added indicators when publishing performance data with regard to Scottish secondary schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office education department and COSLA have set up a working group to investigate value-added indicators of school performance. The Scottish Office has also commissioned a major research study on school effectiveness, including ways of measuring value added.

Manufacturing Industry

Mrs. Adams: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the manufacturing industry in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I meet representatives of the Scottish Trades Union Congress from time to time to discuss a range of matters concerning the Scottish economy.

Water Authorities

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to call in major proposed new water and sewerage capital investments by local authorities during the run-up to transfer of responsibilities to the new water and sewerage authorities.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to call in any major water and sewerage proposals during the run up to the transfer of responsibilities to the new water and sewerage authorities.

Hill Farming

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland to discuss the future of hill farming in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend and I met the president of the National Farmers Union of Scotland on 26 October as part of the annual review of hill farming. We have no plans for a further meeting, although I meet the president from time to time on a range of issues.

A9

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about accidents on the single carriageway sections of the A9 north of Perth.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office has received no representations about accidents on the single carriageway sections of the A9 between Perth and Inverness.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will postpone the elections to the new local authorities until Thursday 4 May 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: I believe that the timetable that has been set is the right one. It strikes the best possible balance between giving the existing councils sufficient time to prepare for the elections and giving the new councils additional time to prepare for the change on 1 April 1996.

Economy

Dr. Reid: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with the chairman of Scottish Enterprise regarding the Scottish economy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I last met the chairman of Scottish Enterprise on 23 November.

Second Forth Road Bridge

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what account he has taken of the findings of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution in coming to conclusions about a second Forth road bridge.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend and I welcome the recent report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution as a valuable contribution to public debate of the issues it considers. My right hon. Friend has reached no conclusions about a second Forth road bridge.

Toxic Waste

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision he has made in the current financial year in financial allocations to Scottish Enterprise and the Glasgow Development Agency for making safe land contaminated by toxic waste.

Mr. Stewart: No specific allocations are made to Scottish Enterprise or to local enterprise companies for expenditure on dealing with land contaminated by toxic waste. Such expenditure is met from the block allocation for environmental expenditure. The expenditure provision for Scottish Enterprise on the environment block in 1994–95 amounts to £78 million.

The distribution of expenditure resources among local enterprise companies is a matter for decision by Scottish Enterprise. Glasgow Development Agency's budget allocation for 1994–95 on the environment block amounts to £13.680 million.

Public Sector Housing

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of tenants' organisations to discuss public sector housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no plans at present to meet tenants' organisations to discuss housing in Scotland, but I often meet tenants in the course of my housing visits throughout Scotland.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of tenants' organisations to discuss public sector housing in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet tenants' organisations to discuss housing in Scotland, but I often meet tenants in the course of my housing visits throughout Scotland.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further steps he is taking to combat homelessness in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh).

Skillseekers Training Scheme

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he plans to have with the Glasgow development agency on the operation of the skillseekers training scheme.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans for such discussions. In Scotland the operation of Skillseekers is the responsibility of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and its networks of local enterprise companies, which include the Glasgow Development Agency.

Economic Deprivation (Ill Health)

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met Lanarkshire health board to discuss ill health as a result of economic deprivation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend and my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State regularly meet representatives from all health boards to discuss health issues. There are no immediate plans for further meetings at present.

Hawick Cottage Hospital

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Borders health board in order to discuss the need for a custom built replacement for Hawick cottage hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My noble and learned Friend, the Minister of State meets chairmen of health boards regularly to discuss a wide range of strategic issues affecting the management of the NHS in Scotland. I understand that Borders health board is appraising options for the future provision of community hospital services in Hawick and that these considerations are at a preliminary stage.

Youth Unemployment, Glasgow

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he is taking to combat youth unemployment in south-west Glasgow.

Mr. Stewart: The Government's economic policies are designed to create a climate in which all employers, including those in Glasgow, can maintain existing jobs and create new ones. The Skillseekers programme, operational in Glasgow since April this year, gives young people the opportunity to receive high-quality training, often while in employment, in the occupational area of their choice, and our youth training guarantee ensures that all young people under 18 who are not in full-time education or employment will receive the offer of a training place, with the prospect of gaining a qualification and thus an improved chance of securing employment.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Local Government Staff Commission to discuss the arrangements for staff transfers to the new authorities.

Mr. Stewart: I met the Chairman and Secretary of the Local Government Staff Commission (Scotland) on Friday 18 November.

Scottish Homes

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he proposes to meet the board of Scottish Homes to discuss its spending programme in 1995–96; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend and I meet the board from time to time to discuss a range of issues, the last occasion being on 7 November 1994. I shall consider Scottish Homes' proposed programme for 1995–96 around the end of February next year.

Growth Rate

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from Scottish industry about the rate of growth.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I are in continual contact with representatives of Scottish industry, in order that we remain fully aware of their interests and concerns.

The average projection of the independent forecasters monitored by the Scottish Office industry department is for gross domestic product to grow by between 2.5 and 3 per cent. in both 1994 and 1995. This is a steady and sustainable rate of economic expansion.

Unemployment

Mr. McKelvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have been out of work for more than one year; and what steps he has taken to reduce the number.

Mr. Stewart: Latest figures as at October 1994 show that 75,752 people in Scotland have been out of work for more than one year. This figure is 7.9 per cent. of the relative United Kingdom figure and is a reduction of 9.1 per cent. over the October 1993 figure.

The Government have introduced a comprehensive range of measures aimed at reducing long-term unemployment through the Employment Service and through Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the local enterprise companies and we have created the right conditions for growth in employment through tight control over inflation and harmonisation of business rates.

House Building

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses have been built for rent by *(a)* Renfrew district council and *(b)* Inverclyde district council in the last two years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on tenders accepted, houses started, under construction and completed in each local authority area is available in the quarterly housing series of Scottish Office statistical bulletins, copies of which are in the Library.

Labour Statistics

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the change in the number of unemployed since December 1992.

Mr. Stewart: Between December 1992 and October 1994, the seasonally adjusted level of unemployment in Scotland fell by 28,700.

Grant Assistance

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the compliance of the second application of assistance from Bell Woven Brakel to set up a woven label factory in Dunoon with his Department's criteria for such grant assistance; and if, as part of this application, he will examine the potential impact of the grant on existing woven name tape manufacturers in the United Kingdom.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Bell Woven Brakel received financial assistance from Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Government's economic development agency for the highlands and islands. Consideration of individual assistance cases is a matter for the enterprise body and I have asked the chairman to provide my hon. Friend with the information requested.

M74

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects work *(a)* to commence and *(b)* to be completed on the M74 between Fullarton and the south side of the Kingston bridge at the M8; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The question of any extension to the M74 in Glasgow is at present a matter for Strathclyde regional council. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State recently issued a consultation document on proposals for trunking certain routes, including the proposed M74 within Glasgow, but no decisions have yet been taken.

Departmental Travel Contracts

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which airline has won the contract to transport Scottish Office staff travelling to Europe on official business; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My Department does not have contracts with particular carriers to transport staff on routes between the United Kingdom and Europe. It is a member of a consortium of Government Departments which, following an open tendering exercise with all the carriers on a number of heavily used routes, has awarded preferred-carrier status to Sabena for travel to Brussels and Air France for Paris. There are no arrangements for other European destinations. Bookings are made taking account of price and airline schedules. These arrangements will be reviewed at 31 March 1995.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. Lang: None. Civil servants may provide briefing of a factual nature for Ministers on matters relating to their own Departments. In addition, Ministers in preparing for a constituency speech can draw on material produced by their Department during the normal course of business.

NHS Spending

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the level of spending per head of population on NHS provision in each Scottish health district.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The latest available information is set out in the table:

Health Board Area	*NHS Expenditure Per Head of Population 1993–94 £*
Argyll and Clyde	753
Ayrshire and Arran	729
Borders	770
Dumfries and Galloway	754
Fife	675
Forth Valley	719
Grampian	736
Greater Glasgow	886
Highland	773

Health Board Area	NHS Expenditure Per Head of Population 1993–94 £
Lanarkshire	642
Lothian	766
Orkney	868
Shetland	885
Tayside	840
Western Isles	1,084
Total health boards	767

Forestry Commission

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his current policy towards the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Lang: The Forestry Commission will continue as the Government Department that advises on and implements our forestry policy.

Medical Complaints

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many medical complaints were heard in Scotland in each of the past five years; and in what percentage of cases complaints of patients were upheld.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* This information is not available for the full period requested. Information about complaints since January 1993 is now published in a series of quarterly NHS complaints bulletins, copies of which are held in the Library of the House.

A global figure in respect of primary care service committee complaints in 1993–94 is provided in the most recent bulletin for the quarter ending 31 March 1994. The number of complaints made specifically against general medical practitioners was 141 of whom 13.5 per cent. were found to be wholly or partially in breach of their terms and conditions of service.

Community Care

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to require a set proportion of local authority expenditure on community care to be spent in the voluntary and private sectors; what considerations underlie those plans; and what consultation will take place before their implementation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* The Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 has provided the Secretary of State with the power to direct authorities on the use of the considerable resources provided to them for community care. Where the use of these resources by an authority is judged to be inconsistent with Government policy and against the best interests of its clients, this new power will prove useful. Any authority in this position will generally have been in discussion with The Scottish Office prior to a decision to use the power.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to ensure that the same standards of financial and managerial control that do not apply to local education authority schools will be required for grant-maintained schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* A self-governing school in Scotland is subject to a range of provisions to ensure that the highest possible standards of financial and managerial control apply. In addition to inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools, these provisions include: a scheme of Government prescribing such a school's articles of constitution and articles of management; the Self-Governing Schools (Application and Amendment of Regulations) (Scotland) Regulations 1994; the Self-Governing Schools (Change in Characteristics) (Scotland) Regulations 1994; the Self-Governing Schools Grant and Recovery (Scotland) Regulations 1994; and detailed financial management procedures and audit arrangements set out in a financial memorandum and other requirements and other guidance.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Spitfire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he is taking to preserve the Battle of Britain Flight Supermarine P.R. XIX Spitfire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is responsible for the operation of the Battle of Britain Flight. However, under the export control system, an export licence will be required from my Department if an owner wishes to export the aircraft, if it was manufactured or produced 50 years before the date of exportation and if it is valued at or above £39,600. In such a case there would be an opportunity for an objection to the export to be raised on the grounds that the Spitfire was of national importance under the Waverley criteria and for a decision on the export licence application to be deferred to enable a compensating offer to purchase to be made to retain the Spitfire.

Turner Bequest

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many of the finished pictures in the Turner bequest are now on public view in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: The Turner bequest of 1856 makes provision for the display of approximately 100 unspecified paintings in his possession at the time of his death. The bequest currently comprises around 30,000 items, as it now includes unfinished work and sketches. The bequest is under the supervision of the trustees of the national gallery and of the Tate gallery, which administer, The Clore gallery.

The national gallery has nine Turner paintings on display, its entire collection. The Clore gallery currently displays 160 oil paintings on its main floor, most of which are finished, and another 53 items in the reserve gallery, including studies and finished work. Other work is shown in rotation at the Clore. The Clore displays all finished works in its possession except for items on which conservation work is needed.

Tourism

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those initiatives taken on behalf of domestic tourism in the last 12 months.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on initiatives undertaken by the English Tourist Board is published in the ETB's annual report, which may be obtained from the Library of the House. In addition to providing grant-in-aid to the ETB, my Department has undertaken a number of activities in support of the domestic tourism sector. These include pursuing with other Government Departments many issues of concern to the tourism industry; helping to encourage and publicise a wide range of events to mark the 50th anniversary of D-day; and working, with the ETB and the British tourist authority, on a tourism strategy which will identify priorities for action by my Department and the tourist boards.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish details of the remit given to McKinsey and Co. Inc., with regard to its present study on behalf of his Department, the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board; what was the value of his Department's contribution to that study; and what is the likely completion date of the study and the number and identity of the other firms bidding for the contract to complete the study.

Mr. Dorrell: McKinsey and Co. Inc., was engaged to assist on work which my Department is undertaking with the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board to identify opportunities for growth and constraints on performance and areas where Government intervention can assist, in the tourism industry. KPMG Peat Marwick and Touche Ross also bid for the contract.

The first phase of this work, for which my Department contributed £35,000, is now complete. McKinsey is now developing certain parts of the original analysis. My Department has committed £15,000 to this work which should be completed by the early part of next year.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the value of the expenses claimed by KPMG for its work on behalf of the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board into information needs and IT strategy.

Mr. Dorrell: The total expenses claimed by KMPG Peat Marwick from the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board for its study were £2,652.06.

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the value of the expenses claimed by McKinsey and Co. Inc., and incurred during its work for the British Tourist Authority entitled, "Meeting the Challenge".

Mr. Dorrell: The total expenses claimed by McKinsey and Co. from the British Tourist Authority were £3,591.

Civil Servants

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many civil servants are employed in the sport and recreation department of his Department; if he will list at what grade, at what salary and at what location they are employed; and for each of those civil servants seconded from other Departments, what was the Department from which they were seconded and the length of their secondment.

Mr. Sproat: The Department's sport and recreation division, which is located at Cockspur street, is currently 21 strong and staffed as in the following table. The salaries of individual members of the division are, in every case, within the minimum to maximum band for the grade, as shown.

Grade	*Number in post*	*Salary minimum £*	*Salary maximum £*
Grade 5	1	38,341	56,953
Grade 7	3	25,837	40,012
HEO	5	16,000	21,059
EO	6	11,673	16,835
AO	3	9,393	12,450
AA	1	7,412	10,513
Personal Secretary	1	9,937	12,880
Typist	1	7,755	10,513

In addition, all of the listed staff receive Inner London Weighting of £1,776 (on a "reserve rights" basis).

Six members of staff have been seconded from the Department of the Environment, 5 since April 1992 who will be returning by March 1995 and 1 since June 1994 who is on a two-year secondment.

Television Licences

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many representations he has received on the subject of increasing the discount for purchase of television licenses by partially sighted people in the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: In the year to 30 November 1994, I have received three letters on this subject. As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member's question of 28 June this year, *Official Report*, columns *470–71*, registered partially sighted people are not entitled to a reduction in their television licence fee on account of being partially sighted.

"Sport for the 21st Century"

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what timetable he proposes for the implementation of "Sport for the 21st Century"; who will be consulted; what procedures will be used for the consultation process; what representations have been received from the North-West Federation for Sport, Recreation and Conservation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: The extent of consultation on the Government's proposals for restructuring the Sports Council was set out in my statement to the House on 8 July, *Official Report*, columns *584–92*. I am currently considering a wide range of responses, including written representations from the North-West Federation for Sport, Recreation and Conservation. I have subsequently asked the GB Sports Council to provide me with its view of how its current functions and staffing might be re-aligned to take account of the Government's proposals. I shall then take final decisions on policy and the timing of implementation.

Library Services

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he intends to publish the review of public library services.

Mr. Sproat: I hope to receive the final report from the review consultants early in the New Year. I will make a further statement on publication in due course.

Broadcasting

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what is his policy regarding the European Audiovisual Green Paper's suggestion of tightening the enforcement rules on the level of European programme content in broadcast television;

(2) what is his policy towards the continuance of the quotas on the levels of European programmes set out in article 4 of the broadcasting directive; and when the directive is to be reviewed.

Mr. Dorrell: In the Government's view, the flexibility in applying the European programme content requirements afforded by the present wording of the EC broadcasting directive must be retained to avoid risking damage to the growth and development of the sector. We would not favour any proposal to remove this flexibility. We expect the European Commission's conclusions, following the review of the directive which it has conducted, to be published before the end of the year.

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the compliance with existing GATT rules of article 4 of the European broadcasting directive.

Mr. Dorrell: As we said in our response to the European Commission's Green Paper on European Union audiovisual policy, we would oppose any steps which would undermine the existing flexibility and relative openness to competition from outside the Union. We noted that even the existing provisions of article 4 of the directive carried the risk of successful challenge by our trading partners under the existing GATT rules.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep Lice

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what insecticides sheep lice have developed resistance in other countries;; what resistance in sheep lice to insecticides has been suspected or detected in the United Kingdom; what percentage of sheep flocks in the United Kingdom are currently affected by sheep lice infestations; and what assessment he has made of the rate of spread of sheep lice infestation.

Mr. Waldegrave: In Australia, the chewing louse of sheep—*Bovicola Damalinia ovis*—has been shown to be resistant to the synthetic pyrethroid cypermethrin, both by laboratory bioassay and under field conditions.

Monitoring for insecticide resistance within United Kingdom populations of sheep ectoparasites—including the sheep chewing louse—has been undertaken for the past three years, under a Government-funded research project. There is no evidence to suggest that chewing lice are resistant to any licensed synthetic pyrethroid or ornaophosphorus formulation applied to sheep in the United Kingdom. Suspected resistance to organochlorine insecticides, which are no longer used, was reported in sheep lice in Cumbria in 1965.

In the United Kingdom, the compulsory national dipping of sheep in organochlorine, organophosphate or synthetic pyrethroid plunge dip formulations between 1974 and 1992 for scab control, dramatically reduced the prevalence of *B. ovis*. During this period, a total of 24 incidences of infestation were recorded. These were located on Bodmin moor, Dartmoor, the North Yorkshire moors, the Peak district, the Lake district, the Pennine regions of Cumbria and County Durham, Mid Glamorgan and the Scottish islands. No assessment has been made of the incidence of sheep lice infestation since 1992.

Goat Lice

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what approved products are available for treating lice on goats; and what approved products are available for treating lice on goats in the event of the ineffectivity of pyrethroid products.

Mr. Waldegrave: Two veterinary medicines are licensed for the treatment of lice on goats—Cypor and Parosol Pour-on. Both are pyrethroid products. Any evidence of lack of efficacy of these products, or any other veterinary medicines, should be reported as suspected adverse reactions to the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. In the absence of any other products specifically licensed for the treatment of lice on goats, the advice of a veterinary surgeon should be sought on what alternative products may be appropriate for use in the particular circumstances.

Drug Registration

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans *(a)* the United Kingdom Government and *(b)* the European Union have to introduce a system for the registration of drugs for use in minor species.

Mr. Waldegrave: Both EC and national law already provide for a system of registration of drugs for all animal species. The requirements for an application for an individual authorisation will reflect the target species and the use to which the drug is likely to be put.

Warble Fly

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy in respect of the eradication of warble fly in the United Kingdom; what is his estimate of the number of years by which the eradication of warble fly was set back by the introduction of warbled cattle from France; and what is his estimate of the extra cost incurred to public funds in 1993 by the import of warbled cattle.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government are committed to maintain the United Kingdom's warble free status. Warble fly was eradicated from the United Kingdom in 1992 but was reintroduced in imported cattle during 1993. The reinfestation from imports is now well under control. Only two compulsory treatment areas have been established this autumn because of warble fly outbreaks and within these areas only five premises remain under movement restrictions pending confirmation of appropriate treatment.

The state veterinary service has provided for increased checks on imported animals, for a number of diseases, within existing manpower levels by adjusting priorities. It is not possible to cost out separately resources expended on checks for warble fly. The cost of warble fly operations within Great Britain for 1993 was approximately £237,000.

Pigs

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what surveys for anthelmintic resistance in oesophagostomum have been undertaken in the United Kingdom in the nematodes of pigs; and what steps are being taken to ensure that resistant worms are not imported in pigs from Denmark.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am not aware of any surveys for anthelmintic resistance in the pig nematode, oesophagostomum, or any indications that this is a significant problem that calls for Government action. There are no EU requirements to check for resistant worms and no justification for taking special action in relation to imports from Denmark.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the change in parasite burdens in pigs maintained out of doors.

Mr. Waldegrave: No data are maintained specifically on this subject. The management of parasitic problems would be carried out normally by the veterinary practitioner responsible for the herd. However, in the course of routine investigations, the veterinary investigation service has discovered the following numbers of cases of intestinal parasites in pigs since 1985. These figures do not differentiate between indoor and outdoor pigs.

1985: 21
1986: 22
1987: 16
1988: 21
1989: 13
1990: 14
1991: 7
1992: 11
1993: 7

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which 10 diseases of pigs in the United Kingdom cause the greatest economic losses to the agriculture industry; what is his Department's estimate of the loss caused to the agriculture industry by each disease; what significant changes he has predicted in the incidence of each of these diseases in the next 10 to 20 years; how much money the Government are spending on research and development on each of these diseases in the current financial year; and what differences in diseases are being observed between pigs reared indoors and out of doors.

Mr. Waldegrave: This question can be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Sheep

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of *(a)* the percentage and *(b)* the number of sheep which are seropositive for maedia visna; and what steps are being taken to control the disease and to warn farmers of the dangers of buying infected animals.

Mr. Waldegrave: A survey carried out by MAFF in 1993 suggests that around 0.4 per cent.—70,000 sheep—of the national flock may be infected by Maedi visna.

We have taken a number of steps to alert veterinary surgeons and sheep farmers to the risks of infection in sheep. In particular, representatives of the state veterinary service have addressed the Sheep Veterinary Society and briefed individual breed societies. An information sheet is also available for veterinary surgeons and sheep farmers.

Maedi visna is not a notifiable disease. Responsibility for protecting sheep lies primarily with flock owners. Effective disease control measures are part of the basic principles of good stock management.The sheep and goat health scheme operates a maedi visna accreditation scheme for farmers wishing to achieve disease-free status, and to provide an accredited source of unaffected sheep for other flock owners.

Caseous Lymphadenitis

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reliable diagnostic tests are available for the detection of animals infected with caseous lymphadenitis; what is the total of Government spending on the development of improved diagnostic tests for caseous lymphadentitis; and what steps are being taken to warn farmers of the dangers of buying infected animals.

Mr. Waldegrave: The only available reliable diagnostic test for caseous lymphadenitis is to identify the causative organism from material from animals suspected of having the disease.

Caseous lymphadenitis is not a notifiable disease and there is no Government spending on the development of diagnostic tests. Responsibility for control measures lies with the sheep and goat industries, and individual farmers who have been advised to protect their flocks and herds using good husbandry practices.

Anticoccidial Drugs

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many types of anticoccidial drugs are available in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our records indicate that there are approximately 30 anticoccidial veterinary medicines licensed in the United Kingdom. They cover a wide range of substances, but fall into three main types:

ionophore antibiotics, sulphonamides and potentiated sulphonamides and antiprotozoals.

The majority of these are administered in feed or drinking water. Two formulations are prepared in tablet form, and three are administered by injection.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to which anticoccidial drugs resistance has developed in the United Kingdom; how widespread is this resistance; and what assessment he has made of the threat resistant coccidia pose to the production and welfare of broiler chickens.

Mr. Waldegrave: Anticoccidial resistance has been reported to amprolium, thiamine analogue; arprinocid, Purine analogue; clopidol, hydroxyquinalone; decoquinate, hydroxyquinalone; methylbenzoquate, hydroxyquinalone; monensin, ionophore; and zoalene, nitrobenzamide, in the United Kingdom. The use of anticoccidials is closely monitored by the veterinary pharmaceutical industry and, although anecdotal evidence suggests that resistance has developed to other chemicals, strategies for the control of avian coccidia remain generally effective.

The Government are currently funding several research projects into avian coccidiosis. Some of this research is aimed at assessing the threat of resistant coccidia to the protection and welfare of broiler and laying chickens. Results are awaited.

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in which countries there are *(a)* virulent and *(b)* non-virulent strains of the bovine immunodeficiency virus; and what plans the Government have for the eradication of virulent BIV from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: To date, only three isolations of bovine immunodeficiency-like virus have been recorded from two herds in the United States of America. It has not been possible as yet to ascribe virulence or non-virulence to this virus. There is, however, serological evidence that BIV exists in cattle in a number of countries, including the United States of America, Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Venezuela and Costa Rica, and the virus probably has a worldwide distribution. Experience to date in those countries would suggest that the virus does not produce a specific disease condition and we understand that no control measures are applied in any country. The Government have considered all the available evidence about the virus very carefully and do not consider it necessary to introduce an eradication programme.

Dogs (Tapeworms)

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food where are the main foci in the United Kingdom of infection of dogs with the tapeworm echinococcus granulosus; and what is his estimate of the cost of treating dogs in these areas to ensure eradication of the infection.

Mr. Waldegrave: The main focus of the tapeworm echinococcus granulosus infecting dogs in the United Kingdom is north Gwent, Powys and west Herefordshire. The cost of treating and eradicating the disease cannot be estimated until a survey is carried out, but that cannot be done until a reliable cost-effective diagnostic test becomes available.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which 10 diseases of sheep in the United Kingdom cause the greatest economic losses to the agriculture industry; what is his Department's estimate of the loss caused to the agriculture industry by each disease; what significant changes he has predicted in the incidence of each of these diseases in the next 10 to 20 years; how much money the Government are spending on research and development on each of these diseases in the current financial year; and what action is being taken by the Government to inform farmers of the optimal way to control each of these diseases.

Mr. Waldegrave: This question can be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Cattle Diseases

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which 10 diseases of cattle in the United Kingdom cause the greatest economic losses to the agriculture industry; what is his Department's estimate of the loss caused to the agriculture industry by each disease; what significant changes he has predicted in the incidence of each of these diseases in the next 10 to 20 years; how much money the Government are spending on research and development on each of these diseases in the current financial year; and what action is being taken by the Government to inform farmers of the optimal way to control each of these diseases.

Mr. Waldergrave: This question can be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Leather Trade

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the losses to the farming, skin and leather industry from poor quality sheep skins; what assessment he has made of the causes of damage to sheep skins; what changes have been observed in the causes of damage to sheep skins since the deregulation of sheep scab; and what percentage of sheep skins are now top quality.

Mr. Waldegrave: As far as the farming industry is concerned, there is no direct correlation between the quality of sheep skins and the prices paid for animals going for slaughter. My Department produced a leaflet this autumn in conjunction with the industry, encouraging farmers to treat their sheep against sheep scab. This initiative should help reduce the amount of damage caused by all ectoparasites. The skin and leather industries are the responsibility of the President of the Board of Trade. However, I understand that no Government studies are available to provide answers to the questions the hon. Gentleman raises.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the losses to the farming, hide and leather industry from poor quality cattle hides; what assessment he has made of the major causes of damage to cattle hides; and what percentage of *(a)* United Kingdom, *(b)* Danish and *(c)* German cattle hides are now top quality.

Mr. Waldegrave: As far as the farming industry is concerned, there is no direct correlation between the quality of cattle hides and the prices paid for animals going for slaughter. The Government have mounted over a number of years a successful campaign to eradicate warble fly which is considered to be a major threat to the quality of cattle hides. The skin and leather industries are the responsibility of the President of the Board of Trade. However, I understand that no Government studies are available to provide answers to the questions the hon. Gentleman raises.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the number of jobs lost in the United Kingdom leather trade in the last five years as a result of the decrease in quality of sheep skins and cattle hides.

Mr. Waldegrave: The skin and leather industries are the responsibility of the President of the Board of Trade. However, I understand the Government have no firm information on the impact of the quality of sheep skins or cattle hides on employment levels in the leather industry.

Sheep Scab

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of outbreaks of sheep scab in the United Kingdom in the 12 months prior to deregulation; how many outbreaks of sheep scab there have been in the United Kingdom in the last 12 months; and in which areas of the United Kingdom sheep scab has been found since the deregulation of the disease.

Mr. Waldegrave: The total number of confirmed cases of sheep scab in the United Kingdom between 1 July 1991 and 30 June 1992 was 195. The collation of official records on the number of sheep scab outbreaks in Great Britain was discontinued after deregulation. In Northern Ireland, where sheep scab remains a notifiable disease, there have been 61 outbreaks over the last 12 months.

Industry reports have indicated that sheep scab has been discovered in every county in Britain. A surveillance exercise during the spring identified 177 batches of sheep suspected of having sheep scab from 869 visits to sheep sales and markets. These and other reports confirm that the disease is probably spread across the whole country.

The Government announced on 17 May that they would conduct a publicity campaign and increase the official veterinary presence at sheep markets. Surveillance at 766 market days since 1 September has resulted in 44 animals with sheep scab being withdrawn from sale and treated. These animals were found at markets in north Humberside, south Wales, the highland region and borders region of Scotland.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to monitor the development of resistance of sheep scab to insecticides in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on the insecticides sheep scab has developed resistance to in other countries.

Mr. Waldegrave : Sheep scab was notifiable in the United Kingdom between 1974 and 1992, with the compulsory national dipping of sheep in organochlorine, organophosphate or synthetic pyrethroid plunge dip formulations. During this period, there were no reported incidences of dip formulations failing to be effective. Monitoring for insecticide resistance in United Kingdom populations of sheep ectoparasites—including the sheep scab mite *Psoroptes ovis*—has been undertaken for the past three years, under a Government-funded research project. There is no current evidence to suggest that the scab mite is resistant to any licensed synthetic pyrethroid or organophosphate formulation applied to sheep in the United Kingdom.

In Argentina, the sheep scab mite developed resistance to the organochlorine insecticide BHC—HCH, benzene hexachloride, hexachlorocyclohexane or lindane—in 1962 and then to the OP, diazinon, in 1970. The development of resistance in both cases was directly related to the standard of Argentinian sheep husbandry. There is no evidence that similar resistance has developed elsewhere.

Chicken Diseases

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which 10 diseases of chickens in the United Kingdom cause the greatest economic losses to the agriculture industry; what is his Department's estimate of the loss caused to the agriculture industry by each disease; what significant changes he has predicted in the incidence of each of these diseases in the next 10 to 20 years; and how much money the government are spending on research and development on each of these diseases in the current financial year.

Mr. Waldegrave: This question can be answered only at disproportionate cost.

Animal Transportation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that all the animals shipped from Plymouth to France on the night of 1 December were fed and watered within 15 hours of the start of their journey, and that all aspects of the journey plan for these animals were complied with;

(2) what plans he has to stop the transport of livestock in unattended lorries;

(3) how many livestock transporting lorries were left unattended for the voyage between Plymouth and France on the night of 1 December; how long the animals in these lorries were left unattended; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Browning: I am informed that five livestock lorries were without drivers on landing at Calais after the aircraft which was to carry the drivers across the channel had been prevented from taking off by fog. Drivers were found for all of them and the longest period of delay was about three hours. During this period, the lorries were under the direct supervision of a veterinary surgeon employed by the shipping company to accompany the animals during the voyage. He has reported that the livestock were unaffected by the delay. Nevertheless, it is possible that delays of this sort could result in animals travelling for more than 15 hours without food and water, and as a result of this incident a notice has been served on the shipper prohibiting the carriage of livestock in lorries unaccompanied by their drivers.

Farm Animal Mutilations

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many prosecutions have been brought under the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968 in each of the last five years in respect of unnecessary pain or distress caused by farm animal mutilations.

Mrs. Browning: Information on the number of prosecutions in respect of pain or distress caused specifically by farm animal mutilations is not available.

Veterinary Inspectors

Sir Peter Fry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the role of veterinary inspection centres in promoting good animal health practices.

Mrs. Browning: One of the functions of the veterinary investigation service is to provide a diagnostic, advisory and consultancy service to private veterinary surgeons in agricultural practice and when an advisory farm visit is undertaken within this service, when a further investigation is carried out for disease surveillance purposes or when the service arranges promotional activities, every opportunity is taken to promote good animal health practices.

Sir Peter Fry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what time veterinary investigation officers are allocated for research and investigating changes in endemic diseases.

Mrs. Browning: Approximately one-third of the time of veterinary investigation officers is allocated towards the monitoring of endemic disease, the detection of trends in such diseases and the investigation of new and emerging diseases. Basic research is not a function of the veterinary investigation service.

Sir Peter Fry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the effect of time recording in the veterinary investigation service; and what is done with the information collected.

Mrs. Browning: Work recording in the veterinary investigation service is a normal management function used to monitor activities and to apportion staff time to the various programmes of the Department in which they are involved.

Sir Peter Fry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what literature the veterinary investigation service has produced in the last year for distribution to farmers or veterinary surgeons.

Mrs. Browning: Eleven out of 13 veterinary investigation centres send out a regular monthly newsletter to veterinary practices. The other two centres send out either an amended monthly report or a newsletter at less frequent intervals. A large number of advisory leaflets are also produced by the centres for veterinary surgeons in relation to specific disease topics. The veterinary investigation service is a frequent contributor to agricultural sections of local newspapers and contributes to local radio broadcasts. In the last year, 45 articles, short communications or letters have been published in scientific journals by the veterinary investigation service and staff have contributed to a further 19 articles in the scientific press.

Sir Peter Fry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the future involvement of veterinary inspection centres in animal health schemes.

Mrs. Browning: The future of the animal health schemes is currently under review as a result of the review of the animal health and veterinary group.

Sir Peter Fry: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans has he to further reduce the number of veterinary inspection centres.

Mrs. Browning: I have no current plans to reduce the number of veterinary investigation centres.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. Waldegrave: As far as we are aware, none. Civil servants may provide factual briefing for Ministers on matters relating to their own Departments. In addition, Ministers in preparing for a constituency speech can draw on material produced by their Department during the normal course of business.

Animals (Drowning)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in what circumstances drowning is permitted as an acceptable or humane method for killing animals.

Mrs. Browning: I know of no circumstances in which I would consider the intentional drowning of conscious animals for which the Department has responsibility to be either acceptable or humane. The EC directive on the welfare of livestock when slaughtered or killed, which will be implemented next year, does not permit drowning.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 8 December 1994

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Innovation Advisory Board

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the innovation advisory board in each of the last three years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The innovation advisory board was wound up in September 1993. No formal successor arrangements have been put in place, but the Department's innovation unit, which contains 15 industrial secondees, is taking forward much of the board's work. The secretariat of the IAB was provided by staff of the Department of Trade and Industry; independent external members were appointed by the Secretary of State on the basis of their pre-eminence in relevant subjects rather than as representatives of particular businesses. The board advised the Department on various aspects of innovation policy, providing advice to the Secretary of State or senior officials as appropriate. The board gained a reputation, externally and internally, as a strong and effective champion of innovation and a valuable source of advice to DTI.

In the financial year 1991–92, the board met six times and in 1992–93 four times. It did not meet in 1993–94. The focus of its work during these periods was the interface between industry and financial institutions and between industry and education. The style of working was to prompt action by others. The board did not produce many reports or submissions. Those produced during these periods were:

Reports	
1991–92	First United Kingdom Company R and D Scoreboard
	"Innovation Plans Handbook" providing guidance to companies on how to present their innovation plans to investors and guidance to investors on how to examine such plans.
1992–93	Guidance on a modular masters degree in the management of technology Second R and D Scoreboard.
Submissions	
1991–92	Submission to the Cadbury Committee on the Financial Aspects of Corporate Governance. Submission to the Accountancy Standards Board of Financial Reporting Exposure Draft.

Programme Expenditure for these periods was:

	£
1991–92	124,068.35
1992–93	5,000.74
1993–94	0

Staff costs were also incurred, but since these were an integral part of other related activities it would be disproportionately costly to identify these separately or to search for budgeted spend in the same periods.

Defence Procurement

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which section of is Department is assessing the industrial policy issues involved in RAF procurement of long-range transports.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Department's aerospace division is working with the Ministry of Defence and other interested Departments on the industrial implications of the Hercules replacement programme.

Edinburgh Solicitors Property Centre

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what has been the total cost to date to public funds of the Office of Fair Trading's inquiry into the complaint made against the Edinburgh solicitors' property centre;

(2) who advises the Director General of Fair Trading in relation to Scottish law;

(3) from how many Edinburgh solicitors the Office of Fair Trading sought views on the complaint brought against the Edinburgh solicitors' property centre;

(4) on how many occasions officials from the Office of Fair Trading have visited Scotland in the course of their inquiry into the complaint made against the Edinburgh solicitors' property centre;

(5) on whose authority a press release was issued by the Office of Fair Trading on 22 November regarding the referral of the Edinburgh solicitors' property centre to the restrictive practices court, Scotland; and what is the usual practice of putting such information into the public domain before the subject of the press release has been informed of the action being taken;

(6) what representations have been received by the Director General of Fair Trading concerning the Edinburgh solicitors' property centre; and how many were from members of the public;

(7) when the Solicitor's Office informed the Office of Fair Trading that it would be issuing a notice of referral to the restrictive practices court (Scotland) to the Edinburgh solicitors' property centre; when this referral was issued; and whether the issue preceded or succeeded the publication of a press release by the Office of Fair Trading referring to the office's action in this matter.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Director General of Fair Trading, Sir Bryan Carsberg, is responsible for administering the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976. I have today asked Sir Bryan to consider the questions that the hon. Member has put about the Edinburgh solicitors' property centre and he will write to him in due course.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many officials and at what grades in *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Office of Fair Trading have been involved in investigating a complaint against the Edinburgh solicitors' property centre.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Department of Trade and Industry officials have not been involved. I am asking Sir Bryan Carsberg to write to the hon. Member about the involvement of his officials.

Property Sales, Edinburgh

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received about the competitive position of the estate agents seeking instructions for the sale of properties in the Edinburgh area.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: None.

Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions he or his predecessors have made an order under section 11 or 12 of the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976 in relation to services provided by solicitors.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Services provided by solicitors in their capacity as such are excluded by paragraph 1 of schedule 1 of the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976. Any other services provided by solicitors are brought under section 11 by the Restrictive Trade Practices (Services) Order 1976—SI 1976 No.98. That order has been amended three times: 1985 No.2044, 1986 NO.2204 and 1989 No.1082. No order has been made under section 12.

Future Large Aircraft

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consideration he is giving to a Government contribution to the support costs of the future large aircraft project; and when he expects to complete it.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The development of military aircraft is a matter for the Ministry of Defence, but the Department is closely involved in considering the industrial implications of the proposed project.

Civil Air Transports

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what studies his Department is *(a)* undertaking directly or *(b)* has commissioned into new long-range civil air transports; and when he expects to make their conclusions available to Parliament.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No such studies have been undertaken or commissioned, but the Department is in regular contact with the United Kingdom aerospace industry on market projections and plans for new projects.

Telephones

Mr. Miller: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he intends to take to ensure that the sound levels in telephone receivers are at a level which will not disadvantage the deaf and hard of hearing.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My Department is reviewing the technical requirements for United Kingdom approval of telecommunications terminal equipment, including telephones. The identified essential requirements are being consolidated into draft national technical regulations and these are being made available for a statutory consultation with interested parties, including organisations representing people with hearing difficulties. There are no proposals to reduce sound levels in telephone receivers.

Disqualification Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what percentage of initial unfit conduct reports received during the past six years from insolvency practitioners, pursuant to the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 were received within the time limits specified in the Act;

(2) if he will make a statement of what measures he has taken to ensure that insolvency practitioners fulfil their statutory requirement in relation to the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 requires an insolvency practitioner to report forthwith when it appears to him that the conduct of a director makes him unfit to be concerned in the management of a limited company. Where he has not so reported, he is required to submit a return no later than six months after his appointment as officeholder.

Statistics are not available for the past six years, but the National Audit Office examined a representative sample of 102 initial reports submitted between April and June 1992, which showed that 22 per cent. were received within six months.

In March 1993, the Insolvency Service issued guidelines to insolvency practitioners to assist them in complying with their obligations to report unfit conduct in a timely way but without sacrifice to quality. These guidelines have been re-enforced by newsletters to insolvency practitioners.

In addition, insolvency practitioners are subject to monitoring visits either by their authorising bodies or by the joint insolvency monitoring unit, for the purpose of ensuring compliance with insolvency legislation including the requirements of the Company Directors Disqualification Act.

In 1995, separate visits will be undertaken by the Insolvency Service to practitioners who have demonstrated poor compliance with the Act. If there is no subsequent improvement in performance, the practitioner will face possible licensing action or in extreme cases prosecution.

Public Telephones (Unauthorised Displays)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will propose legislation to make it lawful for a supplier of telephone services to disconnect lines advertised by unauthorised displays at public telephones.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I have no plans to do so. Although I recognise my hon. Friend's concern about this matter, it would not be appropriate to seek to regulate the placing of advertisements in unauthorised places through telecommunications legislation.

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the plans of his Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which he intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the world wide web server "open.gov.uk" or any specific departmental server.

Mr. Ian Taylor: In line with a recent Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency initiative, my officials are actively considering how the facilities of the Internet might add value to current arrangements for the distribution of departmental information. This consideration includes the use of the world wide web server, "open.gov.uk."

As previously stated, the Command Paper "Developing Broadband Communications in the UK" was placed on the CCTA Government service Internet server a few days after publication and there have been around 1,750 accesses to date.

Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 583, what has been the change in United Kingdom exports of finished manufactures to *(a)* the EEC and *(b)* non-EEC countries since 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: From 1984 to 1993, the value of United Kingdom exports of finished manufactures increased by 198 per cent. to the EC and by 77 per cent. to non-EC countries.

Chemical Weapons Convention

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when Her Majesty's Government will introduce legislation to ratify the chemical weapons convention;

(2) what preparations his Department has made for the implementation of the chemical weapons convention and for the establishment of the national authority.

Mr. Heseltine: Primary legislation is required to enable the United Kingdom to ratify the chemical weapons convention. This will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time and other Government legislative priorities permit.

My Department has a section dedicated to preparing for the implementation of the CWC, including the establishment of a national authority. These preparations are now at an advanced stage. We have been liaising closely with other Government Departments which have an interest in the CWC and with industry representatives. My Department will be issuing a discussion document early in the New Year, to canvass industry views on the implementation of the CWC in industry in the UK.

Mortgage Insurance

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he is taking to limit the costs of premiums of mortgage insurance policies.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: None. The Secretary of State's powers under the Insurance Companies Act 1982 are primarily concerned with the solvency of insurance companies and, except where such matters are concerned, he does not intervene in their day-to-day business.

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to make it a requirement for providers of mortgage insurance to make full disclosure of management and similar costs at the point of sale of mortgage insurance.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: No. This would not be appropriate. The United Kingdom general insurance market is already highly competitive. In addition, the Association of British Insurer's general business code of practice requires insurance intermediaries not to impose any charge in addition to the premium required by the insurer without disclosing the amount and purpose of such charge and to disclose, on request, the commission.

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make it his policy to ensure that mortgage insurance policies allow those individuals claiming under their policies to take short-term employment without losing their right to continue to claim under their policies when that period of employment concludes;

(2) what action he is planning to take to ensure that providers of mortgage insurance limit increases in premiums for those individuals who have previously suffered a period of unemployment;

(3) if he will make it his policy to require insurers to provide mortgage insurance to the self-employed, to those on fixed contracts and to those in part-time work.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: No. This is a matter for the underwriting judgment of individual insurance companies.

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the total annual cost in premiums if all mortgages taken out after October 1995 were to be covered by mortgage insurance for the financial year 1995–96 and each of the following four financial years.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: It is not possible to provide a realistic estimate because mortgage lending in the period in question cannot be predicted.

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the total amount paid out on mortgage insurance policies in the last full financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Association of British Insurers estimates that claims paid in 1993 amounted to £156 million.

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the total premiums paid in mortgage insurance for the last full financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Association of British Insurers estimates that premiums paid for mortgage protection insurance in 1993 amounted to £220 million.

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the number of mortgage insurance policies currently in operation which cover *(a)* 50 per cent. or more and *(b)* less than 50 per cent. of the full cost of the associated mortgage for (i) one year or less, (ii) two years or less, (iii) three years or less and (iv) more than three years.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Association of British Insurers estimates that some 1.1 million policies are in force. Generally, policies cover 100 per cent. of the cost of the associated mortgage. The ABI estimates that 90 per cent. of the policies will pay up to one year and 10 per cent. up to two years. The ABI is not aware of any policies that pay for more than two years.

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if any British oil exploration contracts in the East Timor gap have been approved by the Government of Indonesia.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand that one United Kingdom company is licensed to explore for oil and gas in this region.

Energy Advisory Panel

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what requests he has received from external bodies to use the collective expertise on his energy advisory panel to assist them in energy assessment; and what reports he has received to date from the energy advisory panel.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 2 December 1994]:* I have received no such requests. The panel has not produced specific reports.

Capital

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November, *Official Report,* column 583, what has been the change in net capital employed in manufacturing in real terms since 1979.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* Figures on net capital stock by sector are published in table 14.7 in the Central Statistical Office Blue Book—United Kingdom national accounts—which is available in the Library of the House. Net capital stock figures by industry are not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the increase in real terms in net capital employed in *(a)* United Kingdom manufacturing and *(b)* commercial and industrial firms other than manufacturing since 1979; and to what extent he ascribes the difference to the Government's fiscal, monetary and exchange rate policies.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* Figures on net capital stock by sector are published in table 14.7 in the Central Statistical Office Blue Book—United Kingdom national accounts—which is available in the Library of the House. Net capital stock figures by industry are not available. The capital employed by a firm is influenced by a number of factors including expected demand and rates of return.

Export Credits

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list export credits to Oman since 1979, by year, and state the percentage increases or decreases each year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* ECGD support for capital goods and project business in Oman and the percentage increase or decrease each year is given in the table:

	Business (£ million)	*Percentage Increase/Decrease*
1980–81	305.7	n/a
1981–82	65.94	–78.39
1982–83	415.06	+529.45
1983–84	305.54	–26.39
1984–85	40.65	–86.70
1985–86	77.19	+89.89
1986–87	65.67	–14.92
1987–88	0.00	–100.00
1988–89	0.06	n/a
1989–90	0.35	+483.33
1990–91	349.51	+99,760.00
1991–92	0.10	–99.97
1992–93	44.48	+44,380.00
1993–94	413.39	+829.38

Reliable comparative data is not available prior to 1980–81.
The figures for 1993–94 remain provisional pending publication of ECGD's Trading Accounts for the 1993–94 financial year.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list export credits to India since 1979, by year, and state the percentage increases or decreases each year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* ECGD support for capital goods and project business in India and the percentage increase or decrease each year is given in the table:

	Business (£ Million)	*Percentage Increase/Decrease*
1980–81	51.73	n/a
1981–82	42.44	–17.96
1982–83	626.57	+1,376.37
1983–84	224.15	–64.23
1984–85	74.52	–66.75
1985–86	35.97	–51.73
1986–87	86.37	+140.12
1987–88	83.35	–3.50
1988–89	5.03	–93.97
1989–90	79.65	+1,483.50
1990–91	69.84	–12.32
1991–92	12.81	–81.66
1992–93	101.97	+696.02
1993–94	208.54	+104.51

Reliable comparative data is not available prior to 1980–81.
The figures for 1993–94 remain provisional pending publication of ECGD's Trading Accounts for the 1993–94 financial year.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list export credits to Turkey since 1979, by year, and state the percentage increases or decreases each year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* ECGD support for capital goods and project business in Turkey and the percentage increase or decrease each year is given in the table:

	Business (£ million)	*Percentage Increase/Decrease*
1980–81	16.12	n/a
1981–82	3.94	–75.56
1982–83	0.23	–94.16
1983–84	75.24	+3,2613.04
1984–85	7.93	–89.46
1985–86	165.42	+1,986.00
1986–87	38.14	–76.94
1987–88	49.42	+29.58
1988–89	125.09	+153.12
1989–90	54.66	–56.30
1990–91	51.02	–6.66

	Business (£ million)	Percentage Increase/Decrease
1991–92	175.41	+243.81
1992–93	130.32	–25.71
1993–94	111.85	–14.17

Reliable comparative data is not available prior to 1980–81.
The figures for 1993–94 remain provisional pending publication of ECGD's Trading Accounts for the 1993–94 financial year.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list export credits to Indonesia since 1979, by year, stating percentage increases or decreases each year.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* ECGD support for capital goods and project business in Indonesia and the percentage increase or decrease each year is given in the table:

	Business (£ million)	Percentage Increase/Decrease
1980–81	9.31	n/a
1981–82	149.94	+1,510.53
1982–83	566.35	+277.72
1983–84	301.08	–46.84
1984–85	248.75	–17.38
1985–86	139.75	–43.82
1986–87	72.74	–47.95
1987–88	47.92	–34.12
1988–89	67.36	+40.57
1989–90	52.29	–22.37
1990–91	149.59	+186.08
1991–92	124.11	–17.03
1992–93	450.40	+262.90
1993–94	100.14	–77.77

Reliable comparative data are not available prior to 1980–81.
The figures for 1993–94 remain provisional pending publication of ECGD's Trading Accounts for the 1993–94 financial year.

LORD CHANCELLOR' S DEPARTMENT

Magistrates, Teesside

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will consider appointing at least one stipendiary magistrate at Teesside.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor is pleased to consider the appointment of stipendiary magistrates following requests from the local advisory committees. No request has been received from the South Cleveland advisory committee.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many lay magistrates are currently needed to bring the Teesside bench up to full strength.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The required strength of any bench is determined by the number of magistrates needed to deal with the work without the annual number of half-day sittings for individual magistrates being excessive. The strength of the Teesside bench on 1 December was 274, and a further 23 people are being recommended to the Lord Chancellor for appointment. The current and projected annual average number of sittings per magistrate is 43, which is a little high but is not regarded by the Lord Chancellor as excessive.

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. John M. Taylor: None. Civil servants may provide briefing of a factual nature for Ministers on matters relating to their own Departments. In addition, Ministers, in preparing for a constituency speech, can draw on material produced by their Department during the normal course of business.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Maintenance and refurbishment works carried out in 1992–93 totalled £18,444,000 and in 1993–94, £21,094,000. The figures for 1991–92 are not readily available, nor are details of schemes in 1992–93. Details of expenditure on major court refurbishment schemes during 1993–94 was as follows:

	£
Lewes Combined Court	3,118,000
Lincoln Castle Crown Court	482,000
Nottingham Combined Court	642,000
Plymouth Combined Court	364,000
Royal Courts of Justice	3,233,000

The balance was expended by regional budget holders on a variety of works, a proportion of which would be in respect of refurbishment schemes. However, the detailed information could not be obtained without incurring disproportionate cost.

Legal Aid

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of people of the United Kingdom were eligible for free legal aid in each year from 1990 to 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department estimates the percentage of households qualifying for civil legal aid without a contribution as follows:

1990: —29 per cent.
1991: —25 per cent.
1992: —27 per cent.
1993: —21 per cent.

The figures are based on the family expenditure survey reports for the years in question.

DEFENCE

Joint Service Command and Staff College

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the location of the proposed joint service command and staff college.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I have given today to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls).

Staff Colleges

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the staff colleges with particular reference to the staff college, Camberley, Surrey.

Mr. Rifkind: In my statement on 14 July 1994, I announced that further work was in hand to examine whether the joint service command and staff college should be located at Camberley or Greenwich and whether junior command and staff training should take place on the same site. This work has now been concluded and I am satisfied that Camberley is by far the most appropriate and cost-effective site for both activities, and that staff training at Bracknell and Greenwich should cease. I have decided that this proposal should be the basis for consultation. A consultative document will be issued in the next few weeks.

I recognise the need to ensure that fitting occupants are found for such an important site as the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. We are now considering a number of potential candidates to occupy these buildings, including a restructured defence school of languages, for which Wilton Park, Beaconsfield is unlikely to remain an appropriate home. Work is continuing to determine which would provide the best balance of suitability and compatibility. I hope to be in a position to announce a proposal for the future of Greenwich early next year, on which we will consult separately.

Unless there is an alternative defence use for the RAF staff college at Bracknell, my intention would be to dispose of it. Similarly, if work in hand at present determines that there is no longer any need to retain Wilton Park, Beconsfield, that will also be disposed of.

Further work is under way to determine the effect on staff numbers of these proposals. Once final proposals for Greenwich can be made, we shall consult separately on the specific staffing impact on Greenwich, Beaconsfield and any other site affected. Every effort will be made to minimise the need for redundancies.

Married Quarters

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made with the development of plans for transfer of the married quarters estate to the private sector.

Mr. Soames: It is too early to be confident that such a transfer will be possible on terms which will satisfy our requirements. Nonetheless, the initial work undertaken for us by NatWest Markets, the investment bank, has been productive and encouraging. We therefore now intend to progress to development of comprehensive proposals aimed at achieving the transfer in financial year 1995–96. A decision on whether to proceed will not be taken until worked-out proposals are available in the first part of next year. Meanwhile, however, following completion of the initial study, we are proceeding to competitive selection of financial and other advisers to help us prepare for and effect the transfer.

Defence Medical Services

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of the defence medical services.

Mr. Soames: During the "Front Line First" medical study consultation period, my Department received more than 230 responses to our proposals for the future of the defence medical services.

All of these responses have received careful and sympathetic scrutiny. Understandable local concerns and support have been expressed for fine military facilities with a proud history of service to their civilian communities. No significant new defence-related arguments have, however, emerged, nor have any new suggestions bee made which have caused us to alter our original proposals.

I can therefore confirm that we shall now move to develop our plans, working closely with the relevant NHS authorities, along the lines indicated in "Front Line First". We shall establish a single tri-service core hospital to provide the future secondary care needs for the armed forces in the United Kingdom. I can conform that we have decided that this facility will be established at the current royal naval hospital Haslar in Gosport. This hospital will be supported by a continuing presence at the Duchess of Kent military hospital at Catterick and by Ministry of Defence medical staff working in three Ministry of Defence hospital units. One of these will be located at the Derriford district general hospital in Plymouth; the remaining two sites will be chosen over the next three months. All secondary care will be managed by a tri-service Defence Agency, which will continue to develop increasingly close links with the NHS, and will be headed by a chief executive reporting through the surgeon general to the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff responsible for personal matters.

The Princess Mary's RAF hospital Akrotiri in Cyprus will also form part of the tri-service secondary care agency. The future of the two service hospitals in Germany will be considered further following the completion of the current market testing programme. We are also examining the case for market testing the defence services medical rehabilitation unit at RAF Headley Court, and shall be examining the need for the RAF's central medical establishment to be in central London and the scope for alternative uses of the Royal Army medical college at Millbank. We shall be bringing dentists from all three services into a single, tri-service agency and subsequently submitting the business to a market test.

Primary care will be provided by the most cost-effective combination of the NHS, the private health care sector, and MOD military and civilian staff, to the greatest extent consistent with providing peacetime employment for those uniformed personnel required to deploy for operations and war.

The reorganisation of defence medical services, including the closures of the Cambridge military hospital and the Princess Alexandra's RAF hospital, is intended to be complete by April 1996. Because of this, the closure of the Queen Elizabeth military hospital at Woolwich will be brought forward to the spring of 1995, at which time we expect to transfer the hospital to the NHS although a service presence may remain for some months afterwards. The closure date for the Princess Mary's RAF hospital at Halton has also been brought forward to March 1996.

Much work needs to be done before the full reorganisation of defence medical services can become effective and we have therefore put in place a team to effect all elements of the implementation process. We shall continue to consult the trade unions on the details of our plans as they unfold.

Minor War Vessels, Rosyth

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence further to his statement of 14 July, *Official Report*, columns *1171–2*, if he has reached a decision on the future of minor war vessels based at Rosyth.

Mr. Freeman: Having given full and careful consideration to the representations made on the proposals promulgated on 14 July, we have decided to proceed with the redeployment of minor war vessels from Rosyth to Faslane and Portsmouth by April 1996 and the change in the role of Rosyth from a minor war vessel operating base to a Royal Navy support establishment within a similar time frame. In the same time scale, the non-operational functions of flag officer Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland will transfer to Faslane from Pitreavie. We will continue to consult with staff and the trade unions about the detailed implementation of these measures and their implications. My officials will also work closely with the Scottish Office, local authorities and other agencies to enable those areas of the base no longer required by the Department to be redeveloped for alternative economic use. Constructive dialogue between the Ministry of Defence and the Scottish Office is already under way with a view to securing co-ordinated disposal strategy for the site aimed at promoting the continuing economic development and diversification of the area.

Gulf War Syndrome

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what independent research he has commissioned into the possible after effects of inoculations against anthrax, yellow fever, hepatitis, plague, polio and cholera, given singly or together or within a few day of each other to personnel serving in the Gulf war.

Mr. Soames: None. All known vaccine interactions are published in standard medical textbooks and the British national formulary. Short-term side-effects—sore arm, malaise—are very common after any vaccination procedure but there is no scientific or medical evidence to suggest that vaccines can interact to produce long-term adverse health effects. Furthermore, it is not unusual, in normal medicine practice, for a number of separate vaccines to be administered at the same time or over a short period.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will issue regimental part I orders to all current service personnel requiring those who served in the Gulf war and who believe they may have suffered ill-effects to report to their medical officer.

Mr. Soames: Personnel from all three services who believe that they are suffering from ill health, for whatever reason, have been encouraged to report to their medical officer. The armed forces medical services have already established a medical assessment programme for those who believe their ill health is a result of their Gulf service. The existence of this assessment programme is well known in the services and the issuing of orders is not therefore considered necessary.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what independent research he has commissioned into possible birth defects in children born to the families of service personnel who served in the Gulf war.

Mr. Soames: We are aware of no scientific or medical evidence to suggest that the incidence of genetic defects among babies born into the families of British Gulf veterans is any higher than that found among the civilian population. Given the lack of evidence, there are no grounds for commissioning independent research.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research has been commissioned into leishmania tropica infection in service personnel who served in the Gulf war, with particular reference to viscerotropic leishmaniasis.

Mr. Soames: Tests for leishmaniasis are routinely performed on United Kingdom armed forces personnel whose service and personal history, symptoms and signs are suggestive of this disease. No case of any species of leishmania has been found in British armed forces personnel who served in the Gulf, and we have not therefore commissioned any additional research into the disease. We are aware, however, that the United States authorities have to date identified 31 cases of leishmaniasis among their personnel who served in the Gulf, including 12 cases of a disseminated disease not previously associated with the species leishmania tropica, which has been labelled viscerotropic leishmaniasis. The armed forces medical services will continue to monitor developments in the United States.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the troops who served in Operation Granby *(a)* are still serving in the armed forces and *(b)* have been invalided out since.

Mr. Soames: Around 45,0000 service personnel were deployed to the middle east in support of operation Granby. Details of the number still serving are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. According to central medical records, one Royal Navy, 44 Army and three Royal Air Force personnel have, to date, been discharged on medical grounds as a result of injuries or illness sustained as a result of incidents during Operation Granby. All were discharged for recognised medical conditions.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research he has commissioned into possible nerve end damage, whether permanent or temporary, in service men and women as the result of exposure to various agents during the Gulf war.

Mr. Soames: None. Any service man or woman whose medical history, symptoms and signs are suggestive of neurological—including nerve end damage—is thoroughly investigated in accordance with normal clinical practice. None of the 65 individuals so far assessed under the Gulf medical assessment programme have neurological damage, and we therefore see no reason to commission specific research into this matter.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what checks have been carried out to establish whether service personnel with a history of asthma or hay fever may be particularly susceptible to nerve agent pre-treatment set or other products used for their protection during the Gulf War.

Mr. Soames: There is no evidence that normal seasonal hay fever sufferers are particularly susceptible to any of the protective measures used during Operation Granby. Individuals with a history of asthma could be susceptible to one of the protective measures, NAPS, the active constituent of which is pyridostigmine bromide. The administration of pyridostigmine bromide is not contra-indicated for known asthmatics, but caution is advised because the drug may exacerbate asthma symptoms. However, asthma is generally not compatible with service in the armed forces and potential recruits with a history of this condition would not be accepted for service. Furthermore, those already serving who develop asthma are required to be referred to a service consultant who assesses their suitability to be retained in the services. Those retained would normally serve in a reduced medical category which would preclude operational service.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make available to ex-service personnel who served in the Gulf war their full medical records, including details of all injections and other protective measures given.

Mr. Soames: Service medical records are the property of the Department and can be released only to the patient concerned in accordance with the Access to Health Records Act 1990, which came into force on 1 November 1991. Under the provisions of this Act, which is not retrospective, medical records are normally released only to the individual whom they concern if they were compiled after 1 November 1991. For records compiled before this date, however, it has long been my Department's policy to release them on request to a former service person's GP or solicitor where they may be required for the management of a particular case.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what independent research he has commissioned into the possible after-effects of exposure to a combination of two or more of inoculations against infectious diseases, NAPS tablets, organo-phosphorus pesticides and airborne pollution.

Mr. Soames: None. We are aware of no scientific or medical evidence which suggests that the combination of preventative medical procedures and individually non-harmful levels of other substances presents any increased risk to health which would warrant the commissioning of specific research.

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Gulf war veterans have presented themselves with illnesses since their return; and how many have, in the judgment of his Department, been suffering from identifiable complaints, whether or not linked to their service in Operation Granby.

Mr. Soames: The information is not available in the form requested as no central record is maintained of visits by armed forces personnel to service primary health case facilities, and responsibility for the health of those Gulf veterans who have left the services rests with the national health service. One hundred and eighty-five Gulf war veterans with concerns about their health have, however, come forward at our request for medical assessment by the armed forces medical services. Of these, 65 have so far been examined under the medical assessment programme and all have been found to be suffering from identifiable complaints, none of which are peculiar to service in the Gulf.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the annual budget of the Defence Export Services Organisation in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 22 November, *Official Report*, column *139*.

Closures

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions during each of the last four years the proposed closure of a Royal Navy, Army or Royal Air Force base was made the subject of formal consultation; and in how many cases the proposed closure was subsequently reversed.

Mr. Soames: All proposals by my Department which affect civilian staff are subject to formal consultation with trade unions and other interested parties before final decisions are taken. As consultation is undertaken locally for all proposals affecting fewer than 25 staff, central records are not maintained, and the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. For those cases where records are held centrally, one proposal was altered, and two others are subject to fresh study. In other cases, alternative defence uses were found for some sites.

Airfields

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which of his Department's airfields are now surplus to requirements; and what is the timetable for their disposal.

Mr. Soames: The following airfields are surplus to requirement and are in disposal or earmarked for disposal:

Airfields	*Expected disposal timetable*
DRA Bedford (Thurleigh Airfield)	Completion of sale anticipated June 1995.
RAF Bentwaters	Disposal projected for FY 95/96.
RAF Binbrook	Disposal projected for FY 95/96.
RAF Greenham Common	Sale of airfield anticipated summer 1995.
Old Sarum Airfield	Freehold of airfield expected to be sold in February/March 1995.
St. David's Airfield, Dyfed	Completion of sale anticipated 31 December 1995.
RAF Sculthorpe	Disposal projected for FY 95/96 subject to confirmation of no further Defence use.
RAF Swinderby	Disposal projected for FY 95/96 subject to confirmation of no further Defence use.
RAF Upper Heyford	No timetable available at present as the method of disposal is still to be decided.
Wroughton Airfield	To be transferred to the National Museum of Science & Industry 31 March 1995

The table below gives details of airfields that have been declared surplus to requirements but which are still in use and/or under consideration for alternative Defence use.

Airfields	*Status*
RAF Alconbury	USAF to vacate by September 1995. Disposal projected for FY 96–97.
RAF Binbrook	Projected disposal dated FY 96–97.
RAF Chivenor	Under consideration for alternative Defence use.
HMS Daedalus	Due to close in April 1996. Disposal is projected for FY 96–97.
DRA Farnborough	Currently operational but expected to be accepted for disposal in April 1995. The disposal of the airfield is linked to that of the "factory area" which is not expected to become surplus until early 1997.
RAF Newton	Under consideration for alternative Defence use.
RAF Swanton-Morley	To be released 1995. Disposal projected for FY 96–97.
RAF Upwood	USAF Contingency Hospital. Site (minus Clinic) to be handed back to MOD in September 1995. Disposal projected for FY 96–97 subject to confirmation of no further Defence use.
RAF West Raynham	Closed Autumn 1994. Under consideration for alternative Defence use.
RAF Woodbridge	Station closed. Under consideration for alternative Defence use.

Defence Appointments

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total number of approvals given per officer rank in the armed forces since 1984 to take up appointments with companies in the defence industry.

Mr. Freeman: The information is as follows:

	Approvals
Admiral of the Fleet	1
Admiral	30
Vice Admiral	5
Rear Admiral	54
Commodore	8
Captain	88
Commander	258
Lieutenant Commander	287
Lieutenant	89
Field Marshal	2
General	16
Lieutenant General	6
Major General	65
Brigadier	77
Colonel	71
Lieutenant Colonel	125
Major	159
Captain	32
Lieutenant	6
Marshal of the RAF	1
Air Chief Marshal	13
Air Marshal	19
Air Vice-Marshal	49
Air Commodore	51
Group Captain	92
Wing Commander	187
Squadron Leader	174
Flight Lieutenant	48

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Ministry of Defence Houses

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Ministry of Defence houses are currently vacant in each county of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

	Houses
County Antrim	5
County Armagh	3
County Down	110
County Fermanagh	—
County Londonderry	55
County Tyrone	8

Of these houses, all but 18 are either being refurbished or are being held vacant in preparation for the arrival of replacement units in early 1995.

Service Accommodation

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action his Department is taking to review the requirements for service residential and social accommodation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Soames: We keep the requirement for accommodation under continual review in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere.

Royal Engineering Camp, Antrim

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the requirement for additional accommodation at the Royal Engineers camp in Antrim in the event of other suitable alternative accommodation becoming available in the Antrim area.

Mr. Soames: The option of building on another site rather than rebuilding Massereene barracks was investigated, but no suitable alternative was found.

Gordon Foxley

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what reforms his Department has adopted following the Gordon Foxley case.

Mr. Freeman: Our investigations into the Gordon Foxley case continue. It is, however, already apparent that a number of changes in practice, in areas such as competition and contracting procedures, made since the period in which Foxley was active had reduced the risk of a recurrence. We have also taken steps to reduce the time for which individuals serve in commercially sensitive posts. Further changes will be considered in the light of the progress of our investigation.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what conclusions his Department has drawn from the Gordon Foxley case.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson) of 23 November, *Official Report,* column *146-47.*

Eurocorps

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to British membership of the Eurocorps.

Mr. Soames: There are no plans for the United Kingdom to join the Eurocorps.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his French and German counterparts concerning the Eurocorps.

Mr. Soames: There have been no recent substantive discussions with France and Germany on the Eurocorps, although in the course of normal bilateral exchanges French and German Ministers generally inform their UK opposite numbers of significant developments concerning the corps.

Tornado Aircraft

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Tornado aircraft have been lost in accidents in each of the last five years; and what has been the total cost of these accidents.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

1990—5
1991—4
1992—0
1993—1
1994—6

No replacement costs arise for these aircraft since there is an attrition reserve from which aircraft are taken to replace those lost. Records are not maintained centrally of other costs that may arise from an accident, such as aircraft salvage or third party claims.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the safety records of Tornado F3s and GR1s.

Mr. Soames: The safety of aircraft in service is monitored continually by the RAF. The safety record of the Tornado compares favourably with other fast-jet types operated in a similar environment. Overall, the Tornado has had a low loss rate since it entered service.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action his Department has taken to remedy any technical problems which have caused Tornado accidents in the past five years.

Mr. Soames: One of the completed RAF boards of inquiry into Tornado accidents in the past five years has identified a technical problem as the cause. As a result of the accident on 30 April 1990 in Canada, modifications were made to the Tornado's RB199 engine to improve fire protection.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the RAF's inspectorate of flight safety report into Tornado crashes will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The RAF inspectorate of flight safety has not been tasked to produce a specific report on Tornado crashes. All RAF aircraft accidents are subject to an RAF board of inquiry, which conducts a comprehensive investigation into the circumstances of each accident. Summaries of boards of inquiry findings are placed in the Library of the House. The safety of all RAF aircraft types are, however, kept under constant review.

LSD Experiments

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of the LSD experiments called Moneybags carried out at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down; in which years the Moneybags experiments were conducted; how many service volunteers were tested under the Moneybags experiments; what were the lowest and highest doses administered to service volunteers during the Moneybags experiments; what were these volunteers required to do under these Moneybags experiments; how many animals were tested under the Moneybags experiments and what type of animals were used; what was the conclusion of the Moneybags experiments; and with which countries the results of these experiments were shared.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down to consider under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Dr. David Clark, dated 8 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence about work carried out with LSD at Porton Down known as Moneybags has been passed to me to reply as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment (CBDE) is to carry out work to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. As part of that programme, evaluation is carried out of chemicals that may be utilised by an aggressor as a chemical warfare agent.

3. Moneybags was one in a series of studies carried out in the 1960s to assess the effects of LSD on troops in a military setting where the behaviour of those volunteers who had been given LSD could be compared with those control volunteers who had not been given LSD. The aim of Moneybags was to determine how this psychotomimetic drug affected the military performance of men under simulated operational conditions. Some 20 Service Volunteers participated but not all were given LSD; 4 were screened out as being unsuitable to receive LSD. Of the others, some received no LSD whilst the lowest and highest doses were 75 and 200 vg respectively. This was given orally in water. No animals were involved.

4. Moneybags was designed to reproduce a military exercise of an internal security nature, the scenario being that an "enemy" force had sought refuge on the Porton Down range. The volunteers were tasked to clear the relevant area and to capture prisoners and stores from the "enemy".

5. Moneybags showed that the effects of LSD were manifest within 10 minutes and within 15 minutes the efficiency of the volunteer unit was impaired. After 70 minutes the levels of

incapacitation and the breakdown of communication between sections of the unit was such that all activity was terminated. Two days after their exposure to LSD the volunteer unit showed no ill effects and a repeat of the exercise, in which an inactive placebo was given, was perfectly executed.

6. It was concluded that men given a drug such as LSD would be incapable of effective military action. However, the drug had been administered orally and it as far from clear whether it could be disseminated effectively as an aerosol and thus whether it would present a significant battlefield hazard.

7. The results from Moneybags formed part of the technology database held by the Establishment in the area of evaluation of the potential hazard to Service personnel from possible chemical warfare agents. This information was drawn upon during the 1960s and 1970s in the agreements with our NATO allies to exchange information and so promote collaboration and cooperation in areas such as research and development in chemical and biological defence. The agreements with the United States at that time included:

a. The Technical Cooperation Programme involving UK, US, Canada and Australia which had subsumed the earlier trilateral UK/US/Canada meetings.

b. America, British, Canadian and Australian Armies (ABCA) agreement Quadripartite Working Group (QWG) on NBC defence.

c. The NATO Panel VII on chemical and biological defence.

Hercules Fleet

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which companies have put in bids to refurbish the present Hercules fleet; and if he will now instigate a competition for this work.

Mr. Freeman: Competitive bids for refurbishment of the Hercules fleet will be sought formally if the Government decide, on the basis of the current detailed assessment, that there is an operational and value for money case in favour of pursuing refurbishment.

Military Bases

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the present number of *(a)* Navy, *(b)* Royal Air Force and *(c)* Army military bases within the United Kingdom.

Mr Soames: Data held on the defence property list does not differentiate between minor sites and major locations. The total number of facilities attributed to single services are as follows:

(a) NAVY = 223
(b) RAF = 276
(c) ARMY = 447

These figures include facilities such as training areas and ranges, but exclude facilities such as married quarters, career information offices, and facilities for the reserve forces.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bosnia

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Government have to propose the complete demilitarisation of the safe areas in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome the United Nations Secretary-General's report of 1 December to the Security Council on safe areas. The report includes proposals on the demilitarisation of the safe areas. It is now being studied by the Security Council.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of the UN-declared safe areas are occupied by armed Bosnian Muslim troops; and what are the reasons for their presence.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Bosnian Government troops are present in all the safe areas in Bosnia: Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, Srebrenica and Bihac.

The Security Council resolutions relating to the designation of safe areas—819, 824 and 836—do not require that Bosnian Government troops be withdrawn from these areas.

Management Information System

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will introduce a full management information system encompassing the activities of his staff in London and overseas.

Mr. Goodlad: Work is in hand to replace the Foreign Office's present management information system with a new financial and management accounting system from 1 April 1996. It will be compatible with the Department's integrated manpower and personnel system and will provide a comprehensive system covering all its activities at home and overseas.

The ODA has an office-wide system providing management information for all staff, including those overseas, responsible for managing expenditure. This system came into operation in April 1987.

Embassy Staff

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, columns *165–66*, what are the reasons for the size of his Department's staff establishment in Ankara.

Mr. David Davis: The staffing level of diplomatic service posts overseas is determined by the Foreign Office's political and economic objectives, which are published in the departmental report for 1994. Staffing and resource levels at individual posts reflect the depth of bilateral relations, the requirements of British exporters, the growing number of British citizens travelling abroad; and United Kingdom immigration, aid and domestic policies.

EU Council

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *949–52*, what factors have led to the non-availability of the agenda of the Council of the European Union in Essen.

Mr. David Davis: There are no formal agendas for European Councils although the President of the Council circulates his suggested themes for discussion a few days in advance. The likely subjects for discussion were set out in the memorandum by my right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, which was sent to the Committee on 24 November.

PRIME MINISTER

Honours System

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Prime Minister how many *(a)* peerages and *(b)* knighthoods have been awarded since May 1979 to (i) local authority members, (ii) civil servants, (iii) business men, (iv) business women, (v) Conservative hon. Members, (vi) ex-Conservative hon. Members, (vii) Liberal hon. Members, (viii) ex-Liberal hon. Members, (ix) Social Democrat party hon. Members, (x) ex-Social Democrat party Members, (xi) Labour hon. Members and (xii) ex-Labour hon. Members.

The Prime Minister: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Department of Trade and Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what considerations led to the current ministerial staffing of the Department of Trade and Industry.

The Prime Minister: Ministerial staffing levels are determined according to the responsibilities of each Department.

Engagements

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the purposes of his engagements today.

The Prime Minister: To carry out my duties and responsibilities as Prime Minister.

Lockheed

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Prime Minister how many letters he has received from the general public in connection with the Hercules C-130 replacement; how many of these supported Lockheed; and how many have asked for the decision to be delayed until the future large aircraft feasibility study has been completed.

The Prime Minister: I have received numerous representations on this subject.

ENVIRONMENT

Green Belt Land

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what releases of green belt land over 100 hectares in size have been agreed to in structure or unitary plans since 1986.

Sir Paul Beresford: No releases of green belt land over 100 hectares in size have been agreed to in the north-east in structure or unitary plans since 1986. Information is not available nationally, except at disproportionate cost.

Research that the Government published last year showed that boundary alterations in development plans and affected less than 0.3 per cent. of green belts over the last eight years in the areas studied.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the occasions since 1987 when he or his predecessors have called in a development plan or issued a holding direction to prevent the release of areas of green belt land over 100 hectares in size.

Sir Paul Beresford: Three article 14 directions have been made on green belt sites in excess of 100 hectares in the north-east since 1987. Information on holding directions is not available nationally, except at disproportionate cost. No development plans have ever been called in on green belt grounds.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision is made in guidance or draft guidance on green belts for the release of green belt land to halt out migration from local authority areas.

Sir Paul Beresford: Planning policy guidance note 2 on green belts states:

> "Once the general extent of a green belt has been approved it should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. If such an alteration is proposed the Secretary of State will wish to be satisfied that the authority has considered opportunities for development within the urban areas contained by and beyond the green belt. Similarly, detailed green belt boundaries defined in adopted local plans or earlier approved development plans should be altered only exceptionally."

A draft revision of PPG2, which was issued for consultation earlier this year, maintained the point that "exceptional circumstances" were required to justify boundary changes. A final version has not yet been published.

Nickel and Vanadium Emissions

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has carried out into the health effects of nickel and vanadium emitted from large combustion plants; what conclusions have been reached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of Environment has not carried out any research into the health effects of nickel and vanadium. The World Health Organisation has published an air quality guideline for vanadium of 1vg/m^3 daily average. The data available for the United Kingdom suggest that this is unlikely to be exceeded in urban areas.

The WHO has not produced an air quality guideline for nickel. Advice from the Department of Health is that there is no reason to suppose that ambient levels of nickel pose a significant threat to health in the United Kingdom.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress the United Kingdom is making towards meeting its target of reducing total annual carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by 2000.

Sir Paul Beresford: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) on 30 November 1994, *Official Report,* column *1200.*

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will identify the amount and source of the extra funds for the single regeneration budget outlined in the latest Budget; and whether those extra funds will be available for all local authorities to compete for.

Mr. Curry: An extra £25 million has been added, for each of the three years 1995–96 to 1997–98, to the resources for projects successful in the first bidding round of the single regeneration budget. This brings the amount available for the 201 successful bids announced on 6 December to £125 million in 1995–96 and to £225 million in both 1996–97 and 1997–98.

A second bidding round will be launched next year and will build up to a full spend of £200 million in 1997–98, with £40 million available in 1996–97 for early funding of successful projects.

Resources for these new SRB projects are being released from the programmes which were brought together to form the SRB, as their existing commitments come to an end.

Detailed guidance for the second round will be issued next spring. As in round 1, local authorities, training and enterprise councils and private and voluntary sector interests will be encouraged to form partnerships and put forward comprehensive bids that meet local regeneration needs and priorities.

Departmental Expenditure Plans

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will supply further figures to those set out at tables A and B of page 60 of the Department of Environment's annual report 1994 so as to bring those figures up to date to expenditure plans for the year 1997–98.

Mr. Curry: The updated figures for planned urban and regeneration expenditure to 1997–98, including the single regeneration budget, are given in the table:

Urban and regeneration expenditure

	1995–96 plans (£ million)	*1996–97 plans (£ million)*	*1997–98 plans (£ million)*
Housing Action Trusts	90.0	90.0	90.0
Urban Development Corporations/DLR	238.7	214.7	209.7
English Partnerships (URA)	211.6	221.7	221.7
Other SRB	791.2	797.8	802.8
Total SRB	1,331.5	1,324.2	1,324.2
Other Urban	2.3	1.4	1.3
SRB and Urban Total	1,333.8	1,325.6	1,325.5

Updated figures for outturn expenditure in 1993–94 and estimated outturn in 1994–95 will be given in the Department's 1995 Annual Report.

Estate Management Boards

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by region, area and title those estate management boards presently in operation giving their date of commencement and the number of residents and homes within their areas.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The information available to the Department on estate management boards approved by the Secretary of State before 1 April 1994 is as follows:

Approved Estate Management Boards in England as at 1 April 1994

Region	*Authority*	*EMB*	*Units*
London	Camden	Maiden Lane	479
London	Islington	Hornsey Lane	173
London	Kensington and Chelsea	Lancaster West	829
London	Tower Hamlets	Samuda	505
North East	Langbaurgh-on-Tees	South Bank	865
North West	Blackburn	Shadsworth	n/a
North West	Burnley	West End Estates	1,200
North West	Manchester	Hollin	1,200
North West	Oldham	Higginshaw Village	339
North West	Oldham	Holts Village	925
North West	Rochdale	Freehold	n/a
North West	Rossendale	Bacup and Stacksteads	1,184
North West	Rossendale	Haslingden	1,461
North West	Warrington	Blackbrook	809
North West	West Lancashire	Digmoor	n/a
North West	West Lancashire	Tanhouse	1,063
North West	West Lancashire	Whitworth	827
North West	Wyre	West View	843
South West	Plymouth	Pembroke Street	153
West Midlands	Birmingham	Bloomsbury	n/a
West Midlands	Stoke-on-Trent	Chell Heath	n/a
Yorkshire/Humberside	Kirklees	Staincliffe	628
Yorkshire/Humberside	Leeds	Belle Isle North	n/a
Yorkshire/Humberside	Leeds	Halton Moor	1,319

Note:

n/a: information not held centrally.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current financial provision made for estate management boards; and what is that planned for 1995–96 and 1996–97.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: There is no separate provision for funding development of estate management boards. They are funded from the section 16 programme, for which the current provision for 1994–95 is £6.4 million. Planned provision for 1995–96 and 1996–97 is £6 million for each year.

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the annual cost to public funds of each of the estate management boards by region, area and title since their commencement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Information on the annual cost of individual estate management boards which have entered into a management agreement with a local authority is not held centrally.

County Hall

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who owns the freehold of County hall, London SE1.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The London residuary body.

Selector Europe

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contracts have been awarded by his Department or organisations responsible to it to Selector Europe since 1 January 1990; and what has been the value of the contracts.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 2 December 1994]:* No contracts have been awarded to Selector Europe by the Department or its executive agencies during the period in question.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Accounts

Mr. Flynn: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners if he will publish details of the companies and undertakings owned by the Church Commissioners.

Mr. Alison: In common with normal practice, and as required by the Companies Act 1985, the commissioners give the names of their significant subsidiary undertakings, and their proportionate interest in each, in the financial statements which form part of their published annual report and accounts. This report is transmitted to the Home Secretary, distributed to other interested persons and is freely available to the public.

EDUCATION

Higher Education Lecturers

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the salary of higher education lecturers at each salary grade in each year since 1979 at current prices and as a percentage of average earnings.

Mr. Boswell: This information is not readily available in the form requested. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Opted-out Schools

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which London schools have opted out of national wage negotiations.

Mr. Robin Squire: The London Oratory school is the only grant-maintained school for which an order has been made exempting the school from sections 2(6) and 2(7) of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1991 so that it can put its own pay scales and conditions of service in place.

Pre-school Education

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what comparative assessment she has made of provision of the proportion of children in publicly funded pre-school education in the United Kingdom and in each other EU country.

Mr. Forth: The United Kingdom is one of only three countries in the European Union where universal state education starts at the age of five; elsewhere, it is at the age of six or seven. Although data exist for participation rates in most of the countries of the European Union, they do not compare like with like because they do not, for example, clearly distinguish between education and child care, or take account of whether parents are required to contribute towards the cost.

The Secretary of State has set up a task force to plan the implementation of the Prime Minister's commitment to provide, over time, good quality pre-school places for all four-year-olds whose parents wish them to take up. Comparative assessment of international provision is part of their work.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Disabled Access

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what guidelines he has issued to museums, galleries, theatres, and other artistic venues in receipt of public funds as to expected practice in relation to access for people with disabilities.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People announced on 24 November a package of measures to tackle discrimination against disabled people, including a right of access to goods and services. This includes provisions for the removal of physical and communication barriers.

It has not been my Department's role to issue guidelines. However, most of my Department's sponsored bodies have policies on facilities for people with disabilities and some of them issue guidelines. In addition, when giving directions under section 26 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993, my predecessor reminded those bodies responsible for the distribution of proceeds from the lottery that those who are disadvantaged, including people with disabilities, should be able to benefit from lottery funds in the same ways as others in the community, and that it was important that access to facilities which receive lottery funding should be as wide as possible.

Libraries

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, if he will list the five local authorities which spend *(a)* most and *(b)* least per head of population on library book provision; for the year 1992–93, together with the sums they spent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat *[pursuant to his reply, 29 November 1994, c. 606.]:* I regret to inform the House that the answer given was incorrect. The correct reply is as follows:

The five local authorities in England spending the most per head of population on library book provision in 1992–93 were—*source* CIPFA:

City of London, £129.54; Westminster, £4.34; Kensington and Chelsea, £3.75; Hounslow, £3.21 and Sutton, £3.20.

The five spending least were:

Sheffield, £0.89; Barnsley, £0.87; Hillingdon, £0.78; Wakefield, £0.72, and Brent £0.34.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Extradition

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of extradition warrants served in the last three years by the authorities in the Irish Republic for non-terrorist offences against persons living in Northern Ireland; and what has been *(a)* the outcome, *(b)* the time taken to effect each extradition and *(c)* the difficulties which required any application to be referred specifically to the Attorney General.

Sir John Wheeler: The information is listed in the schedule, with the exception of that relating to persons for whom warrants have been issued but who have not yet been arrested by the RUC. The Attorney-General is not directly concerned with applications for extradition from Northern Ireland to the Republic of Ireland. No application was referred to him.

Name	*Offences on the warrants*	*Date first sent*	*Outcome*
McCall, Kenneth	[Two warrants] Two separate warrants for theft.	25 July 1991	Extradited to the Republic of Ireland on 2 March 1994 following difficulties in locating the subject of the warrants and after resolution of various queries.
Brady, Patrick	[Four warrants] Two separate warrants for having possession of illegal drugs with intent to supply.	4 October 1991	Extradited to Republic of Ireland on 10 May 1994 after resolution of outstanding criminal proceedings in Northern Ireland and various queries, and following difficulties in locating the subject of the warrants.
Greer, John McGregor	Two separate warrants for unlawful importation of drugs. [22 warrants] Possession of articles with intent to rob. Entering a building as a trespasser with intent to steal. Escape from lawful custody. Nine separate warrants for unlawful assault. Ten separate warrants for handling stolen goods.	29 April 1993	Extradited to the Republic of Ireland on 17 July 1993 after his release from prison in Northern Ireland.
Conway, Thomas Desmond	[Five warrants] Two warrants for unlawful and malicious infliction of grievous bodily harm. Two warrants for assault occasioning a action bodily harm. Assault on police officers.	20 January 1994	Extradited to the Republic of Ireland on 27 January 1994
Morgan, Terence Anthony	[One warrant] Unlawful possession of drugs.	9 July 1994	Extradited to the Republic of Ireland on 29 July 1994

Name	*Offences on the warrants*	*Date first sent*	*Outcome*
McHugh, Patrick	[Two warrants] Robbery. Possession of an imitation firearm with intent to commit an indictable offence.	20 September 1994	Extradited to the Republic of Ireland on 26 October 1994

Mr. Maginnis: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those warrants, stating persons and offences concerned, which were sent by the RUC to the Irish Republic in connection with extradition for non-terrorist offences during the past three years; and what has been *(a)* the outcome, *(b)* the time taken to effect each extradition and *(c)* the difficulties which required any application to be specifically referred to the Irish Republic's Attorney-General.

Sir John Wheeler: The information is listed with the exception of that relating to those persons for whom warrants have been issued, but who have not yet been arrested. All warrants sent by the RUC to the Garda Siochana are referred to the Irish Attorney-General's office as a matter of course.

Name	*Offences on the warrants*	*Date sent*	*Outcome*
Moran, James Joseph	[Two warrants sent] Murder contrary to Common Law. Conspiracy to murder.	17 February 1993	Awaiting High Court Appeal in Dublin.
Quigley, Philip Andrew	[One warrant sent] Murder contrary to Common Law.	17 February 1993	Awaiting High Court Appeal in Dublin.
Larkin, Daniel Francis	[One warrant sent] Murder contrary to Common Law.	17 February 1993	Awaiting judgment of the Supreme court in Dublin.
Smyth, John Gerard Brendan	[Nine warrants sent] Eight separate warrants alleging indecent assault against male persons. One warrant alleging indecent assault against a female	29 April 1993	Warrants not backed. Smyth voluntarily returned to Northern Ireland January 1994.
McNamee, William Patrick	[One warrant] Rape	14 January 1994	Extradited to Northern Ireland 18 January 1994.
Walsh, Christopher Patrick	[Four warrants] Four separate warrants for handling stolen goods	10 February 1994	Awaiting High Court Appeal in Dublin.
Donnell, James Edward	[Two warrants] Theft. Robbery.	24 February 1994	Extradited to Northern Ireland 14 March 1994
Stewart, Samuel Mervyn Noel	[One warrant] Rape.	26 May 1994	Extradited to Northern Ireland 27 May 1994.
Bell, Garnet Seabrooke	[Eight warrants] Three separate warrants for attempted murder. Three separate warrants for unlawfully and maliciously causing grievous bodily harm. Two separate warrants for criminal damage.	21 June 1994	Extradited to Northern Ireland 18 August 1994.
Valliday, Stephen Charles	[Two warrants] Murder, Unlawfully and maliciously causing grievous bodily harm.	7 July 1994	Extradited to Northern Ireland 8 September 1994.
Wilson, John Robert Henry	[One warrant] Reckless driving, causing grievous bodily harm.	1 September 1994	Extradited to Northern Ireland 17 October 1994.
Friel, Patrick Martin	[Three warrants] Three separate warrants for indecent assault on a female	13 October 1994	Arrested 16 November 1994 case presently before the District Court in Dublin.

Staffing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average qualified nurse to patient ratio in each of the last five years by region.

Mr. Moss: The information is as follows:

Qualified Hospital Nurse: Patient Ratio (Whole-time Equivalent)

	Ratio
1990–91	1 : 24.8
1991–92	1 : 25.5
1992–93	1 : 26.4
1993–94	1 : 29.3

Notes:

Information prior to 1990, is unavailable.

The patient ratio was calculated using deaths and discharges and excludes day cases, regular day/night admissions and outpatients.

Redundancies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of redundancies among national health service staff *(a)* by grade and *(b)* by reason for each of the last five years.

Mr. Moss: The information is not held in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what have been the costs of redundancy payments to staff in each of the last five years.

Sir John Wheeler: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Operating Theatres

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many operating theatre sessions have been cancelled in each region in each of the last five years.

Mr. Moss: The number of scheduled operating theatre sessions cancelled in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years are set out in the table.

Year	*Number*
1989–90	3,022
1990–91	3,257
1991–92	3,021
1992–93	2,445
1993–94	1,732

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by name the start-up costs for each national health service trust hospital, by region.

Mr. Moss: Since regional health authorities do not exist in Northern Ireland, it is not possible to present the information exactly as requested. Prior to their operational dates, the following contributions were made towards the cost of establishing health and social services trusts in Northern Ireland.

Establishment costs of HSS trusts in Northern Ireland

	£
Operational date 1 April 1994	
Royal Group of Hospitals and Dental Hospital Trust	218,000
Belfast City Hospital Trust	188,000
Green Park Trust	192,000
Ulster North Down and Ards Hospitals Trust	191,000
Craigavon Area Hospital Trust	205,000
Eastern Ambulance Service Trust	215,000
Operational Date 1 April 1994	
North Down and Ards Community Trust	211,000
North and West Belfast Trust	223,000
South and East Belfast Trust	204,000
Down Lisburn Trust	192,000
Newry and Mourne Trust	185,000
Craigavon and Banbridge Community Trust	185,000
Mater Infirmorum Hospital Trust (includes further development costs following deferral of first application)	227,000

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many fishing boats are being decommissioned in each of the registered ports in Northern Ireland; and what is the total estimated cost.

Mr. Ancram: The number of fishing vessels accepted for decommissioning under the Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning) Scheme 1994 at Northern Ireland ports is as follows:

Ardglass: 2
Donaghadee: 1
Kilkeel: 5
Portavogie: 5

The total cost of decommissioning the 13 vessels is anticipated to be £890,680.

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the plans of his Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which he intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the world wide web server "open.gov.uk" or any specific departmental server.

Sir John Wheeler: In line with the open government code of practice published in April 1994, the Northern Ireland civil service has plans in the next year, in liaison with the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, the Government centre for information systems, to examine the potential of using Internet as an effective medium to make information available to the public domain. When this exercise is completed, the NICS will address the issue of what information it would be appropriate to make available. The NICS has already registered Internet addresses with the relevant authority in order to facilitate future use.

Emergency Provisions Act (Review)

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has yet received the report of Mr. J. J. Rowe's fundamental review of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have received the report and am giving it careful consideration.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

3 Dean's Yard

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee for what reasons building works were carried out in 3 Dean's yard outside the recess; and what representations he has received from hon. Members and their staff about illnesses caused by these works.

Mr. Ray Powell: There was an obligation under the terms of the lease on 3 Dean's yard, to carry out repairs this year, and the opportunity was taken to make some improvements. The internal work to Members' and secretaries' offices was completed during the recess and the remainder of the project to upgrade the roof and external areas is on schedule to finish by Christmas. It was not possible to complete both internal and external works during the recess period. No representations other than those made by the hon. Member have been received on this matter from hon. Members or their staff.

Great Clock

Mr. Bell: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what plans there are to modernise the lighting behind the four faces of the Great Clock; how long the work will take; and what resulting change he expects in the annual cost.

Mr. Ray Powell: It is planned to replace the existing lighting behind the four faces of the Great Clock with energy-saving lamps. The lighting on one face of the clock at a time will be shut down and converted. The work will be completed by the beginning of February. The energy savings resulting from this work will amount to some £1,000 per annum. All four faces of the clock will be illuminated on New Year's eve.

TREASURY

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. Nelson: None. Civil servants may provide briefing of a factual nature for Ministers on matters relating to their own Departments. In addition, Ministers in preparing for a constituency speech can draw on material produced by their Department during the normal course of business.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the additional contributions that the United Kingdom will have to make to the EC as a result of the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel and power; and how much the United Kingdom contributions will increase due to the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel and power under *(a)* the third resource and *(b)* the fourth resource.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The introduction of VAT on fuel and power has no effect on the VAT base which is used to calculate our third resource contributions since this is harmonised across member states. There may be a small effect on gross national product at market prices, but that depends on what alternative policies would have been followed instead.

In any case, there would be no overall effect on the size of our contribution to the EC budget since, after abatement, our gross contribution is the same as it would have been under the pre-1988 Community financing system—before the introduction of the GNP resource. Changes in our GNP base, which are not mirrored in our harmonised VAT base, do not affect the size of our contribution after abatement.

Child Benefit

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the savings from taxing child benefit as part of the women's income if taxed at the rates of 20 per cent., 25 per cent., 30 per cent., 35 per cent., 40 per cent. and 60 per cent.

Sir George Young: This would depend on how such a tax was to be calculated, and, in particular, on the relationship between the current marginal tax rate on the women's income and the rates specified by the hon. Member.

Tax Allowances

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the cost of the main personal and non-personal tax allowances and the revenue saved from restricting them to the rates of *(a)* 25 per cent., *(b)* 20 per cent. and *(c)* 15 per cent.

Sir George Young: Estimates for 1995–96 based on information about individuals on Inland Revenue records in 1992–93 projected in line with the forecast published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" 1995–96 are given. These costs exclude the value of personal allowances to some individuals whose income is below the tax threshold. No estimates for restricting the married couple's and related allowances are shown since these are given at 15 per cent. in 1995–96.

	£ billion	
	Personal allowance[1]	*Married couple's and related allowances*[2]
Total revenue cost	27.7	3.1[3]
Yield from restricting allowances		
a) to the basic rate	1.6	not applicable
b) to 20 per cent.	5.9	not applicable
c) to 15 per cent.	10.9	not applicable

[1] Including the age-related personal allowance

[2] Including the age-related married couple's allowance, the additional personal allowance and the widow's bereavement allowance

[3] The costs assume that the personal allowance remains in place. If the personal allowance were abolished, the cost of the married couple's and related allowance would be substantially greater.

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the impact of including BNFL within the public sector borrowing requirement on BNFL's ability to raise capital and on the manner in which such capital is invested.

Mr. Aitken: No such estimate has been made. BNFL's external financing requirements will be subject to annual discussions between the company and the Government. BNFLs' inclusion on the PSBR statistics should not affect decisions on the allocation of funds to capital projects.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy that, following BNFL's inclusion within the public sector borrowing requirement, its payments to the Treasury will not be increased to a higher level than its dividend payments of recent years.

Mr. Aitken: BNFL's dividend payments are related to the company's profitability, according to a formula agreed between BNFL and the Government. There are no plans to change this formula.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whom he consulted before the decision was made to include BNFL within the public service borrowing requirements; what advice they gave; and on what basis the decision was made.

Mr. Aitken: The decision to include BNFL within public sector statistics and hence score its borrowing against the PSBR was taken by the director of the Central Statistical Office, who is responsible, within the framework of international agreement and conventions, for the definitions and methodology of statistics covered by the CSO.

"Financial Statement and Budget Report"

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the reasons for the accounting adjustments of £9.5 billion, £10.7 billion, £12.5 billion and £12.7 billion in public spending for 1994–95, 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 shown in table 1.5 the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" 1995–96.

Mr. Aitken: The accounting adjustments include various items within general Government expenditure but outside the control total—other than central Government debt interest and cyclical social security, which are shown separately. The larger items are non-trading capital consumption, refunds of VAT, teachers' and NHS pensions increase payments, the difference between civil service and armed forces pensions payments and accruing superannuation liability charges, the element of NHS trusts' charges to health authorities which goes to remunerate debt to the Exchequer, and the spending of the proceeds of the national lottery.

The net market and overseas borrowing of nationalised industries and other public corporations is, on the other hand, in the control total but outside GGE such that net repayments add to the magnitude of the accounting adjustments. Debt interest paid from local authorities to central Government reduces the accounting adjustments. This is removed to avoid double counting between local government debt interest payments—which are shown inside local authority expenditure—and central Government debt interest. Fuller details of the national accounting adjustments will appear in the statistical supplement to the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", along the lines of appendix B of last year's supplement—Cm 2519.

Foreign Exchange

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the advantages and disadvantages of a fall in the rate of foreign exchange; and what is his policy on whether the disadvantages outweigh the advantages.

Mr. Nelson: Movements in the exchange rate are considered as part of the general assessment of monetary conditions in setting monetary policy. The Government recognise the value of a stable exchange rate, but do not have a target rate for sterling.

Finance Bill

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the Finance Bill will be published; and if he will make available to hon. Members the customary notes on the Bill's clauses.

Sir George Young: The Finance Bill will be published on Wednesday 4 January 1995. The notes on the Bill's clauses will be placed in the Vote Office and the Library of the House that day. In addition, the Treasury will be making the notes available to the public.

Anti-smuggling Staff

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many front-line anti-smuggling staff are currently deployed at each port on the south coast.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* The numbers of front-line anti-smuggling staff currently deployed are as follows:

	Number
Ramsgate	29
Dover	235
Southampton	88
Portsmouth	88
Newhaven	49
Poole	53
Plymouth	81

Value Added Tax, Southampton

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the increase in the amount of VAT which will remain uncollected as a result of the proposed reduction in Customs and Excise staff in the area covered by the Southampton local VAT office.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The recently announced reductions in staff result from a package of measures designed to improve overall departmental efficiency and are not expected to increase the amount of uncollected VAT.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the current amount of uncollected VAT arrears in the area covered by the Southampton Customs and Excise office;

(2) what was the total amount of uncollected VAT debt owing from businesses covered by the Southampton local VAT office area that was written off from each year since 1983;

(3) what is his estimate of the total number of Customs and Excise officers engaged in VAT inspections in the area covered by the Southampton Customs and Excise office in each year since restructuring of local VAT office boundaries, and in each of the forthcoming two years;

(4) what is his estimate of the total number of VAT inspections carried out in the area covered by the Southampton Customs and Excise office in each six-months period since restructuring of local VAT office boundaries, and in each of the next four six-month periods;

(5) what is his estimate of the amount of uncollected VAT outstanding at *(a)* the end of the current financial year and *(b)* the end of the financial year 1995–96 in the

area covered by the Southampton Customs and Excise office;

(6) what was the total amount of uncollected VAT debt owing from businesses covered by the Southampton local VAT office area written off from each year since 1983;

(7) what is his estimate of the current amount of uncollected VAT arrears in the area covered by the Southampton Customs and Excise office;

(8) how many VAT inspections were carried out in the area covered by the Southampton Customs and Excise Office in each six-month period since restructuring of local VAT office boundaries, and in each of the next four six-month periods;

(9) what is his estimate of the total number of Customs and Excise officers engaged in VAT inspections in the area covered by the Southampton Customs and Excise office in each year since restructuring of local VAT office boundaries, and in each of the forthcoming two years;

(10) what is his estimate of the total amount of uncollected VAT debt owing from business covered by the Southampton local VAT office that will be written off for the financial years 1994–95 and 1995–96.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 7 December]:* For the years to March 1993 and March 1994, Southampton local VAT office assigned 43 and 45 officers respectively to VAT visiting duties. For the year to March 1995, Southampton LVO plans to assign 46 officers to such duties. Planning figures are not available for the year to March 1996.

Using those staff the number of visits carried out in each six month period were:

	Number
April 92–September 92	1,940
October 92–March 93	2,022
April 93–September 93	1,691
October 93–March 94	1,978
April 94–October 94	1,876
October 94–March 95	[1]2,127

[1] number of visits planned.

Planning figures are not available for periods beyond March 1995. The number of visits is not, of itself, an indicator of the efficacy of the visiting programme as businesses are selected in accordance with their risk profile which may vary from year to year.

In October 1994, the outstanding local VAT debt of registered businesses, within the Southampton LVO area, was £7.3 million.

For the year ending March 1995, Southampton LVO estimates the debt on hand will be some £6.5 million. Planning figures are not available for 1995–96.

Because of the restructuring of local VAT office boundaries and other operational changes, figures for VAT debt written off are not available for the whole period requested. For the years to March 1993 and March 1994, Southampton LVO wrote off £1.1 million and £2.1 million of debt respectively.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Buckley Hall Prison

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he gave to accepting lower tenders received for the management of Buckley Hall prison than that he accepted; and what was the gap between the tender accepted and the lowest one made.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 8 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the letting of the contract for Buckley Hall.

The Evaluation Panel considered a number of factors when assessing all bids. These included how well the tenderers met the requirements of the invitation to tender; the level of realism and innovation in the bid; the quality of the programmes offered; security; staffing levels; deliverability and implementation; the Panel's confidence in the management teams and the corporate approach; and value for money. The Prisons Board then considered and decided to accept the recommendation of the Evaluation Panel that the contract be awarded to Group 4.

Over the five years of the contract the lowest bid was approximately £5 million or 15% less than Group 4's bid. The Evaluation Panel considered that the proposals in the lowest bid lacked substance and was not satisfied that the bidder was capable of implementing its proposals.

In the opinion of the Evaluation Panel and the Prisons Board, Group 4's bid offered the best combination of quality and price, as well as confidence in delivery, thus providing the taxpayer with the best overall value for money.

Doncaster Prison

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* deaths and *(b)* serious injuries of prisoners held at Doncaster prison there have been since the present private management contract began;

(2) what inspections of Doncaster prison by Home Office staff have taken place since the contract with Premia Prison Services began; and when the contract will next be reconsidered;

(3) if he will hold an independent inquiry into the death of Lee Bowen, held in Doncaster prison;

(4) what were the numbers of *(a)* inmates and *(b)* staff at Doncaster prison on 1 November.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 8 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about Doncaster prison.

Since the prison opened on 20 June this year, two prisoners held there have died. Eleven prisoners have suffered injuries which required immediate transfer to hospital. These include acts of deliberate self harm and drug related incidents, as well as assaults by other prisoners.

An inquest into the death of Lee Bowen will be held shortly. It would be wrong for me to comment further until the inquest is complete, but I will write to you again after the inquest's findings are known.

On 1 November there were 452 staff and 740 prisoners at the prison.

The prison is subject to continuous inspection by the on-site controller, a senior prison governor, who ensures that the contractual obligations set for Premier Prison Services are met. A Prison Service area manager recently also spent some time at the prison to monitor the operation of the prison. Visits to the prison have been carried out at regular intervals by other Prison Service personnel, including the area manager. As for all prisons, there is a Board of Visitors whose independent members visit prison regularly. The Prison will also be subject to inspection by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons.

The contract for Doncaster is next due for review in June 1999.

Prison Service

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what appeals procedure exists for those individuals who believe they have been unfairly excluded from working in the Prison Service;

(2) if he will make a statement of his policy on employing at prisons individuals with criminal records incurred as minors;

(3) whether a higher level of screening is applied to permanent Prison Service staff rather than the staff of contractors and agencies working within prisons; and what are the reasons for this;

(4) if he will list the convictions which disqualify individuals from working in prisons.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Peter Luff, dated 8 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about recruitment to the Prison Service.

The Prison Service is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 for spent convictions. Candidates for employment in prisons must declare all offences.

There is no definitive list of convictions which disqualify individuals. Where candidates have criminal records, including records as minors, each case is treated on its merits according to the nature of the record and the type of post for which a candidate is applying. For prison officers, establishments are advised that any applicant who has committed a serious crime or served a period of detention should be rejected.

Where they believe they have been unfairly excluded, candidates for employment in the Prison Service may appeal in writing. In line with Civil Service policy, specific reasons for rejection are not normally divulged, except where basic eligibility criteria have not been met.

Where the staff of contractors and agencies working within prisons are employed on a regular basis or for a long period they are subject to the same level of screening as permanent prison staff. Those employed for a short period are still subject to criminal record checks and are escorted within the prison.

Blakenhurst Prison

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what assessment he has made of the number of employees at Blakenhurst prison who have a criminal record;

(2) what inquiries are made about the criminal records of staff employed at Blakenhurst prison *(a)* on permanent contracts and *(b)* as temporary employees of subcontractors.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Peter Luff, dated 8 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about security checks on staff at Blakenhurst prison.

All people who work at contracted prisons and for the contracted court escort service are subject to routine enquiries about their suitability to work with prisoners. These enquiries are similar to those made in relation to applicants for Prison Service employment.

Candidates who apply for employment, either in the public or the private sector of the Prison Service, in custodial duties are exempted from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 by the Rehabilitation Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975 and therefore convictions ordinarily regarded as "spent" are taken into account.

Security audits are carried out at regular intervals for all contracted prisons and court escort services to ensure all staff have undergone such clearance. The last audit at Blakenhurst did not reveal any employees with a criminal record.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reinstate Mr. Tony Urosevic to his position as a nurse at Her Majesty's prison Blakenhurst.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Peter Luff, dated 8 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Mr. Tony Urosevic.

As you know from Michael Forsyth's letter to you of 2 September, the Prison Service reviewed Mr. Urosevic's case but decided that it was not possible to clear Mr. Urosevic for employment at Blakenhurst and that it was not, therefore, possible for him to be reinstated.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Michael Howard: The following refurbishment projects, excluding routine maintenance and the replacement of plant and equipment, have been carried out in Home Office buildings in the last three financial years.

	1992–93 £	*1993–94* £	*1994–95* £
London			
Windows (Queen Anne's Gate)	139,134.00	—	53,187.00
Toilets (Queen Anne's Gate)	—	38,968.00	83,331.00
Hot water points (Queen Anne's Gate)	—	—	18,989.00
Toilets (Abell House)	—	11,713.00	—
Hot water points (Abell House)	—	6,004.00	—
Hot water points (Horseferry House)	—	1,034.00	—
Toilets (UKPA, Clive House)	—	73,000.00	—
Installation of ceiling fans (UKPA, Clive House)	—	2,500.00	—
Office/toilet areas (UKPA, Hayes)	111,000.00	21,000.00	—
Provinces			
Office/workshop/laboratory (PSDB, Sandridge)	459,846.00	—	—
Workshop (PSDB, Sandridge)	—	13,222.00	—
Laboratories (PSDB, Sandridge)	—	167,019.00	—
Offices (UKPA, Liverpool)	12,000.00	—	—
Kitchen/restroom (UKPA, Liverpool)	16,500.00	1,500.00	—
Ceiling fans (UKPA, Liverpool)	—	3,500.00	—
Toilets (UKPA, Newport)	—	78,000.00	—
Wall fans (UKPA, Newport)	3,000.00	—	—
Offices (Supply and Transport, Branston)	—	8,000.00	—
Total	741,480.00	425,460.00	155,507.00

HIV

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the review of the Prison Service's policy on HIV to be concluded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 8 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the review of the Prison Service's policy on HIV.

The review of HIV in prisons carried out by the Prison Service AIDS Advisory Committee has been completed and its recommendations are being considered.

Empty Property

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to make use of his Department's empty residential property.

Mr. Michael Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for the Isle of Wight on 30 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *732*. My Department will study the proposed guidance for Government Departments on how to secure better use of their empty residential property and make every effort to achieve the targets set.

Asylum Seekers

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases he is aware of involving asylum seekers who have absconded after being granted temporary admission; and in what time period these cases arose.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is not available.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost in the financial year 1993–94 to the Home Office of detaining asylum seekers under Immigration Act powers; and if he will provide a breakdown of these costs.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The available information does not identify separately those costs which relate to asylum seekers.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers who have been refused asylum have been removed or deported in the last 12 months.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: In the period 1 November 1993 to 31 October 1994, 1,860 asylum seekers were removed or voluntarily departed.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for asylum made after 26 July 1993 are still awaiting an initial decision.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: At 31 October 1994—the latest date for which information is available—an estimated 16,790 applications which were lodged after the implementation of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 on 26 July 1993 were outstanding.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how asylum seekers are detained in prison establishments other than the designated prisons for that purpose;

(2) how many different asylum seekers have been detained over the last 12 months at *(a)* HMP Birmingham, HMP Haslar, HMP Rochester, HMP Doncaster and HMP Holloway and *(b)* Campsfield detention centre, Harmondsworth, Gatwick Beehive, Queen's building Heathrow, Stansted airport and Dover docks.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) on 23 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *159-61*.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of the proportion of the 50,000 asylum applicants whose claims are still under consideration by the Home Office are liable to detention under Immigration Act powers.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: It is not possible to say whether individual applicants are liable to be detained until their cases have been considered. However, only a tiny proportion of people who have sought asylum are currently detained.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average cost of transporting and escorting an asylum seeker detained under Immigration Act powers to an appeal or bail hearing before the Immigration Appeals Authority.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Separate records are not maintained of the costs of escorting people who have sought asylum to appeal and bail hearings and the information sought is therefore not available.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers who are held in detention under Immigration Act powers have appealed against refusal of asylum in the last 12 months; and how many of those have been withdrawn.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Of those currently held in detention who had sought asylum, it is estimated that just over 60 per cent. had lodged an appeal in the last 12 months. Less than 1 per cent. of these appeals had been withdrawn.

Immigration

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost to the Immigration Service in the financial year 1993–94 of carrying out reviews of decisions to detain under Immigration Act powers.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is not available.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the weekly or monthly cost of detaining someone under Immigration Act powers at *(a)* a detention centre or *(b)* a prison service establishment.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The average cost in 1993–94 of detaining someone under the Immigration Act at an Immigration Service detention centre is estimated at just over £800 per week. The Prison Service normally holds detainees in local prisons or remand centres, where the average cost per place in 1993–94 was £411 per week.

Police Authorities, Wales

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish for each police authority in Wales, and for Wales as whole, for the last available two years, and with an estimate for the next available two years *(a)* the total expenditure and *(b)* the percentage change from the previous year indicating in each case what proportion of expenditure is met by central Government provision.

Mr. Maclean: Table A lists the total current and capital expenditure, together with percentage increases, by each police authority in Wales in each of the last two years for which outturn figures are available. Estimated expenditure for 1994–95 is also shown. Fifty-one per cent. of this expenditure is met by Home Office grants to police authorities. Revenue support grant is also paid by the Welsh Office to the constituent county councils of police authorities in Wales.

From 1995–96, the police authorities will be free standing, precepting bodies with their own standard spending assessment. Police specific grant will be paid as a cash-limited sum not as a proportion of expenditure.

Table B shows the proposals for allocation of police grant to Welsh police authorities for current expenditure, and also the police standard spending assessments proposed by my right hon. Friend. the Secretary of State for Wales. Allocations of capital grant have not yet been determined.

Table A

Police Authority Expenditure (£ million)

	Expenditure 1992–93	*Per cent. change on previous year*	*Expenditure 1993–94*	*Per cent. change on previous year*	*Estimated exp 1994–95*	*Per cent. change on previous year*
Dyfed-Powys						
current	38.896	+10.7	41.518	+ 6.7	43.378	+4.5
capital	1.982	+1.2	3.242	+63.6	1.445	–55.4
Total	40.878	+10.2	44.760	+9.5	44.823	+0.1
Gwent						
current	38.965	+6.2	41.406	+6.3	43.430	+4.9
capital	3.882	+4.4	1.280	–67.0	2.141	+67.3
Total	42.847	+6.1	42.686	–0.4	45.571	+6.8
North Wales						
current	55.897	+10.3	58.387	+4.5	62.780	+7.5
capital	1.617	–3.1	2.604	+61.0	1.688	–35.2
Total	57.514	+9.8	60.991	+6.0	64.468	+5.7
South Wales						
current	127.300	+7.4	130.885	+2.8	134.485	+2.8
capital	4.420	+29.3	5.018	+13.5	5.873	+17.0
Total	131.720	+8.0	135.903	+3.2	140.358	+3.3
All Wales						
current	261.058	+8.3	272.196	+4.3	284.073	+4.4
capital	11.901	+10.5	12.144	+2.0	11.147	–8.2
Total	272.959	+8.3	284.340	+4.2	295.220	+3.8

Table B—Police authority provisional expenditure allocations 1995–96

£ Million[1]

	Grant £	*SSA* £	*Total* £
Dyfed-Powys	22.557	21.66	44.217
Gwent	24.136	23.26	47.396
North Wales	32.211	30.64	62.851
South Wales	74.775	71.46	146/235
All Wales	153.679	147.02	300.699

[1] Excluding capital grant.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representation he has received from Welsh police authorities regarding their budgets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and noble Friend Lord Ferrers met a delegation from the South Wales police authority to discuss its financial situation on 1 February 1994. I have received no subsequent representations from Welsh police authorities about police budgets. It is the responsibility of each police authority to set the budget of its police force.

Passport Office

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he plans to report his proposals for the future of the Passport Office.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 23 November 1994, *Official Report,* column *163–64.*

Police Operation, Alexandra Palace

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost of the police operation at Alexandra palace, north London on 2 to 3 December; how many officers were involved; and if the organisers of the event being held at Alexandra palace at the time of the police operation have made a contribution towards the costs.

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that 151 officers were involved in the operation to police the demonstration outside Alexandra palace, north London on 2 December. The additional manpower costs of the operation are estimated at £6,500.

I understand that the organisers of the event held at Alexandra palace did not request the provision of special police services and that there was no question of chargeable services being provided. A police presence would not have been necessary but for the fact that a demonstration was organised to disrupt a private event. The policing costs were therefore occasioned by the demonstrators, who have not made a contribution towards the costs.

Animal Procedures Committee

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what appointments he has recently made to the Animal Procedures Committee.

Mr. Michael Howard: I have appointed the following Persons to be members of the Animal Procedures Committee for four years with effect from 1 December:

Professor Ronald S. Anderson	Professor of Animal Husbandry, University of Liverpool.
Professor Margaret Boden	Professor of Philosophy and Psychology, University of Sussex.
Dr. Yvonne Cripps	Director of Studies in Law, Emmanuel College, Cambridge.
Dr. David Christopher	Director of Laboratory Sciences, Huntingdon Research Centre.
Dr. John Flack	Director of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Hazleton Laboratories.
Dr. Paul Flecknell	Director, Comparative Biology Centre, the Medical School, University of Newcastle.
Mrs. Judy MacArthur-Clarke	Recent past President, Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.
Dr. Ian Purchase	Director Central Toxicology Laboratories, Zeneca.

Police Authorities (Membership)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* former Conservative councillors or candidates and *(b)* other persons known to be supporters of the Conservative party have been included in the lists of names submitted by him to local selection panels for membership of the new police authorities.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 6 December 1994]:* Information about the political affiliation of candidates was not sought on the application forms for these appointments.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many names of people from ethnic minorities have been included in the lists he has so far returned to local selection panels as approved by him for membership of the new police authorities.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 6 December 1994]:* Shortlists have been received from the local selection panels in respect of 39 of the 41 new police authorities. The Home Secretary has considered 38 of these. The total number of nominations made by the Home Secretary is 374, of whom 23 are from ethnic minorities.

EMPLOYMENT

Bedfordshire TEC

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress Bedfordshire TEC is making in meeting the criteria for the award of a three-year licence.

Mr. Paice: I am pleased to announce that Bedfordshire training and enterprise council has now completed the progress of meeting the rigorous standard we set for the award of the new three-year licences. Its licence will be effective from April 1995.

Employment Service

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to publish the findings of the evaluation of the Employment Service carried out in 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: An evaluation of the effects of agency status on the Employment Service was carried out during 1993 as part of the systematic periodic review to which all agencies are subject. A report on the findings has now been published today and I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current estimate of the reduction of staff numbers during 1996–97 of those employed within the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service as a result of the introduction of jobseeker's allowance; what are the expected financial savings which will result during 1996–97 and the following year; what functions of the Employment Service are currently subject to market testing; and what plans there are to market test, subcontract or privatise the job-broking functions of the Employment Service.

Miss Widdecombe: We expect the introduction of the jobseeker's allowance in April 1996 to result in efficiency savings. However, it is too early to estimate the impact on staffing in the Employment Service and Benefits Agency.

The level of financial savings resulting from jobseeker's allowance will depend on the level of unemployment at the time of implementation. Our current assumptions are for a reduction in expenditure on benefits by around £140 million in 1996–97 and by about £270 million in 1997–98. Further net administrative savings are expected.

The Employment Service is currently undertaking a full programme of market tests of support services. There are currently no plans to market test, subcontract or privatise the job-broking functions of the Employment Service.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are *(a)* employed on fixed-term contracts, *(b)* self-employed and *(c)* employed in part-time jobs; and what is the total in these groups.

Mr. Oppenheim: Estimates from the spring 1994 labour force survey for Great Britain show that there were 732,000 employees on fixed-term contracts, 3,208,000 people who were self-employed, and 6,006,000 employees and self-employed working part-time. In total, there were 9,076,000 people who belonged to one or more of these categories.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the work force is currently *(a)* employed on fixed-term contracts, *(b)* self-employed and *(c)* employed in part-time jobs; and what is the total in these groups.

Mr. Oppenheim: Estimates from the spring 1994 labour force survey for Great Britain show that of all people in employment, 3 per cent. were employed on fixed term contracts, 13 per cent. were self-employed, and 24 per cent. worked part-time as employees or self-employed. In total, 36 per cent. of all people in employment belonged to one or more of these groups.

Training

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the percentage figures for achievement of national vocational qualifications *(a)* in the pilot areas for output-related funding with the major payment of training for work funding at the end of the training period and *(b)* the non-pilot areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Paice: In 1993–94, 48 per cent. of those leaving training for work achieved national vocational qualifications or their equivalents in the areas where training and enterprise councils were piloting output related funding. In the non-pilot TEC areas of England the figure was 35 per cent. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently announced that all TECs in England will move to a starts and outcomes funding regime for training for work from April 1995.

Unemployment

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the current estimates of the effects on the monthly claimant count of the introduction of the jobseeker's allowance and the introduction of incapacity benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) on 14 April 1994, *Official Report*, column *345*. Current estimates suggest that the relevant figure for the jobseeker's allowance would be approximately 25,000.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Overseas Travel

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 28 November, *Official Report*, column *518*, about Overseas Development Administration spending on air travel, what categories of people travel *(a)* economy, *(b)* business or club class and *(c)* first class when on Overseas Development Administration business.

Mr. Baldry: The class of travel for ODA staff is determined by the length of journey and their grade as follows:

	Grade 3 and above (or equivalent)		*Other grades*	
Structure	*up to 2 hours*	*over 2 hours*	*up to 2 hours*	*over 2 hours*
First/economy	Economy	First	Economy	Economy
Business/economy (or equivalent	Business	Business	Economy	Business
First/club/economy (or equivalent)	Business[1]	Business	Economy	Business

[1] Ministers and grades 1 and 1A may travel first class.

Samarinda Power Station

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of the aid-funded Samarinda power station in east Kalimantan, giving details of monitoring visits by Overseas Development Administration staff; what assessment he has made whether the technology provided is going to be suitable; and if he will place in the Library a copy of judgments that have been made on the environmental implications of the project.

Mr. Baldry: The Samarinda project consists of the provision of a 60MW gas fired combined cycle power station and associated transmission facilities. Work on the power station has just commenced while the transmission line contract is presently being negotiated.

There have not so far been any monitoring visits by Overseas Development Administration staff. These do not usually commence until the project is under way. We envisage such visits will take place at six-monthly intervals.

The project is part of an extensive Indonesian programme to bring power to the more remote areas of the country. Power at present is generated by a number of disparate, oil-fuelled diesel engines, some of which are old and inefficient. The new facility will utilise a cleaner resource, natural gas, which Indonesia has in abundance. The emissions from the gas turbines will meet United Kingdom/EU environment standards. The technical case for the project is sound.

The potential environmental risks have been considered fully. Amongst other things, an ODA team investigated the risk of an enhanced power supply leading to plywood factories in the project area using more timber and therefore having an adverse impact on forests and plantations in east Kalimantan. The team's conclusion was that the project was unlikely to have such an impact. Social impacts have also been studied and found to be positive. An environmental impact assessment was undertaken as part of the feasibility study. A copy will be placed in the Libraries of the House shortly.

Third World Debt

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs what discussions he has had with his right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, regarding third world debt.

Mr. Baldry: By long-standing convention, discussions of this nature between Departments are confidential.

Concessional Aid Debt

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by country the total stock of existing estimated and outstanding concessional aid debt owed to the United Kingdom by developing countries for each year from 1990 to 2000.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 6 December 1994]:* The amount of concessional aid debt outstanding by country at the end of each financial year from 1990 to 2000 was and is estimated as follows:

Outstanding Debt—1990–91-1999–2000

Country	*1990–91* £	*1991–92* £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £	*1994–95* £	*1995–96* £	*1996–97* £	*1997–98* £	*1998–99* £	*1999–2000* £
Antigua and Barbuda	1,980	784,859	1,290,309	2,006,893	2,006,893	2,006,893	1,828,323	1,471,183	1,114,043	756,903
Barbados	445,670	406,970	368,270	329,578	290,870	252,170	213,470	174,770	136,070	97,370
Belize	13,698,963	14,064,634	15,181,814	16,585,152	15,089,336	13,588,492	12,121,434	10,662,986	9,204,538	7,746,090
Bolivia	141,276	141,276	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brazil	2,808,941	3,501,297	3,297,008	3,297,008	3,297,008	3,297,008	3,297,008	3,297,008	3,297,008	3,297,008
British Virgin Islands	15,340	10,655	5,554	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambodia	63,748	45,498	27,248	8,998	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cameroon	66,776	66,776	66,776	66,776	66,776	66,776	66,776	66,776	66,776	66,776
Cayman Islands	719,120	625,958	561,398	496,838	432,278	367,718	303,158	238,598	174,038	111,367
Colombia	2,053,678	1,784,729	1,515,780	1,426,831	977,882	708,933	439,985	221,642	169,867	144,667
Costa Rica	3,214,041	4,616,928	5,195,615	4,785,023	3,930,839	2,857,531	1,952,789	1,294,770	921,332	547,895
Cyprus	293,974	273,574	253,174	232,774	212,374	191,974	171,574	151,174	130,774	110,374
Dominica	8,616,757	9,025,407	9,170,735	9,068,579	8,527,579	7,986,579	7,445,579	6,904,579	6,363,579	5,822,579
Ecuador	7,539,901	7,539,901	7,221,935	7,973,382	6,913,579	5,872,564	4,765,863	3,638,659	2,774,240	2,154,469
Egypt	7,020,961	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Falkland Islands	146,426	124,126	101,826	79,526	57,226	34,926	16,226	0	0	0
Fiji	1,415,886	1,179,889	943,911	707,933	471,955	235,978	0	0	0	0
Gibraltar	710,293	620,158	529,001	453,722	378,443	303,164	227,889	154,319	89,869	42,323
Grenada	3,856,949	4,244,241	5,196,703	5,009,023	4,383,823	3,758,623	3,133,423	2,508,223	1,883,023	1,257,823
Guyana	24,340,689	36,470,598	36,470,598	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Honduras	3,994,211	3,994,211	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
India	138,205,024	112,949,901	89,955,926	68,743,526	50,159,026	35,100,147	21,596,647	10,179,819	2,432,000	0
Ivory Coast	3,556,463	3,666,006	3,690,430	3,690,430	3,480,615	3,364,283	3,053,352	2,836,353	2,619,492	2,403,787
Jamaica	49,237,837	58,962,199	51,910,458	55,247,129	49,850,365	43,904,538	37,409,651	31,476,168	26,104,092	22,241,857
Jordan	39,985,758	40,808,280	42,021,022	43,728,451	0	0	0	0	0	0
Laos	27,983	27,983	27,983	27,983	25,313	22,643	19,973	17,303	14,633	13,358
Liberia	77,750	77,750	77,750	77,750	77,750	77,750	77,750	77,750	77,750	77,750
Malaysia	11,005,518	10,045,084	8,640,416	6,791,514	5,386,846	3,983,525	3,467,325	2,951,125	2,434,925	1,418,725
Malta	7,845,531	7,776,133	7,765,525	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mauritius	6,050,066	5,187,896	4,182,619	3,289,311	2,517,512	1,888,812	1,260,112	631,412	247,712	0
Nicaragua	584,705	584,706	584,706	584,706	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nigeria	4,905,084	4,905,084	4,905,084	4,905,084	4,905,084	4,905,084	4,905,084	4,905,084	4,905,084	4,905,084
Paraguay	4,102,707	3,868,107	3,281,607	3,047,019	2,812,419	2,577,819	2,343,219	2,108,619	1,874,019	1,639,419
Peru	4,194,609	4,194,609	4,193,122	4,193,122	0	0	0	0	0	0
Philippines	5,481,635	5,481,535	5,908,639	5,612,306	5,063,014	4,595,569	4,001,425	3,306,680	2,745,480	2,184,280
Seychelles	10,631,662	9,587,477	8,913,204	8,243,187	7,582,878	6,920,953	6,259,836	5,598,719	4,937,602	4,276,486
Singapore	5,208,316	4,166,648	3,124,980	2,083,312	1,041,664	0	0	0	0	0
Solomon Islands	4,744,848	4,738,148	4,734,699	4,684,985	4,402,485	4,120,429	3,842,629	3,564,829	3,287,029	3,009,229
St Kitts-Nevis	844,065	1,363,409	2,646,041	2,813,090	2,361,550	1,910,010	1,480,670	1,097,836	740,696	383,556
St Lucia	3,142,091	4,156,065	4,388,070	4,166,496	3,833,096	3,499,696	3,166,296	2,832,896	2,499,496	2,166,196
St Vincent	839,509	1,272,576	1,505,594	2,390,440	2,127,240	1,864,040	1,600,840	1,337,640	1,074,440	811,240
Swaziland	8,193,097	7,344,324	6,155,191	5,159,977	4,194,576	3,278,266	2,430,291	1,598,028	837,292	158,725
Thailand	772,892	564,392	425,392	286,392	147,392	8,392	0	0	0	0
Tonga	1,367,533	1,219,061	1,073,549	930,708	787,867	645,029	502,703	371,503	240,203	157,803
Tunisia	255,902	213,942	171,982	130,022	88,062	54,461	26,661	0	0	0
Turkey	55,572,641	50,082,626	45,056,525	40,634,159	36,607,270	32,733,668	29,324,867	25,956,565	22,588,355	19,255,409
Turks and Caicos Island	0	0	1,883,408	1,883,408	1,817,462	1,751,517	1,685,571	1,619,625	1,553,680	1,487,734

Outstanding Debt—1990-91-1999-2000

Country	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £	*1992-93* £	*1993-94* £	*1994-95* £	*1995-96* £	*1996-97* £	*1997-98* £	*1998-99* £	*1999-2000* £
Vanuatu	86,100	71,840	57,580	36,190	21,930	14,800	0	0	0	0
Vietnam	196,798	196,798	196,798	196,798	0	0	0	0	0	0
Yemen	4,162,900	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Zambia	45,262,252	52,086,548	52,086,548	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Zimbabwe	21,485,121	20,055,804	18,594,889	17,136,249	13,677,609	12,218,964	10,760,629	9,301,689	7,843,049	6,384,409
Total	519,191,977	505,176,616	465,557,392	343,241,780	250,005,886	210,969,724	175,199,028	142,554,330	115,382,186	95,130,691

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Attorney-General on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

The Attorney-General: None. Civil servants may provide briefing of a factual nature for Ministers on matters relating to their own department. In addition, Ministers in preparing for a constituency speech can draw on material produced by their Department during the normal course of business.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Attorney-General if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishment.

The Attorney-General: The following refurbishment works were undertaken and funded by the Crown Prosecution Service at headquarters buildings. In each case, the refurbishments included painting and decorating, carpeting, partitioning, screening and the provision of blinds and other equipment. Further refurbishment works have been undertaken in Crown Prosecution Service Areas but the information is not recorded centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Building	*Cost* £	*Details*
1991–92		
10 Furnival street, London	72,000	Refurbishment for a new training branch
1992–93 and 1993–94		
United house, York	80,000	Refurbishment of a newly acquired building
50 Ludgate hill, London	1,808,000	Refurbishment of a newly acquired building
1993–94		
50 Ludgate hill, London	204,000	New security installation for the entrance to the building

TRANSPORT

Rail Fares

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cost of a journey by rail from *(a)* Gospel Oak to Barking, *(b)* Enfield Town to Liverpool Street and *(c)* Peckham Rye to London Bridge, giving prices for (i) off-peak return, (ii) standard rate return and (iii) standard rate single for each year from 1979 to the present, and at current and 1994 prices.

Mr. Watts: The information requested is not held centrally by either the Department or British Rail and could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

Automated Registrations

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the introduction of automated first registration and licensing involves a transfer of an undertaking from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to motor dealers within the meaning of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Norris: The application of the regulations in this case is being considered and I will ask the chief executive, Mr. Curtis, to write to the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich about this shortly.

WALES

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by name the start-up costs for each national health service trust hospital, by region.

Mr. Richards: Prior to their operational date, the contribution made available for the shadow running period of established NHS trusts in Wales was as follows:

1992
  Pembrokeshire NHS Trust—£104,000
1993—£215,000 to:
  Glan Clwyd District General Hospital NHS Trust
  Clwydian Community Care NHS Trust
  Wrexham Maelor Hospital NHS Trust
  Carmarthen and District NHS Trust
  Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS Trust
  Llanelli/Dinefwr NHS Trust
  Glan Hafren NHS Trust
  Gwent Community Health NHS Trust
  Bridgend and District NHS Trust
  Powys Health Care NHS Trust
  Llandough Hospital NHS Trust
  Swansea NHS Trust
  £300,000 to South and East Wales Ambulance NHS Trust
1994—£275,000 to:
  Derwen NHS Trust
  Nevill Hall and District NHS Trust
  Gwynedd Community Health NHS Trust
  Gwynedd Hospitals NHS Trust
  East Glamorgan NHS Trust
  Rhondda Health Care NHS Trust

Velindre NHS Trust
Morriston Hospital NHS Trust
Mid Glamorgan Ambulance NHS Trust
North Wales Ambulance NHS Trust

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish *(a)* the out-turn figure for lending to NHS trusts in Wales in 1993–94, *(b)* the capital projects to which it corresponds, *(c)* the latest estimated out-turn figure for lending to NHS trusts in Wales in 1994–95 and *(d)* the capital projects to which it corresponds.

Mr. Redwood: The out-turn figure for lending to NHS trusts in Wales in 1993–94 was £26.690 million. The latest estimate of out-turn for 1994–95 is £87.521 million which includes provision of £20 million for short term loans. For information on capital projects in the capital programme for 1993–94 and 1994–95, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given by my predecessor on 4 March 1993, *Official Report*, columns *252–58* and my reply of 16 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *698*.

Nursery Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provisions he is making to establish a task force to promote nursery education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend and I intend to consult all the main interest in Wales about how to fulfil the Government's commitment to provide places for all four-year-olds whose parents wish to take them up.

Green Belts

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to produce draft strategic planning guidance with particular reference to green belts.

Mr. Redwood: I am currently considering my response to the advice of the Assembly of Welsh Counties on strategic planning guidance in Wales including that on green belts.

Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I will decide about the future of the Health Promotion Authority for Wales once the present review of health promotion has been completed.

Mental Handicap

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will call for a report into the decision and its implementation by Powys NHS trust whereby three elderly mentally handicapped women were moved from Brynhyfryd hospital to Llys Maldwyn hospital; and what assessment he has made as to whether the trust followed the community care guidelines and the all-Wales strategy for people with a learning difficulty.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* In accordance with the all-Wales mental handicap strategy, the number of residents at both Brynhyfryd and Llys Maldwyn hospitals is in decline. With the great majority of patients already resident in Llys Maldwyn, the Powys NHS trust decided to concentrate the nursing resources on one site and transfer patients requiring permanent nursing care from Brynhyfryd hospital.

The trust board sought professional advice and was assured that there would be no adverse medical effects on their patients.

Following the transfer to Llys Maldwyn, the hospital's director of medical services and the chairman of Powys Health Care NHS trust have both visited the three patients concerned and have confirmed that they are all well and have settled in their new surroundings.

I have made clear that the patient's needs must be the overriding factor in determining where he or she receives care. I expect all trust and health authorities to be guided by this advice.

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning the precautions taken to ensure that the environment in Mid Wales is safe from damage as a result of the operation and closure of the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* All operations at Trawsfynydd nuclear power station, including decommissioning, are regulated by Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate to ensure that public health and safety are protected. Discharges and disposal of waste from decommissioning are subject to strict authorisation conditions imposed by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Welsh Office under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993. These conditions include a requirement for environmental monitoring to evaluate radiation exposure and to ensure compliance with national and international guidelines. The results of the environmental monitoring are published annually by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Welsh Office.

NHS Fraud

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement concerning his policy towards combating fraud in the NHS in Wales.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* All health bodies in Wales are required to maintain appropriate systems of financial control in order to combat fraud in the NHS.

SCOTLAND

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Lang: Property Holdings is responsible for much of the major refurbishment work in premises occupied by the Scottish Office. The Scottish Office carries out a considerable amount of small-scale refurbishment throughout its estate; individual projects costing more than £50,000 are set out in the following table:

Building	*Cost* £	*Nature of refurbishment*
1991–92		
Cameron House, Oban	75,000	Provision of new carpeting, furniture and blinds
Pentland House, Edinburgh	60,000	New furniture
Saughton House, Edinburgh	50,000	Recarpeting corridors
St. Andrew's House, Edinburgh	60,000	Recarpeting fourth floor
1992–93		
Brandon Street, Edinburgh	107,700	Reorganisation and new furniture for 200 staff
Brandon Street, Edinburgh	122,000	New IT furniture to comply with legislation and new storage units
Longman Road, Inverness	140,000	New IT furniture to comply with legislation; new storage units and recarpeting
Longman Road, Inverness	100,000	Contributions towards refurbishment of building by Property Holdings
Pentland House, Edinburgh	65,000	Uprating of entrance and public reception areas
Brooms Road, Dumfries	50,800	New furniture
1993–94		
Dover House, London	59,000	Resiting radio studio and converting space to office use
James Craig Walk, Edinburgh	51,000	Contribution towards rewiring of building by Property Holdings
Broom Road, Dumfries	52,000	New IT and storage furniture and recarpeting
James Craig Walk, Edinburgh	140,000	Upgrading of work processing training centre

Reported Offences

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases have been reported by the police to procurators fiscal in each procurator fiscal area in Scotland in each of the last five years broken down by offence category; how many of such cases have been marked for no further proceedings; and what percentage of each total this represents.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not available on the offence categories reported to individual procurator fiscal offices, or on the offence categories in respect of which no proceedings were taken. The Crown Office collects information on the total number of reports submitted to individual offices by all reporting agencies, and on the number of cases in which no proceedings were taken. The figures for Scotland as a whole are detailed below. My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate will write to the hon. Member with a breakdown of the figures for individual offices.

	Total reports received	*Total marked "No Proceedings"*	*Per cent.*
1989	374,685	45,092	12.03
1990	381,492	40,813	10.70
1991	389,731	35,326	9.06
1992	387,293	35,587	9.19
1993	317,848	35,590	11.20

Overseas Students

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce legislative proposals to allow colleges to charge overseas students fees for those studying part-time who have no permanent United Kingdom connection; and if he will make refugees and asylum seekers exempt from such legislation.

Mr. Lang: My Department is currently consulting further and higher education institutions about the possibility of allowing them to charge part-time students from overseas a different rate of fees from home students. It is not our intention to change how individuals granted refugee status are treated. Institutions have specifically been asked as part of the consultation if they are likely to offer concessions to students who have applied for refugee status. Their responses will be taken into account in taking any proposals forward.

Redundancies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what have been the costs of redundancy payments to staff in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang: Staff reductions are largely being achieved by natural wastage and voluntary early retirement. Costs of redundancy payments to staff in the Scottish Office and its associated departments and agencies are therefore relatively low and are detailed. Figures for the Scottish Prison Service are shown separately.

	1989–90 £	*1990–91* £	*1991–92* £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
The Scottish Office	—	5,313	6,839	645,933	193,835
Scottish Prison Service	—	—	—	—	63,000

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the plans of his Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which he intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the world wide web server "open.gov.uk" or any specific departmental server.

Mr. Lang: My Department's press releases are already available via the Internet. My officials are considering the provision of further selected information.

Insolvency

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of processing individual insolvencies for the past seven years in terms of *(a)* payments to insolvency practitioners and *(b)* direct administrative expenses.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The net cost of processing individual insolvencies in Scotland was as follows:

Year	*Payments to insolvency practitioners £ million*	*Administrative expenses £ million*
1987–88	0.42	0.09
1988–89	2.41	0.50
1989–90	7.52	0.73
1990–91	12.25	1.11
1991–92	18.50	1.20
1992–93	26.31	1.62
1993–94	24.60	1.64

From 1 April 1993, the administrative expenses include the costs of the Accountant in Bankruptcy acting as interim and permanent trustee under the provisions of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1993.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost per case of processing individual insolvencies in Scotland in *(a)* 1992–93 and *(b)* 1993–94; what was the percentage change; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for the change.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average annual costs per live sequestration were £1,189 and £904 respectively in 1992–93 and 1993–94, a reduction of 24 per cent. Under the provisions of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1933, which were brought into effect on 1 April 1993, the costs of administering new sequestrations have been reduced and the costs of concluding existing cases also fell.

Hill Farmers

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is *(a)* the average indebtedness of hill farmers and *(b)* the resultant loan servicing charges for each year since 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* The information requested for livestock farmers in the Scottish less favoured areas is set out in the following table.

	Total liabilities		
	At start of year £	*At end of year £*	*Interest paid £*
1988–89	26,983	38,967	2,881
1989–90	30,187	31,172	3,782
1990–91	31,528	33,075	4,149
1991–92	33,169	32,805	4,215
1992–93	38,060	36,343	3,594

Source:

Scottish Farm Accounts Scheme.

The sample of farms changes slightly from year to year and caution is therefore needed when comparing absolute levels between one year and the next but the average level of indebtedness has remained broadly constant over recent years.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

Ms Corston: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken by the Ministry to restrict BIV-infected livestock from entering the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Browning: The Government have considered this very carefully, commissioning research and consulting not only independent scientific experts in this country but leading researchers in North America and Europe. There is no scientific evidence relating to BIV which would justify placing restrictions on livestock to be imported into the United Kingdom, and we are not aware that such restrictions have been imposed by any other country.

Greater Thames Estuary

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what responsibilities his Department has to protect habitats, flora and fauna within the flood plains of the Greater Thames estuary.

Mr. Waldegrave: As Minister, I have a duty under the Agriculture Act 1986 to balance the interests of conservation with agricultural efficiency, the socio-economic interests of rural areas and public enjoyment of the countryside. In carrying out my flood defence responsibilities, I am subject to the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991, as amended, and the Water Resources Act 1991 so far as the furtherance of conservation is concerned. Finally, I am also bound by the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 to comply with the requirements of the EC habitats and birds directives.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Battle: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the latest research on BSE.

Mrs. Browning: The Ministry has a wide-ranging BSE research programme, costing £5.4 million for 1994–95, based on the recommendations of the consultative committee on research into spongiform encephalopathies. The research is regularly reviewed by the Spongiform Encephalopathies Advisory Committee and all results of conducted research are published.

A new progress report on BSE in Great Britain will be made available shortly.

Sugar

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to defend British interests in the forthcoming discussion on the reform of the EU sugar regime.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Commission has recently issued its proposals to make adjustments to the sugar regime. We well understand the various concerns of the sugar sector. We will strongly defend the interests of the United Kingdom in the forthcoming negotiations.

Environmental Programmes

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made with his Department's environmental programmes.

Mr. Jack: Progress in the Department's environmental programmes in reported annually in the environment White Paper—"This Common Inheritance"—and the MAFF-IB departmental report. Copies of these publications are available in the Library of the House.

Food and Drink Industry

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he intends to help develop export opportunities for the United Kingdom's food and drink industry.

Mr. Jack: We are giving the fullest support to Food From Britain which, since last year, has as its main task assisting our food and drink companies to export. Developing export opportunities in the most promising export markets—the EU countries and north America—is central to FFB's work, and there are plans to extend these efforts into further markets in Asia, central and eastern Europe, Scandinavia and the middle East. This financial year, FFB expects to provide services to 250 firms, including 50 that are completely new to exporting.

Hill Farming

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received regarding hill farming incomes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have received a number of written and oral approaches from hill farmers and their representatives and hon. Members on hill farming incomes in the context of this year's autumn review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands. All these views were carefully considered before we came to a decision on the rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances which will apply for the 1995 scheme.

Horse Exports

Mr. Sutcliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to ensure that the minimum value rule for horses exported to continental Europe has been implemented.

Mrs. Browning: The current directive on the welfare of animals during transport permits national rules on the protection of horses—which include the United Kingdom's minimum values system—to continue, and this we shall fight to retain. The rules have been in force in this country for many years and are fully implemented by Ministry staff.

Marketing Development Scheme

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many grants have been approved under the marketing development scheme.

Mr. Waldegrave: At 29 November 1994, 34 grant applications had been approved under the marketing development scheme.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Sir Wyn Roberts: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what factors he will take into account in determining the levels of hill livestock compensatory allowance payable next year.

Mr. Jack: Rates of hill livestock compensatory allowances for the 1995 scheme were announced on 29 November. As in previous years, we took into account those factors which affected the net farm incomes of hill farmers this year, including the levels of support which hill farmers receive from the other livestock subsidy schemes and the returns from livestock markets. The decision was taken against the background of continuing pressure to reduce public expenditure.

Compassion in World Farming Trust

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the report from the Compassion in World Farming Trust entitled "For Their Own Good" published in October; and what response he has given.

Mrs. Browning: We are studying the report carefully, and will be responding shortly.

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what initiatives his Department is pursuing to assist United Kingdom farmers who export live animals; what representations he has made to the European Union authorities on the subject; when he last attended a meeting of the Council of Ministers, and what was the outcome of the meeting; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Browning: Departmental officials are scrutinising urgently and fully all detailed proposals for alternative routes to transport food animals to mainland Europe, following the withdrawal of the main cross-channel ferry companies. The Department takes very seriously its responsibility for ensuring that only proposals which provide adequate welfare safeguards are allowed to proceed, but also recognises that legitimate proposals which meet these requirements should be permitted to start up with a minimum of delay.

My right hon. Friend has impressed on the European Commission and the Council of Ministers the importance of restoring public confidence by adopting at the Community level strict welfare controls and explicit enforcement arrangements: the last discussion in the Council of Ministers was in October when, regrettably, a number of member states successfully maintained their resistance to the kind of measures that we consider necessary.

We shall continue to press for the highest possible Community welfare standards for animals in transit. However, in the light of the continuing absence of agreement at the Community level, we are pressing ahead with the implementation of the proposals we circulated for comment in September for tighter national controls and a code of practice.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food how many representations he has received during the last six months on the subject of the export of live animals from England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Browning: We have received a very large number of representations, the majority expressing dissatisfaction at the export of live animals for slaughter or further fattening.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what reassessment he has made of the benefits accrued to the United Kingdom from the contributions made to the EU common agricultural policy.

Mr. Jack: The European Union, of which the common agricultural policy is an integral part, offers widespread benefits to the United Kingdom. In this context, we continually reassess our policies with a view to reducing the cost of the CAP.

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the plans of his Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which he intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the world wide web server, "open.gov.uk", or any specific departmental server.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the answer given to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on 1 December 1994, *Official Report,* column *892.* The Department is considering the use of Internet to provide further information from its range of published material.

Common Fisheries Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will now seek to renegotiate the concessions made to Spain and Portugal on the common fisheries policy in respect of Norwegian accession to the European Union.

Mr. Jack: The Norwegian chapters of the treaty of accession of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Austria, including those dealing with fisheries matters, will now be deleted following the outcome of the Norwegian referendum.

Apples

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many *(a)* Worcester Pearmain and *(b)* Discovery apples were estimated to have been eaten in Great Britain and Northern Ireland during the past year; by how many people; at what average cost and what was the average cost 10 and 20 years ago in real terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: It is estimated that about 52 million Worcester Pearmain and 60 million Discovery apples were marketed in the United Kingdom in 1993. It is not possible to estimate how many individuals ate them, or the average retail cost.

Anti-rabies Controls

Mr. Key: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food when he will introduce anti-rabies controls based on vaccination and blood testing as an alternative to quarantine for pet dogs and cats.

Mrs. Browning: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) on 1 December 1994, *Official Report,* column *892.*

HEALTH

Primary Health Care

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the adequacy of funding and facilities at primary health care level to support her policy of changing the delivery of health care from secondary to primary locations.

Mr. Malone: Funding for the demand-led family health service programmes is up by 2.5 per cent. on last year's plans; in addition the cash-limited allocations to health authorities, announced Tuesday, include a special uplift of 2 per cent. in real terms for funding to support general practitioners' expenditure on staff, premises and computers.

Hospitals

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table which breaks down the data in table 17 of the Department of Health statistical bulletin 12/94, "NHS Hospital Activity Statistics: England 1983 to 1993–94", by regional health authority.

Mr. Sackville: A table setting out the information has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table which breaks down the data in table 15 of the Department of Health statistical bulletin 12/94, "NHS Hospital Activity Statistics: England 1983 to 1993–94", by regional health authority; and if she will also show the results in terms of finished consultant episodes by leading diagnosis per 100,000 population in each age group in each region.

Mr. Sackville: Tables setting out the information have been placed in the Library.

Community Care

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has to demonstrate that transfer of funding to Lancashire for care in the community is keeping pace with the transfer of responsibilities.

Mr. Bowis: Since 1990–91, Lancashire's total resources for social services, including community care, have risen from £92.9 million to £169.9 million. This is an increase of 56 per cent. in real terms compared to the national average of 49 per cent. Lancashire received a special transitional grant allocation of £19.8 million to meet its new responsibilities for community care in 1994–95. In addition, its resources for all social services, including the 1993–94 tranche of special community care grant, rose by 15.4 per cent. For 1995–96 Lancashire total resources for social services including community care will be increased to £185.4 million. It is for Lancashire county council to allocate these substantial resources efficiently and effectively to meet local needs and priorities.nb

Consultants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library the activity rate overall, and by speciality, in finished consultant episodes in each English NHS region for 1992–93; and if she will show in each case the volume change since 1991–92.

Mr. Sackville: The information for the financial years 1991–92 and 1992–93 is contained in "Ordinary admissions and day case admissions for England", copies of which are available in the Library.

Operating Theatres

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many operating theatre sessions have been cancelled in each region in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Regional tables setting out information on cancelled operating theatre sessions for the years 1990–91, 1991–92 and 1992–93—the latest available—are contained in the publication "NHS Operating theatres availability and use, England—Year Ending 31 March 1993". Information for 1989–90 and 1988–89 is set out in "NHS Operating theatres availability and use—England" for the financial years 1988–89 and 1989–90. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Herbal Medicines

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her recent statement about the availability of herbal products in which she referred to section 28 of the Medicines Act 1968 also covers the provisions of section 56 of that legislation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Yes. The exemptions, together with the public health safeguards which are provided by section 56 of the Act for retail sale and supply of certain categories of herbal medicines will continue to apply.

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many letters she has now received from right hon. and hon. Members concerning the future availability of herbal medicines; and how many of those letters opposed the imposition of restrictions on the availability of such products.

Mr. Sackville: We have received over 1,000 letters from right hon. and hon. Members who were concerned about the possible effect of proposed regulations on herbal medicines. Our confirmation that the exemption from product licensing requirements for certain categories of herbal medicines under section 12 of the Medicines Act 1968 will be retained when the new regulations come into force has been generally welcomed.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each national health service trust in England the number of meetings that were held in public and in private for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Malone: The National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 requires NHS trusts to have one public meeting per year. Many NHS trusts have more. The number of such additional meetings and of those held in private is not available centrally.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the Federation of National Health Service Trusts about the rise in emergency admissions to trust hospitals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State discussed the Federation of National Health Service Trusts concerns about emergency admissions during the course of a meeting with it on 3 November.

Medicines Regulations

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what date the Medicines for Human Use (Marketing, Pharmacovigilance and Related Matters) Regulations Order originally was expected to be *(a)* laid and *(b)* passed by the House; and when she now expects these events to occur.

Mr. Sackville: These regulations are due to come into force on 1 January 1995. We expect to lay them before the House shortly.

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement indicating precisely the definition of the term "industrially produced" which she intends to adopt in connection with the Medicines for Human Use (Marketing, Pharmacovigilance and Related Matters) Regulations; and how this definition differs from other definitions of the term in European directives and domestic legislation.

Mr. Sackville: The term "industrially produced" is not defined in pharmaceutical legislation. We are satisfied that herbal medicines currently exempt from product licensing requirements fall outside the meaning of "industrially produced" as they are made by traditional processes or supplied on a small scale, and this will be reflected in the new regulations.

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that all organisations representing practitioners of alternative and complementary medicines are in future properly consulted about proposed regulations affecting them and their clients; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Our aim is to consult, wherever practicable organisations representing interests likely to be substantially affected by proposed regulations.

GP Fundholding

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department has received the survey by Dr. Colin Francome into general practitioner fundholding; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: No.

London Ambulance Service

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide figures for the number of emergency calls to the London ambulance service for each six-month period between October 1992 and October 1994.

Mr. Sackville: The London ambulance service have provided the information in the table.

Six-month period	*Number of emergency calls received*
October 1992–March 1993	310,461
April 1993–September 1993	351,573
October 1993–March 1994	370,916
April 1994–September 1994	389,189

Hospital Admissions

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide figures for the number of emergency admissions to London hospitals for each six-month period from October 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994.

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available in the form requested.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which London hospitals were restricting elective admissions in August, September and October 1994 because of pressure of emergency workload.

Mr. Malone: The information requested is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairmen of the London health authorities for information.

Cancer

Mr. Sutcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will issue guidance to national health service authorities covering minimum standards in purchasing cancer and palliative care;

(2) what plans she has to cope with the estimated increase of people living with cancer within the next 20 years;

(3) what plans she has to issue minimum standards covering the provision of cancer care services.

Mr. Sackville: Last year, the chief medical officers of England and Wales established an expert advisory group on cancer to consider the provision of cancer services. The EAGC has already published a consultative report "A Policy Framework for Commissioning Cancer Services" on the organisation of cancer services, copies of which are available in the Library. A number of current initiatives are producing guidelines with the aim of improving standards and quality of care including cancer and palliative care.

Hospital Maintenance

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by region the hospital maintenance backlog as at 31 March.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 30 November 1994]:* Information is collected on the estimated backlog maintenance cost for all buildings in the national health service. Separate figures for hospital backlog maintenance are not readily available.

The figures shown in the table are the estimated costs of clearing outstanding repairs and upkeep required to bring all buildings on the NHS estate up to a satisfactory condition irrespective of whether they have a long term use. They include work to meet statutory and safety standards.

A substantial reduction in the size of the estate is anticipated over coming years, along with a continuing ambitious programme of capital investment. These initiatives are expected, over time, to substantially reduce the backlog problem.

Figures including buildings scheduled for closure or due for replacement or upgrading as part of the capital investment programme.

Region	*Cost of Backlog Maintenance at 31 March 1994 £,000*
Anglia and Oxford	243,135
West Midlands	382,500
South and West	230,419
Northern and Yorkshire	321,103
North Thames	503,381
South Thames	378,527
Trent	132,983
North West	198,950

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to enable invalidity benefit claimants becoming members of health authorities to retain their right to invalidity benefit rather than claiming members' emoluments; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: I have been asked to reply. It is an established principle of the social security benefit system that earnings are taken into account in full, whether or not the claimant chooses to waive receipt. There are no plans to alter this arrangement.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Ministerial Speeches

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on what occasions since 1979 civil servants in his Department have been asked to draft speeches of a constituency nature for use in a Minister's own constituency.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Public Bodies

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which public bodies, currently meeting in private, he proposes should in future meet in public.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: It is for the boards of public bodies to exercise their discretion as to whether or not they wish to hold meetings in public, except in the cases where there is a specific statutory obligation to do so.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: During the last Session of Parliament, there were 40 occasions when parliamentary questions tabled to my Department received the answer that all or part of the information requested was not held centrally. This represents 5.18 per cent. of the total questions asked.

SOCIAL SECURITY

House Owners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to revise payments to house owners to protect them from lenders repossessing their homes for trivial debts.

Mr. Roger Evans: In 1991, the Council of Mortgage Lenders gave an undertaking that lenders will not seek possession in cases where mortgage interest payments are fully covered by income support.

Last week, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security announced proposals for changes to the help that income support provides for the housing costs of home owners. Most of the changes will be introduced in October 1995 after consultation. The lenders will be included in the consultation process.

Income Support

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many income support claimants who have lost their benefit books have been refused an immediate replacement in the past three years; and, where there has been a previously lost book, how many had been subject to unauthorised encashments.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 7 December 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of customers who have, in the past 3 years, been refused an immediate replacement after losing their Income Support order book; and, the number of unauthorised encashments where there had been a previous loss.

The information you have requested about the refusal of replacement payments is not available and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. However, there was an omission in the details provided in response to your previous Question on this matter (Official Report Vol.218, Col.694) as one category of loss had not been included. I have taken this opportunity to correct that and, at the same time, to bring it up to date. The revised figures are attached as an appendix to this letter. I am sorry for any inconvenience you may have been caused.

For the reason given in the earlier reply, the present payment system does not allow us to identify accurately the number of unauthorised encashments of order books which had previously been reported as lost. Plans to automate benefit payments made at post offices are expected to provide for full reconciliation of transactions.

I hope that you find this reply helpful.

Income Support

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Number of order books issued	6,472,016	7,599,276	9,117,392
Number reported lost or stolen	66,954	89,919	108,484
Number reported lost or mislaid after receipt	28,004	42,072	52,931
Number reported stolen after receipt[1]	7,418	10,267	13,357

[1] Omitted from figures supplied previously

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what categories of people with disabilities will be excluded from his plans to limit income support assistance with mortgage interest payments after October 1995;

(2) if people over the age of 60 will be excluded from his plans to limit income support assistance with mortgage interest payments from October 1995;

(3) if lone parents will be excluded from his plans to limit income support assistance with mortgage interest payments from October 1995;

(4) when he proposes to issue a consultation paper setting out his plans to limit income support assistance with mortgage interest payments from October 1995.

Mr. Roger Evans: Changes to the level of income support assistance with mortgage interest payments were announced in the uprating statement. Pensioners will be protected and the position of other groups will be considered during the consultation process. The consultation paper will be issued in the spring.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to scale back income support assistance with mortgage interest payments for existing borrowers.

Mr. Roger Evans: Proposals for changes to income support help with mortgage interest payments for existing borrowers who make claims for income support from next October were contained in the uprating statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 30 November.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures giving a breakdown of expenditure on income support assistance with mortgage interest payments by claimant group and for all claimants showing for each *(a)* total expenditure on interest payments for the first nine months of a claim and *(b)* total expenditure on interest payments over nine months from the start of a claim, giving the most recent available figures.

Mr. Roger Evans: Details are available only for the weekly amount of mortgage interest in payment at the time the survey was carried out. Details are set out in the table below.

Income support claimants with mortgage interest payments

	Weekly expenditure on mortgage interest-claimants on IS less than 9 months £ million	*Weekly expenditure on mortgage interest-claimants on IS 9 months or more £ million*
Pensioners	0.2	1.6
Sick/Disabled	0.4	2.2
Lone Parent	0.9	4.2
Unemployed	3.4	6.3
Other	0.4	1.2
All cases	5.3	15.5

Source:
Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry February 1994.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many existing recipients there are of the disability premium of income support, housing benefit and council tax rebate in *(a)* Scotland, and *(b)* Strathclyde and the Benefits Agency districts contained within Benefits Agency area directorates 4 and 5.

Mr. Roger Evans: The figures for income support for August 1994, the latest information available, are:

Scotland (total)	*Strathclyde*	*AD4*	*AD5*
78,732	51,588	31,105	26,690

Source:

Benefits Agency Management Information Statistics. Data is subject to amendment.

The information about housing benefit and council tax benefit is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is as follows:

	Housing benefit	*Council tax benefit*
Scotland	75,000	68,000
Strathclyde	48,000	Information not available

Source:

Housing Benefit Management Information Systems, annual 1 per cent. samples with and without Income Support taken at the end of May 1993.

Notes:

[1] The figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

[2] The figures are for benefit units which may be a single person or a couple.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the effect of his decision to remove the right to income support covering the first nine months of mortgage interest on the rate of house repossessions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: The proposals announced strike a careful balance between the need to stimulate the insurance market, and the need to protect owner occupiers. There is no reason to suppose the withdrawal of income support entitlement for new borrowers for the first nine months will adversely affect the rate of repossessions.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions has he had with *(a)* mortgage companies and *(b)* insurance companies regarding his proposals to remove the right to income support covering the first nine months of mortgage interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: Officials hold regular meetings with lenders and insurers to discuss issues of mutual interest. Ministers intend to meet the Council for Mortgage Lenders and the Association of British Insurers in the new year as part of the consultation process on these proposals.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the savings to his Department that will accrue from proposed changes to the level and availability of income support to cover mortgage interest in each of the next five years.

Mr. Roger Evans: We propose to consult widely on the precise detail of the changes. The financial effects will depend on the outcome of the consultation and the final details of the scheme.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if his proposals to remove the right to income support covering the first nine months of mortgage interest for all mortgages taken out after October 1995 apply to *(a)* those re-mortgaging existing properties and *(b)* second mortgages taken out to cover necessary structural repairs.

Mr. Roger Evans: These matters will be considered during the consultation process.

Benefits

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all forms of benefit that can be obtained through his Department stating for each benefit *(a)* when it was first introduced and *(b)* if it was an entirely new benefit or superseded an earlier payment.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

	Year introduced	*Benefit/s replaced*
Retirement pension	1948–49	
Christmas bonus—contributory	1973–74	New
Widows benefit	1948–49	
Unemployment benefit	1948–49	
Sickness benefit	1948–49	
Invalidity benefit	1971–72	New
Industrial disablement benefit	1948–49	
Industrial death benefit	1948–49	
Other industrial injuries benefits	1948–49	Existed prior to 1948–49.
Maternity allowance	1948–49	
Guardians allowance	1948–49	
Non-contributory retirement pension	1970–71	New
Christmas bonus—non-contributory	1973–74	New
War pension	1948–49	Introduced in 1914–15.
Attendance allowance	1971–72	New
Invalid care allowance	1976–77	New
Severe disablement allowance	1984–85	Replaced non—contributory invalidity pensions.
Disability living allowance	1992–93	Replaced and extended mobility allowance as well as attendance allowance to the under 65s.
Disability working allowance	1992–93	New
Income support	1988–89	Replaced supplementary benefit, which in turn replaced national assistance and non contributory old age pension in 1968–69.
Child benefit	1977–78	Replaced family allowance.
One parent benefit	1981–82	Replaced child benefit increase.
Family credit	1988–89	Replaced family income supplement.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimate of the likely increased level of appeals under the new test for incapacity benefit; and what extra resources are being allocated to the independent tribunal service to deal with that increase.

Mr. Hague: Current planning assumptions are that the number of appeals which will be lodged on the question of incapacity will be in the region of 140,000 in 1995–96. As it will take several months to prepare each appeal for hearing, not all these appeals will be cleared during the year. The Independent Tribunal Service will be allocated sufficient funds to deal with as many appeals as they expect to have available for hearing.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to channel extra resources to *(a)* local enterprise companies, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* the Employment Service for retraining, rehabilitation and other strategies in respect of current invalidity benefit recipients who will lose entitlement following the introduction of incapacity benefit.

Mr. Hague: I have no such plans.

The function of incapacity benefit is to help those incapable of work because of their condition. The provision of services supporting those seeking employment is primarily a matter for the Employment Department.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimate of the number of current recipients of invalidity benefit in Scotland, Strathclyde and the Benefits Agency districts contained within Benefits Agency area directorates 4 and 5.

Mr. Hague: Estimates by region are not available. Estimates of the number of existing invalidity benefit recipients in Great Britain expected to be found capable by the new medical test of incapacity are in the table.

Year	*Number of recipients (thousands)*
1995–96	140
1996–97	80
1997–98	20

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimation of the rate at which current recipients will be medically examined by Benefits Agency medical service doctors under the new test in Scotland, Strathclyde and the Benefits Agency districts contained within Benefits Agency area directorates 4 and 5.

Mr. Hague: From 13 April 1995, and over the following two to three years, the new test will be applied to all current recipients in those areas not in the exempt categories.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on repayments of overpayments made to the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) on 25 October, *Official Report,* column *560.*

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what factors cause alterations in Child Support Agency maintenance payments when the child being supported reaches the age of 16 years.

Mr. Burt: Alterations in liability for child support maintenance when a child reaches the age of 16 depend on the circumstances of the case.

If the child ceases non-advanced full-time education, liability ceases unless the termination date for child benefit has not been reached

The maintenance requirement—the amount calculated to represent the basic maintenance needs of a child—can be affected by two factors at age 16. First, the personal allowance for the child increases in line with income support allowances. Secondly, if the child is the youngest or only child to be maintained by the absent parent, then the carer element of the maintenance requirement is removed.

However, many absent parents cannot in any case meet the full amount of the maintenance requirement and their maintenance assessment is a lower amount. In these cases a change in the maintenance requirement will not necessarily lead to a change in the maintenance assessment.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to appoint an ombudsman or inspectorate to oversee the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: Complaints about the handling of cases by the Child Support Agency already fall for investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

The Government do not have any plans to establish a separate ombudsman or inspectorate with responsibility solely for the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the reduction in work for the Child Support Agency which would result if clean-break amicable arrangements were exempted from the scope of the agency.

Mr. Burt: The very limited data available about divorces involving a clean break settlement suggest that less than 10 per cent. of parents with care receiving income support, and up to 20 per cent. of parents with care not receiving income support, may have such a settlement. There is no information about the proportion of cases in which the parties regard the settlement as amicable.

If such cases were to be exempted from the scope of the Child Support Act, the conclusion is that well under 10 per cent. of benefit cases would be excluded. Non-benefit cases in this position are not due to be taken on by the Child Support Agency until 1996–97 and application will be voluntary ex-partners with an amicable settlement will therefore presumably not apply.

Housing Benefit

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost of administering the housing benefit system for the last financial year available.

Mr. Roger Evans: Local authorities estimate that they spent £255 million on administering the housing benefit scheme for the 1992–93 year.

Source:

Social Security Department Report 1994.

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average expenditure on housing benefit per claimant for *(a)* council tenants, *(b)* housing association tenants and *(c)* private sector tenants, for each year since 1979 in constant prices.

Mr. Roger Evans: The available information is set out in the table:

Average amount of housing benefit Real terms 1994–95 prices (£)

		Private tenants		
Great Britain	*Local authority tenants*	*All private tenants*	*Housing association tenants*	*Other private tenants*
May 1988	21.28	25.21	N/A	N/A
May 1989	21.78	26.43	N/A	N/A
May 1990	23.00	29.57	N/A	N/A
May 1991	24.88	35.60	N/A	N/A
May 1992	27.80	40.42	33.89	42.76
May 1993	29.53	44.48	36.47	47.74

Source:

HBMIS

Notes:

[1] All figures in the tables have come from the Housing Benefit Management Information System (HBMIS) 1 per cent. samples.

[2] Information for earlier years is not available.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the cost of housing benefit after the changes introduced in the Budget for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98.

Mr. Roger Evans: This information will be published in the Social Security departmental report in the normal way.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many housing benefit review boards were held in each English and Welsh local authority in each year since 1986.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is not collected.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals were received by each housing benefit review board in England and Wales in each year since 1986; of these, how many were heard and determined at a hearing; and what was the number of successful appeals.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is not available.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the estimated cost to a local authority of administering, hearing and determining a review board appeal.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is not available.

Responsibility for operating review boards lies with individual local authorities. It is not possible to make a representative estimate of these costs to an individual authority since detailed information is not collected about particular aspects of their operating costs. In addition, review board costs could vary widely depending upon the arrangements made by individual authorities.

In-work Benefits

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make a statement on the introduction of the new in-work benefits for single people and childless couples;

(2) what is his Department's estimate of the annual gross and net costs of introducing on a national basis the in-work benefit for single people and childless couples; how many single people and childless couples would be eligible; and what proportion these form of the totals in these groups.

Mr. Roger Evans: We shall be publishing a consultation document in April 1995 giving details of our proposals for the new in-work benefit.

Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average cost of a social security appeal tribunal appeal determination in 1993–94.

Mr. Roger Evans: It is estimated that the average cost of an appeal to a social security appeal tribunal for the Independent Tribunal Service in 1993–94 was £265. The Benefits Agency's costs in preparing and submitting these appeals are not included.

Mortgage Insurance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the average cost to new borrowers of taking out insurance against unemployment and sickness to cover their mortgage interest payments as a result of the decision to limit income support assistance with new mortgages from October 1995.

Mr. Roger Evans: According to the Association of British Insurers, the current average cost of mortgage protection policies is about £7 per month for every £100 of cover.

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the plans of his Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which he intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the world wide web server "open.gov.uk" or any specific departmental server.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on 30 November, *Official Report*, column *751*.

Pensions Bill

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, what significant policy developments since the publication of the White Paper will be reflected in the forthcoming Pensions Bill.

Mr. Lilley: Since the publication of the White Paper, "Security, Equality, Choice: The Future for Pensions", the Government have refined their proposals in respect of a statutory minimum solvency requirement and age-related rebates following further detailed analysis and consideration of comments received on the original proposal.

In relation to the proposed statutory minimum solvency requirement, I now propose that there should be an adjustment to the valuation basis in respect of very large schemes, to allow an equity component in the calculation of their pensioner liabilities; that the time limits for restoring schemes' funding levels to at least 90 per cent.

and 100 per cent. of the statutory minimum solvency requirement should be extended to one year and five years respectively; and that the statutory minimum solvency requirement calculation should be smoothed over a period of months rather than being based on market values on a particular day. With these changes the statutory minimum solvency requirement should deliver an appropriate level of security for members' pension entitlements, without imposing unnecessary burdens on business.

The White Paper announced our intention to introduce age-related rebates for appropriate personal pensions and contracted-out money purchase occupational pension schemes in April 1997. This will ensure that money purchase pensions remain attractive across a broader age range. To help phase in this policy, I intend to introduce a 9 per cent. cap on the age related rebates when they are brought in. This should enable the vast majority of existing appropriate personal pension scheme holders to continue with their scheme until they reach state pension age. It will also mean that younger employees can continue to take out new appropriate personal pensions. Details of the illustrative rates of the age-related rebates will be published by the Government Actuary in his report on the forthcoming Pensions Bill.

Further details are set out in a letter of 8 December to the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) which is in the Library.

Child Maintenance

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to propose that *(a)* the amount of child maintenance paid by an absent parent will be taken into consideration when other benefits are calculated and *(b)* those parents who can afford less than £2.30 a week in maintenance payments should be zero rated.

Mr. Burt: We have no such plans.

If an absent parent's maintenance liability were to be deducted from his income before his entitlement to income-related benefits was assessed, this would mean that his benefit entitlement was higher and was, in effect, contributing towards the maintenance payment. Also, since maintenance is assessed on the basis of an absent parent's income including any income-related benefits, the higher benefit entitlement should lead to a higher maintenance liability, producing a circular effect.

The Government believe that it is right that absent parents should normally make some contribution towards the support of their children. The minimum amount, currently £2.30 a week, is payable where assessed maintenance is less than £2.30 or where the absent parent is on income support. However, absent parents who should pay the minimum amount are exempted where, for example, they are sick or disabled or are themselves bringing up a child; most of those on income support, and all those on family credit, are exempted.

Nursery Provision

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide support for single parents to use existing nursery provision in addition to existing benefits.

Mr. Burt: Lone parents already use a wide range of informal and formal methods of child care including day nurseries. The help with child care costs from October 1994 in family credit, disability working allowance, housing benefit and council tax benefit, is payable in respect of day nursery provision where charges are made for this.

Along with child benefit and one-parent benefit, lone parents can qualify for a range of extra assistance within the income related benefits such as the lone parent premium, a higher earning disregard and a maintenance disregard.

Child Care

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions he has held with the Secretary of State for Education about *(a)* short and *(b)* long-term provision for child care.

Mr. Burt: There is a continuing discussion across Government at ministerial and official level on a wide range of issues affecting the family, including child care.

Computerisation Programme

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the lead company awarded the contract for the computerisation programme at his Department.

Mr. Arbuthnot: This Department uses a wide range of computer organisations in the development, implementation and maintenance of its computer operations.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was *(a)* the estimated cost and *(b)* the actual cost of the computerisation programme at his Department.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The actual cost of computerisation in 1993–94 was £450,322,000. This was within the estimated cost for the year, at £450,357,000.

Habitual Residence Test

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes), on 1 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *884-85*, regarding the benefit rights available to British citizens under present habitual residence rules, if he will make a statement on the basis by which such citizens have a right to claim under existing rules relating to the social fund.

Mr. Roger Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) on 30 November, *Official Report*, column *747*.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 24 November 1994, *Official Report*, columns *424-25*, concerning the application of the habitual residence test in Lewisham, Deptford; how the test is being applied; what are the guidelines issued to adjudication officers; and what is the length of time clients are having to wait for habitual residence test interviews.

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 7 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking for details of the application of the habitual residence test in Lewisham, Deptford.

The habitual residence test is applied to all Income Support customers who satisfy the normal conditions of entitlement of Income Support and have indicated on their claim form that they have come to live in the UK in the last 5 years. Relevant information is gathered by officers acting as the Secretary of State, normally by interview, to establish the reasons and intentions for coming to the UK. This information is then considered by an adjudication officer who decides if the customer is habitually resident in the UK. The customer is informed in writing of the decision and of their right of appeal.

Before the habitual residence test regulations became effective the Central Adjudication Services provided adjudication guidance (Adjudication Officers Guide (AOG) Memo Vol 3/69), offering an interpretation of the term "habitual residence" using existing European social security legislation where the concept of habitual residence is mainly to be found. The Benefits Agency (BA) also issued procedural instructions to offices on the handling of claims when the habitual residence test is to be applied (Income Support Guide (ISG) Circular 15/94). Copies of the ISG Circulars are available in the House of Commons library. I have enclosed a copy of the AOG Memo and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Initially, Lewisham caller office had a problem with the number of cases that required an interview and appointments were delayed for up to 4 weeks. This problem has now been addressed and personal callers with an urgent claim can usually be seen the same day. Non urgent and postal claims are generally seen within one week.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes, if any, are proposed to the existing £15 weekly disregard available to couples where the claimant's unemployment duration exceeds two years under the proposed arrangements for a back-to-work bonus available to jobseeker's allowance recipients; what is the proposed maximum accumulation period during which a claimant or claimant's partner in part-time work may have benefit deducted to be set aside; under what circumstances a claimant's partner who obtains full-time work will be eligible for receipt of the back to work bonus; and how the back to work bonus income will be treated for the purposes of pay-as-you-earn or national insurance contributions.

Mr. Roger Evans: Under our proposals for jobseeker's allowance the £15 earnings disregard for long-term unemployed couples will be abolished. A £10 disregard will apply for all couples in place of the usual £5 per person under current income support rules. Where a person is receiving income-related jobseeker's allowance, or income support, a partner's earnings will help to build up a bonus, which can be paid if the partner obtains work of 24 or more hours a week. No decision has yet been made on whether there should be a maximum accumulation period. The back to work bonus will not be subject to income tax and national insurance contributions.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the best estimates of the numbers of unemployed people who are currently receiving income support at the reduced rate on grounds of hardship who would not qualify under the proposed jobseeker's allowance arrangements; under the new arrangements, in what circumstances entitlement to either housing benefit or assistance with payment of mortgage interest payments continue if an unemployed claimant is under sanction but cannot demonstrate that a household member would suffer hardship; and what arrangements are envisaged under the jobseeker's allowance for the treatment of unemployed claimants who are judged to be voluntarily unemployed on grounds of misconduct or voluntary leaving; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: A total of 2,779 hardship payments were made in the year to March 1994 to unemployed people who were found not available for or actively seeking work. The arrangements for access to hardship payments under the proposed jobseeker's allowance will broadly follow those which apply for actively seeking work in income support. Payments are made at the discretion of an adjudication officer on a case-by-case basis. Estimates of those who would not receive payments under the jobseeker's allowance are not available.

Sanctioned claimants not in receipt of hardship payment in a given week will be able to claim housing benefit on income grounds. During the period of the sanction they will not be entitled to jobseeker's allowance, including any elements in respect of help with mortgage interest payments.

People who leave work voluntarily without just cause, or through misconduct, will not receive jobseeker's allowance for up to 26 weeks unless they can demonstrate that a member of their household would suffer hardship. Hardship payments will be made under income-related jobseeker's allowance and will be equivalent to a reduction of 40 per cent. or 20 per cent. of the personal allowance. Such payments will not be available for the first two weeks of a benefit sanction except to people with children, with caring responsibilities, who are pregnant or have a pregnant partner, or who are sick or disabled or who have a partner who is sick or disabled.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimate, based on the most recent information for income support recipients, of the number people likely to become eligible for jobseeker's allowance as a result of extending the threshold of a partner's weekly working hours from 16 to 24; what is the estimated cost from payment of income support to those brought into eligibility; and what changes, if any, will be made to eligibility for either housing benefit or assistance with mortgage interest payments to jobseeker's allowance recipients with a partner employed for less than 24 hours per week.

Mr. Roger Evans: Information on the costs of, and the number of people who will benefit from, the change in the partner's hours threshold is given in the table.

Those entitled to either income support or income-related jobseeker's allowance as a result of the increase in the partner's hours threshold will continue to be entitled to maximum help with their rent, subject to any deductions for non-dependants or ineligible service charges. Had the hours threshold not been increased, housing benefit could still have been claimed on income grounds where the partner was working 16 hours or more per week. In these cases where net income, including partner's earnings, exceeds income support levels, the amount of help from housing benefit will reduce as income rises, as now. Help with mortgage interest payments will also continue where the partner is working for less than 24 hours per week. If the partner's hours threshold had not been increased no help with mortgage interest payments would have been available if the partner worked for 16 hours or more per week, as entitlement to income-related jobseeker's allowance would have been extinguished.

	Increase in the numbers eligible	*Increase in the number of claimants*	*Cost of IS/JSA (IR) £ million*	*FC Saving £ million*	*Total net cost £ million*
JSA (income related) (IR)	25,000	15,000	35	25	10
Income Support (IS)	5,000	5,000	5	—	5
Total	25,000	20,000	40	25	15

Notes:

JSA—Jobseekers allowance

FC—Family credit

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Modelled on the PSM using the 1990–91–92 FES and the 1994–95 benefit system.

All caseload figures rounded to the nearest 5,000 and savings/costs to the nearest £5 million.

Estimates do not include any tax or behavioural impacts.

Costs/savings are given in 1997–98 prices and assume 2.4 million unemployed.

Couples are assumed to claim IS/JSA only if they are better off on IS/JSA than they would be on FC.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security under the proposed arrangements for the jobseeker's allowance, what will be the taper for reducing the allowance above the £50 weekly ceiling for those unemployed claimants whose payment will be abated on the ground of their receipt of occupational pension income; and what are the best estimates available of the total numbers of unemployed claimants who would be affected by this abatement and the number who would lose the entirety of the jobseeker's allowance payment, in both cases for those aged over 55 years and those aged 55 years and under giving separate figures.

Mr. Roger Evans: As is currently the case with unemployment benefit, there will be a 100 per cent. taper. The precise mechanism is still under consideration. However, current broad estimates of the numbers of people who will be affected by the occupational pension abatement rules in jobseeker's allowance as well as the numbers of unemployed claimants who will not receive any jobseeker's allowance because their pensions are too large is set out in the table.

	Aged less than 55	*Aged more than 55*
Estimated number of unemployed claimants who receive no JSA because of pension	5,000	5,000
Estimated number of JSA recipients with pensions of more than £50 per week	5,000	5,000
Estimated number of JSA recipients with pensions of less than £50 per week	5,000	10,000

Notes:

(1) All caseload estimates rounded to the nearest 5,000; as a result the figures do not sum.

(2) All estimates assume that JSA has been introduced and the length of entitlement is set at six months. Estimates assume that any occupational pension above £50 per week is abated against benefit. Estimates assume that there is no age limit under which occupational pensions are abated.

(3) Estimates assume 2.4 million unemployed claimants and 500,000 UB cases.

(4) Estimates use the 1993 and 1994 Unemployment Benefits Statistics, the 1993 Annual Statistical Enquiry, and the policy simulation model using 1990–91–92 data.

(5) Estimates do not include tax or behavioural implications.

(6) Estimates assume that those claimants aged less than 55 who currently receive UB and who will not be eligible for any contributory JSA continue to claim benefit.

VAT on Fuel

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out details of the new rates of benefit proposed from April 1995, revised in the light of the decision not to proceed with the second phase of VAT on domestic fuel.

Mr. Lilley: The revised benefit rates are in the schedule which has been placed in the Library. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland proposes to introduce similar changes.

Unemployment Benefit

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the number of unemployed people, listing figures for men and women and separately for those aged under 25 years and those aged 25 years and over who would not qualify for unemployment benefit if the period of entitlement were reduced from 12 months to six months showing the number of claimants *(a)* likely to be affected over a full operational year and *(b)* likely to be affected at any one point in an operational year; how many would be eligible for income support; how many are expected to apply for credits of national insurance contributions; what the net saving to the Exchequer would be; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: Information on the numbers affected at any one point in time is in the table. Estimates of the number who are likely to be affected over an operational year are not available. We estimate that approximately 45,000 people who would have no entitlement to unemployment benefit or income support would decide to sign on in order to be credited with national insurance contributions. Our current unemployment assumptions setting the length of entitlement to unemployment benefit at six months rather than 12 months is estimated to result in net savings of £170 million.

	All	*Men*	*Women*	*Under 25*	*Over 25*
A. Estimated number who lose entitlement to unemployment benefit	165,000	115,000	45,000	30,000	135,000
B. Of numbers in A the estimated number entitled to income support	95,000	75,000	20,000	25,000	70,000
C. Of numbers in A estimated number entitled number entitled to neither unemployment benefit nor income support	70,000	45,000	25,000	5,000	65,000

Notes:

Figures may not sum due to rounding.

All costs/savings estimates rounded to the nearest £10 million. All caseload estimates rounded to the nearest 5,000.

All estimates in 1994–95 prices.

Estimates assume 2.4 million unemployed claimants and 500,000 UB cases.

Estimates do not include tax or behavioural implications, except for the estimate of those who will continue to sign to claim NI credits. In this case we have assumed that the same number will continue to sign if UB exhausts after six months as currently continue to sign when UB exhausts after 12 months.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 9 December 1994

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Export Credit Guarantees

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of export credit guarantee finance contributes to arms sales; and what assessment he has made of the appropriateness of this funding as a means of overseas aid.

Mr. Baldry: ECGD supported guarantees worth £1.96 billion in respect of defence contracts in 1993–94. This amounted to 48 per cent. of ECGD's support for capital goods and projects in 1993–94.

Export credit cover does not form part of the Government's overseas aid effort, nor is it funded from the aid budget. Export credit is provided as part of the Government's export promotion strategy.

Death Penalty

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries of the British Commonwealth still retain the death penalty; and how many people in each country were under sentence of death on 16 November.

Mr. Baldry *[pursuant to his reply 28 November 1994, Official Report, column 502]:* The death penalty in Britain applies only to acts of treason and piracy with violence.

Rwanda

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are Rwanda's outstanding debts to *(a)* the World bank, *(b)* the International Monetary Fund and *(c)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Baldry *[pursuant to his reply, 6 December 1994, Official Report, columns 120–21]:* Rwanda's arrears to the World bank currently total $5.2 million.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Statistics

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* boys and *(b)* girls under the age of 16 years were being held in an adult prison in England and Wales on 10 October 1994.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 8 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what was the number of *(a)* boys and *(b)* girls under the age of 16 years held in an adult prison in England and Wales on 10 October 1994.

The provisional information for 30 September 1994 is the closest to 10 October that is available. On that date ten males and two females aged under 16 years of age were held in adult Prison Service establishments in England and Wales.

Solvent Abuse

Mr. Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the police greater powers to deal with glue sniffing and solvent abuse.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985 makes it an offence for retailers to sell substances to a person under the age of 18 if they have reason to believe that the young person intends to use them for the purpose of intoxication. It is punishable on conviction with up to six months' imprisonment and/or a fine up to £5,000. In addition, under section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 it is an offence for a person to use threatening, abusive, insulting or disorderly behaviour, a sanction which can be used against an individual who behaves in such a way while so intoxicated.

The possibility of making volatile substances abuse a criminal offence was considered by the Government in 1983 in consultation with a range of statutory and voluntary agencies. The great majority of those who replied took the view that to criminalise VSA would be counter-productive, deterring misusers from seeking help and possibly burdening young people with a criminal record. There was also a fear that such a course might put young people in greater danger by making their activities more secretive.

The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs has recently undertaken a study into VSA, the results of which will be published next year. We do not expect it to recommend any changes in the law.

We currently have no reason to believe that a change in the law would be beneficial and have no plans for such a change.

Whitemoor Prison

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Sir John Woodcock's inquiry into the escape from Whitemoor prison will be completed; and when it will be published.

Mr. Howard: I will publish Sir John Woodcock's report as soon as possible.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library copies of his correspondence with the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) concerning Whitemoor prison.

Mr. Howard: I shall place copies of the correspondence with my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam in the Library once Sir John Woodcock's report into events at Whitemoor prison has been published.

Vehicle Checks

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what priority he gives to the targeting of police resources for the purpose of vehicle checks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The priority given to the use of police resources for vehicle checks is an operational matter for individual chief officers of police.

Operation Brink

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reports he has received from the West Midlands police force regarding Operation Brink; and what plans he has to recommend the adoption of the scheme by other forces.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that this is a police initiative against those who have outstanding warrants for the non-payment of fines. No reports on this operation had been received prior to the tabling of this question.

The allocation and deployment of police officers on initiatives of this kind is a matter for individual chief constables.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total cost of the policing of the M11 link road protest *(a)* in order to occupy the premises in Claremont road, Leytonstone and *(b)* for the project as a whole to date; and if he will estimate the continuing cost.

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the cost of policing the protest in order to allow bailiffs to take possession of the premises in Claremont road was £1,014,060. Prior to the operation which commenced on Monday 28 November the costs of policing the M11 protest were £1,190,846 giving a total cost to date of £2,204,906. No continuing costs are expected.

Overseas Domestic Workers

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce further safeguards for overseas domestic workers admitted to the United Kingdom with their employers.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I have been considering in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Employment Department the arrangements under which overseas domestic workers are admitted to the United Kingdom. The Government believe that the majority of employers make satisfactory arrangements for the maintenance and accommodation of such employees while in the United kingdom, but we have been concerned about cases where employers have failed to do so. We have therefore introduced additional requirements at the entry clearance stage in order to ensure that there is no misunderstanding about employers' obligations to their domestic workers:

- employers must give a written undertaking to provide adequate maintenance and accommodation—in particular, a separate bedroom—for their domestic workers;
- employers must confirm that they have read and understood the note to employers and the leaflet for servants;
- employers must set out in writing the main terms and conditions of employment in the United kingdom;
- domestic workers must be given a copy of the statement of the main terms and conditions of their employment at the entry clearance interview, with an explanation of them, and must confirm that they agree to those terms and conditions;
- the minimum qualifying age for domestic workers has been raised from 17 to 18.

These measures build on requirements already in place that all domestic workers must obtain entry clearance before coming here; must have been in continuous paid employment with the employer abroad for at least the previous 12 months before coming here with a visitor, or at least two years in all other cases; and must be interviewed (at least on their first visit with a particular employer) by the entry clearance officer separately from that employer and receive and understand a leaflet setting out their legal rights and where to go to for help. We believe that the new measures will provide valuable additional safeguards for domestic workers entering the United Kingdom.

ENVIRONMENT

Noise Policy

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff in his local environment quality division now work full-time on noise policy matters.

Sir Paul Beresford: Four staff in the local environment quality division work full time on policy matters relating to noise and other statutory nuisances.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research he has undertaken or commissioned on the effectiveness of the current noise control framework in dealing with neighbour noise complaints.

Sir Paul Beresford: An inter departmental working party comprising officials from my Department, the Home Office, Lord Chancellor's Department, territorial departments and representatives of the local authorities and police, is reviewing the effectiveness of current neighbour noise controls and will be making recommendations to Ministers in the new year.

The working party will consider available evidence on the effectiveness of current neighbour noise controls, including surveys by local authorities, voluntary bodies and research institutions.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State of the Environment what plans he has to set targets for reducing noise exposure as part of his sustainable development strategy.

Sir Paul Beresford: Planning policy guidance note No. 24, "Planning and Noise" issued in October 1994, recommends exposure levels for new residential development near transport and other noise sources. A copy of PPG24 is in the Library.

A number of EC directives ensure the progressive reduction in noise from road vehicles, aircraft and a variety of machinery and equipment.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State of the Environment what research he has undertaken of commissioned on the contribution of poor sound insulation to neighbour noise complaints.

Sir Paul Beresford: My Department has commissioned the Building Research Establishment to study a small sample of complaints about poor sound insulation between dwellings. The research was carried out between 1992 and 1994. The information gained will form part of a continuing review of the regulations for sound insulation.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the proportion of the population currently exposed to night-time noise levels of *(a)* more than 65 decibels, *(b)* between 55 and 65 decibels and *(c)* less than 55 decibels;

(2) what is his estimate of the proportion of the population currently exposed to daytime noise levels of more than 65 decibels.

Sir Paul Beresford: From noise measurements carried out at 1,000 dwellings in England and Wales during the 1990 national noise incidence study it is estimated that at night *(a)* less than 1 per cent. of the population are exposed to noise levels 65dB L_{Aeq} (23.00-07.00), *(b)* 13 per cent. are exposed to levels between 55dB and 65dB L_{Aeq} (23.00-07.00) and *(c)* 86 per cent. to levels less than 55dB L_{Aeq} (23.00-07.00). It is estimated that 10 per cent. of the population are exposed to daytime noise levels of more than 65dB L_{Leq} (07.00-23.00).

Copies of an information paper reporting the findings of the study, which was carried out by the Building Research Establishment, are in the Library.

Empty Property

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what statistics the Government have regarding the reasons for private sector dwellings lying empty.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Some indication of the reasons for dwellings being vacant can be obtained from data about council tax exemptions, collected annually from each English housing authority. This information does not distinguish between dwellings in the private and public sector.

Additionally, broader information on the reasons for privately-owned dwellings being vacant is provided by the five-yearly English House Conditions Survey. The Department will soon have results from a research project which has tried to identify reasons for long-term vacancy in the private sector.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his statement of 6 December on the single regulation budget, *(a)* over how many years the total sum is to be spread, and how much in each year, *(b)* how much of the sum announced is top-sliced from other programmes, *(c)* how much of the sum announced is new money and *(d)* how any money will be paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: As stated in my reply to my hon. Friend the member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) on 5 December, *Official Report* column *9-10*, the resources available for projects successful in the first bidding round of the single regeneration budget (SRB) have been increased by £25 million in each of the three years 1995–96 to 1997–98.

This brings the proposed funding for the 201 successful bids, announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 6 December, to £125 million in 1995–96 and to £225 million in both 1996–97 and 1997–98. The 201 successful bids are planned to have lifetimes varying from one to seven years. Over their lifetime they are expected to receive total SRB funding of some £1.1 billion, subject to satisfactory performance and the availability of resources.

A second bidding round will be launched next year and will build up to a full spend of £200 million in 1997–98, with £40 million available in 1996–97 for early funding of successful projects.

The resources—more than £800 million in SRB funding over the next three years—for new projects are being released from the provision for programmes which combined to form the SRB, as existing commitments are fulfilled.

Government offices for the regions will be in touch with the successful bidders about arrangements for payment of the agreed funding. Successful partnerships have been informed that approval is subject to agreement of delivery plans and that the continuation of funding will be dependent on achievement of outputs and milestones identified in those plans.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he uses to select successful bids for funds from the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Curry: The criteria used to select successful bids under the single regeneration budget are set out in the bidding guidance issued on 14 April. Copies are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many single regeneration budget bids were submitted from the north-west.

Mr. Curry: The Government office for the north-west received 56 bids for funding from the single regeneration budget.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases the Child Support Agency is currently dealing with; what is the extent of the Child Support Agency's backlog; how long, on average, it takes for the Child Support Agency to deal with a case; and if the Child Support Agency will take on further cases before the backlog is cleared.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Jim Cunningham, dated 9 December 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about outstanding cases at the Child Support Agency.

At 30 September 1994 the Agency was dealing with over 766,500 cases; in up to 474,000 of which action had not been fully completed. It was originally expected that a straightforward case would take around 12 weeks to complete, and we would be likely always to have about 250,000 cases in action at any one time. The Agency has already implemented a number of management initiatives to improve performance and operations are kept under review to establish where further improvements may be possible.

The Agency does not produce an average clearance time for maintenance assessments, but between April and September 1994 37 percent of assessments were cleared within 40 days; 14 percent between 41 and 100 days, and 49 percent over 100 days.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which company has been engaged by the Child Support Agency to advise the agency upon its administration structure and procedures; and what is the projected cost for this advice.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 9 December 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the consultants engaged by the Child Support Agency.

The Agency is being advised upon current and planned service improvements by Andersen Consulting. I cannot provide you with information regarding the projected cost as this is confidential due to its commercial nature.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost per annum of the Child Support Agency proposals to provide DNA testing for fathers in cases of disputed paternity.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 9 December 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the estimated cost to the Child Support Agency of DNA testing.

The contract for providing the DNA testing service has not yet been awarded, but it is being tendered on the basis that there will be no additional administrative costs for the Agency.

Where paternity is established, the resulting payment of child maintenance will provide a continuing nett weekly gain to either the parent with care, or in certain benefit cases, the taxpayer.

In the expectedly small number of cases where the alleged absent parent proves not to be the father and benefit is involved, the Agency will refund the test fees from within existing operating costs.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how much has been paid out by the Child Support Agency over the last 12 months in compensation for errors or inefficiency; and in how many cases;

(2) how many compensation claims for inefficiency are under consideration in the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Ms Helen Jackson, dated 9 December 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about claims for compensation from the Child Support Agency.

Over the 12 months to the end of September 1994, payments totalling £900 were authorized in respect of four claims. A further 102 were under active consideration.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the numerical targets for Benefits Agency medical service doctors in respect of the number of medical tests in connection with applications for incapacity benefit *(a)* in Scotland, and *(b)* in Strathclyde and the Benefits Agency districts contained within Benefits Agency area directorates 4 and 5.

Mr. Hague: The administration of incapacity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 8 December 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the numerical targets for Benefits Agency Medical Service (BAMS) doctors in respect of the number of medical tests in connection with applications for Incapacity Benefit in Scotland, Strathclyde and the Benefits Agency (BA) Area Directorates (ADs) 4 and 5.

The planning of procedures to deal with referrals to the BAMS is not yet complete and, accordingly, the number of cases to be seen by each doctor is not known.

It will be the nature of the cases to be seen which will determine the number seen each day by a doctor as opposed to the area in which the customer resides.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many Benefits Agency medical service doctors will be employed in the medical examination centres in Scotland, Strathclyde and the Benefits Agency districts contained within Benefits Agency area directorates 4 and 5.

Mr. Hague: The administration of incapacity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 8 December 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of doctors to be employed by the Benefits Agency medical Service in the medical examination centres in Scotland, Strahtclyde and the Benefits Agency Districts of Area Directorates 4 and 5 of the Scotland and Northern Territory.

In 1995, Scotland will have approximately 70 full time equivalent doctors, in addition to 19 full time medical advisers, all of whom will all be available to examine customers in the medical examination centres. The doctors will be available to examine where needed and will not be based rigidly in one specific location.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated benefit saving of the new test, including disability premium recipients in *(a)* Scotland, and *(b)* Strathclyde and the Benefits Agency districts contained within Benefits Agency area directorates 4 and 5.

Mr. Hague: Estimates of benefit savings of the new test by region are not available.

Estimated benefit savings in Great Britain from applying the new medical test to existing recipients of invalidity benefit, new recipients of incapacity benefit and both new and existing recipients of a disability premium in the income-related benefits are shown in the table:

	1995–96	*1996–97*	*1997–98*
Savings from medical test (£ million)	210	700	1,000

Note:
Estimates rounded to the nearest £10 million, expressed at constant 1993–94 prices. Estimates include income-related benefits offsetting costs.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of current invalidity benefit recipients are to be exempt from the new test for incapacity benefit by virtue of being aged 58 years or over, by virtue of being in receipt of disability living allowance higher care component; and what is the estimate of the number of exemptions being deemed under the prescribed conditions listed in the report, "Incapacity for Work".

Mr. Hague: We estimate that at April 1995, the number of invalidity benefit recipients aged 58 or over and in receipt of invalidity benefit continuously since 1 December 1993 will be around 738,000.

It is not possible to make an estimate of the number of existing invalidity benefit claimants who are in receipt of the highest rate of care component of disability living allowance.

We estimate that around 293,000 existing claimants will be treated as incapable of work by reason of the exempt conditions listed in the report, "The Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit". Some of them will be aged 58 or over, but it is not possible to identify how many.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on how many occasions in each of the last five years cold weather payments have been made in the counties of *(a)* Dorset, *(b)* Hampshire, *(c)* east Sussex, *(d)* west Sussex, *(e)* Kent and *(f)* Berkshire.

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of the cold weather payments scheme is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. John Denham, dated 8 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your parliamentary question about the number of occasions in each of the last five years when cold weather payments have been made in six counties of southern England.

I have provided a list of the counties for which you requested, giving the number of times the weather stations returned temperature information which resulted in cold weather payments being issued. The information is based on the meteorological weather station that the Meteorological Office have advised broadly covers each county.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

County	*Weather Station*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Dorset	Bournemouth	—	—	1	—	—
Hampshire	Southampton	—	—	—	—	—
East Sussex	Herstmonceux	—	—	1	—	—
West Sussex	Gatwick Airport	1	—	2	1	1
Kent	Manston	—	—	—	1	—
Berkshire	Easthampstead	1	—	3	1	1

In addition, cold weather payments were made on a national basis irrespective of recorded temperatures for the two weeks 1 February 1991 to 14 February 1991.

Automated Benefit Payment System

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which suppliers have been invited to make proposals for the automated benefit payment system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Arbuthnot: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 30 November, the automation of post offices and benefit payment will make a major contribution to our top priority fight against fraud. It will also act as a springboard for Post Office Counters Ltd. to gain new business. Nine companies, some of whom lead consortia, submitted formal procedures to act as prime contractors in the development of payment cards to replace girocheques and order books. The following five have been selected, by Post Office Counters Ltd. and my Department, to develop their solutions further: BT; Cardlink UK; EDS; IBM; ICL.

Domestic Fuel

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average amount spent weekly by *(a)* single pensioners and *(b)* married pensioners on domestic fuel between and including the months from November to March.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is not available.

Back-to-work Scheme

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether, under the back-to-work bonus scheme, the bonus payment will be treated as income or capital for the purpose of calculating family credit or housing benefit entitlement.

Mr. Roger Evans: No decision has yet been made about the effect of a back-to-work bonus on a claim for family credit or housing benefit.

Income Support

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his assessment of the average loss per home owner who starts claiming income support with mortgage interest payments, arising from the changes introduced in the Budget after *(a)* April 1995 and *(b)* October 1995 compared with the arrangements prior to April 1995.

Mr. Roger Evans: The average loss per home owner who starts claiming income support with mortgage interest payments, arising from the changes introduced in the budget between April and October 1995 is estimated at around 25p. This estimate is based on the 1993 ASE, uprated to 1995–96 levels, and is rounded to the nearest 5p.

The proposed changes to be introduced from October 1995 will be subject to wide consultation. The financial effect will depend on the outcome of the consultation and the final detail of the scheme.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of current recipients of invalidity benefit in Scotland, Strathclyde and the Benefits Agency district contained within Benefits Agency area directorates 4 and 5.

Mr. Hague: This is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 8 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about Invalidity Benefit (IVB) recipients in Scotland.

The following figures were obtained from a 100% clerical count of cases in the Benefits Agency's (BA) District offices on 31 October 1994 and are the latest available.

The total number of IVB customers in Scotland at that date was 232,890.

The numbers of IVB customers dealt with by each Benefits Agency (BA) District in Area Directorates (ADs) 4 and 5 of the Scotland and Northern Territory are provided at Appendix 1 and total 171,287.

IVB customers in Strathclyde are those dealt with by the BA Districts of ADs 4 and 5, with the exception of the Forth Valley and Highlands and Islands Districts. Consequently, there were 150,730 IVB customers within Strathclyde at 31 October 1994.

The figures provided include some customers who have claimed but are not actually receiving IVB. This is because there are circumstances in which, although there is underlying entitlement to IVB, because a higher overlapping benefit is in payment no IVB is actually paid.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Patient Complaints

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many patient complaints were received per 1,000 patients treated in each year since 1989–90 by region.

Mr. Moss: There were 4.3 hospital-related patient complaints received per 1,000 patients treated in Northern Ireland during the period 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994. Information relating to patient complaints is not available for years prior to 1993–94.

Information relating to patient complaints in the family health services is not available in the form requested.

Health Care Purchases

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much was spent by *(a)* district health authorities, *(b)* family health service authorities, *(c)* regional health authorities, *(d)* trusts and *(e)* general practitioner fundholders on health care purchases from non-NHS providers in each of the last three years.

Mr. Moss: In Northern Ireland integrated health and personal social services are supplied by health boards, trusts, general practitioner fundholders and the Central Services Agency for the Health and Personal Social Services.

Health and social services boards' expenditure on the purchase of health and personal social services from non-NHS/HPSS providers was £5,777,349 in 1992–93 and £4,448,722 in 1993–94.

The accounts of the health and social services boards were revised in 1992–93 to take account of the separation of the purchaser/provider functions and the information is accordingly not readily available prior to this date.

The first health and social services trusts were established in Northern Ireland on 1 April 1993. Their accounts for 1993–94 indicated nil expenditure on purchases from non-NHS/HPSS providers.

The accounts of general practitioner fundholders do not currently separately record expenditure on purchases from non-NHS/HPSS providers.

Family practitioner services which are delivered by the CSA on a regional basis indicated nil expenditure on purchases from non-NHS/HPSS providers.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost per annum of the Child Support Agency proposals to provide DNA testing for fathers in cases of disputed paternity.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 9 December 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the estimated cost to the Child Support Agency of DNA testing.

The contract for providing the DNA testing service has not yet been awarded, but it is being tendered on the basis that there will be no additional administrative costs for the Agency.

Where paternity is established, the resulting payment of child maintenance will provide a continuing nett weekly gain to either the parent with care, or in certain benefit cases, the taxpayer.

In the expectedly small number of cases where the alleged absent parent proves not to be the father and benefit is involved, the Agency will refund the test fees from within existing operating costs.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how much has been paid out by the Child Support Agency over the last 12 months in compensation for errors or inefficiency; and in how many cases;

(2) how many compensation claims for inefficiency are under consideration in the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Ms Helen Jackson, dated 9 December 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about claims for compensation from the Child Support Agency.

Over the 12 months to the end of September 1994, payments totalling £900 were authorized in respect of four claims. A further 102 were under active consideration.

I hope that this reply is helpful.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Liabilities

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what liabilities exist, what contractual arrangements exist to express those liabilities, in respect of Government programmes carried out prior to April 1971 on sites now in the ownership of British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. or the Atomic Energy Authority; which agencies of Government took part in settling those contractual arrangements; and on what dates such arrangements were concluded.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In correspondence between the Secretary of State for Energy and the chairman of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority in 1986 the Government confirmed that they were prepared to continue to accept responsibility in principle for the costs which the UKAEA incurred in treating and disposing of nuclear wastes and in decommissioning plant arising from programmes carried out by the UKAEA and its predecessors prior to 1 April 1986.

In correspondence between the Secretary of State for Energy and the Chairman of BNFL in 1983 and 1988 the Government agreed in principle to accept responsibility for the costs which BNFL incurred in treating and disposing of nuclear wastes and in decommissioning plant, arising from programmes carried out prior to 1 April 1971, to the extent that Government Departments were responsible for those programmes.

All of the work for which DTI has accepted financial responsibility, including that on BNFL sites, is funded by means of a conditional grant from DTI to the UKAEA and therefore is not subject to contractual arrangements between DTI and the UKAEA.

The UKAEA has estimated that the total value of waste management and decommissioning liabilities for which DTI has accepted financial responsibility is £8 billion, within a range of £6 to £12 billion, undiscounted at present price levels. These figures include liabilities for which DTI has accepted financial responsibility that have arisen from programmes carried out by the UKAEA or BNFL on behalf of DEn/DTI since 1986 and 1971 respectively. £1 billion of this estimate relates to waste management and decommissioning at BNFL sites.

The Ministry of Defence has also accepted responsibility in principle for some liabilities in respect of Government programmes carried out prior to April 1971 on sites now in the ownership of BNFL and the UKAEA.

The principal Government Departments which took part in settling these arrangements were the Department of Energy, the Treasury and the Ministry of Defence.

Insurance Company Act Notices

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many times notices were issued under sections 32 and 33 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 in each subsequent complete calendar year.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Eighteen notices were issued under sections 32 and 33 in 1993; and 13 notices in 1994 to date. Figures for earlier years could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Company Remuneration Committees

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what analysis he has carried out of the composition of remuneration committees of United Kingdom plcs and the background of their members.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: None. However, research has been commissioned by the Cadbury Committee as part of its monitoring of its code of best practice. The code recommends that remuneration committees should be made up wholly or mainly of non-executive directors who should be independent of management and free from any business or other relationship which could materially interfere with the exercise of their independent judgment, apart from their fees and shareholding.

Brewing Industry

Mr. Cox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met members of the brewing industry which also included publicans to discuss the 1995 review by the European Union of the tied house system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I have responsibility for competition issues in the brewing industry. Since taking up post in October I have held no such meetings. However, my predecessor last met a group of publicans to discuss issues relating to the tied house system in June this year. The European Commission regulation 1984–83 under which the tie is permitted expires in 1997; the Commission has made it clear that it does not expect to begin its review of the regulation until early 1996.

Mortgage Insurance

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his latest estimate of the additional cost per month to a house buyer of the requirement to take out insurance on a mortgage of £50,000.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The current average cost of mortgage protection insurance policies is about £7 for every £100 of mortgage payment per month up to a general maximum of £1,000 per month. The cost of insurance against a £50,000 mortgage would depend on the level of interest rates.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much he estimates an average householder will have to pay in monthly insurance premiums on a new mortgage when plans to limit income support help with mortgage interest payments come into effect.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The current average cost of mortgage protection insurance policies is about £7 for every £100 of mortgage payment per month up to a general maximum of £1,000 per month. Costs to householders will vary according to the prevailing rate of interest and how much they choose to insure.

Future Large Aircraft

Dr. David Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has received concerning the future large aircraft.

Mr. Eggar: I have received many representations from interested parties including several United Kingdom aerospace companies and from hon. Members.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State of Defence concerning the future large aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department keeps in close contact with the Ministry of Defence on the future large aircraft and other projects with significant implications for United Kingdom industry.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the impact on the aerospace industry if the future large aircraft is not procured by the Government.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is considering the industrial implications of the future large aircraft with the Ministry of Defence and other interested Departments.

Deregulation Task Force

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the members of the deregulation task force and their payments.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 6 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *224*, which listed the members of the deregulation task force. In addition, David Band of Barclays de Zoete Wedd has since been appointed. Individuals do not receive payment for their work as members of the deregulation task force, but the Department has agreed to reimburse their travel expenses.

Soft Commissions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to co-ordinate action by regulatory bodies in the United Kingdom, in United Kingdom dependencies and elsewhere to end the offering of soft commissions by brokers; and what steps he will take to ensure that insurance companies declare soft commissions offered to, or by, brokers and fund managers acting on their behalf.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

Under the Financial Services Act 1986 "soft commissions" are closely controlled. They must be subject to formal soft commission agreements in each case and the range of benefits provided limited to those relating specifically to the fund manager's business. Fund managers are obliged to make regular and full disclosure to the fund trustees of all benefits provided to them.

Action in the dependent territories and elsewhere is a matter for their regulatory authorities.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the special advisers employed by his Department in each of the last five years indicating when they *(a)* joined and *(b)* left his Department and the annual salary they received.

Mr. David Hunt *[pursuant to his reply, 5 December 1994, Official Report, column 16-17]:* Miss R. Finlay was also employed as a special adviser in the Chief Whip's Offices from June 1985 to October 1991.

EMPLOYMENT

Jobseekers Allowance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy under the jobseekers allowance in respect of claimants needing to show good cause for rejecting the offer of a part-time job of less than 24 hours a week.

Miss Widdecombe: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) on 25 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *387*.

Social Affairs Council

Mr. Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Social Affairs Council held on 6 December.

Mr. Portillo: I attended the Social Affairs Council on 6 December in Brussels, accompanied by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Deptartment of Employment. The principal items on the agenda were two draft directives, on part-time and temporary work, and on posted workers; a discussion of Commissioner Flynn's White Paper on the future of European social policy; and a presentation of the Commission's proposals for the Essen European Council to follow up the earlier White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment. There were no formal votes. The Leonardo training programme, a resolution on women and employment and proposals on the future of the handynet information system were agreed unanimously. The other 11 member states agreed a resolution, under their agreement on social policy, on future Community social policy.

In discussion of the part-time and temporary work directive, I made it clear that the United Kingdom could not accept the measure proposed. The United Kingdom Government have always opposed its directive because we believe that this is not an appropriate subject for Community-wide regulation and that the directive would lead to a loss of part-time jobs in the United Kingdom, particularly for women. There are 6 million part-time workers in the United Kingdom—more than 30 per cent. of all the part-time works in the European Community. The vast majority of them wish to work part time rather than full time. With nearly 20 million unemployed, the European Community should not be making it harder for employers to create part-time jobs. The Commission indicated that it would bring forward new proposals in this area under the agreement on social policy.

There was an inconclusive discussion of the draft directive on posted workers. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State made clear our considerable difficulties, of both principle and detail. A number of other member states also had significant difficulties with the proposal. The Presidency announced that the Council would meet again on 21 December to discuss it further.

The President of the European Commission, Mr. Delors, reported to the Council on issues to be discussed at the Essen European Council, following up the Commission's White Paper on growth, competitiveness and employment, and on the Commission report on employment. No formal conclusions were drawn.

There was a brief debate on Commissioner Flynn's White Paper on European social policy, again without conclusions.

I took the opportunity at the Council to set out the United Kingdom view of how the social affairs agenda should develop over the next few years. I suggested five main subjects for the Council of Ministers in the social affairs field:

- encouraging more effective policies to give the unemployed, particularly the long-term unemployed, the best chance of finding a job;
- improving training, through Community support for member states' activities;
- developing consistent standards for the implementation and enforcement of existing Community legislation;
- further practical steps to promote the free movement of workers;
- a re-examination of existing Community legislation to see whether it is still relevant and whether it stands in the way of job creation.

A resolution on social policy tabled by the Presidency which focused on developing legally-binding minimum standards at Community level was agreed by the other 11 member states under their agreement on social policy.

Final agreement was reached on the Leonardo vocational training programme.

A resolution on women and employment and a decision on the continuation, until 1996, of the handynet information system for people with disabilities were agreed without discussion.

The Council endorsed the conclusions of the Development Council about the world summit on social development which will take place in March 1995 in Copenhagen.

Prior Options Review Group

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *931*, if he will indicate the results of the Ernst and Young examination commissioned by the prior options review group; and when it will be published.

Miss Widdecombe: The work carried out by Ernst and Young was commissioned to inform the work of the prior options review. There are no plans to publish the results of the consultants' work independently of the results of the review. The results of the prior options review will be announced in due course.

Training and Education Expenditure

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *931*, if he will provide estimates of expenditure or planned expenditure by the Department of Employment on training in each year from 1994–95 to 1997–98.

Mr. Paice *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* The table shows planned expenditure on the Department's training and education programmes:

Planned Expenditure (£ million)

Year	*Cash*	*1994–95 prices*
1994–95	[1]2,042	2,042
1995–96	1,870	1,809
1996–97	1,941	1,831
1997–98	1,949	1,797

[1] Forecast.

HEALTH

Radical Vulvectomy Procedures

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many radical vulvectomy procedures were carried out by the NHS in each of the last four years in each NHS region and in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Death Statistics

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths occurred in *(a)* October to March and *(b)* April to September in each year since 1980 for (i) all ages, (ii) those aged 65 years and over, (iii) those aged 75 years and over and (iv) those aged 85 years and over.

Mr. Sackville: The information for England and Wales will be placed in the Library.

Research

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson), 22 November, *Official Report* columns *88–89*, from what budget head the £40 million for new research will be drawn.

Mr. Malone: The £40 million increase to the service increment for teaching and research will be drawn from general allocations made to health authorities out of hospital and community health services, vote 1.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sample of termination payments made to national health service trust chief executives and general and senior managers have been monitored by the national health service executive.

Mr. Malone: A sample of 18 termination payments made to trust chief executives, general and senior managers has been monitored by the National Health Service Executive this financial year.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many termination payments have been made by national health service trusts to chief executives and general and senior managers; and what is the total amount for each trust to date.

Mr. Malone: Up to the quarter ending 30 September, 48 termination payments to national health service chief executives, general and senior managers have been notified to the NHS Executive this financial year. The total amount for each trust is as follows:

	£
Broadgreen Hospital NHS Trust	81,838
Burton Hospitals NHS Trust	42,888
Cheviot and Wansbeck NHS Trust	16,415
Chorely and South Ribble NHS Trust	28,749
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Learning Disabilities NHS Trust	11,000
Dudley Priority Health NHS Trust	37,222
East Surrey Learning Disability and Mental Health Services NHS Trust	36,677
Epsom Healthcare NHS Trust	15,000
Fosse Health NHS Trust	19,500
Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust	122,689
Herefordshire Community Health NHS Trust	28,416
Healthlands Mental Health NHS Trust	25,008
Hertfordshire Health Agency	9,000
Kings Healthcare NHS Trust	56,578
The Medway NHS Trust	39,295
Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust	31,549
North East Essex Mental Health Services	26,188
North Hampshire Hospitals NHS Trust	30,000
North Mersey Community NHS Trust	11,300
North Tees Health NHS Trust	27,764
Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust	25,000
Northampton Community Healthcare NHS Trust	39,798
Pilgrim Health NHS Trust	7,864
Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust	7,865
Queens Medical Centre Nottingham University NHS Trust	77,715
Royal Liverpool University Hospital	47,355
Royal Liverpool Children's NHS Trust	18,466
Royal United Hospital Bath NHS Trust	19,343
South Bedfordshire Community Healthcare Trust	17,771
South Kent Hospitals NHS Trust	8,626
South Warwickshire General Hospitals NHS Trust	34,829
Southend Healthcare NHS Trust	80,840
Teddington Memorial Hospital NHS Trust	18,750
United Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust	30,000
Walsall Community NHS Trust	35,000
Walsall Hospital NHS Trust	6,926
West Herts Community Health NHS Trust	4,909
Wiltshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	27,314
Worcester Royal Infirmary NHS Trust	22,167
Worthing and Southlands Hospitals NHS Trust	52,747

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the proposals of Heatherwood and Wrexham Park trust to introduce a midwife-led maternity service and a nurse-practitioner led accident and emergency service.

Mr. Sackville: Berkshire health authority is currently undertaking a public consultation exercise on the proposed changes. This is due to be completed by the end of January 1995.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *216*, (1) when 1993–94 data on trust surpluses and deficits will be available;

(2) if she will now publish a list of which trusts failed to *(a)* break even, *(b)* keep within the external financing limit and *(c)* record a 6 per cent. return on capital, and by what percentage and sum in 1993–94;

(3) if she will now publish a list of trust turnover for 1993–94.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested will be available shortly and will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, columns *318–9*, on NHS managers if she will now provide figures for 1991 and 1992 on the 1993 recalculated basis.

Mr. Malone: Overall figures on the numbers of national health service managers in 1991 and 1992 were presented on the 1993 recalculated basis in the "NHS Statistical Bulletin" published in October 1994, copies of which are available in the Library. It is not possible to provide more detailed figures identifying the number of managers in trusts alone on the recalculated basis.

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the plans of her Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which she intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the world wide web server "open.gov.uk." or any specific departmental server.

Mr. Sackville: Use of the Internet as an additional method of disseminating information to the public via the world wide web server "open.gov.uk." is under active consideration by this Department in line with the Government's commitment to make more information available to the public and to make innovative use of telecommunications. Discussions are at an early stage and it is too soon to specify what documents will be made available. Officials from the Department of Health and Office of Population Censuses and Surveys are also working with the Central Statistical Office and other Government Departments to see what use can be made of the Internet to disseminate Government statistics.

Fraud

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to combat fraud in the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: A recent Audit Commission publication, "Ensuring Probity in the NHS", stated that the level of proven fraud and corruption in the national health service was very low and the vast majority of people working in the NHS are honest and diligent. The Department has taken a number of initiatives including strengthening internal audit, the creation of audit committees in NHS bodies and a major review of the systems for collecting NHS charges and the scope of fraud by contractors is under way.

Prescription Costs

Mr. Cann : To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of prescription drugs costs less than £5.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of prescriptions cost less than £5; what is the *(a)* average and *(b)* median cost of a prescription item; how many prescriptions were issued by doctors in the last year; how many prescription items were dispensed by pharmacists last year, in total, and by the family health service authority area; and what has been the total revenue generated by charging for prescriptions in each of the last 15 years.

Mr. Malone: The available information has been placed in the Library. Figures for the number of prescriptions issued by doctors are not available centrally. The extensive arrangements for charge exemption and for remission of charges under the national health service low-income scheme, coupled with the prescription prepayment certificate scheme, ensure that no-one need be deterred from obtaining any necessary prescribed medication for financial reasons.

Patient Complaints

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patient complaints were received per 1,000 patients treated in each year since 1989-90 by region.

Mr. Malone: Information on the number of written complaints relating to hospital services per 1,000 in-patient and day cases in each year from 1989-90 to 1992-93, by region, are included in the publication entitled "Written complaints by or on behalf of patients—England—financial year 1992-93", copies of which are available in the Library.

Equivalent information about the number of complaints against family practitioners is not available centrally.

Tinnitus

Mr. Benton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much is being spent on specific tinnitus research; and what plans she has to increase the sums.

Mr. Sackville: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Medical Research Council is an independent body deciding what research to support on its own expert judgment.

In 1991-2 the Medical Research Council spent £129,000 on research directly related to tinnitus and in 1992-93, the last year for which figures are available, it spent £131,000.

National Capitation Scheme

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) when she expects to publish the formula for the proposed national capitation scheme;

(2) what factors are being considered for the formula of the proposed national capitation scheme.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, *Official Report,* 21 October at column *573.* The results of the review of weighted capitation are included in the guidance referred to in the statement. Copies of the guidance, FDL(94)68, are available in the Library.

The result of the review of weighted capitation is a modified formula which takes account of new information and better statistical techniques. The three basic elements of the formula, ie age, need and cost, remain the same but each element has been updated and refined. Further details of the modified formula have been published in the form of a booklet entitled "Hospital and Community Health Services. Revenue Resource Allocation: Weighted Capitation Formula", and copies of this are also available in the Library.

Life Expectancy

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total population of Great Britain aged 75 years and over; and how many of these are women.

Mr. Sackville: The latest available population estimates relate to mid-1993. It is estimated that there were 3.92 million residents in Great Britain aged 75 and over at that date. This figure comprises 2.59 million women and 1.33 million men.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average life expectancy for *(a)* males and *(b)* females in (i) 1978–79 and (ii) the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: Life expectancy at birth in England and Wales for males and females for the years 1978, 1979 and 1992, the last available year, are shown in the table:

Year	*Males*	*Females*
1978	70.1	76.3
1979	70.3	76.4
1992	73.8	79.2

Junior Doctors' Hours

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many new consultants have been employed by the NHS as a result of the new deal reduction in junior doctors's hours.

Mr. Malone: Our task forces report that, in England, at 30 September 1994, 533 new consultants were employed in centrally funded posts to reduce junior doctors' hours. In addition, 72 posts had been advertised and were awaiting appointments' committees. Many of these were already in operation through the temporary appointment of locum consultants. A further 81 posts had been funded and were at the planning stage, these will be filled as soon as possible.

Information on consultant posts set up specifically to reduce hours by individual trusts and authorities, and funded directly by them, is not available centrally.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the increased workload resulting from the reduction in junior doctors' hours.

Mr. Malone: It was recognised when the new deal on junior doctors was introduced that reductions in junior doctors' hours unsupported by other action could lead to an increase in the intensity at which they work.

That is why a range of measures was put in place, focusing resources effectively so as to ensure that reductions in hours were real and sustainable. These include the controlled growth of the medical work force, more effective working patterns, improved team-working, greater use of cross-cover between appropriate specialities, better skill mix—including more nurses and support workers—and site and service rationalisation.

Paediatrics

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many paediatric consultants there were in each of the last five years.

Mr. Malone: The information is shown in the table.

Paediatric consultants—England at 30 September each year whole-time equivalent

Year	*Whole-time equivalent*
1989	690
1990	710
1991	740
1992	780
1993	860

Note:
Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many unfilled vacancies exist for paediatric posts; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: The information is shown in the table.

Vacant paediatric posts by grade—England at 30 September 1993

Grade	*Number of vacant posts*
Consultant	42
Staff grade	12
Senior registrar	16
Registrar	15
Senior house officer	7
Total	92

Note:
This indicates the number of vacant paediatric posts notified to the Department as at 30 September 1993. As a snapshot of vacancies on a single date they may not fairly reflect the trend for the number of vacancies over the year as a whole.

Consultants

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultants there are per head of population in each EC country.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

Accident and Injury Departments

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the location of all nurse-practitioner led accident or minor injury departments in England, and of all proposed such departments.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is not available centrally.

Maternity Units

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the location of all existing and proposed midwife-led maternity units.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Midwife and Nurse Practitioner Units

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been conducted into the efficacy, mortality rates, cost-efficiency, patient satisfaction and public perception of midwife and nurse practitioner units in England.

Mr. Sackville: A number of research studies, some funded by the Department of Health, address different issues concerning efficiency, cost-effectiveness, patient satisfaction and public perception in relation to nurse development units and nurse practitioners and the nurse practitioner scheme in England. The question of mortality rates is not generally applicable to nurse practitioners but will be covered in a study of NDUs.

In August 1993, following an evaluative study funded by the Department of Health, the King's fund centre published "A Way to Develop Nurses and Nursing", a report on the four pilot NDUs funded by the King's fund. A further study is being carried out of the 30 Department of health-funded NDUs.

Earlier this month Touche Ross issued a report, "Evaluation of the Nurse Practitioners"; this was initiated and funded by the former South East Thames regional health authority with a contribution for evaluation purposes from the Department of Health. The Department is also evaluating 10 nurse practitioner schemes set up in 1994 and has commissioned a literature review of role expansion with particular reference to nurse practitioners.

Work is being done to evaluate midwifery group practices in three locations. The main areas of work include basic audit of midwifery care, economic evaluation, assessment of staffing issues, women's experiences of care and the use of local maternity information systems.

Correspondence Costs

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of sending individual letters to blood donors about a proposed change to the blood transfusion centre; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Authority estimates that the total cost of the consultation letter to the two million blood donors about the reorganisation proposals was £400,000.

GP Lists

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 22 November, *Official Report*, column *86*, when she will publish data for 1993–94 on patients removed from general practitioners' lists.

Mr. Malone: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave him on 28 November at column *537*.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 22 November 1994 *Official Report*, column *86*, if she will now itemise the number of patients removed from general practitioner lists because of *(a)* registration with another doctor, *(b)* death or resignation of the doctor, *(c)* death or emigration of the patient, *(d)* removal at the doctor's request or *(e)* other causes for 1992–93 and 1993–94 by family health service authority.

Mr. Malone: The available information will be placed in the Library.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, column *322*, when data for 1993–94 on general practitioner fundholders' end-of-year retentions will be available.

Mr. Malone: Information about fundholder efficiency savings for 1993–94 will not be available until final audits are completed in the new year.

Disabled People (Cash Payments)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *794*, what assessment she has made of the compliance by Gloucestershire county council in the current year with its statutory duties to disabled people under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970; what recent contact her Department has had with the county council on this matter; if she has received legal advice on the effect of section 2; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We are aware that leave has been granted for a judicial review hearing involving Gloucestershire county council. This is a matter for the courts. Local authorities' duties under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 remain unchanged, and they were reminded of their legal obligations in December 1992. The social services inspectorate is in regular contact with all local authorities.

Health Care Purchases

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent by *(a)* district health authorities, *(b)* family health service authorities, *(c)* regional health authorities, *(d)* trusts and *(e)* general practitioner fundholders on health care purchases from non-NHS providers in each of the last three years.

Mr. Sackville: The total expenditure in the last three years of district health authorities, regional health authorities, national health service trusts and general practitioner fundholders on the purchase of health care from non-NHS providers is shown in the table. Family health services authorities do not purchase health care services.

	1991–92 £000	*1992–93 £000*	*1993–94 £000*
District health authorities	159,818	187,335	250,484
Regional health authorities	32,746	21,421	25,649
NHS trusts	12,204	45,436	51,322
GP fundholders	3,698	13,127	29,899

Notes:

The figures for 1993–94 are provisional: the summarised accounts for 1993–94 are subject to audit by the National Audit Office.

Source:

Annual accounts of FHSAs; regional and district health authorities. Financial returns of NHS Trusts.

NHS Private Treatment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *320*, if she will update the tables on the number of patients treated privately in the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: Updated information on outpatient attendances is available in "1993–94 Outpatients and Ward Attenders England", copies of which have been placed in the Library and updated information on finished consultant episodes will shortly be placed there.

Capital Projects

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the capital projects in the NHS with a works cost of over *(a)* £1 million, *(b)* £5 million and *(c)* £10 million that were completed in each of the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94, giving the total costs and a brief description of each project.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 30 November 1994]:* Information which records national health service capital building works projects with a works cost over £1 million will be placed in the Library. The works cost is a sum for the construction of buildings which excludes fees for professional services, equipment, value added tax and land purchase.

TREASURY

Child Benefit

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the administrative cost of introducing a system of taxing child benefit at the higher rate assuming that it is taxed as part of the woman's income if she is a higher rate payer and, if she is not, that child benefit is taxed at the higher rate as part of her husband's or partner's income.

Sir George Young: The cost of administration would depend on the form of the legislation and how it was administered.

VAT (Fuel)

Mr. Horam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer of zero rating standard charges in domestic fuel bills assuming value added tax at 17.5 per cent.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 6 December 1994]:* Zero rating of any item is not permissable under the sixth VAT directive once it has been given up.

Manufacturing Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the increase in the nominal and real exchange rate against the deutschmark and the ecu since February 1993 on the balance of trade in manufactures; and what contribution that has made to the economic growth.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* The Government's most recent assessment of trade performance is published in chapter 3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", in which it is explained that the United Kingdom's cost competitiveness has largely been maintained as a result of British industry's success in controlling costs. Net trade accounts for about half the growth of gross domestic product in 1994 so far.

Christmas Cards

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Attorney-General how many official Christmas cards he and other Ministers in his Department intend to send in 1994; how much those cards will cost *(a)* to buy, *(b)* to post and *(c)* in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes; and if he will place in the Library a sample copy of the official Christmas card he intends to send this year.

The Attorney-General: The Law Officers intend to send approximately 150 cards this year at a cost of *(a)* £123 and *(b)* an estimated £18 to post. Cards for recipients within the United Kingdom will be sent either second class post or included in normal departmental deliveries. Information on the cost of staff time is not available but would be minimal. A sample of the card has been placed in the Library.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether he will list *(a)* the arts organisations, companies and projects, *(b)* the public libraries and *(c)* the galleries and museums he has visited since becoming Secretary of State.

Mr. Dorrell: The visits I have made to the relevant bodies since I became Secretary of State are listed in the table.

In addition, I have had the opportunity to talk to many representatives of arts organisations at receptions I have hosted for the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

Secretary of State's visits (Arts, Libraries, Galleries and Museums)

1994		
A	29 July	Attended Stately Homes Music Festival —English Chamber Orchestra, Blenheim Palace.
A	28 September	Opened 20th Century British Arts Fair, Royal College of Art.
A		Attended Prudential Corporation Visual Arts Award, Serpentine Gallery.
M	3 October	Opened exhibition to celebrate centenary of the Survey of London, Museum of London.
A	7 October	Nottingham Regional Conference —visit to Nottingham Playhouse —Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Concert Hall —BSIS Reception, Nottingham Castle
A	12 October	BSIS Reception, Lancaster House
A	13 October	Visited Russell Coles Art Gallery, Bournemouth.
A	15 October	Swan Theatre.
M	22 October	Visit to Leicester Museum and Art Gallery.
A	24 October	Attended Live Music Now Concert, Lancaster. House.
M	1 November	Visit to Duxford Air Museum.
A	8 November	Opened Paolozzi Donation Box, Royal Academy.
A	15 November	Addressed launch of Festival of Arts and Culture and London Arts Scene, Savoy Hotel.
M	17 November	The Wallace Collection.
A	21 November	Visit to Huddersfield —the Literature Centre (the Byram Arcade) —Lawrence BatleyTheatre —Contemporary Music Festival concert, St Paul's Hall
M	1 December	Tate Gallery.
M	6 December	Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester.
M	7 December	National Gallery.
A	10–12 December	Birmingham Royal Ballet.

Note:

A=Arts, L=Libraries, M=Museums, G=Galleries.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the surveyed values, book values and location of the properties and houses purchased by British Rail along the lines of putative, but now rejected, channel tunnel rail links, together with the total price at which they were transferred to Railtrack.

Mr. Watts: Information about properties purchased for previous rail link proposals should be sought from the British Rail Property Board whose responsibility they are. No such properties have been transferred to Railtrack.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the text of the agreement between himself and the consortia bidding to build the channel tunnel rail link especially as it relates to obligatory confidentiality.

Mr. Watts: The confidentiality agreements with consortia bidding in the channel tunnel rail link competition are strictly private and confidential documents and are not appropriate for publication.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his best estimate of the revenues to be derived from the European passenger services due to be transferred to the consortium chosen to build the channel rail link.

Mr. Watts: This information is commercially confidential.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the value of the financial assistance likely to be available from the European Union towards the cost of building the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Watts: The value of any assistance from the European Union for the channel tunnel rail link has yet to be determined. Potential sources of support are the trans-European networks programme, the European investment bank and the European investment fund.

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the latest estimate of the value of the assets intended to be transferred to the successful consortium in the competition to build the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Watts: The value of the assets to be transferred will be determined by the present competition to select the rail link promoter.

Traffic Calming

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the designs of traffic calming measures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The design of traffic calming measures is the responsibility of individual highway authorities. The Department of Transport works closely with authorities, offering advice on planning and design aspects and collaborating on the development of new techniques. Information on good practice is published in the form of traffic advisory leaflets, which are sent to all local authorities. Over the last few months, for example, we have produced leaflets on design aspects of entry treatments, speed cushions, thermoplastic road humps and road narrowings and chicanes.

Cyclists (Safety)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to increase the safety of cyclists.

Mr. Norris: As part of our efforts to achieve a one third reduction in road casualties by the year 2000 we will maintain our commitment to reduce cyclist casualties. Cyclist safety will be promoted through education and publicity measures, continued research projects, and the issue of technical advice to local highway authorities on the planning, design and construction of cycling facilities.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last session of Parliament were not answered on the ground that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Norris: Twenty-seven.

Lorry Drivers

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many prosecutions have been taken out for each year since 1985 against haulage contractors and other firms employing long-distance lorry drivers for exceeding the permissible number of hours driving without a statutorily required break.

Mr. Norris: The information is not available in the form requested. The total numbers of drivers' hours prosecutions, including exceeding the permissable number of hours without a statutory break for United Kingdom and foreign heavy goods vehicle drivers/operators were as follows:

	Number
1984–85	212
1985–86	193
1986–87	249
1987–88	1,654
1988–89	1,893
1989–90	2,243
1990–91	2,310
1991–92	2,385
1992–93	2,898
1993–94	4,422[1]

[1] There was a change in the method of recording drivers' hours prosecutions in 1993–94. In the previous years the numbers of prosecutions referred to the number of cases whereas the 1993–94 figures refer to the number of offences.

Roll-on Roll-off Ferries

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many collisions have occurred involving roll-on roll-off ferries *(a)* in the Solent, *(b)* off the south coast of England and *(c)* in British coastal waters in each of the last 10 years.

(2) how many incidents have occurred involving roll-on roll-off ferries *(a)* in the Solent, *(b)* off the south coast of England and *(c)* in British coastal waters in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* The figures shown in the table relate to accidents involving one or more United Kingdom registered roll-on roll-off ferries where it has been established that the accident happened in *(a)* the Solent/Southampton Water, *(b)* elsewhere off the south coast and *(c)* in other stretches of United Kingdom coastal waters.

The figures are given only for the years shown as information relating to a particular sea area and type of accident can readily be obtained only from the marine accident investigation branch computerised accident database. The database contains data from 1991 onwards only. Information requested for the previous six years could be obtained only at disproportion cost.

Year	*Number of accidents*	*Collision*
The Solent/Southampton water		
1991	Nil	Nil
1992	1	Nil
1993	1	Nil
1994 to date	Nil	Nil
Elsewhere off south coast		
1991	Nil	Nil
1992	1	1
1993	2	1
1994 to date	Nil	Nil
Other stretches of the United Kingdom coastal waters		
1991	18	4
1992	12	1
1993	11	1
1994 to date	5	Nil

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will include in Her Majesty's Government's submission to the International Maritime Organisation's investigation into roll-on roll-off ferries the recommendation that all roll-on roll-off ferries be fitted either with transverse bulkheads on the car deck or sponsons;

(2) if he will take steps to require all roll-on roll-off ferries operating in British coastal waters to be fitted either with sponsons or transverse bulkheads on the car deck;

(3) how many of the roll-on roll-off ferries operation *(a)* in the Solent and *(b)* off the south coast currently conform to the Solas 90 regulations;

(4) how many of the roll-on roll-off ferries operating off the south coast of England have fitted *(a)* transverse bulkheads on the car deck, *(b)* sponsons or *(c)* neither.

(5) how many of the roll-on roll-off ferries operating the Solent have fitted *(a)* transverse bulkheads on the car deck, *(b)* sponsons or *(c)* neither.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* These are operational matters for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Mr. John Denham, dated 9 December 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about roll-on roll-off passenger ferries.

1. How many of the roll-on roll-off ferries operating off the south coast have fitted *(a)* transverse bulkheads on the car deck *(b)* sponsons, or *(c)* neither?

Of the sixteen United Kingdom registered ships operating off the south coast (including Dover) one has been fitted with sponsons. The information on foreign registered ships is not readily available.

2. How many of the roll-on roll-off ferries operating in the Solent have fitted *(a)* transverse bulkheads on the car deck, *(b)* sponsons, or neither?

There are nine roll-on roll-off passenger ferries operating solely on the Solent. These vessels are not of the same design as ships operating on international voyages in that they do not have enclosed car decks spaces—the car deck is open at both ends of the deck—and as such the devices are not appropriate.

3. How many of the roll-on roll-off ferries operating *(a)* in the Solent, and *(b)* off the south coast, currently conform to the SOLAS '90 Regulations?

An assessment of all ferries operating to and from ports in the United Kingdom is being processed. As soon as all the information is available, a full list will be published and a copy placed in the library of the House.

4. Will the Secretary of State take steps to require all roll-on roll-off ferries operating in British coastal waters to be fitted either with sponsons or transverse bulkheads on the car deck?

The enhanced survivability standard of roll-on roll-off passenger ferries operating to or from ports in the United Kingdom is already in place. That standard may require the fitting of sponsons or transverse bulkheads on the car deck. further measures will be addressed when the report from the International Maritime Organisation's Panel of Experts investigating ferry safety is received.

5. Will the Secretary of State include in Her Majesty's Government submission to the International Maritime Organisations into roll-on roll-off ferries the recommendation that all roll-on roll-off ferries be fitted either with transverse bulkheads on the car deck or sponsons?

The results of the United Kingdom research which identified the fitting of sponsons or transverse bulkheads on the car deck as two of the means of increasing the survivability standard or ro-ro passenger ferries have already been submitted to the International Maritime Organisation.

EDUCATION

Schools, Islington

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information she has on shortages of state or private secondary school places in the Islington area.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend's reply today to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris). There were, 656 surplus places in maintained secondary schools in Islington in January 1994, 19 per cent. of total capacity. The Department does not collect information on the supply of independent school places.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will meet the leader of Islington council and discuss the extent to which the council has not provided the range of educational choice required by all Islington residents.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no plans for such a meeting.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she has made of whether Islington council is meeting all the statutory requirements currently in force under the Education Acts.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has made no such assessment. She has no reason to believe that Islington is not meeting the relevant statutory requirements.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to improve educational choice in Islington.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Government's White Paper of July 1992, "Choice and Diversity" (Cm 2021), set out a new framework for schools in England, opening the way to greater variety in education through the formation of new schools and by encouraging specialisation.

The Government have also taken action to increase parental choice by enabling parents to express a preference for the school they wish their child to attend. Parents now have more rights, more information and access to a wider choice of different schools than ever before.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many ballots for grant-maintained status have been conducted in Islington state schools in the last five years.

Mr. Robin Squire: Since grant-maintained status became available, to date no ballots have been held in Islington.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the state and private schools operating in Islington and within three miles of Islington and state for each state school whether it is grant-maintained.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department's records do not enable us to identify which schools fall within three miles of Islington. The list which has been placed in the Library gives all schools by type, excluding schools for pupils with special educational needs, in Islington and the neighbouring boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Hackney, Haringey, Lambeth, Southwark, Waltham Forest and Westminster.

School Meals

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is *(a)* the cost per meal and *(b)* the price charged per school meal currently in (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in each local education authority in England.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is not collected in the form requested. Some details of local authorities' charging arrangements for school meals were published in "Statistics of Education: Schools—1993", a copy of which in the Library.

London Oratory School

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many children from Islington have applied and been admitted to the London Oratory school during each of the last six years;

(2) how many children have applied to go to the London Oratory school in September 1995; how many of these children came from the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham; and how many of these children come from each of the other London boroughs.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected by the Department.

Examination Statistics

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the proportion of pupils in each school in Northamptonshire who obtained five GCSE grades A to C in each of the last five years, the national average during the same period, the shire county average during the same period and the average during the same period for *(a)* Northamptonshire, *(b)* Cambridgeshire, *(c)* Bedfordshire, *(d)* Buckinghamshire, *(e)* Oxfordshire, *(f)* Warwickshire, *(g)* Leicestershire and *(h)* Lincolnshire.

Mr. Forth: The table lists the proportion of 15-year-old pupils in each school, including the independent sector, in Northamptonshire, who obtained five GCSE grades A to C, in each of the last three years. Individual school data are not available prior to 1992, the first year in which school performance tables were published. The table also shows the national average during the same period, and the averages during the same period for maintained schools in shire counties and in *(a)* Northamptonshire, *(b)* Cambridgeshire, *(c)* Bedfordshire, *(d)* Buckinghamshire, *(e)* Oxfordshire, *(f)* Warwickshire, *(g)* Leicestershire and *(h)* Lincolnshire.

Percentage of 15-year-old pupils achieving five or more GCSE Grades A^1 to C in 1994 and five or more GCSE Grades A to C in 1993 and 1992

Schools in Northamptonshire	*1994*	*1993*	*1992*
Beanfield School	24	19	34
Bishop Stopford School	66	54	53
Bosworth Tutorial College	22	–	–
Brooke College	58	–	–
Campion School	50	47	42
Chenderit School	57	49	50
Danetre School	38	39	34
Duston Upper School	33	34	38
Falcon Manor School	28	14	–
Guilsborough School	48	63	47
Henry Gotch Comprehensive School	24	20	19
Huxlow School	35	28	27
John Lea School	20	11	50
Kingsbrook School	39	53	41
Kingsthorpe Upper School	39	39	42
Latimer School	31	44	48
Laxton School	96	96	–
Lings School	18	17	13
Lodge Park School	28	35	27
Magdalen College School	46	54	51
Manor School (GM)	47	50	47
Mereway Upper School	17	25	20
Montagu School	33	30	30
Montsaye School	54	55	42
Moulton School	51	48	42
Northampton (GM) School for Boys	31	35	33
Northampton High School	98	89	89
Northamptonshire Grammar School	66	100	77
Oundle School	95	94	100
Our Lady and Pope John School	39	33	24
Parkside Independent School	78	60	–
Prince William School	60	49	55
Queen Elizabeth (GM) School	17	23	18
Quinton House School	74	71	–
Roade School	54	40	53
Rushden School	26	27	22
Sir Christopher Hatton GM School	39	31	28
Southfield School	39	48	43
Sponne School	44	45	41
St. Peter's Independent School	50	77	–
St. Peter's School	60	62	–
The Ferrers School	48	48	36
The Kingswood School	32	34	37
The Northampton School for Girls	41	29	31
Thomas Becket RC Upper School	36	36	39
Trinity School Northampton	21	29	20
Weavers Grant Maintained School	42	30	25
Wellingborough School	88	90	–
Weston Favell Upper School	36	42	45
William Parker School	38	38	41
Wollaston School	49	32	38
Wrenn School (GM)	33	45	36

Percentage of 15-year-old Pupils achieving five or more GCSE Grades A^1 to C in 1994 and five or more GCSE Grades A to C in 1993 and 1992

	1994	*1993*	*1992*
National Average (All schools)	43.3	41.1	38.3
(a) Northamptonshire	38.9	38.0	36.2
(b) Cambridgeshire	43.3	41.1	39.5
(c) Bedfordshire	40.3	38.1	34.9
(d) Buckinghamshire	49.4	46.8	45.0
(e) Oxfordshire	46.3	44.8	41.3
(f) Warwickshire	42.6	39.8	37.0
(g) Leicestershire	39.3	37.6	33.2
(h) Lincolnshire	42.6	38.9	36.6
Shire Counties	42.7	40.3	37.8

Graveny School

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what decision she has made on the application by Graveny school in Wandsworth to introduce a selective admissions policy.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend approved on 28 November the statutory proposals made by the governors of Graveny school, Wandsworth, significantly to change the character of the school by introducing 50 per cent. selection by reference to general ability.

Surplus Places

Mr. David Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the numbers and percentages of surplus places in each local education authority in England.

Mr. Robin Squire: The tables set out the numbers of surplus places, by local education authority area, and the proportion that these represent of total capacity, as at

January this year. The data are drawn from the returns made this summer by local education authorities in respect of their schools and by the Funding Agency for Schools in respect of grant-maintained schools in stage 2 and 3 authority areas: data on surplus places in the 286 GM schools stage 1 authorities are not available. These returns indicate that there were just over 1 million surplus school places in England in January this year, representing 13 per cent. of the total capacity of 7.7 million places.

The tables illustrate considerable variation in numerical and proportionate levels of surplus across the country. In some cases, combinations of pupil population growth and current rationalisation plans will probably reduce high levels of surplus to more acceptable levels. Where there is no indication of significant reduction in high levels of surplus, the Department will consult the authorities concerned about the extent to which any of that surplus is in practice removable. In the light of this consultation my right hon. Friend will decide whether surplus place removal targets should be set for any of these authorities.

Table 1: Surplus places by local authority area (excluding GM schools in stage 1 authorities) at January 1994

LEA	Primary (see note 1) Actual surplus Number	Percentage	Secondary Actual surplus Number	Percentage
Avon	7,342	9	11,596	18
Barking	975	7	307	3
Barnet	1,598	7	1,947	[1]10
Barnsley	1,496	7	2,611	17
Bedfordshire	7,272	15	9,021	[1]17
Berkshire	5,946	9	7,754	[1]14
Bexley	1,799	9	2,005	[1]12
Birmingham	8,983	9	11,330	[1]15
Bolton	2,187	9	2,000	[1]11
Bradford	4,099	11	6,914	[1]13
Brent	2,291	11	2,383	[2]16
Bromley	1,442	7	891	[1]5
Buckinghamshire	11,457	17	3,231	[1]8
Bury	848	6	947	9
Calderdale	2,722	13	2,221	[1]14
Cambridgeshire	7,978	13	2,837	[1]7
Camden	325	3	1,047	[1]9
Cheshire	14,860	15	7,983	12
Cleveland	7,426	12	8,276	19
Cornwall	3,005	8	2,601	8
Corporation of London	22	10	—	—
Coventry	5,133	16	4,236	18
Croydon	2,442	9	1,716	[1]11
Cumbria	6,104	14	6,169	[1]17
Derbyshire	10,637	13	10,782	[1]16
Devon	9,032	10	4,160	7
Doncaster	6,632	20	6,439	23
Dorset	3,242	7	3,964	[1]9
Dudley	3,352	11	2,218	[1]11
Durham	8,368	14	8,144	18
Ealing	4,358	17	1,056	[1]7
East Sussex	6,671	12	3,783	10
Enfield	1,013	5	1,781	[1]9
Essex	17,814	[1]12	18,008	[1]16
Gateshead	4,887	23	2,695	19
Gloucestershire	6,234	13	3,417	[1]10
Greenwich	2,220	11	3,038	18
Hackney	2,046	12	2,132	23
Hammersmith	1,591	16	2,606	[1]31
Hampshire	18,287	13	10,114	[1]12
Haringey	1,240	7	1,515	14
Harrow	998	5	278	4
Havering	1,817	9	2,284	[1]13
Hereford and Worcester	6,505	11	7,851	15
Hertfordshire	14,517	16	13,552	[1]17
Hillingdon	2,464	[1]12	1,336	[2]9
Hounslow	1,656	9	435	[1]3
Humberside	11,612	13	10,912	16
Isle of Wight	384	5	1,093	10
Isle of Scilly	67	27	223	65
Islington	1,630	10	1,656	19
Kensington	722	12	712	[1]18
Kent	14,638	11	18,000	[1]15
Kingston upon Thames	503	5	843	[1]10
Kirklees	2,714	8	3,160	12
Knowsley	3,277	17	1,635	16
Lambeth	4,060	20	3,142	[1]33
Lancashire	12,398	9	11,754	13
Leeds	10,425	15	6,358	13
Leicestershire	8,082	10	10,076	15
Lewisham	999	5	1,587	13
Lincolnshire	7,434	[1]13	4,864	[1]12
Liverpool	11,436	21	7,687	22
Manchester	5,657	12	12,294	36
Merton	1,100	8	1,488	17
Newcastle upon Tyne	3,704	16	4,421	21
Newham	3,631	14	2,794	17
Norfolk	7,383	11	4,041	[1]9
North Tyneside	3,020	18	3,101	18
North Yorkshire	9,048	14	6,304	13
Northamptonshire	4,410	9	5,423	[1]11
Northumberland	4,960	21	3,333	11
Nottinghamshire	13,457	14	20,327	25
Oldham	2,152	9	1,145	7
Oxfordshire	8,237	17	6,858	16
Redbridge	406	2	835	6
Richmond-upon-Thames	686	6	288	4
Rochdale	1,709	8	2,436	17
Rotherham	3,423	13	2,875	14
Salford	3,681	15	3,375	23
Sandwell	1,857	7	3,445	16
Sefton	2,884	11	3,956	18
Sheffield	6,696	14	5,612	18
Shropshire	4,902	12	4,947	[1]17
Solihull	2,443	12	1,144	8
Somerset	2,487	7	3,486	11
South Tyneside	1,710	11	2,076	18
Southwark	3,980	18	2,296	[1]20
St. Helens	1,985	12	2,245	16
Staffordshire	21,456	20	4,919	7
Stockport	2,448	9	2,209	12
Suffolk	4,559	10	6,000	11
Sunderland	6,104	18	2,408	11
Surrey	8,483	11	5,407	[1]11
Sutton	1,110	9	367	[1]3
Tameside	1,464	7	1,737	[1]12
Tower Hamlets	1,522	7	2,239	17
Trafford	1,562	8	2,067	[1]15
Wakefield	3,924	13	4,728	19
Walsall	3,556	13	3,565	[1]16
Waltham Forest	1,422	7	1,737	[1]13
Wandsworth	6,111	30	2,308	[2]21
Warwickshire	7,966	15	6,607	[2]21
West Sussex	6,951	12	6,051	13
Westminster	621	7	938	12
Wigan	5,734	17	2,969	14
Wiltshire	7,604	14	5,812	[1]14
Wirral	4,398	13	4,064	18
Wolverhampton	4,412	17	3,638	[1]19
Total	540,729	12	475,628	14

Table 1: Surplus places by local authority area (excluding GM schools in stage 1 authorities) at January 1994

[1] Stage two for planning purposes

[2] Stage three for planning purposes

Note 1: Primary figures show surplus after taking account of any summer entry

Note 2: Stage 1 = less than 10 per cent. of pupils in the GM sector
Stage 2 = between 10 per cent. and 75 per cent. of pupils in the GM sector
Stage 3 = 75 per cent. or more pupils in the GM sector

Table 2: Distribution of surplus between LEA and GM schools in stage 2 and 3 authorities (all figures refer to the secondary sector unless otherwise indicated)

	LEA		*GM*		*Total*	
	Surplus	*percentage*	*Surplus*	*percentage*	*Surplus*	*percentage*
Barnet	1,202	12	745	7	1,947	10
Bedfordshire	8,126	19	895	9	9,021	17
Berkshire	6,477	14	1,277	15	7,754	14
Bexley	1,871	15	134	4	2,005	12
Birmingham	9,796	17	1,534	9	11,330	15
Bolton	1,599	11	401	13	2,000	11
Bradford	6,683	14	231	5	6,914	13
Brent	395	12	1,988	17	2,383	16
Bromley	207	4	684	6	891	5
Buckinghamshire	2,744	10	487	5	3,231	8
Calderdale	1,606	19	615	9	2,221	14
Cambridgeshire	1,840	7	997	6	2,837	7
Camden	1,041	12	6	0	1,047	9
Croydon	991	10	725	11	1,716	11
Cumbria	3,881	16	2,288	18	6,169	17
Derbyshire	9,071	18	1,711	10	10,782	16
Dorset	3,154	10	810	8	3,964	9
Dudley	1,891	12	327	7	2,218	11
Ealing	784	10	272	4	1,056	7
Enfield	1,403	10	378	6	1,781	9
Essex - primary	15,754	13	2,060	9	17,814	12
Essex - secondary	6,918	19	11,090	14	18,008	16
Gloucestershire	1,511	12	1,906	8	3,417	10
Hammersmith	2,606	36	0	0	2,606	31
Hampshire	8,834	13	1,280	8	10,114	12
Havering	2,266	17	18	0	2,284	13
Hertfordshire	10,485	18	3,067	13	13,552	17
Hillingdon - primary	2,340	13	124	4	2,464	12
Hillingdon - secondary	560	22	776	6	1,336	9
Hounslow	372	3	63	3	435	3
Kensington	712	22	0	0	712	18
Kent	10,697	18	7,303	13	18,000	15
Kingston-upon-Thames	403	8	440	14	843	10
Lambeth	2,466	45	676	17	3,142	33
Lincolnshire - primary	6,761	14	673	10	7,434	13
Lincolnshire - secondary	3,131	13	1,733	10	4,864	12
Norflok	3,529	10	512	6	4,041	9
Northhamptonshire	4,462	12	961	9	5,423	11
Shropshire	4,820	18	127	3	4,947	17
Southwark	1,907	22	389	12	2,296	20
Surrey	4,122	12	1,285	10	5,407	11
Sutton	175	4	192	3	367	3
Tameside	1,709	14	28	1	1,737	12
Tafford	1,711	17	356	10	2,067	15
Walsall	2,673	16	892	14	3,565	16
Waltham Forest	1,697	15	40	2	1,737	13
Wandsworth	1,129	33	1,179	15	2,308	21
Warwickshire	5,368	21	1,239	21	6,607	21
Wiltshire	4,159	17	1,653	11	5,812	14
Wolverhampton	3,278	20	360	13	3,638	19

Notes:

(1) The GM column includes schools which became grant-maintained on or before 1 April 1994.

(2) LEA and GM percentage columns show the actual number of surplus places as a proportion of total capacity within that sector.

DEFENCE

Ceremonial Swords

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ceremonial swords have been bought or repaired and at what cost during the last five years; and how many such swords are now in circulation in the armed forces.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the chief executive of the Defence Clothing and Textiles Agency under the terms of his framework document. I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Richard Kirby to Mr. Alan Milburn, dated 8 December 1994:

I have been asked by the Minister for Armed Forces to reply to your Parliamentary Question about ceremonial swords. Truly ceremonial swords are only issued to the most senior officers and are very few in number. In replying to your question I have assumed, therefore, that you required information on all swords.

Our records indicate that, during the past 5 years 560 swords have been procured at a cost of £365,700 (including scabbards where appropriate). We have also had refurbished some 576 swords at a cost of £156,700. At present it is estimated that there are approximately 2,500 swords in use or held in pools for use by the Armed Forces.

These figures exclude the many swords which are procured privately by officers and regiments and for which we hold no records.

Allied Rapid Reaction Corps

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to the use of NATO's Allied Rapid Reaction Corps for possible use in Bosnia in the event of a United Nations withdrawal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: NATO and the United Nations have undertaken contingency planning for a wide range of possible scenarios, including withdrawal. It would not, however, be appropriate to comment on the details of these plans.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what period of time is required for the NATO allied rapid reaction corps to be mobilised for operational use;

(2) in what current state of readiness is the NATO allied rapid reaction corps.

Mr. Soames: The multinational allied Europe rapid reaction corps was established to provide NATO with a capability to respond quickly, drawing on an appropriate level of forces determined by SACEUR, to a range of contingencies. It will achieve full operational capability in 1995 although the HQ is already operational in Rheindalen in Germany. Details of the readiness states of the units assigned to the ARRC and the period of time required to deploy the ARRC for operations are classified for operational reasons.

Departmental Cars

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many cars were *(a)* owned and *(b)* leased by his Department in each of the last five years;

(2) what makes of cars were *(a)* owned and *(b)* leased by his Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

SA80 Rifles

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost to his Department to make the necessary modifications to the SA80 rifle to bring it to operational standards.

Mr. Freeman: Following negotiations with Royal Ordnance plc on outstanding pricing, we now estimate the cost of the SA80 modification programme to be £13 million at long-term costing 94 prices, inclusive of VAT.

Sergeant John Gilders

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when his Department first learned of the location of the remains of Sergeant John Gilders of the RAF; if the family were duly notified once the information was known to the authorities; and what action is being taken to ensure that the remains of other airmen who died in action within the United Kingdom are located and given a proper burial.

Mr. Soames: My Department was notified by the Coroner in Ashford, Kent on 22 April 1994 that what were believed to be the remains of Sergeant J.S. Gilders RAF had been discovered. My Department first notified Sergeant Gilders' family on 27 April and a letter of confirmation was sent on 3 May once the Coroner had confirmed the identity of the body.

It is long-standing policy not to disturb crash sites where a member of crew is listed as missing, as such sites are considered an appropriate last resting place for aircrew killed in action. This is a view shared by ex-service organisations who agree that the digging up of wreckage after so many years could be upsetting for next of kin. There is also the possibility of a difference of view between next of kin over what action should be taken where more than one member of crew is listed as missing.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the extent to which the British troops who have recently returned from Rwanda had completed the task they had been sent to fulfil.

Mr. Soames: The British contingent was sent to Rwanda to provide specialist support for a three-month period in the initial stages of the United Nations operation. They were withdrawn having accomplished this task.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he had given to the replacement of the British troops recently in Rwanda and for what reasons he rejected that option.

Mr. Soames: The British contingent was sent to fulfil a specific role over a three-month period. That task is now complete. The United Nations has not requested a further deployment.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received, and from whom, against the withdrawal of British troops from Rwanda.

Mr. Soames: I am not aware of any representations received by my Department against the withdrawal of British troops from Rwanda.

Gulf War Syndrome

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if disclosure of allergies was required of British service personnel prior to their being offered chemical and biological warfare vaccines during the Gulf war; if severe asthma or hay fever was regarded as a contra-indication for vaccination; and what changes to guidelines to medical personnel about the administration of counter-CBW vaccines or preparations have been made since 1991.

Mr. Soames: The armed forces medical services, in line with Department of Health guidelines, regard a history of anaphylaxis as the only absolute contra-indication to vaccination. A previous severe reaction to the same vaccine may also be a contra-indication to be considered on its merits. The Department of Health guide on immunisation against infectious disease states that asthma, hay fever or a history of non-anaphylactic allergy are not contra-indications for vaccination and consequently disclosure of allergies was not required prior to vaccination during the Gulf war.

However, during the medical selection process for entry into the Armed Forces all candidates are required to disclose, by direct questioning, all aspects of their medical history. Among other things, candidates are required to disclose whether they suffer from "asthma or wheezing", "hay fever or allergies" and "any severe reaction to drugs or injections". A severe reaction to drugs or injections may indicate an anaphylactic episode, which is very rare, but is generally an absolute bar to employment in the armed services. Similarly, known asthmatics would not normally be accepted for service, and if already serving would be in a reduced medical category which would in general preclude operational service.

Apart from routine updating to take account of new vaccines, no changes to guidelines for medical personnel regarding vaccine or drug administration have been made since 1991.

Defence Industry

Mr. Olner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps the Government are taking to protect jobs in the defence industry by assisting in a transition from the manufacture of weapons to non-military manufacture.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Pollock (Mr. Dunnachie) on 22 November 1994, *Official Report*, column 462–63.

Search and Rescue Helicopters

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current number of search and rescue helicopters in the Royal Air Force; and where these aircraft are based.

Mr. Soames: The RAF search and rescue helicopter fleet comprises 19 Sea King and nine Wessex helicopters. These are based at RAF Chivenor, RAF Leconfield, RAF Boulmer, RAF Lossiemouth, Wattisham airfield and in the Falkland Islands. Training is carried out at RAF Valley and RAF St. Mawgan and deep maintenance at RAF St. Mawgan.

Empty Property

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to make use of his Department's empty residential property.

Mr. Soames: The majority of our empty properties are undergoing or awaiting major maintenance, held for future developments, or form part of the management margin needed to ensure that accommodation is available for entitled service families. Empty properties which are surplus to requirements, however, are sold. Properties which are not surplus to long-term requirements but which are not needed immediately for service families are leased to local authorities, housing associations or civilians.

WALES

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Redwood: Refurbishment works undertaken and funded by the Department in its office buildings were as follows:

	Building	*Works*	*Cost*
1991–92	Cathays Park, Cardiff	Partitioning for offices	3,000
		Conversion of storeroom for fitness centre	5,000
	Gelliwasted Road, Pontypridd	Ingoing works at new medical examination centre	110,000
	Golate House, St. Mary Street, Cardiff	Structural alterations internally	18,000
	Barn Street, Haverfordwest	Alterations to rationalise accommodation	18,000
	Picton Terrace, Carmarthen	Upgrade toilet and washroom facilities	19,000
	Trawsgoed, Aberystwyth	Conversion of laboratories to offices	25,000
	Various	Energy efficiency improvements	11,000
1992–93	Cathays Park, Cardiff	Computer suite	20,000
		Toilets for disabled	8,000
		Library alterations	4,000
		Energy efficiency improvements	30,000
	Gwydyr House, London	Energy efficiency improvements	8,000
		Anti-shatter film to windows	8,000
		Emergency lighting	6,000
		Ventilation fans	3,000
	Companies House, Cardiff	Partitioning for offices	6,000
	John Williams Building, Cardiff	New ceiling	5,000
	Picton Terrace, Carmarthen	Energy efficiency improvements	17,000
	Jobswell Lane, Johnstown, Carmarthen	Energy efficiency improvements	4,000
	Government Buildings, Llandrindod Wells	Energy efficiency improvements	3,000
	Trawsgoed, Aberystwyth	Energy efficiency improvements	52,000

	Building	*Works*	*Cost*
*cont.*1992-93	Penrallt, Caernarfon	Energy efficiency improvements	3,000
		Upgrade toilet and washroom facilities	40,000
1993–94	Cathays Park, Cardiff	Conversion of basement rooms for office use	32,000
		Upgrade fire doors	32,000
		Conversion for former recreation area for office use	54,000
		Toilet for disabled	32,000
		Partitioning for offices	7,000
		Energy efficiency improvements	81,000
	Picton Terrace, Carmarthen	Partitioning for canteen	5,000
	Government Building, Llandrindod Wells	Structural alterations internally	5,000
	Southgate House, Cardiff	Ingoing works at new offices	16,000
	Government Buildings, Llanishen, Cardiff	Computer storage room	2,000
	Government Buildings, Llanishen, Cardiff	Improvements to air conditioning	6,000
		Partitioning for offices	8,000
	Trawsgoed, Aberystwyth	Fire detection system	11,000
		Upgrade canteen facilities	19,000

Long-stay Patients

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give figures for the numbers of NHS-funded long-stay patients being cared for in private nursing homes in Wales at the last convenient date.

Mr. Redwood: On 31 March 1993, the latest date for which information is available, there were 22 permanent residents in private nursing homes who were known to be funded by the NHS.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the costs of redundancy payments to staff in each of the last five years.

Mr. Redwood: The cost of redundancy payments committed in each of the last five years was:

	£
1990–91	143,781
1991–92	Nil
1992–93	61,388
1993–94	157,618
1994–95 (to end November 1994)	37,906

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the plans of his Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which he intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the world wide web server "open.gov.uk" or any specific departmental server.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) on 5 December 1994, *Official Report*, column 68.

GP Lists

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will itemise the number of patients who have been removed from general practitioner lists because of *(a)* registration with another doctor, *(b)* the death or resignation of the doctor, *(c)* the death or emigration of the patient, *(d)* removal at the doctor's request and *(e)* other causes in each of the last five years.

Mr. Richards: The information is not held centrally.

Health Expenditure

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent by *(a)* district health authorities, *(b)* family health service authorities, *(c)* regional health authorities, *(d)* trusts and *(e)* general practitioner fundholders on health care purchases from non-NHS providers in each of the last three years.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is as follows:

	1991–92 *£000*	*1992–93* *£000*	*1993–94* *£000*
District health authorities	4,384	8,078	11,261
Family health services authorities	11	113	657
NHS trusts	n/a	0	2,688

Source:

Health authorities and GP fundholding accounts

NHS trust financial returns.

Notes:

(i) 1993–94 figures are provisional.

(ii) There are no health authorities in Wales.

(iii) Pembrokeshire NHS Trust was established on 1 April 1992. In 1993–94 a further 13 NHS trusts became operational in Wales.

(iv) The figures given in respect of family health services authorities represent GP fundholders purchase of hospital services made via the family health services authorities.

Patients' Complaints

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients complaints were received per 1,000 patients treated in each year since 1989–90 by region.

Mr. Richards: The available information, relating to hospital services, is given for Wales and each district health authority area in the following table. Information on complaints per patient concerning community health services and FHSA services is not available centrally.

Written complaints per 1,000 patients treated in hospitals[1]

	1989–90	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*
Clwyd	3.6	3.6	3.9	4.9
East Dyfed	3.0	3.4	3.5	4.0
Gwent	1.6	1.1	2.9	3.5
Gwynedd	4.4	3.0	5.6	4.6
Mid Glamorgan	3.2	3.9	5.0	5.2
Pembrokeshire	4.1	3.1	3.3	5.3
Powys	2.0	2.3	1.3	3.6
South Glamorgan	3.3	3.9	4.1	5.2
West Glamorgan	2.4	2.5	2.0	3.0
Wales	3.0	3.1	3.8	4.4

[1] The number of written complaints to the health authorities/NHS trusts concerning the hospital service per 1,000 in-patients and day cases treated. Figures for NHS trusts have been allocated to the health authority area in which they are situated.

South East Wales Ambulance Trust

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the estimated date for commencement of construction of the South East Wales Ambulance trust's new headquarters;

(2) what consideration he has given to the proposed new ambulance headquarters and allied communications infrastructure for South East Wales Ambulance trust.

Mr. Redwood: The South East Wales Ambulance trust submitted a business case for the leasing of an existing building and purchase of new communications equipment, supported by the South Glamorgan, Gwent and Powys health authorities. This has been approved and a start is due to be made shortly.

Countryside Council

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has issued to the Countryside Council for Wales with respect to making grants to voluntary bodies; and if he will list those voluntary organisations which have received grants under such guidelines.

Mr. Redwood: The guidelines on grants issued to the Countryside Council for Wales are contained in the management statement and the financial memorandum. Lists of recipients of grants from the CCW are included in its annual report for 1993–94, which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Countryside Council for Wales and other conservation bodies in Wales with respect to the purchase of land for the purpose of the maintenance of bio-diversity; what provision he has agreed with the council and the other bodies regarding the role of voluntary bodies in the field of conservation in the *(a)* purchase and *(b)* management of such land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The Countryside Council for Wales is guided in its role regarding the purchase of land by the management statement, which states that the council should not add significantly to its estate. Within the limits of available resources, the CCW may, however, grant aid others in the purchase of land where the council's objectives are met.

Private Patient Income

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, column *365*, when data for 1993–94 on private patient income will be available.

Mr. Richards: The amount of income generated by private patient facilities in national health service hospitals in Wales in 1993–94 was £2.910 million.

Source: Health Authorities' and NHS Trusts Annual Accounts.

Notes:

i. 1993–94 figures are provisional;

ii. consists of money received from NHS patients paying for accommodation in single rooms or small wards (Section 63 NHS Act), private-in-patients (Section 65), private non-resident patients (Section 66) and accommodation and services provided under Section 58 of the NHS Act 1977.

iii. Overseas visitors (Section 121 (not eligible for free treatment have been excluded as they are charged NHS patients).

South Wales Valleys (Investment)

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how he intends to achieve his aim of generating £1 billion of private sector investment in the south Wales valleys.

Mr. Redwood: I have met the local authorities covering the Valleys area together with the Welsh Development Agency, the Land Authority for Wales and the training and enterprise councils. I have discussed in detail the land availability, communication needs and development plans of each local authority area.

On 13 December, at a lunch in the QEII centre with representatives of the business community, I will be issuing a brochure containing a selection of the development sites identified at the meetings that present excellent opportunities for attracting private sector investment.

Copies, will be sent to Members whose constituencies fall within the Valleys' area and will also be placed in the Library of the House. From 13 December copies of the brochure will be available from the urban affairs division of the Welsh Office.

The document will be incorporated in a new Government private finance initiative prospectus that I intend publishing shortly.

In the new year I will be conducting a series of meetings with local authorities outside the Valleys to discuss their development plans and identify sites with good potential for attracting private sector investment elsewhere in Wales.

Empty Property

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to make use of his Department's empty residential property.

Mr. Redwood: I have asked that all the Department's empty residential properties should be brought back into use as quickly as possible—either by re-letting where there is a justified need, or by disposal.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Mathew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Goodlad: The figures are as follows:

	1991–92 £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
(a)	2,396,415	1,912,241	1,726,606
(b)	439,282	472,000	458,000

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total expenditure on energy for each property owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Goodlad: The figures for the only property concerned are:

	1991–92 £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
1 Carlton Gardens	16,077	15,191	13,091

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made by Rwanda by UNAMIR in establishing a radio station that will broadcast reliable information to the refugee camps for Rwandan refugees in Zaire and Tanzania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The radio transmitting equipment donated by Her Majesty's Government to the Government of Rwanda has arrived in Kigali and is being commissioned by a British radio engineer with the assistance of UNAMIR forces.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being planned by the permanent members of the UN Security Council to provide the necessary logistical support that would back up the Secretary-General's urgent request for a security force in the refugee camps of Rawandans in Zaire.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The UN Secretary General's report contained several options for action in the refugee camps. The Security Council has asked him to investigate the practicalities of the proposals and to seek the views of potential troop contributor nations, emphasising the urgent need for progress towards national reconciliation. We await his response.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to contribute to the retention of a small military logistics unit of about 150 personnel in Rwanda as requested by the UN Secretary-General.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have received no such request.

Croatia

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the ability of non-Croat speakers to participate in elections in Croatia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under article 45 of the constitution of the Republic of Croatia, all Croatian citizens who have reached the age of 18 enjoy the right to participate in elections. This right was confirmed in the electoral law promulgated on 15 April 1992.

European Union

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what concessions were made to Spain in negotiations regarding Norwegian accession to the European Union.

Mr. Baldry: No concessions were made to Spain with respect to Norwegian accession to the European Union. Under the earlier agreement on the European Economic Area, Norway agreed to make additional quantities of cod available to the "cohesion" countries—for this purpose, Spain, Portugal and Ireland.

As part of the EFTA accession negotiations it was decided that the terms for Iberian integration into the common fisheries policy would be agreed by 1 January 1995. This brought forward by 12 months the original agreement to this effect, reached at the time of Spanish and Portuguese accession to the Community.

Caribbean

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will describe the relationship between the dependant territories in the Caribbean and the regional secretariat in Barbados, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The secretariat is responsible for co-ordinating and managing those aspects of our policy towards the Caribbean dependent territories which are best dealt with in the region. The secretariat liaises with and supports governors and chief Ministers on matters relating to the promotion of economic development and good government and manages FCO and ODA financial resources available to the territories.

Bosnia

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration was given by the United Nations to declaring a safe area in north-west Bosnia to protect the dissident Bosnian Muslim population from attack by Bosnian Muslim troops supporting the Muslim Government in Sarajevo.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations has no plans to create any additional safe areas.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken by the United Nations to disarm the Bosnian Muslims troops in the Gorazde exclusion zone.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Nations troops were deployed to Gorazde in April 1994 under Security

Council Resolution No. 836, to deter attacks against the safe areas, to monitor the ceasefire, and to promote the withdrawal of military units other than those of the Government of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In the absence of any agreement between the parties to move towards demilitarisation of Gorazde, UNPROFOR is not mandated to disarm troops of either party.

Colombia

Mr. Llywd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received during the past two years on the subject of assistance, military or otherwise to the regime in Colombia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We have received frequent representations. Our assistance has focused on the following priority areas which have been agreed with the Government of Colombia: renewable resources management, good government and help to counter the illicit production and trafficking of drugs.

Gibraltar

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that border controls on Gibraltar's Spanish frontier comply with European Community legislation.

Mr. Baldry: Gibraltar's position outside the Community's common customs territory allows Spain to maintain normal customs checks at the frontier. We view the current level of controls as disproportionate. We have protested strongly, and are considering next steps.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he is making to Spain about passport and customs delays on its frontier with Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: On 1 December, my hon. Friend the Minister of State summoned the Spanish ambassador to express our strong concern at these intrusive and disruptive checks, and made it clear that they should cease. Similar representations have been made on several other occasions and we shall continue to keep the position under close review.

World Service

Mr. Jim Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has agreed for the BBC World Service in the present funding triennium, 1994–95 to 1996–97.

Mr. Baldry: As stated in the recent White Paper, "The Future of the BBC" Cmnd 2621 of July 1994, the World Service will in future operate to targets and performance indicators agreed with the FCO. These will replace the detailed prescription of languages and hours of broadcasts. For the current triennium, 1994 to 1997, the following targets have been agreed for increasing overall World Service audiences and listenership among the better educated:

Audience Size[1] *(millons)*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*	*1996–97*
Global	130	134	140
Regional			
Asia-Pacific	7.5	8	9
South Asia	52	53	54
Africa	31.5	32	33.5
Middle East and North Africa	11	11	11.5
FSU and South-west Asia	7.5	8	9
Eastern and Central Europe	5	5.5	5.5
Western Europe	7.5	7.5	7.5
Americas	8	9	10

Audience among the better educated[2]	*1994–95 Percentage*	*1995–96 Percentage*	*1996–97 Percentage*
Global	18	19	21
Regional			
Asia-Pacific	5	7	10
South Asia	30	35	37
Africa	68	68	69
Middle East and North Africa	40	42	44
FSU and South-west Asia	5	7	10
Eastern and Central Europe	5	7	9
Western Europe	12	13	14
Americas	1	2	3

[1] Number of adults listening at least once per week, excluding areas where measurement is not possible, e.g. China.

[2] Percentage of adults surveyed who have some tertiary education and who listen to the BBC at least once per week.

Other key targets are to increase output in programme minutes per £1,000 spent from 33 in 1994–95 to 40 in 1996–97, and to increase the hours of output per member of staff from 31½ in 1994–95 to 46 in 1996–97.

SCOTLAND

Operating Theatres

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many operating theatre sessions have been cancelled in each region in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on cancellations of operating theatre sessions is not centrally available. The number of admissions which were cancelled by hospitals for the year ending 31 March 1994, the first year for which accurate information is centrally available, is shown in the table.

NHSiS—cancellations of admission[1] *by health board area of treatment: year ending 31 March 1994*

	Total cancellations
Scotland	6,170
Argyll and Clyde	274
Ayrshire and Arran	435
Borders	80
Dumfries and Galloway	65
Fife	418

	Total cancellations
Forth Valley	19
Grampian	964
Greater Glasgow	1,429
Highland	403
Lanarkshire	188
Lothian	1,247
Orkney	4
Shetland	38
Tayside	605
Western Isles	1

[1] Cancellations by hospital of admission for inpatient or day case treatment in the following surgical specialties: general surgery, orthopaedic surgery, ENT surgery, ophthalmology, urology, neurosurgery, cardiothoracic surgery, plastic surgery, orthodontics and paediatric dentistry, oral surgery and oral medicine, restorative dentistry, paediatric surgery and gynaecology.

Student Support

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of changes in the student support and tuition fee arrangements for Scottish domiciled students in session 1995–96.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: I am publishing today the main rates of maintenance allowances payable under the students' allowances scheme and the postgraduate students' allowances scheme, including rates for those courses which do not attract student loans, together with the rates of various supplementary allowances payable to both undergraduate and vocational postgraduate award holders.

The support available to undergraduate students in 1995–96 through the main rates of maintenance grant and loan, taken together, will be 2½ per cent. higher than in 1994–95, thus maintaining its value in real terms. Postgraduate maintenance grants and supplementary allowances will be increased by a similar amount.

Tuition fees will continue to be reimbursed to institutions through the student support system on behalf of eligible students. The rates will be the same as in 1994–95.

These changes are consistent with those for England and Wales announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education. Details have been placed in the Library.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by wave the start-up costs for each NHS trust hospital, by region.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

Health board	*Trust*	*Start-up grant £ thousand*
First wave		
Ayrshire and Arran	South Ayrshire Hospitals	270
Grampian	Aberdeen Royal Hospitals	310
Second wave		
Argyll and Clyde	Royal Alexandra Hospital	175
Ayrshire and Arran	Ayrshire and Arran Community Healthcare	175
	North Ayrshire and Arran	175
Forth Valley	Royal Scottish National Hospital	175
	Stirling Royal Infirmary	175
Grampian	Grampian Healthcare	175
	Moray Health Services	175
Greater Glasgow	Southern General	175
	Victoria Infirmary	175
	Yorkhill	175
Highland	Caithness and Sutherland	175
	Raigmore	175
Lanarkshire	Monklands and Bellshill	175
Lothian	West Lothian	175
Tayside	Dundee Teaching Hospitals	175
Third wave		
Argyll and Clyde	Inverclyde Royal	175
	Renfrewshire Healthcare	175
Dumfries and Galloway	Dumfries and Galloway Acute and Maternity Hospitals	175
Fife	Fife Healthcare	175
	Kirkcaldy Acute Hospitals	175
	Queen Margaret Hospital	175
	Forth Valley Central Scotland Healthcare (Merger)	175
	Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary	175
Greater Glasgow	Glasgow Royal Infirmary University	175
	Greater Glasgow Community and Mental Health Services Stobhill	175
	West Glasgow Hospitals University	175
Highland	Highland Communities	175
Lanarkshire	Hairmyres and Stonehouse	175
	Law Hospital	175
Lothian	East and Midlothian	175
	Edinburgh Healthcare	175
	Edinburgh Sick Children's	175
	Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh	175
	Western General Hospital	175
Tayside	Angus	175
	Dundee Healthcare	175
	Perth and Kinross Healthcare	175
Fourth wave		
Argyll and Clyde	Argyll and Bute	175
	Lomond Healthcare	175
Borders	Borders General hospital	175
	Borders Communities Health Services	175

Health board	*Trust*	*Start-up grant £ thousand*
Dumfries and Galloway	Dumfries and Galloway Community Health	175
Greater Glasgow	Glasgow Dental Hospital and School	175
Lanarkshire	Lanarkshire Healthcare	175
Common Services Agency	Scottish Ambulance Service	175

NHS Superannuation Scheme

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the report by the Government Actuary on his valuation of the national health service superannuation scheme in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I have today placed copies of the report in the Library.

The report concludes that the rate of contribution required from employers to meet the scheme's future liabilities, after taking account of employees contributions, should be set at 4 per cent. of pensionable pay, a reduction of 1½ per cent. on the existing rate of 5½ per cent. The scheme's liabilities do not include the cost of pensions increase. Most of the costs of inflation proofing pensions are borne directly by the Exchequer and are not reflected in the above contribution rates.

I have decided to accept the actuary's recommendation and to reduce the employers contribution rate with effect from 1 April 1995. The rates of contribution paid by members of the scheme are not affected by this.

The reduction in employers' contributions will release an additional sum of some £22 million towards the funding of the NHS in Scotland.

Redundancies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of redundancies among national health service staff *(a)* by grade and *(b)* by reason for each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Statistics on redundancies in the NHS in Scotland are not collected centrally other than in respect of staff who are both over 50 years of age and have at least five years' reckonable service for superannuation purposes where a benefit is immediately payable under the NHS (Compensation for Premature Retirement) (Scotland) Regulations 1981. The total number of such premature retirement awards for the last five years is as follows:

	1989–90	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Number of cases	1,040	480	625	759	849

A breakdown by grade and by reason of redundancy is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 12 December 1994

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Newton: No service in the Privy Council Office has been market-tested.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: Expenditure on energy by the Privy Council Office amounted to £16,492 in 1991–92, £16,680 in 1992–93 and £13,977 in 1993–94. I am not responsible for any agencies.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Afzal *v.* Ford

Mr. Brazier: to ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what measures his Department is taking to monitor the effects of the Afzal *v.* Ford ruling; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department is collecting statistics on the number of cases concluded each month through arbitration in the county courts, and a sample of cases concluded at trial broken down by the type of case and amount of the award. These data will, over a period, indicate whether changes have taken place, for example in relation to the number of lower value personal injury cases dealt with in the small claims procedure, and the total number of arbitrations compared with the number of trials.

Small Claims

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he plans to announce the review of the small claims court limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor intends to keep the small claims limit under review. At present, officials are examining the volume of work received by the county courts in different monetary bands, gathering evidence on the current operation of the small claims procedure and considering other relevant information. Any proposals for change will be put out to public consultation in the usual way.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The services market tested by the Lord Chancellor's Department and won by the private sector are listed. The value of the contracts is £7,185,626.

Court Building Management and Maintenance
- Alex Gordon Partnership
- CS Project Consultants
- Hubert Jenkins
- Osprey Project Management
- Powell Dobson
- Rainey Petrie Design
- Silk and Frazier
- TTPM Project Management
- Veryard and Partners
- WF Johnson and Partners
- Widnell Project Management
- WS Atkins Project Management.

Estate Surveying
- Drivers Jonas
- DTZ Debenham Thorpe
- Torpy
- York Montague

Printing and Forms Supply
- The Satellite Press Ltd.

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement about the plans of his Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which he intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the world wide web server "open.gov.uk" or any specific departmental server.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department has no firm plans for the release of information through the Internet at this point. However, it is considering the potential of the CCTA government information service—world wide web server "open.gov.uk"—as a complementary service for the release of publicly available information.

Contact Centres

Mr. Alton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many local authorities provide contact centres for fathers coming before family courts who wish to see their children; and what considerations are being made to extend the availability of contact centres across the country.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information sought is not a matter for the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Immigration Appeals

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average cost of a hearing before a special adjudicator of the Immigration

Appeals Authority of an application for bail by a person detained under Immigration Act powers.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available. In any one case, the cost of a hearing depends on many factors, such as the number of parties and witnesses attending and giving evidence, the level of representation and whether or not an interpreter is required.

ENVIRONMENT

English Partnership

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the effect of the external finance limit on the EFL in the case of English Partnerships on the public sector borrowing requirement;

(2) what is the effect of guarantees provided by English Partnerships on the PSBR.

Sir Paul Beresford: The public sector borrowing requirement takes account of English Partnerships' external finance limit. Any calls arising from guarantees that English Partnerships give must be accommodated within its EFL, and therefore have no direct effect on the PSBR.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was paid in housing benefit *(a)* to council tenants and *(b)* to non-council tenants; how much was received in housing revenue account subsidy in each local housing authority area; and what was the size of the surplus or deficit in each local housing authority in 1993–94.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I have placed in the Library a copy of the information requested by the hon. Member.

Overpackaging

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received regarding overpackaging;

(2) if he will introduce legal targets regarding the reduction of overpackaging; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has received over 450 representations about overpackaging in the past year.

There are strong financial incentives for reducing unnecessary packaging, and industry has made substantial progress in this area. The Government believe that the best way reducing of overpackaging is to build on these incentives through effective use of economic instruments. Our producer responsibility initiative for packaging waste and the recently announced landfill levy will provide substantial and additional incentives for the reduction of overpackaging.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Sir Paul Beresford: The information is as follows:

£ million

	Department	*Agencies*
1991–92	1.03	1.05
1992–93	0.94	1.04
1993–94	0.90	1.10

Conservation

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his strategy for the purchase of land for the protection of flora and fauna; what role he envisages voluntary conservation organisations might play in the purchase and management of land of conservation importance; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: In keeping with the voluntary principle of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, new acquisitions by the county councils are restricted to fragile sites where no alternative owners are willing or able to undertake appropriate management. Voluntary bodies play an important part in conserving important wildlife sites. Where appropriate, English Nature can give financial support to voluntary bodies for purchase and management.

Valuation Tribunals

Mr. Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how members of local valuation tribunals are appointed and by whom;

(2) by what means small business proprietors can become appointed to local valuation tribunal panels.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Valuation tribunal members are appointed by the county council, metropolitan district council or London borough council for the area concerned. Each appointing authority decides its own method of selection and appointment, but my Department has issued general guidance, stressing in particular the desirability of appointing members from a wide cross-section of the community. I would expect appointing authorities to welcome approaches from people interested in serving on tribunals. Tribunal presidents and clerks will also be happy to discuss with such people the work of tribunals and what is expected of members.

Special Areas of Conservation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what further progress he has to announce on the consultation with owners and occupiers of land affected by the designation of special areas of conservation under the European union habitats directive, pursuant to his undertaking on 19 July, *Official Report*, column *240;*

(2) what further progress he has to announce on the selection and designation of sites to become special areas of conservation under the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994 approved on 19 July, as required by the EU directive on the conservation of natural habitats and, pursuant to his undertaking to the House on 19 July, *Official Report*, column *240.*

Mr. Atkins: The Government are considering with the nature conservation agencies the sites to be proposed to the Commission as candidate special areas of conservation in June 1995. The Government will publish a draft list of sites as soon as possible for consultation with owners, occupiers and other affected interests.

Habitats Directive

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects additional draft regulations to implement the EU habitats directive on consents and permissions to be laid before the House, as indicated in his undertaking of 19 July, *Official Report*, column *242*.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are currently considering the form that the additional regulations should take. They will be laid as soon as possible in the new year.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has to report on the establishment of joint working arrangements between sea fisheries committees, harbour authorities and local authorities as regards meeting the United Kingdom obligations under the European Union habitats directive for effective conservation in the maritime zone up to six miles offshore in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland, as announced in his undertaking of 19 July, *Official Report*, column *242*.

Mr. Atkins: The obligations under the directive relate to designated special areas of conservation. No SACs will be designated until the list has been agreed with the Commission some time after June 1995. Where necessary for marine sites, management schemes will be developed. I expect these to build upon the arrangements being developed on a voluntary basis for many areas of our coast.

County Hall

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will identify by building which parts of the county hall complex have been sold; and which parts remain to be sold.

Sir Paul Beresford: The riverside—or main—building of county hall has been sold by way of the grant of a 999-year lease. Contracts for the sale of the remainder of the county hall site were exchanged on 14 October, with completion being set for 29 March 1995.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what new measures he proposes to ensure that the international commitments made by the Prime Minister at the Rio Earth summit to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000 are met, following the decisions not to increase value added tax on domestic fuel to 17.5 per cent.

Mr. Atkins: The Government are committed to fulfilling their obligations under the climate change convention. We are considering whether further measures are needed to ensure that we remain on course.

Civil Estate (Charges)

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy in respect of charging users of publicly funded resources a charge equivalent to a full commercial rental value in respect of real property; and what exceptions have been made to this policy.

Sir Paul Beresford: Under the property repayment system introduced in 1984, Departments occupying the Government's civil estate currently pay an opportunity cost rent equivalent to the open market rent for their occupations of Government freeholds and properties on historically low rents. The opportunity cost rents are reviewed every five years.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Sir Paul Beresford: In this Department so far, nine market tests which have involved exposing in-house functions to competition have been awarded to outside bidders, with a total value of £706,300.

With the exception of staff catering at the Building Research Establishment, these were one-off construction research projects.

Project	*Organisation*
BRE: staff catering	Gardener Merchant
Durability of organically coated metal cladding	W. S. Atkins
Water economy	BSRIA
Scoping study for HVAC systems	Centre for Configurational Studies, the Open university
Identification and development of source data for risk assessment systems, part 1	Fire SERT centre
Identification and development of source data for risk assessment systems, part 2	Ulster university
Fire-resistant behaviour of trussed rafters	Trada Technology Ltd.
Alternative aggregates	Mott McDonald Consultants
Ventilation of underground car parks	TBV Science

Departmental Offices

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Sir Paul Beresford: In addition to works undertaken on DOE buildings, the Department of the Environment Property Holdings undertakes work on buildings occupied by more than one Department. All the buildings concerned are on the common user estate. Works of less than £10,000 have been excluded from the table. Details of refurbishment works funded by other departments will be provided by the Ministers concerned.

	Total estimated cost £ millions
1991–92	
Valiant house, Uxbridge—internal refurbishment	0.410
Riverwalk house, London—refurbishment of heating induction units	1.021
Metropole building, London—toilet refurbishment	0.295
40–42 Westborough, Scarborough—ingoing works 1st floor	0.016
Crown house, Sunderland—external uplift works	0.011
Bridge house, Blyth—ground floor upgrade	0.078
Daryl house, Stockton—internal refurbishment	0.327
Crown house, Huddersfield—part toilet refurbishment	0.066
Crown house, Hull—toilet refurbishment	0.048
Crown house, Wakefield—toilet refurbishment	0.057
Pennine house, Washington—internal refurbishment	0.127
Eaton court, Reading—internal refurbishment	2.135
Bankhead avenue, Edinburgh—internal refurbishment	1.097

	Total estimated cost £ millions
1992–93	
Elmwood house, Harrow—refurbishment of 4 floors	1.800
Mowden hall, Darlington—new podium roof	0.420
Unicorn house, North Shields—replace cladding and windows	0.470
Crown house, Corby—refurbishment of toilets	0.221
2 Marsham street, London—refurbishment of podium toilets	0.514
2 Marsham street, London—refurbishment of Tower toilets	0.142
Government offices Great George street, London—refurbish toilets, stack 1	0.905
Old Admiralty building, London—refurbish-modernise canteen	0.358
Ham River house, London—internal refurbishment	0.592
Olivetree house, Belfast—refurbish front entrance	0.051
Lyon house, Harrow—refurbish two floors	0.589
Lime Grove, Eastcote—internal refurbishment to spur 10	0.064
Bradford house, Llandeilo—general refurbishment	0.099
Crown house, Gainsborough—refurbish disabled toilet	0.016
Berkeley house, Harrogate—toilet refurbishment	0.021
42 Eastgate, Leeds—toilet refurbishment	0.034
West Riding house, Leeds—part internal refurbishment	0.026
Crown buildings, Bridlington—new disabled access	0.031
Elvet house, Durham—toilet refurbishment	0.108
Crown house, Middlesbrough—internal refurbishment	0.115
Benton house, Newcastle—internal refurbishment	0.071
Government buildings, Kenton Bar, Newcastle—toilet refurbishment, spur U	0.081
Government buildings, Kenton Bar, Newcastle—internal refurbishment, spur J	0.025
Regent house, NEI centre, Newcastle—internal refurbishment	0.100
Pennine house, Washington—provision of disabled facilities	0.031
New buildings, Hinckley—internal and external refurbishment	0.498
Broadway house, Hereford—internal refurbishment	0.115
Ty Glyder, Bangor—external refurbishment	0.485
Argyle house, Edinburgh—internal refurbishment	1.145
St. Clare house, Ipswich—internal refurbishment	2.585
Hightown barracks, Wrexham—internal refurbishment	0.808
Cherry Grove CB, Haverfordwest—external refurbishment	1.087
84–86 Guild street, Aberdeen—refurbish entrance canopy	0.080
Thistle street, Edinburgh—toilet refurbishment	0.019
Ladywell house, Edinburgh—internal refurbishment phase 3	0.251
Meldrum house, Edinburgh—toilet refurbishment	0.187
Longman road, Inverness—upgrade entrance hall and refurbish plant room	0.117

	Total estimated cost £ millions
1993–94	
Ashdown house, Hastings—internal refurbishment	5.835
Crown buildings, Scunthorpe—internal and external refurbishment—part-funded Benefits Agency	0.860
Whitgift centre, Croydon—internal refurbishment	1.240
Mesnes house—internal and external refurbishment	1.360
Hook rise, Tolworth—internal refurbishment of A Block	1.292
Raydean House, Barnet—external refurbishment	0.932
246 Stockwell road, London—installation of secondary glazing	0.063
2 Carlton gardens, London—general refurbishment	1.145
Furness house, Barrow-in-Furness—internal refurbishment of fifth floor	0.053
DNS Marton, Blackpool—refurbishment kitchen and dining room	0.171
Eskdale house, Kendal—internal refurbishment	0.023
Stopgate lane, Liverpool—refurbishment F and G	0.095
Sunley tower, Manchester—refurbishment floor 10	0.212
Manchester house, Manchester—refurbishment floor 2	0.135
Bromyard avenue, Harrow—refurbishcanteen	0.140
Beeches road, chelmsford—internal refurbishment, spur F	0.084
41-55 Windmill hill, Ruislip—internal refurbishment	0.210
Elmbridge court, Gloucester—toilet refurbishment	0.155
Merrywalks house, stroud—toilet refurbishment	0.058

	Total estimated cost £ millions
Bondgate hall, Alkwick—refurbish coach house	0.070
Elvet house, Durham—internal refurbishment	0.094
Crown house, Hunddersfield—part toilet refurbishment and kitchen upgrade	0.124
Forseter house, Bradford—refurbish eighth floor	0.051
Abbey House, Selby—refurbish grade 2 listed building	0.146
Government buildings, Kenton Bar, Newcastle—refurbishment of Spurs R, X and Y Block B and main corridor	0.175
Daryl House, Stockton—main entrance refurbishment	0.026
Five Ways tower, Birmingham—refurbish six floor	0.363
Chalfont drive, Nottingham—refurbish block 7	0.381
Station Road, Kettering—internal refurbishment	0.052
Greyfriars House, Aberdeen—external refurbishment	1.890
Cathay Park, Cardiff—internal and external refurbishment	2.368
Vespasian House, Dorchester—external refurbishment	1.353
IRO, Cumberland—reroofing and cladding phases 3, 4, 5 and 7	9.331
Buccleuch street, Dumfries—underpinning and internal improvement	1.027
Crown building, EBBW Vale—internal and external refurbishment	1.721
Argyle House, Edinburgh—toilet and B Floor refurbishment	0.916
St. Agnes road, Cardiff—external refurbishment block 4	0.477
84/86 Guild street, Aberdeen—internal refurbishment ground floor	0.070
Thistle street, Edinburgh—refurbish conference room and alterations to accommodation	0.107
Frederick street, Edinburgh—internal refurbishment	0.455
New Register house, Edinburgh—toilet upgrade	0.043
Castle Wynd, Inverness—general and toilet refurbishment	0.315
Mill street, Perth—internal refurbishment	0.220
1 Park Road North, Havant—main entrance refurbishment	0.032
Crown house, Portsmouth—ground floor refurbishment	0.041
OPCS, Titchfield—ground floor refurbishment stage 1	0.046

Much of this information is recorded in the "Market Testing Bulletin", published monthly, copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the expenditure plans in each year from 1994–95 to 1997–98 in respect of *(a)* the local authorities' housing investment programme and *(b)* the Housing Corporation's approved development programme.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* The total of housing investment programme allocations in England for 1994–95 and 1995–96 are £1,326 million and £1,272 million respectively. Both figures exclude resources for estate action, which are now within the single regeneration budget.

It is not possible to give planned HIP allocations for 1996–97 or 1997–98. These depend on annual decisions about resources for special housing programmes, and the national level of receipts taken into account.

The Housing Corporation's gross capital resources for its approved development programme and the rough sleepers initiative are £1,533 million in 1994–95, £1,197 million in 1995–96, £1,177 million in 1996–97 and £1,191 million in 1997–98. The Housing Corporation will be publishing the full details of its approved development programme for 1995–96 later this month.

TREASURY

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the plans of his Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which he intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the world wide web server "open.gov.uk" or any specific departmental server.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury's Internet service was launched on 15 November 1994.

At present, the service includes the full details of the Budget, including my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor's Budget statement and all the Budget news releases. Other documents that are available include other Treasury news releases, speeches, minutes of the Chancellor's monthly monetary meetings with the Governor of the Bank of England, reports of the panel of independent forecasters and details of the fundamental expenditure review of Treasury running costs.

More information will be added in due course.

All this material is provided on the Treasury's own Internet server. The address for the Treasury's world wide web pages is "http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk". In addition to the world wide web, the same information can be obtained by electronic mail or by FTP from the following addresses:

	Addresses
Email mailing lists:	"maillist@hm-treasury.gov.uk"
Email file transfer:	"ftpmail@hm-treasury.gov.uk"
File Transfer (FTP):	"ftp.hm-treasury.gov.uk"

The text of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" has been published on the Internet by HMSO, and is available at "http://www.open.gov.uk/budget94/budget94.htm;" it can also be located by a hypertext link from the Treasury's world wide web pages.

War Loan

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many recorded holders there are of the 3.5 per cent. war loan.

Mr. Nelson: There are approximately 243,000 accounts in 3½ per cent war stock on the Bank of England and other registers.

Insurance Premium Tax

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what circumstances insurance policies for mortgage interest protection against sickness and unemployment are liable to the insurance premium tax; and what is his estimate of the effect on tax receipts of plans to restrict income support help with mortgage interest payments from October 1996.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Insurance policies for mortgage interest protection against sickness and unemployment are liable to insurance premium tax because they are a type of general insurance, almost all of which is subject to the tax. No specific estimate has been made of the effect on tax receipts of any increase in the use of such insurance—in the context of changes to the income support arrangements relating to mortgage interest payments—but any such effect is likely to be negligible.

Manufacturing Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the contribution made to economic growth since 1992 by the reduction in the deficit on trade with the EEC in manufactures;

(2) what was the contribution made to economic growth since 1992 by the reduction in the deficit on trade in *(a)* manufactures and *(b)* finished manufactures.

Mr. Nelson: Between the fourth quarter of 1992 and the third quarter of 1994 gross domestic product increased by 6 per cent. Over the same period, net trade in manufactures contributed 0.9 percentage points to GDP growth, net trade in finished manufactures contributed 0.3 percentage points to GDP growth, and net trade in manufactures with countries in the European Union made a slightly negative contribution to GDP growth. However, more recently net trade in manufactures has accounted for a far more significant proportion of GDP growth, as the economies of the European Union have picked up.

Building Societies Acts

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to amend the Building Societies Acts to ensure that if the first named holder of a joint account dies the second named holder qualifies for any bonuses in the event of a takeover.

Mr. Nelson: I am currently reviewing the Building Societies Act 1986. In my interim statement of 6 July, I said that stringent statutory controls on takeovers would be retained. The review is now focusing on societies' accountability and powers, but I am taking careful note of all the comments I have received about the position of joint account holders. I hope to announce the conclusion of the review soon.

Official Residences (Expenditure)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many meetings or functions have been or will be held at No. 11 Downing street in December 1994 and which alcoholic drinks will be available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No such information is available.

Tourism

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give full details of all interdepartmental and non-governmental consultations carried out in the preparation of Customs and Excise compliance cost assessment No. 6 related to his Budget statement, with regard to the effect of the measures proposed on the international competitiveness of the United Kingdom tourism industry.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In common with most other Budget measures, there were no such consultations in preparing the compliance cost assessment to which the hon. Gentleman refers. However, Customs and Excise has stated that the assessment will be reviewed in the light of any comments received.

EU Budget

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the assumptions he made as to the increase in gross domestic product when calculating the United Kingdom contribution to the European Union budget for each year until 1999.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The growth assumptions used were consistent with those set out in the Budget of 29 November.

Finance Bill

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) on what date he plans to publish the Finance Bill;

(2) what plans he has to publish the Finance Bill before the House rises for the Christmas recess.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on Thursday 8 December, *Official Report,* column *330.*

Customs and Excise

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the average amount of VAT collected by one Customs and Excise VAT collection officer annually.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* For the year ending March 1994, Customs and Excise deployed 5,429 staff years on VAT visiting. These staff identified errors in traders' records which when corrected resulted in an increase in the net liability of £1,322 million, or an average of £243,507 per staff year. These figures do not take account of errors that traders might have found and corrected themselves.

Customs and Excise has recently reviewed the way in which it deploys staff to ensure compliance with VAT requirements so as to ensure increased effectiveness. Over the coming years, effort will be refocused on better education to assist businesses to get their VAT declarations right. In parallel with this, targeting of visits and assurance techniques will be improved.

Mortgage Statistics

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the percentage of those with mortgages who are self-employed, employed on fixed-term contracts or who are employed on a part-time basis.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* Estimates from the spring 1994 labour force survey for Great Britain show that of all heads of households who were owner-occupiers with mortgages, 15 per cent. were self-employed; 2 per cent. were employed on fixed-term contracts; and 4 per cent. were working part time either as an employee or self-employed. These three groups make up 19 per cent. of all mortgage holders.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new mortgages have been taken out in each of the last five years *(a)* in total and *(b)* by geographic region.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* Data for the total number of mortgages advanced are available in table 10.4 of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1983–1993" published by the Department of the Environment. These data are not published on a regional basis. However, the first column in table 10.9 of the same publication gives the percentage breakdown of new mortgages by region only for advances made by building societies.

Income Statistics

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give an estimate of the change in real personal disposable income over the whole of 1994 and in each quarter of 1994, both in aggregate and on a per capita basis.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 9 December 1994]:* At this stage, quarterly information on real personal disposable income in aggregate and on a per capita basis is available only for the first half of 1994. It can be found on the Central Statistical Office database, series CECP and CAIU respectively. The Budget forecast is for no change in the level of real personal disposable income in 1994 as a whole compared with 1993. Quarterly forecasts are not published.

National Lottery

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the main expected effects on the public accounts from 1994–95 to 1997–98 of the national lottery, including the effects on general Government expenditure, general Government revenue, the general Government borrowing requirement and the public sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 9 December 1994]:* Proceeds paid into the national lottery distribution fund are part of general Government revenue and spending of these proceeds part of general Government expenditure. The GGR figures in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" include projections of £0.2 billion in 1994–95, £0.7 billion in 1995–96, £0.9 billion in 1996–97 and £1.1 billion in 1997–98. These figures do not include lottery duty because the net effect of the lottery on tax revenues is expected to be broadly neutral after redistributive effects. The GGE figures include projections of £0.0 billion, £0.5 billion, £1.0 billion and £1.0 billion respectively for those years. The difference between these flows in any particular year affects the general Government borrowing requirement and the public sector borrowing requirement. The spending of these proceeds is outside the public expenditure control total.

British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the main effects on the public sector accounts from 1992–93 to 1997–98 of the re-classification of British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. as a public corporation, including the effects on the public expenditure new control total, general Government expenditure, the general Government borrowing requirement and the public sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 9 December 1994]:* The figures for the control total contained in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" include the following amounts for BNFL's external financing requirements for the years in question:

£ million

	1992–93	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*
EFR	–392	–653	–422	–411	–573	–244

The reclassification of BNFL as a public corporation in national accounts had no effect on general Government expenditure or the general Government borrowing requirement. However, it did mean that BNFL's market and overseas borrowing became part of the public sector borrowing requirement. The amounts in each year are:

£ million

	1992–93	*1993–94*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*
EFR	–417	–679	–449	–439	–601	–272

The difference between the two sets of figures represents the payment of the fossil fuel levy to BNFL which is now included in its external financing requirement but was previously outside the control total. These payments have been included in general Government expenditure since the 1993 national accounts Blue Book.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

The Attorney-General: The reprographics service of the Crown Prosecution Service headquarters was market-tested in 1991 and the contract awarded to Williams Lea FM. The value of the contract is approximately £1 million.

Brendan Smyth

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Attorney-General what information he, the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland or the RUC have about approaches made by Father Bernard Marshall of the Norbertine Canons based in County Cavan to a family whose children had been abused in Northern Ireland by Father Brendan Smyth after warrants for the latter's deportation had been delivered by the RUC to the Garda in April 1993 and prior to his subsequent conviction in January 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: I have been asked to reply.

The RUC investigated an allegation from a member of the public of an attempt to pervert the course of justice by taking a statement from a member of the family of a victim of Brendan Smyth.

In the light of this statement, it was decided that no further action was appropriate.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value since February 1994 of monthly supplies of humanitarian aid from *(a)* Government and *(b)* non-governmental organisations to Bosnia-Herzegovina; and what were the monthly targets.

Mr. Baldry: Monthly figures for the value of humanitarian aid to Bosnia-Herzegovina since February 1994 are not available. According to the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the value of 1994 aid contributions to the former Yugoslavia reported to the DHA by donors as at 27 October 1994 was:

	$
Governments	367,872,094
European Union	62,198,805
UN Agencies	12,597,735
Red Cross	42,054,618
Non-Government Organisations	131,254,905
Others	7,545,230
Total	623,523,387

UN figures for food aid targets and deliveries to Bosnia-Herzegovina are:

	Target (tonnes)	*Delivered (tonnes)*
1994		
February	42,000	22,000
March	47,000	43,000
April	27,000	25,000
May	33,000	27,000
June	31,000	25,000
July	33,000	22,000
August	23,000	13,000
September	23,000	18,000
October	23,000	25,000

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Private Secretaries

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the current list of parliamentary private secretaries and the Ministers to whom each is attached.

The Prime Minister: The list is as follows:

	Name
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	
Minister for Agriculture—Mr. W. Waldegrave	Mr. O. Heald
Minister of State—Mr. M. Jack	Miss E. Nicholson
Defence	
Secretary of State—Mr. M. Rifkind	Mr. H. Bellingham
Ministers of State—Mr. R. Freeman and Mr. N. Soames	Mr. S. Coe
Duchy of Lancaster	
Chancellor of the Duchy—Mr. D. Hunt	Mr. N. Evans
Education	
Secretary of State—Mrs. G. Shephard	Mr. G. Kynoch
Minister of State—Mr. E. Forth	Mr. J. Whittingdale
Employment	
Secretary of State—Mr. M. Portillo	Mr. D Amess
Minister of State—Miss A. Widdecombe	Dr. R. Spink
Environment	
Secretary of State—Mr. J. Gummer	Mr. D. French
Minister of State—Viscount Ullswater, Mr. D. Curry and Mr. R. Atkins	Mr. J. Hayes
Foreign Office	
Secretary of State—Mr. D. Hurd	Mr. M. Robinson
Ministers of State—Mr. A. Goodlad and Mr. D. Davis	Mr. E. Garnier
Minister for Overseas Development—Lady Chalker—and PUSS—Mr. T. Baldry	Mr. D. Faber
Health	
Secretary of State—Mrs. V. Bottomley	Mr. K. Mans
Minister of State—Mr. G. Malone	Mr. P. Butler
Home Office	
Secretary of State—Mr. M. Howard	Mr. D. Lidington
Minister of State—Mr. D. Maclean and Mr. M. Forsyth	Mr J. Arnold
Minister of State—Lady Blatch	Mr. J. Clappison
Laws Officers Department	
Attorney-General—Sir N. Lyell and Solicitor-General—Sir. D. Spencer	Mr. G. Streeter
Minister without Portfolio—Mr. J. Hanley	Mr. P. Atkinson
National Heritage	
Secretary of State—Mr. S. Dorrell	Mr. G. Brandreth
Northern Ireland Office	
Secretary of State—Sir P. Mayhew	Mr. R. Spring
Minister of State—Sir J. Wheeler and Mr. M. Ancram	Mr. R. Robertson
Prime Minister	Mr. J. Ward
Privy Council Office	
Lord President and Leader of the House of Commons—Mr. T. Newton	Mr. J. Marshall
Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords—The Viscount Cranborne	Miss C. Gillan
Scottish Office	
Secretary of State—Mr. I. Lang	Mr. S. Coombs
Social Security	
Secretary of State—Mr. P Lilley	Mr. P. Merchant
Ministers of State—Mr. W. Hague and Lord MacKay	Mr. C. Hendry
PUSSs—Mr. A. Burt, Mr. J. Arbuthnot and Mr. R. Evans	Ms J. Lait

	Name
Trade and Industry	
President of the Board—Mr. M. Heseltine	Mr. R. Ottaway
Minister of State—Mr. T Eggar	Mr. P. Luff
Ministers of State—Lord Ferrers and Mr. R. Needham	Mr. A. Rowe
Transport	
Secretary of State—Dr. B. Mawhinney	Mr. M. Trend
Minister of State—Mr. J. Watts	Mr. T. Dicks
Treasury	
Chancellor of the Exchequer—Mr. K. Clarke	Mrs A. Knight
Chief Secretary—Mr. J. Aitken	Mr. P. Ainsworth
Financial Secretary—Sir G. Young	
Paymaster General—Mr. D. Heathcoat-Amory	
and Economic Secretary—Mr. A. Nelson	Dr. C. Goodson-Wickes
Welsh Office	
Secretary of State—Mr. J. Redwood	Mr. D. Evennett

Parliamentary Private Secretaries

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish a current list of *(a)* all parliamentary private secretaries and *(b)* unpaid members of the Government.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

The Minister without portfolio is the only member of the Government who does not draw a ministerial salary.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister how many Parliamentary Private Secretaries there are; and if he will provide comparable figures for November 1989, November 1984 and May 1979.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 29 November 1994]:* I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood).

Details of parliamentary private secretaries for earlier dates are a matter of public record.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment today at columns *436–39*.

In 1991–92 the kitchens used for catering for official functions in 10 Downing street were refurbished to bring them into line with the requirements of the then new food hygiene regulations. The cost of these works was £122,000 excluding value added tax and fees.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total expenditure on energy for each property owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

The Prime Minister: Nil.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available;

(2) what was the total expenditure on energy for *(a)* No. 10 Downing street and *(b)* Chequers in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

The Prime Minister: The total expenditure on energy for 10 Downing street in each of the last three financial years was:

	£
1991–92	39,000
1992–93	39,000
1993–94	33,000

The Chequers estate is the responsibility of the Chequers Trust.

Official Residences (Expenditure)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy concerning the use of No. 10 Downing street for non-official or party political functions.

The Prime Minister: Ministers under this and previous Administrations have been allowed—at their own or party expense—to host non-official or party receptions or functions in Downing street. All catering, staff and other direct expenses must be met by the organisers of the event.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Prime Minister how many bottles of *(a)* whisky, *(b)* other spirits and *(c)* wine were bought from public funds for use at No.10 Downing street and the Prime Minister's other official residences in 1993–94; and how much they cost.

The Prime Minister: Disaggregated information of this sort could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Prime Minister how many meetings or functions have been or will be held at No. 10 Downing street in December 1994 at which alcoholic drinks will be available.

The Prime Minister: Such information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister what charges are made to organisations or persons holding non-official or party functions at No. 10 Downing street in respect of overheads or directs costs associated with such functions.

The Prime Minister: Where charitable or other non-official events are held at No. 10 Downing street, the organisers are responsible for all catering and staff costs, as well as other miscellaneous direct costs. Organisers may use the kitchens or other facilities at No. 10 Downing street.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Prime Minister how many functions have been held at *(a)* No. 10 Downing street and *(b)* Chequers since November 1990 where the cost of refreshments was paid by a political party.

The Prime Minister: The answer is:

(a) 52

(b) 3

Shareholders

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister what consideration he is giving to how shareholders might be given additional powers to influence boardroom pay and perks.

The Prime Minister: Shareholders are already able to influence directors' remuneration. The Government are always ready to consider ideas for improving shareholders' powers or the information which is made available to them. It was announced in the White Paper on competitiveness—CM 2563—that the Government have been reviewing a number of aspects of company law, including directors' duties.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the ground that the information sought was not held centrally by his Department.

The Prime Minister: Approximately 1 per cent.

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the CSCE summit meeting in Budapest.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Sir M. Neubert) on 7 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *220–22*.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

The Prime Minister: For these purposes, my office is part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science at column *455*.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to visit the state of Oregon, United States of America.

The Prime Minister: None.

Security (Politicians)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister how much has been spent on security for *(a)* Cabinet members, *(b)* ex-Cabinet members and *(c)* other national politicians in each of the last five years.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 9 December 1994]:* Since April 1991 about £4.4 million has been spent on the installation of protective security measures at the homes of Cabinet Ministers, ex-Cabinet Ministers and other hon. Members. These measures were provided on the advice of those responsible for protective security and reflected on assessment of the threat to the individuals concerned. All spending is carefully monitored and controlled by those responsible.

Information in the form requested for before that date is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Security and Intelligence Services

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister how many staff have been employed by the security and intelligence services during each of the last five years.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 9 December 1994]:* Staff numbers for the security and intelligence services for 1993–94 and 1994–95 were published in the 1994–95 supply estimates—class XIX, Cabinet Office, Privy Council Office and Parliament etcetera. They totalled 10,766 and 10,516 respectively. Figures for earlier years are not publicly available, and I do not propose to publish such data retrospectively.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the budget for the security and intelligence services during each of the last five years.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 9 December 1994]:* The expenditure of the agencies was published for the first time in the 1994–95 Supply estimates—class XIX, Cabinet Office, Privy Council Office and Parliament etcetera. Aggregate expenditure in 1992–93 was £859.6 million. Estimated outturn for 1993–94 was £961.3 million and net provision for 1994–95 was £881.5 million. Figures for earlier years are not publicly available, and I do not propose to publish such data retrospectively.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Open Government

34. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will establish a review of the differential charging policies of Government Departments for information requested under the code of practice on access to official information under the open government initiative.

Mr. David Hunt: No.

40. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is considering to improve the openness of government.

Mr. David Hunt: I am continuing to implement the policy set down in the White Paper on open government.

38. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much money has been spent on promoting and advertising his White Paper "Open Government" in the past year.

Mr. David Hunt: Some £51,000 since April this year.

Citizens Charter

35. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what assessment he has made of the performance of the citizens charter.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The citizens charter has led to considerable improvements in public services. Details of these improvements have been published in the citizens charter reports in 1992 and 1994. There have also been 227 charter mark awards, each one recognising excellence in public service delivery.

Public Complaints

37. **Mrs Angela Knight:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress his Department has made in making it easier for citizens to complain about the delivery of public services.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Well-publicised and easy to use complaints procedures are a key principle of the citizens charter. In addition, our independent complaints task force is looking at how public services handle complaints and where improvements can be made.

Government Information

39. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the latest figures for people using Internet to obtain government information.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: In the past two months, there have been *332599* requests for government information from Internet users.

Building Refurbishments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The following refurbishment projects were undertaken and paid for from departmental funds.

Civil Service College

Year	*Location*	*Cost £*	*Description of Project*
1991–92	Sunningdale Park	292,000	Part of an on-going programme to refurbish previously low-quality lecture accommodation, adding improved insulation, new windows, new toilet facilities for disabled students and general upgrade of existing toilet facilities.
1991–92	Sunningdale Park	130,000	Conversion of a basement store area to provide office accommodation for staff transferred from London.
1992–93	Sunningdale Park	23,000	Part of an on-going programme to refurbish previously low-quality lecture accommodation, adding improved insulation, new windows, new toilet facilities for disabled students and general upgrade of existing toilet facilities.
1992–93	Sunningdale Park	32,000	Works to provide a ground floor coffee lounge and bar to enable disabled staff and students access to facilities enjoyed by others.
1993–94	Sunningdale Park	130,000	Works to upgrade staff leisure facility to enable it to be used by the public at weekends.

HMSO

Year	*Location*	*Cost £*	*Description of Project*
1993–94	Belfast	54,000	Refurbishment of bookshop.
1993–94	Belfast	200,000	Refurbishment of office accommodation following flood damage due to a burst water main.
1993–94	Manchester	74,000	Refurbishment of bookshop.
1993–94	Birmingham	40,000	Refurbishment of reprographics unit allowing surplus space to be reused.
1993–94	Norwich	8,500	Refurbishment of toilets.
1993–94	London	124,500	Conversion of warehouse space to provide office accommodation, and upgrading of toilets.

Occupational Health Service

Year	*Location*	*Cost* £	*Description of Project*
1991–92	Cardiff	1,805	Installation of secondary double glazing.
1991–92	London	7,500	Installation of new fire doors and air conditioning unit.
1992–93	Edinburgh	1,101	Refurbishment and general uplift of conference facilities.
1992–93	London	6,500	Creation of a new room to carry out physiotherapy following the award of a contract to OHS by LFCDA.
1993–94	Edinburgh	3,350	Refurbishment and redecoration of toilet and kitchen facilities adjacent to a conference room.
1993–94	London	9,850	Installation of air conditioning and redecoration and refurbishment of public reception area.

Central Cabinet Office

Year	*Location*	*Cost* £	*Description of Project*
1992–93	London	367,750	Refurbishment of kitchen in the staff canteen to comply with the requirements of the then new Food Hygiene Act.
1992–93	London	81,000	Refurbishment of a suite of rooms in 70 Whitehall.
1992–93	London	9,790	Refurbishment of office accommodation as part of a rolling programme.
1992–93	London	450,000	Refurbishment of Albany house, following vacation by previous occupants, to provide single-site accommodation for newly created Office of Science and Technology.
1993–94	London	19,990	Creation of new office space to house support staff for the Scott inquiry team.
1993–94	London	30,700	Refurbishment of reprographics unit accommodation as part of a rolling programme.
1993–94	London	48,93	Refurbishment of office accommodation as part of a rolling programme.
1993–94	London	15,675	Refurbishment of existing office accommodation to provide purpose built suite for switchboard operators.
1993–94	London	2,380	Refurbishment of existing office to adapt it for use as a computer training room.
1993–94	London	3,520	Expenditure on refurbishment of a suite of rooms in 70 Whitehall falling to be paid in 1993–94.

Central office of information

Year	*Location*	*Cost* £	*Description of Project*
1991–92	London	124,509	Refurbishment of headquarters office accommodation as part of a rolling programme.
1991–92	London	5,235	Modifications to power and lighting as part of a rolling programme.
1992–93	London	89,912	Refurbishment of headquarters office accommodation as part of a rolling programme.
1992–93	London	6,562	Modifications to electrics as part of a rolling programme.
1993–94	London	120,562	Refurbishment of headquarters office accommodation as part of a rolling programme.
1993–94	London	58,403	Modifications to electrics as part of a rolling programme.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings in my Department and its agencies for each of the last three years was:

	1991–92 £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
Cabinet Office	376,019	398,743	374,485
OPSS agencies	306,450	347,831	334,728
Central Office of Information	109,844	116,504	113,420
HMSO	1,102,000	1,158,000	1,120,000

Tinnitus

Mr. Benton: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the current work of the Institute of Hearing Research on tinnitus.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Although work on tinnitus does not currently form a major theme of activity at the Medical Research Council's Institute of Hearing Research, the institute does undertake some tinnitus research in several areas. These include an epidemiological study of risk factors associated with tinnitus and its effects on lifestyle; three studies on the extent of referral by GPs for specialist advice; and methodological research aimed at establishing an improved scale of tinnitus severity. Links with the Nottingham tinnitus clinic are actively maintained. The MRC is always willing to consider soundly-based research proposals in competition with other applications.

CERN

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's

Government's policy on investment in new developments at CERN.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Government have consistently expressed their support in principle for the next major development planned at CERN, the large hadron collider project. It is widely acknowledged to be the right next step for the organisation and more generally for particle physics at the high-energy frontier. However, the LHC, like many other major international scientific initiatives, will be very expensive. Before giving final approval, therefore, it is essential that the project is based on a fair and sustainable financial framework. This will ensure that the investment made in the project gives the best possible value for money, both scientifically and economically. It is only by ensuring that major international collaborative facilities such as CERN are tightly managed that we will be able to afford the domestic science programmes which will exploit those facilities fully.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Those services market tested under the "Competing for Quality" initiative by the Cabinet Office, Office of Public Service and Science, including its agencies, HMSO and COI, and won by the private sector, are as follows:

Activity Tested (and area)	*Successful Tenderer*
Telephonist Service for Downing Street—Cabinet Office	Manpower plc
Office Services—Cabinet Office	Serco Ltd.
Recruitment Monitoring—OPSS	PE International Ltd.
Facilities Management—CCTA	Tarmac Construction Ltd.
Reprographics—Chessington	Dytecna Ltd.
Typing Services—HMSO	Manpower plc
Passport Supply and Production—HMSO	Thomas De La Rue
Classified Printing—HMSO	Greenaways
Office Services: Custody Cleaning—COI	Royal British Legion Cleancare Ltd.
Catering—COI	Gardner Merchant Ltd.

The total value of these services is just over £3.9 million per annum. Individual contract values are not given as this would prejudice the legitimate commercial interests of those companies involved. Information on the restrictions of publication of commercial data within Government can be found in the code of practice on access to Government information, guidance on interpretation. Information on all market testing activities within central Government is published monthly in the "Market Testing Bulletin", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

EDUCATION

Schools, Islington

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will arrange for ballots to be conducted in each secondary school in Islington on the issue of whether the school should apply for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no powers to arrange for any school to conduct a ballot on whether to apply for grant-maintained status. A ballot, in Islington as elsewhere, may only be triggered by a resolution of the governing body of the school, or by the presentation to the governing body of a parental petition.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* her Department and *(b)* her agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: The total expenditure incurred by this Department on energy in respect of the offices and buildings occupied in each of the last three financial years is as follows:

	£
1991–92	577,600
1992–93	530,600
1993–94	550,600

The Teachers Pensions Agency shares a supply of electricity with the Department on its Darlington site. It is therefore not possible accurately to disaggregate the agency's energy costs which are included in the figures given.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list those services that have been market-tested by her Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is as follows:

Service	*Successful contractor*
The Department's publications despatch service	Westex Ltd.
Catering at the Department's headquarters	Gardner Merchant
Banking services provided to the Teachers Pensions Agency	Midland Bank plc
The Department's data preparation service	Compower Ltd.

The value of the individual contracts is commercially confidential information.

Political activity is excluded if there might be a conflict of interest between political activity and the holding of a public appointment. The rules on political affiliation and conflict of interest are laid down in the Office of Public Service and Science "Guide on Public Appointments Procedures".

DEFENCE

Indonesia

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many armed forces personnel have been provided by the Ministry of Defence to *(a)* support sales of planes and other military equipment to Indonesia during the last two years and *(b)* have been stationed in Indonesia during the last two years; and for what purpose they were there.

Mr. Soames: Other than a colonel attached to the British embassy in Jakarta as defence attache and a warrant officer to support him, no military personnel have been stationed in Indonesia for any purpose during the last two years.

Market Testing

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 5 December, *Official Report*, column *108*, what was the basis on which he calculated annual savings arising from the market testing of health provision for British forces.

Mr. Soames: The level of savings arising from exposing an activity to competition will depend upon the outcome of the exercise to test the efficiency of in-house services and functions against tenders from outside contractors. In the case of health provision for the armed forces, many of the support activities which make up the service are still the subject of feasibility studies to determine objectives, priorities and optimum savings routes. Experience has shown that for departmental purposes, a savings target of at least 15 per cent. of the annual operating cost should be assumed to flow from the exposure of an activity to competitive pressures, but the final savings achieved will depend on the outcome of the market-testing exercise itself, and in many cases will be considerably higher.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Freeman: In the 30-month period up to September 1994, the Ministry of Defence examined 82 support activities with annual operating costs in the order of £600 million under the Department's "Competing for Quality" programme, which included market-testing activities. This resulted in contracts being placed with the private sector for 46 of these activities covering over two thirds of the total annual operating costs. Full details of individual contracts remain commercial-in-confidence, although some information on contracts awarded as a result of market tests is published monthly in the "Market Testing Bulletin" available from the House of Commons Library.

EH101 Helicopters

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the Royal Air Force to place an order for the EH101 helicopter.

Mr. Freeman: We hope to be able to make an announcement shortly on our decision on support helicopters for the Royal Air Force.

Ministerial Travel (Israel)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) in what capacity Mr. David Hart took part in his recent visit to Israel; and who paid for his costs;

(2) who was in the official party during his recent visit to Israel; and who paid for the visit.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend was accompanied by Mrs. Rifkind, Mr. David Hart in his capacity as an independent adviser, Mr. Crispin Blunt—special adviser—the MOD press secretary, two members of his private office staff and an MOD official.

The costs of the visit were met from public funds with the exception of Mr. Hart, who paid his own costs.

"Front Line First"

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultancy contracts have been let by his Department as part of the "Front Line First" review; which companies have won contracts; and what sums of money are involved.

Mr. Freeman: BAe Sema, Price Waterhouse, Monk Dunstone Associates, McKenna and Co. and P-E International provided advice to the defence costs study. A number of individuals from outside Government, as listed in the answer given to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 29 April, *Official Report*, column *399*, were engaged to provide advice to the defence costs study teams.

Not all those listed charged for their services, although the companies for which some worked did. Those companies were:

Capita Managed Services Ltd.
Jones Lang Wootton
Trias Management Consultants
Ian McNeil Associates
Central Research Laboratories Ltd.

The total cost in fees to the Ministry of Defence of the work done in the study phase of "Front Line First" inclusive of VAT is £396,597. This total includes an estimate of the elements of the costs of contracts held with BAe Sema and Price Waterhouse prior to the DCS, the terms of which were changed to reflect, inter alia, work done on the DCS.

RAF Chivenor

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the projected cost of new sewerage works at RAF Chivenor.

Mr. Soames: There are no plans for any new sewerage works at RAF Chivenor other than routine maintenance. If it is not possible to find an alternative defence use for the main site at RAF Chivenor following the departure of the RAF, some work would be necessary to link the SAR flight to the local council's main drainage system. The estimated cost of this work is approximately £100,000.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he has given to moving the Sea King search-and-rescue flight currently stationed at RAF Chivenor to St. Mawgan.

Mr. Soames: As part of my Department's review of its requirement for military SAR, a number of possible basing options were considered. For the south Wales and west country area, it was concluded that optimum SAR cover could be provided from RAF Chivenor, and the Brawdy flight was subsequently transferred there on 1 July 1994.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent and how much it plans to spend on building works to enable the Sea King flight to operate at RAF Chivenor.

Mr. Soames: Some £47,100 has so far been spent and a further £51,100 is planned to be spent on building works at RAF Chivenor to enable the Sea King flight to operate there.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the costs of supporting and RAF Sea King flight at RAF Chivenor in *(a)* 1994–95 *(b)* 1995–96 and *(c)* 1996–97.

Mr. Soames The information requested is as follows:

	£
1994–95	nil
1995–96	573,000
1996–97	1,030,000

These figures represent the station infrastructure and operating costs. They do not include the costs of operating the SAR flight.

Fox Hunting

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on fox hunting for members of the armed forces in each of the last five years.

Mr. Soames: Fox hunting is undertaken by some members of mounted units as part of normal training, and costs are not separately identified. No additional costs are incurred by my Department as a result of participation in this activity since these are met by the individuals concerned.

Expenditure

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the percentage fall in defence expenditure from 1984–85 to 1997–98.

Mr. Soames: Based on current plans, defence spending is expected to decline by around 28 per cent. in real terms between 1984–85 and 1997–98, as measured by the GDP deflators published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", 1995–96—House of Commons No. 12. Outturn in 1984–85 included some expenditure for the security and intelligence services which now falls outside the defence budget.

Airwork Ltd.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how much his Department is attempting to recover from Airwork Ltd. following work undertaken by that company at RAF St. Athan;

(2) what is his estimate of the total cost of the damage caused by Airwork Ltd. on the Tornados based at RAF St. Athan.

Mr. Freeman: Preparation of my Department's claim, for costs consequent upon the damage to Tornado F3 aircraft caused by Airwork, is not yet complete.

Aircraft Movements

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many aircraft movements by *(a)* Southampton University Air Squadron and *(b)* others took place on Saturdays and Sundays in (i) September 1994, (ii) October 1994 and (iii) November 1994 at Aircrafts and Armaments Experimental Establishment Boscombe Down.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

	Southampton University Air Squadron	*Others*
September	10	106
October	132	79
November	225	106

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

International Civil Aviation Organisation

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how often his senior staff meet their colleague in the Department of Transport to discuss British representation at the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: United Kingdom representation on the council of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, the office and staff is fully funded by the Department of Transport. The posts of United Kingdom representative and alternate United Kingdom representative are filled by the Department of Transport. There are no detailed discussions between FCO and DOT officials on representation. However, FCO and DOT officials have regular and close contact on the international aspects of British aviation policy and the DOT attends meetings held by the FCO to discuss the United Kingdom's policy interests in the whole range of UN specialised agencies.

Public Appointments

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria govern his decision in respect of the public appointments to which political activity is relevant.

Mr. Goodlad: The criteria which govern the composition of the governing bodies of non-departmental public bodies for which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is responsible and to which political activity are relevant are as follows:

Political activity is relevant where the board needs to cover a range of political experience to support the work of the NDPB in question. This will depend on the political affiliation and experience of the MPs, MEPs and

Members of the House of Lords from whom the candidates are drawn.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the public appointments in respect of which political party membership is relevant.

Mr. Goodlad: The appointments to the boards of non-departmental public bodies for which the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is responsible in respect of which political party membership is relevant are:

Westminster Foundation for Democracy:

The following are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State:

Conservative 3, including the chairman—MPs
Labour 3—2 MPs and 1 MEP
Scottish National Party 1, representing the smaller parties—currently an MP

Wilton Park Academic Council:

The following are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State:

Conservative 1—MP
Labour 1—MP
Liberal Democrat 1—MP

British Council:

The following are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State:

Conservative 1—MP
Labour 1—MP

Commonwealth Institute:

The following are appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State:

Conservative 1—MP
Labour 1—MP

Britain-Russia Centre:

The chairman is appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to reflect the composition of the executive committee which consists of a politician from each of the major political parties.

Conservative 1—MP
Labour 1—MP
Liberal Democrat—1 MP

Britain-China Centre:

The chairman is appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to reflect the composition of the executive committee which is made up of two conservative and two labour MPs and one Liberal Democrat MP.

Conservative 2—MPs
Labour 2—MPs
Liberal Democrat 1—MP

British Association for Central and Eastern Europe:

The chairman is appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to reflect the composition of the executive committee which is made up of two conservative and two labour politicians and one Liberal Democrat politician.

Conservative 2—MPs
Labour 2—1 MP, 1 Peer
Liberal Democrat 1—MP.

Jean Pierre Derisbourg

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the European Commission about the investigation by the EU's external relations inspection unit into the expenses of Jean Pierre Derisbourg.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We attach the utmost importance to encouraging sound financial management in the institutions of the Community, and will insist on appropriate action whenever instances of fraud or mismanagement are apparent. Within the Council, we have pressed the Commission for a report on its investigation into the matter raised by the hon. Member.

Western European Union

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration they are giving to hold WEU meetings concurrently with meetings of the EU Foreign Affairs Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: WEU meets at ministerial level every six months, more often if required in a crisis, with Foreign and Defence Ministers from the 24 nations which are either full members, associate members, associate partners or observers. In the past, there have been occasions when WEU Ministers have met back to back with the Foreign Affairs Council, but it would not be practical to make this a rule.

Bulgarian Vessels (Safety)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will hold urgent talks with the Bulgarian Government to discuss matters of safety of the Bulgarian vessels Afala, Aktinia, Kaprela, Ofelia,and Rotalia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The safety of foreign-flagged vessels in British waters is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. But FCO officials have supported the DOT in discussions with Bulgarian officials about the safety of these vessels. They have also raised the question of safety during separate discussions with the Bulgarians, and have been active in support of the DOT with the flag states of other such vessels.

I understand that as a result of the repair work that has been undertaken, the Marine Safety Agency has now been able to lift the detention order of the Ofelia, one of the Bulgarian vessels.

Human Rights (Workplace)

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will meet the director general of the International Labour Organisation to discuss ways of incorporating a social clause supporting human rights in the workplace in the rules and procedures of the new World Trade Organisation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have no plans to meet the director general of the International Labour Organisation to discuss ways of incorporating a social clause supporting human rights in the workplace in the rules and procedures of the new World Trade Organisation.

We do not support calls for the inclusion of a social clause in the general agreement on tariffs and trade or other multilateral trade agreements under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation. We remain unconvinced that trade measures are an appropriate or effective way of addressing the issue of workers' rights.

EC Presidency

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the rota of EC countries holding the presidency to the end of 1997.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The member states holding the presidency will be as follows:

1995: France
Spain

1996: Italy
Ireland

1997: Netherlands
Luxembourg

Mr. Edsil Charles Fordyce

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now reconsider the decision of his Department to refuse entry into the United Kingdom for Mr. Edsil Charles Fordyce; and if he will make a statement on the criteria used by his Department in deciding on humanitarian visits to the United Kingdom of foreign citizens.

Mr. Baldry: Ministers do not intervene in individual cases unless there is evidence of illogicality or procedural error in handling the application or there are exceptional compassionate circumstances.

Entry clearance officers take all aspects, including those of a humanitarian nature, of an application into consideration when making decisions.

Gibraltar

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Spanish Government regarding border controls between Spain and Gibraltar.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have repeatedly and vigorously protested at high level to the Spanish authorities about the harassment at the frontier and the disruption to normal movement across the border. We are keeping the position under close review.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Goodlad: None of the services market-tested so far by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been won by the private sector.

Macedonia

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans there are to establish a British Council Office in Macedonia.

Mr. Baldry: The British Council has no plans at present to expand beyond the resource centre which it maintains in Skopje but it is alive to the interest and opportunities there and keeps the position under review.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans there are to establish at the British embassy in Macedonia a facility for issuing visas to those wishing to visit the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The embassy in Skopje accepts diplomatic and official applications, refugee cases accepted jointly by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the Home Office and applications from visitors sponsored by the British Government and the British Council. The premises occupied by the embassy are not suitable for a full visa service.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries visited by a spouse accompanying a Minister on overseas visits, since 1 October 1993; which Minister was accompanied; what was the cost of each visit; and what were the dates and the duties undertaken by the spouse during such visits.

Mr. Goodlad: The list gives details of visits made by a spouse accompanying a Minister overseas since 1 October 1993. In each case, the spouse carried out an official programme arranged by the post concerned. On each occasion the guidelines in "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" were followed and accord with departmental practice which has existed since at least 1985.

Date	*Place*	*Minister*	*Cost £*
15–21 November 93	Pakistan	Mr. Lennox-Boyd	3,612.00
3–7 January 94	Lebanon, Israel, OTs, Jordan, Malta	Secretary of State	82.00
3–8 January 94	Kenya, Tanzania	Lady Chalker	4,039.00
24–28 February 94	Portugal, Spain, Greece	Secretary of State	70.00
4–11 April 94	Brazil, Falklands	Secretary of State	105.00
18–19 April 94	Luxembourg, Paris	Secretary of State	77.00
8–10 July 94	Naples, Economic Summit	Secretary of State	14.00
27 July 94–19 August 94	Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, India	Mr. Goodlad	7,777.00
2–5 September 94	Ecuador	Mr. Heathcoat-Amory	3,974.00

Date	*Place*	*Minister*	*Cost £*
11–20 September 94	Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Japan	Secretary of State	282.00
26—29 September 94	New York/Canada UNGA 48	Secretary of State	4,030.00
2—10 October 94	Dependent Territories, Canada	Mr. Baldry	2,997.00
17-21 October 94	Russia, Estonia, Finland	Secretary of State	279.00
			27,338.00

HEALTH

Spending Statistics

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the per capita spending figure for each *(a)* district health authority and *(b)* family health services authority in each of the last four years.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 7 December 1992 at columns *513–18,* and to the reply the then Minister for Health, my right hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), gave him on 26 May at column *305.* The per capita spend for district health authorities and family health services authorities for 1991–92 and 1993–94 will be placed in the Library.

Comparisons of these per capita spend figures need to be treated with caution. First, not all the expenditure covered arises from population-related activities. Secondly, crude populations do not reflect differences in age structure or relative health care need. These differences feature in the formulae used to inform the main allocations made to DHAs.

NHS Managers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1980 the number and cost of managers in the NHS.

Mr. Malone: The general management function was introduced in 1984, following acceptance of the 1983 Griffiths report which concluded that the national health service was undermanaged. Interim arrangements existed for general management appointments until permanent selection and appointment arrangements took effect from February 1986. The senior management staff group was created subsequently. For information on the numbers of general and senior managers for the years ending September 1985 through to September 1990, I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough, the then Minister for Health, (Dr. Mawhinney), gave my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) on 26 March 1993 at column *755.* At 30 September 1991, revised, 1992 and 1993, the number of general and senior managers were 14,500, 17,700 and 20,010 respectively. The increase in numbers over time is largely due to the reclassification of staff from professional and administrative groups, including many senior nurses, as managers. About two thirds of the increase between 1991 and 1992 and almost half the increase between 1992 and 1993 is the result of such reclassification.

The salary costs for general and senior managers from 1985–86 through to 1988–89 were £10,951,000, £25,677,000, £29,647,000 and £30,513,000 respectively. For the years 1989–90 to 1992–93 I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 3 November at column *1267.* The provisional figure for 1993–94 is £606,002,000.

General and senior managers still account for only 2.6 per cent. of the total NHS work force in England and 3.6 per cent. of total NHS expenditure on salaries and wages. This is not excessive by any standard in a large organisation.

GP Fundholding

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has on the levels of support for fundholding among general practitioners; and what conclusions she draws from that evidence.

Mr. Malone: Over 35 per cent. of the population is now registered with a fundholding general practitioner. More general practitioners are preparing to join the scheme from next April and regional health authorities report considerable interest in the extended options for fundholding announced in October.

From this, and the benefits for patients fundholding is delivering, I conclude that we were right to enable general practitioners to purchase care and improve services for patients in this way and to extend the options to enable them to do so.

Brain Tumours

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the incidence of brain tumours in the United Kingdom; and what estimate she has made of the accuracy of the figures.

Mr. Sackville: In 1989, the latest available figures, there were 2,947 registrations of newly-diagnosed cases of malignant neoplasm of the brain—international classification of diseases in 191—in England. This figure is likely to be an underestimate because accurate diagnosis of many brain tumours is problematic.

Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Chiropody

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy towards chiropody in the NHS; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Chiropody treatment within the national health service should be available to those with a clinical need for this service. Provision is determined locally by health authorities in the light of their priorities and resources. "Feet first", the report of a joint Department of Health and NHS chiropody task force, was issued to the service in September and aims to assist authorities in developing better, more cost-efficient chiropody services. Copies are available in the Library.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* her Department and *(b)* her agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The expenditure on energy for the Department and its agencies is shown in the table.

	1991–92 £ million	*1992–93 £ million*	*1993–94 £ million*
Department	2.514	2.093	1.558
Agencies	—	0.230	0.393

Notes:

1. Figures have not been adjusted for inflation.
2. Figures are not directly comparable from year to year because of organisational changes to the Department following the establishment of next steps executive agencies.
3. Separate figures are not available for agencies for 1991–92.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what remuneration, allowances and other expenses are received by members of the boards of *(a)* Hillingdon hospital trust and *(b)* Portsmouth health care trust.

Mr. Malone: Chairmen of national health service trusts receive annual remuneration in the range of £15,125 to £19,285. The annual remuneration of non-executive directors of NHS trusts is £5,000. They are also entitled to claim allowances, at rates set centrally, for travel and subsistence necessarily incurred on trust business. Details of such payments are not available centrally.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make an announcement about the fifth wave of national health service trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I have today approved 13 applications from hospitals and other units wishing to become national health service trusts. I have also given approval to two trust-to-trust mergers. Details have been placed in the Library.

AIDS and HIV

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual number of *(a)* new AIDS cases and *(b)* HIV reports for each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: The information for the United Kingdom is shown in the table:

	AIDS cases	*HIV infection reports*
1990	1,268	2,203
1991	1,357	2,485
1992	1,482	2,432
1993	1,609	2,408

Treatment Provision (Specialisation)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what extent she expects trusts within one health authority are *(a)* to compete and *(b)* to come to agreements about specialisation of treatment provision; which trend she expects to dominate over the next five years; what assessment she has made of the compatibility of the two purposes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Competition with the national health service internal market makes a contribution to ensuring the most appropriate and efficient care for patients.

Mental Health Task Force

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish the report of the mental health task force; what estimate she has made of its resource implications; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The report of the mental health task force London project "Mental Health in London: Priorities for Action" was published on 27 September, copies of which are available in the Library. The report summarised the key themes from the action plans which had been agreed by district health authorities, in conjunction with local authorities and other agencies, to deliver improvements in the quality and co-ordination of services for severely mentally ill people in London. No separate estimate has been made of the resource implications of these plans which form part of the authorities' overall programme of action to improve services.

NHS Deficits

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the figures for the deficit of each London NHS trust and district health authority at the end of the last financial year.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 30 November at column *787*. Information on national health service trusts will be available shortly.

Mixed-sex Wards

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress she has made with regard to reviewing the mixed-sex ward policy in favour of single-sex wards.

Mr. Sackville: A revised patients charter standard to be issued early next year will require hospitals to inform patients in advance when they will be accommodated on a mixed sex ward for non urgent treatment. The standard also expects hospitals to respect the wishes, wherever possible, of those patients who prefer to be cared for in a single-sex ward or a single-sex bay. Patients can also expect to have access to single-sex washing and toilet facilities while in hospital.

In some circumstances—for example, in an intensive care unit or an observation unit where specialist nurses are employed—single-sex accommodation may not be available.

Mundesley Hospital

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment she has made of whether the Anglia and Oxford regional health authority received the best possible price for the Mundesley hospital on its disposal;

(2) if the Anglia and Oxford regional health authority received independent advice on the valuation of the Mundesley hospital prior to its disposal.

Mr. Sackville: Regional health authorities managing the disposal of surplus property must follow the guidance contained in "Property Transactions in the NHS", part of the estatecode series. Independent valuation advice is not required where the RHA has suitably qualified in-house staff, which is the case in Anglia and Oxford. The sale of Mundesley hospital is being conducted by the local office of a national firm of chartered surveyors. A sale has not yet been agreed, but the RHA is considering offers made for the property.

Special Hospitals

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, for each special hospital, the originating local authority of their patients.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally. I refer the hon. Member to the Special Hospitals Service Authority.

Psychiatric Hospitals

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of in-patient admissions to psychiatric hospitals has involved the use of the compulsory provision of the Mental Health Act 1988 for each year since its implementation.

Mr. Bowis: The information requested, which relates to the Mental Health Act 1983, is shown in the table:

Year	*Per cent.*
1983	8
1984	7
1985	7
1986	7
1987–88	7
1988–89	7
1989–90	7

Notes:

The figures from which the percentages between 1983 and 1986 were calculated, were collected by the mental health inquiry from all mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units, and include figures from special hospitals and private nursing homes. These were based on calendar years. From 1987–88, the figures refer to financial year and were collected on forms KH15—from all NHS facilities—and K037—from private nursing homes—and also directly from the Special Hospitals Service Authority.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of *(a)* how much money has been saved by the closure of psychiatric hospitals and *(b)* where these savings have been spent; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The information is not available centrally. We have made it clear that any money released from the closure of a mental hospital should be reinvested in community-based services for the same client group.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her Department's latest assessment of the prevalence of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; and what plans she has for treatment within the national health service.

Mr. Bowis: Research findings have estimated a prevalence of 1.7 per cent. in a population of primary school boys but there are gender differences and geographical variations in distribution.

Children with hyperkinetic disorders are seen routinely within child mental health services and paediatric services.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many district health authorities are currently able to purchase treatment for mentally ill offenders, who are regarded as dangerous and difficult, from hospitals within their own geographical areas.

Mr. Bowis: District health authorities are responsible for assessing the health needs of their residents and for purchasing a range of services to meet those needs. Mentally disordered offenders are treated in a range of secure and non-secure settings in accordance with their differing needs. High-security services are provided by the three special hospitals which are funded centrally.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make bridging finance available to enable alternative community mental health services to be developed alongside existing in-patient services; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: It already is.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to ensure that adequate community mental health services are available before any powers of supervised discharge are introduced; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: It is for health authorities to purchase community mental health services to ensure the needs of patients being discharged from hospital are met.

Vaccinations

Mr. Renton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether she will issue instructions that those people going abroad to countries where vaccinations for diseases including hepatitis A, typhoid and meningitis are necessary on holiday or business should pay the full price at national health service surgeries; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: Hepatitis A, typhoid and meningitis vaccinations are currently provided free of charge to people travelling abroad to high-risk countries.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the ground that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many written parliamentary questions have had an answer containing the phrase, "This information is not held centrally" in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Session	*Number*	*Percentage of total answered*
1989–90	157	3.4
1990–91	192	6.2
1991–92	130	8.5
1992–93	433	7.3
1993–94	225	4.5

Source:
POLIS

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many written parliamentary questions have been answered with the words "No" or "None" in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The number of parliamentary questions answered by "No" or "None" in the last five Sessions is shown in the table.

Session	*Number*
1989–90	41
1990–91	31
1991–92	16
1992–93	116
1993–94	117

Source:
POLIS

VAT (Fuel)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what will be the total cost to NHS trusts in the financial year 1995–96 of 17.5 per cent. VAT on heating fuel.

Mr. Sackville: The non-domestic supply of fuel and power, including that to hospitals, is subject to value added tax at the standard rate. Information on VAT paid by trusts on supplies of heating fuel is not separately identifiable.

Secret Files

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 30 November, to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers), *Official Report*, column *795*, what are the subject headings of each of the secret files at her Department; how many secret files were held at her Department in each of the last five years; and for what reasons her Department cannot identify top secret files from those held as secret.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is able to identify top secret from those held as secret, but to give a breakdown for each of the last five years, and to list each of their subject headings, could be done only at disproportionate cost. However, the majority relate broadly to home and civil defence and co-ordination of emergency planning, and approximately 95 per cent. are held as secret.

Health Authorities (Public Meetings)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many public meetings have been held by each trust, district health authority, family health services authority and regional health authority in each of the last three years.

Mr. Malone: Information on the number of authority and trust meetings held is not available centrally.

Official Secrets Acts

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which staff working in the Department of Health, national health service executive, regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health services authorities, trusts and general practitioner fundholder practices are covered by the conditions of the Official Secrets Acts.

Mr. Sackville: The Official Secrets Act 1989 applies, inter alia, to Crown servants. All Department of Health employees are therefore subject to the Act. Staff in other organisations listed will be subject to the Act if they have, or have had, official information, as defined in the Act, in their possession.

National Health Service Executive

Mrs. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans exist for the proposed regional offices of the NHSE to hold meetings in public or provide information to the public.

Mr. Malone: Regional offices of the national health service executive will not generally hold public meetings but will provide information to the public in accordance with the code of practice on access to Government information.

Food Allergies

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many physicians in English national health service hospitals are specialists in the treatment of food allergies.

Mr. Malone: Information in this form is not available centrally, as a number of clinical specialties treat food allergies.

Night Calls

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will abandon her proposals in respect of payment for night calls by general practitioners; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will make it her policy to remunerate general practitioners for night calls on an hourly paid basis; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: We are continuing to discuss general practitioners' out of hours remuneration with representatives of the medical profession.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the time taken by the average general practitioner on the average night call from receipt of call to return to home or surgery; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available.

Patient Complaints

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, columns *323-24* on patient complaints, when she will publish data for 1993–94.

Mr. Malone: Information on patient complaints for 1993–94 is expected to be available early next year.

Intensive Care Beds

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will obtain a report as to the reasons why on the evening of 6 December there were no intensive care beds with neurosurgical capacity available within west Yorkshire; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. John Greetham, chairman of the authority, for details.

Blood

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what blood or blood products produced in the United Kingdom have been sold internationally; in what amounts; and to which countries.

Mr. Sackville: Blood collected by the national blood service is for the needs of the national health service not for sale or export. The amount of blood collected is determined by the needs of NHS hospitals for blood. Blood products are produced from components of donated blood by the bio products laboratory, which is a part of the National Blood Authority. Surpluses of products, that is after NHS demand has been satisfied, may be exported rather than destroyed. The only blood product where present availability significantly exceeds NHS demand is albumin and this is exported worldwide. This avoids waste of valuable resource and supplements NHS income available for patients.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what funds were made available during 1993 and 1994 to date to encourage an increase in the amount of blood donated; during which periods; and to what amounts;

(2) what sum was made available to each blood transfusion service for advertising purposes during the Christmas and new year period of 1994–95.

Mr. Sackville: National publicity to retain existing donors and recruit new donors for the national blood service is funded and organised centrally by the Department of Health. In 1993–94, £1.6 million was spent on national publicity. The budget for 1994–95 is £1.2 million. The proportions devoted to advertising at times of potential seasonal shortage and emergencies are 57 and 50 per cent. respectively. Local publicity is generally funded and organised by the National Blood Authority.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many operations were cancelled owing to a shortage of blood in 1993 and 1994 to date;

(2) what considerations led to the decision of the National Blood Authority to increase its stock levels of donated blood for the end of 1994 and the beginning of 1995.

(3) if she will make a statement on the expected supply of donated blood during the period of reorganisation of the National Blood Authority;

(4) what was the stock levels of blood held nationally for each month of 1993 and 1994 to date;

(5) during what periods during 1993 and 1994 to date there was a shortfall in the supply of blood;

(6) what criteria are used to decide the levels of donated blood kept by the National Blood Authority.

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Authority is responsible for managing and monitoring the blood supply. A difficult balance has to be struck by the authority between unpredictable demand from the national health service and uncertain supply from the planned collection programme. This balance is subject to considerable seasonal and other fluctuations. From figures available centrally, over the last 12 months average blood stocks have ranged from 15,505 units in July 1994, to 27,142 units in February 1994. Blood stock figures for previous years are not available centrally. Although on occasions, including several days in September 1994, stocks fell below what the NBA regard as a safe limit emergency demands for blood have always been met. Figures are not available centrally on whether operations are cancelled.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals are in place regarding the transfer of jobs resulting from the proposed merger of blood transfusion centres.

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Authority will produce final proposals after the consideration and evaluation of the comments received during the recent consultation exercise has been completed.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list *(a)* the performance indicator of each of the United Kingdom's blood transfusion centres, *(b)* the criteria by which any proposed merger will be judged and *(c)* the percentage number of contracted donors who actually donate at each transfusion centre.

Mr. Sackville: The details of the system are a matter for the National Blood Authority. Approximately 5 per cent. of all blood donations take place at transfusion centres.

Trust Property

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will describe and give the value of the property referred to in the Aintree Hospital National Health Service Trust (Transfer of Trust Property) (No. 2) Order 1994—S.I., 1994, No. 2988;

(2) if she will describe and give the value of the property referred to in the Hartlepool Community Care National Health Service Trust (Transfer of Trust Property) Order 1994—SI., 1994, No. 2989;

(3) if she will describe and give the value of the property referred to in the South Lincolnshire Community and Mental Health Services National Health Service (Transfer of Trust Property) Order 1994—S.I., 1994, No. 2991;

(4) if she will describe and give the value of the property referred to in the Hartlepool and Peterlee Hospitals National Health Service Trust (Transfer of Trust Property) Order 1994—S.I., 1994, No. 2990.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be placed in the Library.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those services that have been market-tested by her Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Sackville: Since the beginning of the Department's market-testing programme, the following contracts have been awarded to the private sector:

Contracts	
NHS Estates Agency Clerical Support	Manpower
National Diet and Nutrition Survey of Elderly People	Social and Community Planning and University College London, and Dunn Nutrition Unit
Health Survey for England	Social and Community Planning Research and University College London
Office and Building Services in Quarry House	Facilities Management—TFM Granada Word Processing and office support—Manpower Security—Centuryan
Office and Building Services—London	Security—Reliance Catering—Compass Facilities Management—Procord and FBA
Operation and Redevelopment of the Hospital Episodes Statistics System	Data Sciences
Welfare Foods Scheme	NCH Promotional Services
Reprographic Services	Libra Business Services Group
Storage of Printed Publications	Her Majesty's Stationary Office
Internal Audit	Price Waterhouse
Editing and Typesetting in the Medical Devices Agency	Multiplex
NHS Pensions Agency IT services	Capita managed services
Catering	Gardner Merchant

Aggregate information on tender values for the Department's 1992–93 programme has already been published in the "Citizens Charter Second Report", available in the Library. Aggregate figures for the 1993–94 programme will be published shortly. Information about individual tender values is considered by the Department as commercially confidential, and cannot therefore be disclosed.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received regarding the risk to humans from BSE following the publication of "Precautions for Work in Human and Animal Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies".

Mr. Sackville: We have received one letter regarding the risk to human health from bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she plans following the publication document produced by the Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens entitled "Precautions for Work in the Human and Animal Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies".

Mr. Sackville: The publication of this guidance has been brought to the attention of those with an interest in the national health service including district and regional directors of public health and consultants in communicable disease control, and also to relevant professional bodies. The Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens will be keeping the guidance under review.

Working for Patients

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the document "Working for Patients".

Mr. Malone: "Working for Patients", which was published in 1989, set out the Government's plans for reform of the national health service. The implementation of these plans has led to major improvements in health services.

Leeds Health Authority

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking following the further report issued on 8 December by the health service ombudsman in respect of complaints against Leeds health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: Leeds health authority has already taken action to address the issues raised by the commissioner.

Cot Deaths

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received about child mattresses and cot deaths; and what is her Department's policy on the matter.

Mr. Sackville: More than 300 written representations on child mattresses and cot deaths have been received in the Department. In addition many people have telephoned.

Dr. Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, has set up an expert group to steer further work by the Department of Health on cot deaths. The group will be chaired by Lady Limerick.

The terms of reference for the group are:

> To review the findings of the report on "Sudden Infant Death Syndrome"—the "Turner report", 1991—and any subsequent data on hypotheses linking antimony with unexplained deaths in infants; and to advise the CMO on what further studies should be undertaken to investigate postulated causal relationships between chemicals and cot deaths.

The group has been asked to review the available material and to provide the Department with advice as quickly as possible.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Hill Farmers

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to encourage hill farmers under 40 years old to remain on the land.

Mr. Ancram: The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland operates a range of measures which either directly benefit or are available to hill farmers. None of these measures is specific to any particular age group.

In addition to the normal range of common agricultural policy support schemes farmers in the less-favoured areas are eligible for hill livestock compensatory allowances and an LFA supplement under the sheep annual premium scheme.

As part of its recently announced rural development programme the Department of Agriculture will be giving priority to proposals coming forward from the most deprived rural areas of Northern Ireland which would include much of the land owned and worked by hill farmers. The programme will build on the concept of involving local communities in the development of plans for their areas. It may provide assistance for a range of beneficiaries—collectives, co-operatives and rural community organisations—with the aim of strengthening the rural economy and maintaining viable rural communities. There is considerable scope for farmers and their families to become involved in the programme. The EC Leader II rural development initiative will also target partnerships and may assist with such activities as on-farm and off-farm diversification and small rural enterprises.

Insolvencies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the cost to the Exchequer, broken down by category, of the process of insolvencies in each of the past seven years; and what has been the number of cases in each category for the same period.

Mr. Ancram: The available information is set out in the table. A breakdown by category of the costs of processing insolvencies could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

	Bankruptcies	*Companies wound up*	*Total*	[1]Costs £000
1987–88	169	52	221	449
1988–89	176	62	238	518
1989–90	243	66	309	542
1990–91	318	82	400	745
1991–92	293	101	394	803
1992–92	495	90	585	978
1993–94	487	86	573	1,090

[1] The costs column represents salaries and wages and general administration expenses.

Water Metering

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland further to his statement of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *1324*, what plans he has to introduce water metering in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Moss: Meters are currently installed for water supplies to commercial, public, industrial and agricultural premises in Northern Ireland. Water supplies used solely for domestic purposes are not metered and there are no plans to introduce routine metering of purely domestic supplies.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the ground that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Sir John Wheeler: In 13 out of a total of 1,469 questions answered, no information could be provided because of the disproportionate cost involved. In a further 10 questions only partial information could be provided.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Sir John Wheeler: The information provided relates to the period April 1992 to September 1994. In each of those cases listed an in-house bid was submitted for evaluation against tenders from alternative providers and subsequently won by the private sector:

Sludge Disposal—three tests

Road Reinstatement

Catering in Staff Restaurants—10 tests

IT Mainframe Operation

Sewer Maintenance—two tests

Building Maintenance

Castlenavan Quarry

In the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland, I would not wish to disclose the names of the successful contractors. We also consider that the disclosure of the tender prices could prejudice fair competition between contractors.

Patients' Complaints

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, columns *405-6*, how many hospital patient complaints there were in the four years prior to 1993–94.

Mr. Moss: Information relating to hospital patient complaints was not collected centrally prior to the year 1993–94.

EMPLOYMENT

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: The total expenditure on energy for offices for the financial year 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 is shown in the table:

	1991–92 £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
Employment Department	1,545,105	1,524,680	1,457,767
Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service	54,598	64,685	86,062
Health and Safety Executive	1,205,929	1,219,112	1,307,787
Employment Service	8,773,640	9,005,469	9,088,497

Labour Statistics

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what was the number of adult *(a)* male and *(b)* female part-time workers in Great Britain in April 1993 and the proportion of those workers whose earnings, excluding overtime, fell below *(a)* £5.88 per hour, *(b)* £5.53 per hour, *(c)* £4.15 per hour, *(d)* £4.00 per hour, *(e)* £3.50 per hour, *(f)* £3.00 per hour and *(g)* £2.50 per hour;

(2) If he will list the proportions of *(a)* full-time employees earning less per week than (1) £221.50, (2) £208.53, (3) £156.40, (4) £150.80, (5) £131.95, (6) £113.10 and (7) £94.25, excluding overtime payments and *(b)* part-time employees earning less per hour than (1) £5.88, (2) £5.53, (3) £4.15, (4) £4.00, (5) £3.50, (6) £3.00 and (7) 2.50, excluding overtime payments giving *(a)* and *(b)* in relation to (A) Great Britain as a whole, (B) each county in England, (C) each county in Wales, (D) each London borough and Greater London as a whole and (E) each regional authority and borough in Scotland.

Mr. Oppenheim: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) on 29 November 1994, *Official Report*, column 635.

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the proportion of manual, non-manual and all full-time employees earning less per week than *(a)* £221.50 *(b)* £208.53, *(c)* £156.40, *(d)* £150.80, *(e)* £131.95, *(f)* £113.10 and *(g)* £94.25, excluding overtime payments, giving each of the above in respect of (i) men, (ii) women and (iii) both sexes by standard economic region, for Great Britain as a whole, and for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Oppenheim: As the information is contained in a number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy in the Library.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effects of the jobseeker's allowance and the test for availability for work on those with a disability; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: In our proposals for the introduction of the jobseeker's allowance we recognise, as now, that some people with disabilities may have difficulties in making themselves available for the full range of employment opportunities. They will, therefore, be able to restrict their availability to the type or hours or work they are able to undertake within the limits of their physical or mental condition. In addition, many people with disabilities will continue to receive incapacity benefit or income support without having to be available for work. However, where people in these groups wish to claim jobseeker's allowance we propose that they should be able to do so, provided they are able to work and meet the other conditions for its receipt.

Work Start Schemes, South-west London

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of work start schemes now in place in south-west London; and if he will list them.

Miss Widdecombe: Work-start has been piloted in four areas: Devon and Cornwall; Kent; Tyneside; and south and south-west London. So far 138 people in south-west London have benefited from this scheme. Eighty-five are still participating and 108 employers have been involved.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the following table, in line with the code of practice on access to Government information under the citizen's charter initiative. Information on individual tender values is commercially sensitive and cannot be provided, but aggregated total values for the different parts of the Employment Department group are included.

1992–93 Programme

Activity	*Winning organisation*	*Value*
Employment Department		
Van services	Inter Departmental Despatch Services Parcel Force	
Travel services	Wagon Lits Travel	
Estates services	Serco Hadens Facilities Management	
Security–Runcorn	Pegasus Security Group	
Security–London	Pegasus Security Group	
Reprographics	HMSO	
Payroll Services	Chessington Computer Centre	
Employment Department Total		£6,748,212
Employment Service		
Travel services	Wagon Lits Travel	
Forms supply management/distribution	Meads of Nottingham Lynx	
Employment Rehabilitation courses	400 organisations at regional and local level. Records not held centrally.	

1992–93 Programme

Activity	*Winning organisation*	*Value*
Jobclubs	JHP Training Midas Y Training	
Financial management training	Unicorn	
Employment Service Total		£11,553,327
Health and Safety Executive		
Publications distribution	Procog Ltd. Dillons Bookshops	
Graphics	Snapz Presentations	
Print unit	22 external printers invited to bid for work on a job-by-job basis	
Security	Sigma Security Neptune Security	
Estates Management	Henry Boot Turpy Management McBain Cooper Thorburn Calhoun Serco Services	
Health and Safety Executive Total		£3,493,632
Total 1992–93 Programme		£21,795,171

1993–94 Programme

Activity	*Winning Organisation*	*Value £*
Employment Department		
Office Services: Records Management	Rockall Data Services	
Employment Department Total		926,277
Employment Service		
Field Staff Training: First Aid	Red Cross	
Field Staff Training: Management and People Development	Manchester College of Art and Technology	
Buildings maintenance and new works	Simons Facilities Management plc Graham and Sibbald Peter, Fall Cowie Associates HSB Partners Drivers, Jonas WS Atkins Procord Ltd. Watts and Partners	
Employment Service Total		3,640,733
Total 1993–94 Programme		4,567,010

Note:

The values given in the tables are derived from the successful bid prices on an annual basis.

Young People

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide estimates of the number of 16 and 17-year-olds not currently in full-time education, work or training.

Mr. Paice: In October 1994, on the unadjusted basis there were 15,849 unemployed claimants aged under 18. All 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in education or a job are covered by the Government's guarantee of an offer of a youth training place.

Employment Policy

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are his policies towards maximising the number of local employees in total employment.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* The route to more jobs and fewer people out of work is clear: sound economic policies based on low inflation; a deregulated, flexible labour market; and help for those who need it most, especially the long-term unemployed. We will continue to pursue these policies, which have already led to a fall of over 450,000 in unemployment since the recovery in the labour market began. There is in place a very wide range of help to get unemployed people back into work, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor's Budget statement announced the extension of a number of programmes, including workwise, 1-2-1, community action, jobfinder's grant and work trials which will be available in Southwark and Bermondsey.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prevention of Terrorism Acts (Review)

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has made for the annual review of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts to be carried out; and how interested persons and organisations may submit their views for consideration.

Mr. Howard: Mr. J.J. Rowe QC will shortly begin to review the operation of the PTA in 1994. Written observations should be submitted to him c/o Room 647, Home Office, Queen Anne's gate, London SW1H 9AT by 13 January 1995.

Football Matches (Ticket Touting)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of arrests, cautions and convictions arising from the measures to curb ticket touting at football matches, contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1994; and if he will include details of those arrests, cautions and convictions, including the dates, games and grounds at which they took place.

Mr. Maclean: Information on the number of people arrested for specific offences is not collected centrally.

Information on cautioning and court proceedings data under section 166—summary offence of sale of tickets by unauthorised persons—of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 will not be available until autumn 1996.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many individuals applied for asylum in each year from 1990–91 to 1993–94 and in the first eight months of 1994–95; how many of these applications were granted; and how many of those who were unsuccessful are known to have left the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is given in the table.

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, decisions[1][2][3] and removals, 1990 to end-October 1994

Number of principal applicants

	Total applications	*Total decisions[4]*	*Recognised as a refugee and granted asylum*	*Not recognised as a refugee but granted exceptional leave*	*Total refused*	*Refused asylum and exceptional leave after full consideration*	*Refused on safe third country grounds[5]*	*Refused under paragraph 180F of Immigration Rules[6]*	*Removals and voluntary departures[7]*
1990	26,205	4,025	920	2,400	705	705	—	—	—
1991	44,840	6,075	505	2,190	3,380	2,325	270	785	—
1992	24,605	34,900	1,115	15,325	18,465	2,675	595	15,195	1,345
1993	22,370	23,405	1,590	11,125	10,690	4,705	745	5,240	1,820
1994[8][9]	26,765	17,300	695	2,955	13,650	10,435	695	2,520	1,605

[1] Figures rounded to the nearest 5 with '—' = unavailable.

[2] Decision figures up to and including 1991 may understate.

[3] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period.

[4] Information is of initial determination decisions, excluding the outcome of appeals or other subsequent decisions.

[5] Refusals on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.

[6] Refusals under paragraph 180F (paragraph 101 prior to 26 July 1993) of the Immigration Rules for failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period.

[7] Includes any voluntary departure, except deportation cases prior to February 1994, up to and including notification of the decision on the asylum claim, but excludes any subsequent departure.

[8] Provisional figures.

[9] Year to October.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, columns *159–61*, (1) how long each of the 129 detainees referred to who had been in detention longer than six months had been in detention;

(2) how many of the detainees in each of the detaining locations listed in his table C were long-term Immigration Act detainees.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The available information is that as at 8 December 1994—103 people who had sought asylum have been in detention for longer than six months and a further 18 have been detained longer than 12 months.

Information on the number of detained people as at 8 December 1994 who had sought asylum and have been in detention for longer than one month, by location of detention, is provided in the table.

Number of people detained longer than one month as at 8 December 1994, who had sought asylum, by location of detention.

	Number detained
Immigration service establishments	
Campsfield House	132
Harmondsworth	72
Prison service establishments	
Armley	10
Belfast	1
Birmingham	34
Brinsford	5
Bristol	2
Brixton	4
Bullingdon	1
Bullwood Hall	1
Canterbury	1
Cardiff	1
Chelmsford	3
Crumlin Road	1
Dorchester	1
Durham	1
Edinburgh	1
Elmley	5
Erlestoke House	1
Exeter	2
Feltham YC centre	2
Gateside	1
Greenock	2
Haslar	75
Highdown	3
Hindley remand centre	3
Holloway	1
Lewes	3
Manchester	3
Norwich	3
Pentonville	1
Risley	56
Rochester	1
Shrewsbury	1
Wandsworth	5
Winchester	4
Winson Green	2
Wolds remand prison	2
Wormwood scrubs	3
Total	448

Prisoners (Psychiatric Treatment)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each prison establishment the latest estimate of the number of inmates diagnosed as requiring psychiatric treatment in a hospital environment; and if he will express the figure as a percentage of the individual prison population.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 12 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of inmates in each Prison Service establishment who have been diagnosed as requiring psychiatric treatment in a hospital environment.

The most up to date information held centrally on mentally disordered offenders is for 21 September 1994. On that day there were 102 mentally disordered prisoners awaiting transfer to NHS psychiatric facilities of all types. The attached table lists by establishment the prisons in which these prisoners were held and expresses the figure for each individual establishment as a percentage of that prison's daily average population during the week beginning 4 September.

Establishment	*Number of prisoners awaiting transfer to hospital on 21 September*	*Percentage of average daily population for week beginning 4 September*
Bedford	3	1.0
Belmarsh	3	0.4
Birmingham	2	0.2
Blundeston	1	0.2
Bristol	4	0.9
Brixton	2	0.3
Bullingdon	1	0.1
Camp Hill	2	0.5
Cardiff	3	0.6
Dartmoor	3	0.5
Exeter	2	0.4
Feltham	1	0.1
Full Sutton	2	0.3
Gloucester	5	2.1
Gartree	3	1.1
Highdown	6	0.9
Holloway	13	2.5
Holme House	1	0.1
Lancaster Farms	1	0.3
Leeds	1	0.1
Leicester	2	0.6
Lewes	1	0.3
Lincoln	5	0.8
Liverpool	8	0.6
New Hall	1	0.6
Parkhurst	5	2.1
Pentonville	3	0.4
Preston	3	0.6
Shrewsbury	1	0.3
Styal	1	0.4
Swansea	1	0.4
Swinfen Hall	1	0.5
Whitemoor	3	0.6
Winchester	4	0.9
Wormwood Scrubs	4	0.5
	102	

Electoral Registration

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what action he is taking to prevent the distribution of electoral registration forms with advertising material; and what assessment he has made of the extent of the practice;

(2) what authority electoral registration officers have to take any actions in an official capacity that are not specifically required of them by law;

(3) what authority electoral registration officers have under law to send out commercial advertising and other material covering statutory electoral registration forms;

(4) what regulations govern the handing out by an electoral registration officer or a local authority of commercial advertising material with ballot papers in polling booths.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We are not aware of any cases involving the distribution of advertising material with electoral registration forms and no assessment has been made of the extent, if any, of this practice.

The duties of the electoral registration officer are set out in representation of the people legislation and the Juries Act 1974. The electoral registration officer's official duties include only those duties imposed by the law relating to elections or the registration of electors. The representation of the people legislation contains no provisions relating to the distribution of commercial advertising and other material with electoral registration forms, but there is no statutory provision prohibiting the distribution of such material.

Rules for the conduct of parliamentary elections are contained in schedule 1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983. Similar provisions are contained in the Local Elections (Principal Areas) Rules 1986 and the Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) Rules 1986. The only item which may be given to voters at the polling station is the ballot paper.

Speeding Offences

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many motorists have been prosecuted for speeding offences in each of the last three years in each police authority region.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is contained in the table:

Prosecutions for speeding offences by police force area

	Number of offences		
England and Wales	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Avon and Somerset	4,908	6,102	3,074
Bedfordshire	2,173	1,723	803
Cambridgeshire	1,711	1,748	1,796
Cheshire	3,006	2,353	1,444
Cleveland	1,370	1,752	784
Cumbria	4,686	5,109	3,030
Derbyshire	4,623	3,645	2,143
Devon and Cornwall	6,377	3,890	2,276
Dorset	1,812	1,315	1,355
Durham	1,410	1,363	963
Essex	11,427	12,249	8,146
Gloucestershire	5,257	3,770	2,011
Greater Manchester	10,415	12,322	8,698
Hampshire	7,706	7,069	5,148
Hertfordshire	2,441	2,232	1,450
Humberside	2,017	1,616	988
Kent	3,393	2,854	3,655
Lancashire	8,369	6,366	3,072
Leicestershire	2,953	2,392	2,229
Lincolnshire	2,908	3,419	2,055
London, City of	146	189	138

Prosecutions for speeding offences by police force area

	Number of offences		
England and Wales	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Merseyside	2,529	2,370	1,742
Metropolitan Police District	13,002	14,376	13,226
Norfolk	3,332	3,466	1,474
Northamptonshire	1,875	1,612	871
Northumbria	3,051	3,446	2,368
North Yorkshire	3,013	2,538	1,238
Nottinghamshire	1,665	664	344
South Yorkshire	2,727	3,695	2,077
Staffordshire	2,539	3,007	1,741
Suffolk	2,595	2,618	1,655
Surrey	3,411	2,655	1,668
Sussex	3,279	4,262	3,118
Thames Valley	6,595	6,257	3,958
Warwickshire	2,550	2,177	1,692
West Mercia	4,013	3,712	3,353
West Midlands	6,443	5,306	4,623
West Yorkshire	6,727	5,954	3,802
Wiltshire	4,068	4,170	2,466
Dyfed-Powys	1,108	897	676
Gwent	1,283	1,113	962
North Wales	2,708	2,401	1,412
South Wales	1,359	1,178	847
England and Wales	168,980	161,352	110,571

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Macedonian nationals have applied in the last year for visas to visit the United Kingdom at British embassies in *(a)* Belgrade, *(b)* Sofia and *(c)* Zagreb; how many applications at each post were (i) granted, (ii) refused and (iii) decision pending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is not available.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those services that have been market tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Howard: The table sets out the information requested about activities which have been contracted out to a private sector supplier after a market test where there was an in-house bid.

Activity	*Supplier*	*Value of Contract*
Departmental computer services	Sema Group plc	About £50 million over five years
Buckley Hall prison	Group 4	£33 million over five years

Market test results are published in the monthly "Market Testing Bulletin", a copy of which is placed in the Library.

Police Authorities

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the names and occupations of the people shortlisted by him to sit as independent members of each of the new police authorities in England and Wales;

(2) if he will list the names and occupations of the people shortlisted by the selection panels to sit as independent members of each of the new police authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: Applications for appointment as independent members of police authorities were made on an "in confidence" basis and it would not be appropriate to release the information sought as it could lead to the identification of unsuccessful applicants.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names and occupations of *(a)* the people he appointed to the selection panels for each of the new police authorities in England and Wales and *(b)* the people chosen by the selection panels themselves.

Mr. Maclean: The members of the selection panels for each of the 41 police authorities for England and Wales are:

	Appointed by the Home Secretary	*Appointed by the Designated members of the police authority*	*Appointed by the other two members*
Avon and Somerset	Mrs. S. Perry (Project Controller)	Mr. D. Heath (Councillor)	Mr. A. Morris (University Vice Chancellor)
Bedfordshire	Ms J. Scholes (Polytechnic Lecturer)	Mr. A. Hesserman (Councillor)	Ms D Yates (Marketing Consultant)
Cambridgeshire	Dr. P. Hampson (Research Director)	Mr. J. Horrell (Councillor)	Miss M. Hyde (Managing Editor-Radio)
Cheshire	Mr. A. Mills (Company Director)	Mr. T. Tilling (Councillor)	Mrs. C Young (Citizens Advice Bureau member)
Cleveland	Mrs. J. Graham-Bourman (NHS Trust Chairman)	Mr. E. Cox (Magistrate)	Mr. D. Stevens (Retired Manager)
Cumbria	Mr. J. Harris (Farmer)	Mr. R. Watson (Councillor)	Mr. J. Ford (Retired Local Government Officer)
Derbyshire	Mr. B. Ashby (Chairman-Property Group)	Mr. E. Swain (Magistrate)	Mr. R. Stone (Businessman)
Devon and Cornwall	Mrs. N. Cutts (Recruitment Manager)	Mr. O May (Councillor)	Mr. T. Lesgood (Chairman—Training and Enterprise Council)
Dorset	Mrs. L. Paddison (Managing Director)	Mrs. J. Dover (Councillor)	Mr. D. Lovatt (Member—Probation Board)
Durham	Mrs. J. Round (College Principal)	Mr. J. Knox (Councillor)	Mr. J. Ward (Local Government Officer)

	Appointed by the Home Secretary	*Appointed by the Designated members of the police authority*	*Appointed by the other two members*
Dyfed-Powys	Professor J. Andrews (Chief Executive, Further and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales)	Mr. W. Evans (Councillor)	Mrs. H. Lewis (Former district councillor)
Essex	Mrs. K. Bennett (Retired Banker)	Miss J. Hindle (Magistrate)	Mr. M. Salmon (University Vice Chancellor)
Gloucestershire	Mrs. R. Fritchie (Consultant)	Mr. J. Newall (Councillor)	Mr. P. Murisamy (member racial equality forum)
Greater Manchester	Mrs. L. Clinton (Planning Manager)	Mr. S. Mercy (Councillor)	Mr. M. Shields (Chief Executive-Development Corporation)
Gwent	Mrs. A. Bennett (Businesswoman)	Mr. B. Sutton (Councillor)	Mr. M. Shields (Chief Executive-Development Corporation)
Hampshire	Mr. H. Smith (Chartered Accountant)	Mr. M. Clark (Councillor)	Mrs. K. Sporle (Local Government Officer)
Hertfordshire	Mr. P. Archer (Personnel Director)	Mr. M. Acland (Magistrate)	Mrs. J. Parker (Chairman—Probation Committee)
Humberside	Professor B. Pettman (Partner—Antiques Gallery)	Mr. I Cawsey (Councillor)	Rt. Rev. D. Snelgrove (Bishop)
Kent	Mr. J. Louden (Company Executive)	Mrs. P. Stubbs (Magistrate)	Mr. W. Jackson (Retired local government officer)
Lancashire	Mr. A. Burford (Business Consultant)	Mr. D. Henning (Councillor)	Mr. R. Booth (University Rector)
Leicestershire	Mrs. S. Spence (Businesswoman)	Mr. R. Wann (Councillor)	Mr. J. Mody (Member Board of Visitors Gartree Prison)
Lincolnshire	Mr. A Silcox-Crowe (Corporate Services Consultant)	Mrs. D. Dobson (Magistrate)	Mr. C. Smith (Newspaper Editor)
Merseyside	Mr. J. Entwistle (Solicitor)	Mr. H. Rimmer (Councillor)	Mrs. M. Downs (Company Director)
Norfolk	Mr. J. Boxall (Insurance Consultant)	Mr. B. Landale (Magistrate)	Mr. P. Thain (Director NHS Trust)
Northamptonshire	Mrs. S. King (Voluntary Worker)	Mr. R. Dickie (Councillor)	Rt. Rev. P. Barber (Bishop)
Northumbria	Dr. C. Morton (Personnel Director)	Mr. M. Gill (Councillor)	Mr. M. Scott (Former High Sherriff)
Nottinghamshire	Dr. D. Edmond (Consultant)	Mr. C. Winterton (Councillor)	Mrs. B. Halfpenny (Former County President—Women's Institute)
North Wales	Mr. J. Davies (Engineering Consultant)	Mr. W. Jones (Councillor)	Mrs. B. Williams (Mature Student)
North Yorkshire	Mr. J. Fox (Personnel Manager)	Mrs. A. Harris (Councillor)	Mr R. Leyland (Retired Local Government Officer)
South Wales	Mr. P. Allen (Retired Managing Director)	Mr. B. Murray (Councillor)	Professor G. Williams (University Lecturer)
South Yorkshire	Mr. B. Trueman (Businessman)	Sir. J. Layden (Councillor)	Mr. D. Hepworth (Magistrate)
Staffordshire	Mrs P. Wilmot (Headmistress)	Mr. J. Meir (Magistrate)	Mr. R. Whitfield (Deputy Lord-Lieutenant)
Suffolk	Mr. R. Chesterman (Managing Director)	Mr. M. Hyde (Councillor)	Mr. W. French (Retired Company Secretary)
Surrey	Mr. J. Buckley (Chief Executive)	Mr. A. Tisdall (Councillor)	Mr. R. Thornton (Lord-Lieutenant)
Sussex	Mr. R. Goddard (Business Consultant)	Mr. D. Bellotti (Councillor)	Miss M. Hulmes (Retired Director of Social Services)
Thames Valley	Mrs. E. John (Company Secretary)	Mrs. D. Priestley (Magistrate)	Mr. P. Floyd (Retired County Solicitor)
Warwickshire	Mr. G. Evans (Personnel Director)	Mr. M. Singh (Councillor)	Mr. G. Stokes (College Principal)
West Mercia	Mr. G. Cooper (Company Director)	Ms P. Fallow (Councillor)	Mrs. S. Davis (Councillor)
West Midlands	Mrs. A. Bhalla (Community Affairs Correspondent)	Mrs. M. Whitehouse (Councillor)	Mr. P. Williams (Retired County Secretary)
West Yorkshire	Mrs. J. Searle (Catering Supervisor)	Mr. T. Brennan (Councillor)	Mr. J. Botterill (Retired Police Officer)
Wiltshire	Mrs. A. Roberts (Managing Director)	Mr. J. Bush (Magistrate)	Mr G. Burgess (Farmer)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many nominations he has received for appointment as independent members to the new police authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: The selection panels for the 41 police authorities in England and Wales received a total of 3,751 applications in response to the advertising for these appointments.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names and occupations of the independent members who will sit on each of the new police authorities for England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: Thirty-eight of the 41 new police authorities for England and Wales have made the initial appointments of their independent members. The information is as follows:

Authority	*Name*	*Occupation*
Avon and Somerset	Mr. J. Christensen	Pharmacist
	Mrs. S. Davies	Retired teacher
	Mrs. C. Djianovic	Farmer
	Mrs. P. Pyper	Clerk
	Mr J. Wagg	Retired engineer

Authority	Name	Occupation
Bedfordshire	Mr. R. Charles	Adult education tutor
	Mr. J. Hunt	Retired company manager
	Dr. G. Owen	Environmental consultant
	Mr. M. Scarlett	Sales executive
	Mr. M. Thomas	IT consultant
Cambridgeshire	Mr. C. Forsyth	University lecturer
	Mr. S. Image	Marketing director
	Mr. P. Loft	Company director
	Mr. R. Odedra	Company director
	Ms J. Renfrew	University lecturer
Cheshire	Mr. T. Barker	Chaplain to the Bishop of Chester
	Mr. R. Hamer	Retired personnel director
	Mr. R. Nichols	Solicitor
	Mr. D. Ogden	Chamber of commerce chief executive
	Mr. M. Rothburn	Consultant microbiologist
Cleveland	Mr. R. Edwards	Retired IT administrator
	Mr. J. Featherstone	Retired sales manager
	Mr. D Fewtrell	Retired company chairman
	Mr. B. Foxton	Chemicals consultant
	Mr. P. Reeder	Company chief executive
Cumbria	Mr. G. Burns	Engineering manager
	Ms E. Hawkes	None
	Mr. D. Hodgson	Freelance editor
	Mr. B. Kennedy	Retired marketing manager
	Mr. A. Taylor	Personnel manager
Derbyshire	Mr. A. Bakshi	Dentist
	Mr. A. Burns	Engineering director
	Mrs. A. O'Brien	Company secretary
	Mrs. J. Thornton	NHS trust member
	Mr. C. Wagstaffe	Barrister
Devon and Cornwall	Ms J. Anderson	Lecturer in education
	Ms M. Behenna	Director of education
	Mr. P. Dickin	Personnel manager
	Mr. L. Hudson	Retired colonel
	Mr. J. Jasper	Former training advisor
	Mr. B. Kerslake	Sales manager
Dorset	Mrs. K. Emery	Bookkeeper
	Mr. P. Geal	Restaurateur
	Mr. D. Howard	Headteacher
	Mr. P. Jones	Publisher
	Mrs. J. Lang	Solicitor
Durham	Mr. G. Hetherington	Retired prison officer
	Miss C. McEwan	Management training consultant
	Dr. E. Mason	IT consultant
	Mr. T. Robinson	Retired local government officer
	Mr. A. Smith	Company director
Dyfed-Powys	Mr. J. Antoniazzi	Shop owner
	Mr. B. Evans	Retired marine pilot
	Mr. I. Gray	Hotelier
	Mrs. M. Harris	Farmer
	Dr. E. James	Retired lecturer
	Mrs. E. Taylor	Retired caterer
Essex	Mr. M. Easteal	Chief executive of the Local Government Commission
	Mr. W. Garland	Retired company manager
	Mr. N. Hicks	Engineer
	Mr. G. Nash	Retired headteacher
	Ms S. Sootarsingh	Management consultant
Gloucestershire	Mr. K. Amlani	Retail florist
	Brigadier M. Brown	Civil servant
	Mr. J. Dunn	Business consultant
	Mrs. M. McLoughlin	Housewife
	Mrs. C. Wiggin	NHS manager
Greater Manchester	Mr. V. Hodgkinson	Retired bursar
	Mr. L. Latham	Company chairman
	Mr. W. McMichael-Phillips	Retired retail manager
	Mr. I. Murray	Marketing director
	Mrs. J. Reed	Retired teacher
	Miss S. Sodha	Computer programmer
Gwent	Mr. D. Burgess	Engineer
	Mrs. J. Davies	Retired typing manager
	Mrs. W. Jones	Pub landlady
	Mr. L. Morgan	Security manager
	Mr. G. Moss	Builder
Hampshire	Mr. M. Attenborough-Cox	Accountant
	Ms C. Barratt	Former secretary
	Mr. S. Copeland	Bookshop owner
	Mr. M. O'Reilly	Scouts fundraiser
	Mr. A. Park	Railway controller
Hertfordshire	Mr. M. Berkley	Company director
	Mr. D. Bucknall	Health authority chairman
	Mr. P. Holland	Media consultant
	Mr. B. Lund	Management consultant
	Mr. N. Shacklock	Naval security officer
Humberside	Mrs. L. Clayton	Farmer
	Mrs. A. Deehan	Businesswoman
	Mr. J. Parkinson	Former estates manager
	Mr. B. Rogan	Company director
	Mr. T. Whittingham	Teacher
Kent	Mr. B. Bright	Company secretary
	Mr. G. Clarkson	Retired chief fire officer
	Ms J. Harrison	Solicitor
	Mr. S. Maclachlan	Retired solicitor
	Mr. G. Van Orden	Brigadier
Lancashire	Mr. R. Banister	Retired engineer
	Mr. G. Dykes	Civil servant
	Dr. A. Kuchar	Race relations consultant
	Mrs. L. Taylor	Training consultant
	Mrs. J. Williams	IT manager
Leicestershire	Mr. P. Billing	Technologist
	Mrs. A. Freer	Retired medical receptionist

Authority	*Name*	*Occupation*
Leicestershire	Mr. M. Harrison	Retired bank manager
	Mr. D. Saville	Building society manager
	Mr. G. Snushall	Company director
Lincolnshire	Mr. R. Atkinson	Retired dock master
	Mr. R. Bayliss	RAF engineer
	Mr. M. Berry	Retired food industry consultant
	Mrs. M. Bouch	Retired teacher
	Brigadier B. Reeves	Lecturer in business management
Norfolk	Mr. M. Anscombe	Retailer
	Mr. M. Briggs	NHS manager
	Mr. A. Leckie	Management consultant
	Mr. P. Papworth	Agricultural estate director
	Mr. H. Wilson	Retired TV news director
Northamptonshire	Mr. J. Chambers	Prison officer
	Mr. G. Chowdhury	Teacher
	Mr. O. Davies	Retired civil engineer
	Ms J. Quin	Marketing director
	Mr. R. Sheppard	Consultant haematologist
Northumbria	Mrs. S. Pearson	Charity director
	Mr. G. Robinson	Company director
	Mr. R. Tilmouth	Retired chamber of commerce executive
	Mr. W. Locke	Estate management director
	Dr. A. Mahmood	Consultant haemotologist
North Yorkshire	Ms S. Campbell	Retail director
	Mr. E. Christian	Management consultant
	Mr. D. Collins	Retired RAF officer
	Ms L. Humphreys	Housewife
	Mr. R. Peterson	NHS trust director
Nottinghamshire	Mr. S. Balmforth	Senior operations inspector
	Mrs. J. Kenwood	Retired customer care manager
	Mrs. C. Revill	Teacher
	Mr. G. Solway	Company director
	Mr. J. Woodrow	Retired civil servant
South Wales	Mrs. A. Peters	Headteacher
	Mrs. V. Rudell	Teacher
	Mr. C. Stevens	TV news editor
	Reverend P. White	Canon of Llandaff cathedral
	Mr. G. Wright	Trade union official
Staffordshire	Mr. M. Beatty	Company director
	Mr. P. Finister	Personnel consultant
	Mr. B. Harvey	Construction consultant
	Mr. A. Millward	Former postal manager
	Mr. F. Shaw	Retired building society executive
Suffolk	Ms E. Barham	Mature student
	Mr. A. Bhatt	Company director
	Mr. G. Egleton	Public affairs advisor
	Mr. C. Hilder	Company chairman
	Mrs. C. Laverock	Former education officer
Surrey	Mr. M. Ault	Marketing director
	Mr. W. Donnelly	Management consultant
	Mr. J. Gall	Local government manager
	Mrs. E. Hewitt	Company director
	Mrs. J. Housden	University examiner
Sussex	Dr. J. Collick	Rabbi
	Miss S. Haslam	Farmer
	Mrs. A. Swain	Education consultant
	Mrs. M. Turner	Retired playgroup organiser
	Mr. T. Wiggins	Business consultant
Thames Valley	Mr. A. Cluff	Retired company director
	Mr. E. Domican	Management consultant
	Mrs. P. Elvin	Accountant
	Mr. G. Maybury	Management consultant
	Professor R. Smith	Education consultant
Warwickshire	Mr. A. Bird	Company director
	Mr. W. Dean	Head of university business studies unit
	Ms M. Fitzgerald	University lecturer
	Mr. F. Lockett	Retired businessman
	Mr. B. Thomas	NHS trust chairman
West Mercia	Mrs. S. Garner	Businesswoman
	Mrs. H. Gillow	Retired researcher
	Mr. P. Kelly	Trade union official
	Mrs. M. Kilbride	Headteacher
	Mr. D. Watkins	Retired veterinary surgeon
West Midlands	Mrs. F. Adams	Housewife
	Mrs. B. Pearce	None
	Mr. G. Richards	Businessman
	Mr. S. Singh	Fellow of Warwick University
	Mrs. A. Worley	NHS trust director
West Yorkshire	Mr. J. Harris	Management consultant
	Mr. J. Horn	Headteacher
	Dr. M. Hughes	Management consultant
	Mr. M. Millgate	Personnel consultant
	Mr. K. Sarathy	Retired deputy headteacher
Wiltshire	Mr. I. Davies	Chartered accountant
	Mr. D. Jones	Retired military advisor
	Mr. M. Lee	Retired RAF officer
	Mr. P. Lefever	Civil servant
	Mr. H. Woolnough	Retired army officer

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what methods have been used to encourage nominations for the independent members of the new police authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: Advertisements were placed in the following newspapers: *The Independent on Sunday, The Observer, The Sunday Times, The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph, The Liverpool Daily Post and The Western Mail.*

Officials wrote to members of the public who had expressed an interest in the appointments in response to the White Paper, or who had registered an interest in this type of work with the public appointments unit at the Cabinet Office.

In addition, police authorities were encouraged to bring the appointments to the notice of local community groups whose members might be interested in them.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the visas to be offered to nationals of the former Yugoslavia deemed to be vulnerable and their close dependants have, to date, been issued; how many nationals of the former Yugoslavia have been issued with visas, outside the scheme refereed to, to obtain medical treatment in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: In November 1992, the Government agreed to accept up to 1,000 nationals of former Yugoslavia (and their dependants) considered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to be vulnerable and in need of evacuation. To date, 831 principal applicants and 1,130 dependants have arrived in the United Kingdom under these arrangements. Of these, 77 people came specifically for medical treatment. Other nationals of former Yugoslavia have been admitted to the United Kingdom for medical treatment outside these arrangements, but no central record is kept of the number of visas issued specially for medical treatment.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the countries visited by a spouse accompanying a Minister on overseas visits since 1 October 1993; which Minister was accompanied; what was the cost of each visit; and what were the dates and the duties undertaken by the spouse during such visits.

Mr. Howard: Since 1 October 1993 there have been three occasions when the spouse of a Home Office Minister has accompanied the Minister on public duties overseas.

From 1 January 1994 to 7 January 1994 I was accompanied by my spouse on a trip to the United States of America at a cost of £2,919.35. From 20 August 1994 to 2 September 1994 I was again accompanied by my spouse on a trip to Latin America, which included visits to Argentina, Bolivia and Colombia, at a cost of £5,397.65.

On both occasions the necessary approval was sought in advance of the visit and full official programmes were followed which had been drawn up by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. These concentrated on charity work relating to Home Office interests, particularly drugs.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) undertook a trip to Greece from 17 November to 19 November 1993 when he was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. He was accompanied by his spouse at own cost.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Press Regulation

15. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he proposes to publish his White Paper on the regulation of the press.

Mr. Dorrell: The White Paper on privacy and media intrusion will be published when we have completed our consideration of the legal issues relating to the proposed criminal and civil remedies.

South Bank (Tourism)

17. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of the contribution of the south bank of the Thames in Southwark and Lambeth to London's tourism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: I consider the south side of the Thames to be an important and integral part of the tourism industry in London. This area has a rich variety of attractions enjoyed by both visitors and residents.

On 29 November, my right hon. Friend was able to announce an additional £2 million over two years for the promotion of London tourism. This will be matched by the British Tourist Authority from existing resources and it, in conjunction with London First and the London tourist board, will seek to lever in matching funding from the private sector. This substantial new fund will make a significant contribution to further strengthen London's performance in tourism.

Sport

19. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what priority the Government give to promoting excellence among the United Kingdom's sporting competitors.

Mr. Sproat: The Government attach great importance to the pursuit of high standards of sporting achievement. This and the development of sporting opportunity for young people are the cornerstones of the Government's proposals for reform of the Sports Council which I announced to the House on 8 July, *Official Report*, columns *584–86*.

Fibre-optic Communications

20. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the implications of fibre-optic communications for television services in Wales.

Mr. Dorrell: Optical fibre networks offer a means of distributing television programmes, information or entertainment to the home. They can create new opportunities for programme makers and broadcasters, and can provide increasing choice for viewers, in Wales and throughout the United Kingdom.

Foundation for Sports and the Arts

21. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about the Foundation for Sports and the Arts.

Mr. Sproat: I have received a number of representations.

Children's Play

22. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the time scale for publishing the results of his consultation on the future of children's play.

Mr. Sproat: I am currently considering the comments received on future arrangements for children's play submitted as part of our wider consultation on Sports Council restructuring. I have asked the council to provide me with its own view of how its current functions and staffing might be realigned to take account of the proposals set out in our 8 July statement, *Official Report,* columns *584-86.* I shall then take final decisions on policy and the timing of implementation.

Television (Violence)

23. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what additional proposals he has for reducing the amount and level of violence on television.

Mr. Dorrell: Broadcasters in the United Kingdom are independent of Government but have clear responsibilities with regard to programme content. Earlier this year, my predecessor held meetings with the chairman of the BBC, Independent Television Commission and Broadcasting Standards Council to discuss public concern about television violence. Both the BBC and ITC undertook to monitor the amount of violence and report back and we await their findings.

Television Transmissions

24. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will take powers to ensure that television viewers can receive transmissions from the appropriate regional ITV and BBC stations.

Mr. Dorrell: No. It is for the broadcasters to determine their own transmission arrangements in the light of their resources and within the constraints of frequency availability and engineering feasibility.

National Lottery

25. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about the operation of the national lottery.

Mr. Dorrell: The Director General of the National Lottery regulates the operations of the licensed operator, Camelot plc, and would be happy to write to the hon. Member about any operational matters he wishes to raise.

26. **Mrs. Jane Kennedy**: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to monitor expenditure patterns by households and individuals on national lottery tickets.

Mr. Dorrell: I have no plans to do so at present.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the latest number of bids received under the millennium fund; how much he envisages will be available for such projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Millennium Commission will be inviting applications from 4 January 1995. The commission has already received notification of over 300 potential millennium projects and there have been 4,000 requests for application forms. According to Camelot's forecasts, the Millennium Commission could receive around £1.6 billion between now and 31 December 2000.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many outlets that have been approved by Camelot for the sale of national lottery tickets remain unconnected to the national lottery ticket sale system; and whether these outlets will be compensated by Camelot for loss of revenue.

Mr. Dorrell: This is an operational matter for Camelot Group plc. I have therefore asked Peter Davis, the Director-General of the National Lottery, who is responsible for regulating the operation of the lottery, to write to the hon. Member, placing copies of his response in the Library of the House.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his best estimate of the funding that will flow from the national lottery to assist sport and the arts in 1995–96.

Mr. Dorrell: On the basis of forecasts prepared by Camelot Group plc when it submitted its application for the licence to run the national lottery, I estimate that £750 million will be paid to the national lottery distribution fund in 1995–96. As specified in section 22 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993, each of the five good causes—including sport and the arts—will receive 20 per cent. of the sum remaining in the national lottery distribution fund after expenses have been deducted. This could amount to some £150 million for each sector.

Tourism (VAT)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment his Department made, prior to the Budget statement, of the effect that imposition of VAT on non-essential public transport would have on the United Kingdom tourism industry.

Mr. Dorrell: The application of VAT is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who announced on 29 November that services relating to entertainment or recreational activities and car parking at airports, which include passenger transport, will become wholly standard rated. The measure, which will affect a limited range of businesses, will not involve significant compliance costs for any business category, and is not expected to affect international competitiveness. Indeed, where supplies become wholly taxable at the standard rate instead of being apportioned, VAT accounting requirements will become simpler.

Sports Councils

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many submissions have been received as a part of his Department's consultation process on the future of the sports councils; how many expressed an opinion on his proposals to *(a)* restrict sports council direct funding to a core of two to three dozen sports and *(b)* cut the formal links between the sports council and the regional councils for sport and recreation; and if he will divide the figures into those in favour of his proposals and those against.

Mr. Sproat: In accordance with the Government's code of practice on open government, I will publish the facts and analysis which were relevant and important in framing our final decisions on reform of the Sports Council when these decisions are announced publicly. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to his written question of 28 November, *Official Report,* column *477,* for the current position on our consideration of responses to the consultation exercise.

SCOTLAND

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The information is set out in the tables.

The Scottish Office and Associated Departments

	1991–92 £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
Total[1]	3,021,651	3,203,726	3,079,573

[1] Includes Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency, which is collocated in a Scottish Office building and separate records are not available.

Agencies for which the Secretary of State is responsible

	1991–92 £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
Scottish Record Office	97,226	96,615	93,895
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency	163,649	165,970	169,775
General Register Office	68,221	92,450	92,184
Students Awards Agency Scotland	63,240	70,561	87,576
Historic Scotland	458,000	411,000	456,000
Scottish Office Pension Agency[2]	0	0	14,871
Registers of Scotland	187,618	214,100	245,777
Scottish Prison Service	2,773,773	3,273,674	3,193,684
Total	3,811,727	4,324,370	4,353,762

[2] Previous years' figures included in the Scottish Office total.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total expenditure on energy for each property owned or leased by his Department for the use of ministers in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: Expenditure on energy at Bute house, the Secretary of State's official residence, was as follows:

Year	£
1991-92	4,415
1992-93	5,216
1993-94	5,293

Health Care Purchases

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent by *(a)* district health authorities, *(b)* family health services authorities, *(c)* regional health authorities, *(d)* trusts and *(e)* general practitioner fundholders on health care purchases from non-NHS providers in each of the last three years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In Scotland, the purchase of hospital, community and family health care is primarily the responsibility of health boards. The following table shows expenditure on purchases of health care from private providers:

Purchases of Health Care from Private Providers

	1991–92 £000	*1992–93* £000	*1993–94 (Provisional)* £000
Health Boards	2,642	21,475	16,255
GP Fundholders	34	131	23

Health boards also have contracts with local authorities, hospices and voluntary agencies where these organisations are registered charities undertaking specific contracted activities but information on these is no longer collected centrally. Expenditure by NHS trusts on purchases from private providers in Scotland is not held centrally.

Food Allergies

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many physicians in Scottish NHS hospitals are specialists in the treatment of food allergies,

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Consultants in various specialties may practise in the treatment of food allergies. Information is not collected on how many doctors carry out such work.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Lang: Since 1 April 1992, the activities set out in the table have been contracted out as part of my "Competing for Quality" programme.

Activity	*Awarded to*
Audit of 1st wave NHS Trusts	KPMG Peat Marwick; Coopers and Lybrand
Audit of 2nd wave NHS Trusts[1]	KPMG Peat Marwick; Price Waterhouse; Ernst and Young
Audit of 3rd wave NHS Trusts[1]	Ernst and Young; Scott Moncrieff; KPMG Peat Marwick; Price Waterhouse

Activity	*Awarded to*
Audit of NHS Boards[1]	KPMG Peat Marwick; Coopers and Lybrand; Price Waterhouse
Scottish Fire Service Training School Catering	Gardner Merchant
Building and Electrical Maintenance Works at HM Prison, Barlinnie	AMEC
Marine Laboratory Property Management[1]	Bell Ingram
Maintenance of new microwave radio systems for the Scottish Ambulance Service and other Health Service Users[1]	National Transcommunications Ltd.
Scottish Agricultural Science Agency Security[1]	Burns Security
Scottish Office Pensions Agency pensions administration systems[1]	McDonnell Information Systems
Data Preparation work[1]	Saztec; Alpha Numeric

[1] Strategically contracted out without an in-house bid.

Bids are made to the Scottish Office on a commercial-in-confidence basis by companies and it is the Scottish Office's normal policy not to reveal the values of contracts let for individual market tests. The estimated aggregate value over the lifetimes of the above contracts is £9.7 million. The length of contract ranges from one to seven years.

General Practitioner Lists

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will itemise the number of patients who have been removed from general practitioner lists because of *(a)* registration with another doctor, *(b)* the death or resignation of the doctor, *(c)* the death or emigration of the patient, *(d)* removal at the doctor's request and *(e)* other causes in each of the last five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 December 1994]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the *(a)* surpluses or *(b)* deficits recorded by each individual trust in each year since its inception.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 December 1994]:* The information requested is provided in the table—no deficits have been recorded by individual trusts since their inception:

NHS trust	*Surplus 1992–93 £000*	*Surplus 1993–94 £000*
First wave		
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals	2,707	696
South Ayrshire Hospitals	480	727
Second wave		
Ayrshire and Arran Community Healthcare		1,021
Caithness and Sutherland		319
Dundee Teaching Hospitals		1,284
Grampian Healthcare		3,546
Monklands and Bellshill Hospitals		904
Moray Health Services		354
North Ayrshire and Arran		1,593
Raigmore Hospital		1,171
Royal Alexandra Hospital		1,114
Royal Scottish National Hospital and Community		975
Southern General		1,106
Stirling Royal Infirmary		899
Victoria Infirmary		526
West Lothian		1,612
Yorkhill		601

Patients' Complaints

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patient complaints were received per 1,000 patients treated in each year since 1989–90 by region.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 December 1994]:* This information is not available in the form requested. Information about complaints has been collected centrally since January 1993. Details of the number of primary care consultations are not available but for hospital services the information for 1993–94 is as follows:

Health board	*Number of complaints per 1,000 patients treated*
Argyll and Clyde	0.52
Ayrshire and Arran	0.68
Borders	0.50
Dumfries and Galloway	0.62
Fife	0.76
Forth Valley	0.59
Grampian	0.87
Greater Glasgow	0.87
Highland	0.80
Lanarkshire	0.94
Lothian	0.81
Orkney	0.69
Shetland	0.37
Tayside	0.70
Western Isles	0.33

GP Fundholders

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide an estimate for the value of fundholding allocations retained by general practitioner fundholders at the year end in each of the last four years by region.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 November 1994]:* In Scotland, trusts have been progressively introduced since 1 April 1992. Staffing information for 1992 is not readily available centrally. There were 17 NHS trusts at 30 September 1993 and 39 from 1 April 1994; managerial staff information available is shown in the table. The managerial staff figures shown for 1993 and 1994 are not comparable as different numbers of trusts may be included within each health board for each of the years. The figures also include staff previously employed by health boards who transferred to trust employment on the establishment of trusts. They also include staff from other staff groups who have transferred to senior manager grades. In addition, new payment arrangements for general and senior managers progressively introduced in Scotland from 1 September 1993 changed the pay threshold to a lower one at which a member of staff can be classified as a senior manager.

NHSiS Managers in Post within Trusts; by health board[1] [3]

	Whole time equivalent	
	1993[2] *30 September*	*1994*[3]* *1 April*
Scotland	447.1	1,149.5
Argyll and Clyde	15.0	46.4
Ayrshire and Arran	95.4	[3]132.6
Borders	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway	—	16.4
Fife	—	102.3
Forth Valley	26.0	46.0
Grampian	126.6	130.4
Greater Glasgow	66.3	219.0
Highland	28.0	65.8
Lanarkshire	23.8	79.3
Lothian	31.0	209.1
Orkney	—	—
Shetland	—	—
Tayside	35.0	102.2
Western Isles	—	—

Source:

National Manpower Statistics.

Notes:

* *Provisional data.*

[1] Includes general managers, senior managers, staff on A and C grades 7 and above and protected grades.

[2] There were 17 NHS trusts at 30 September 1993 and 39 from 1 April 1994.

[3] Some of the change between 1993 and 1994 is accounted for by staff transferring to senior manager grades. For example, staff employed on estates', A and C, senior nurse manager and other grades have so transferred. This is illustrated by Ayrshire and Arran where over 30 such transfers have occurred between 1993 and 1994.

[4] The pay threshold for classification as a senior manager was lowered in September 1993 from £14,940 to £13,086.

Pigs

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what grant aid is available to pig producers in Scotland to convert sow tether and stall accommodation.

Sir Hector Monro: Grants are not available to pig producers in Scotland for the conversion of sow tether and stall accommodation.

Agricultural Assistance

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by agricultural scheme the number of claims received after the prescribed closing date which have been allowed for reasons of force majeure in each of the last five years.

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Forestry

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by county all Forestry Commission woodlands for sale, indicating for each woodland its size and whether an access agreement is in place to protect public access.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 23 November 1994]:* The following Forestry Commission woodlands are currently for sale on the open market:

County/Region	*Name of property*	*Area (hectares)*
England		
Avon	Fifty Acre Wood	[2]21
	Old Park Wood	[2]10
	Three Cornered Wood	[2]3
Buckinghamshire	Stokepark Wood	[2]65
Cambridgeshire	West Wood	[2]29
Cornwall	Hay Wood	[2]54
	Port Elliot, Pathada and Perdredda	[2]95
	Treworgey Wood	[2]17
Cumbria	Black Knors	[2]25
Derbyshire	Kennel Wood—part	[1]6
Devon	Bedpark	[2]8
	Deershill Wood	[2]11
Durham	Stanley Wood Cottages	[1]31
Essex	Hales Wood	[2]26
	Martins Wood	[2]4
	Millpond	[2]3
	Pounce Wood	[2]5
	Robins Grove	[2]9
	Whitehill Wood	[2]5
Hampshire	Bassett Green, Land at	[2]2
Isle of Wight	Grammars Common	[2]17
	Kemphill Moor	[2]20
Lincolnshire	Big Wood	[2]12
	Big Plantation—Stourton	[2]8
	Halstead Wood	[2]26
	Six Acre Plantation	[2]10
	Stourton Wood	[2]19
North Yorkshire	Cottage Wood	[2]4
	Hagg Wood	[2]43
	Lodge Plantation	[2]9
	Scackleton Moor	[2]35
	Scoreby Wood	[2]33
Nottinghamshire	Coombs Wood	[2]16
Shropshire	Coed Detton	[2]14
Somerset	Higher Bitcombe	[2]30
South Yorkshire	Owston and Duck Holt Woods	[2]66
Suffolk	Wrights Plantation	[1]5
Scotland		
Borders	Craig Douglas	[2]352
	Craigend	[2]18
	Fruid, Land at	[2]40
	Gala Blocks	[1]127
Central	Stronvar	[2]2
Dumfries and Galloway	Daljarrock	[2]51
	Glaik	[2]62
Fife	Kirkton Barns	[2]26
Grampian	Auquharney	[1]128
	Braes of Gight	[1]137
	Brunthill Wood	[2]37
	Glenbuchat	[2]539
	Greenness	[2]115
	Lenabo	[1]322
	New Pitsligo	[2]42
	White Cow Wood	[1]448
	Wood of Wrae	[1]50
Highland	Abriachan Plantation	[2]865
	Achrugan	[1]559
	Ardelve	[2]26
	Balmore-Craskie	[2]49
	Balmore-Glencannich	[2]70
	Balmore-Muchrachd	[2]29
	Blarnbee	[2]63
	Duisky	[2]89
	Garbole	[2]696

County/Region	*Name of property*	*Area (hectares)*
	Glenmeanie	[2]397
	Glen Tarbert	[2]84
	Inverchoran	[2]129
	Loch Ashie	[3]437
	Lochlait	[1]90
	Lundavra	[1]148
	Rinuden	[1]88
	Tote	[3]421
Strathclyde	Blarghour	[2]19
	Glenmard	[2]56
	Kirnan	[2]222
Tayside	Camusericht	[2]295
	Claysykes	[2]17
	Cowden Wood	[3]20
	Long	[2]80
	Mill of Fortune	[2]119
	Tulloes	[2]69
Wales		
Clwyd	Coed Graig Goch	[2]8
	Coed Melin y Moch	[2]12
	Crown Wood	[2]29
	Foel Uchaf	[1]18
	Gelli Wood	[2]6
	Halton Wood	[2]79
	Pentre Potes—Coed y Pent	[1]16
Dyfed	Allt Cil y Llyn Fawr	[2]3
	Allt Llyn Dyfrion	[1]11
	Bwlch Newydd	[1]8
	Bylchau Duon	[2]61
	Cilflower Wood	[1]5
	Coed Cefn Pwll Hen	[2]20
	Glan Teifi Wood	[2]2
	Llwyn y Gwair	[2]13
	Pant Eynon and Allt y Forlan	[2]29
	Pencwmfawr	[2]9
	Penhill Wood	[2]4
	Pont Henri	[1]21
	Rams Wood	[2]26
	Scolton Wood	[2]30
	Tynton	[2]5
	Ty'r Shyme	[2]6
	Waun Baglan Wood	[1]26
Gwent	Coed Gwaun Y Ffeiriad	[2]43
	Ty Fry Big Wood	[2]17
	White Mill Common and Roughets Wood	[2]6
Gwynedd	Aberdunant	[2]21
	Coed Ty Uchaf	[2]14
	Pant y Wrach	[1]54
	The Glyn	[2]49
Powys	Allt Yscoedreddfin	[2]9
West Glamorgan	Gelligaer	[1]33
	Nant y Stalwyn	[1]44

[1] Woodlands where an access agreement has been concluded.

[2] Woodlands where the local authority, or a third party with an interest, declined to enter into an access agreement.

[3] Woodlands where the local authority is considering whether to enter into an access agreement.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Advisory Bodies

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the functions and objectives of *(a)* the Monitoring Committee on Misleading Price Indications, *(b)* the Standards Quality and Measurement Advisory Committee, *(c)* the Energy Advisory Panel, *(d)* the Advisory Committee for the Joint Environmental Markets Unit and *(e)* the Advisory Committee on Coal Research.

Mr. Heseltine: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Monitoring Committee on Misleading Price Indications

The Committee was formally disbanded in May 1993 by the then Minister for Consumer Affairs.

(b) Standards Quality and Measurement Advisory Committee (SQMAC)

The SQMAC became the Measurements Advisory Committee, MAC, on 1 July 1994. The function of the MAC is to advise the Department on:

—the effectiveness with which the National Measurement System supports UK industry, and

—the priorities which the Department should assign to programmes of work undertaken to meet the demands of the national measurement system.

Its objectives are:

—advising on the broad objectives, balance and strategy for Government support of measurement and proposing effective means for the delivery of that message to business in general in support of wealth creation;:

—advising on the commercial opportunities resulting from the research and development carried out by contractors, in support of the national measurement system;

—contributing to an annual longer term perspective, as input to the Department's annual "Forward Look" at programme expenditure over the next five years and longer;

—identifying key priorities for the UK measurement system within a European and global context;

—taking account of the advice of technical experts (Working Groups), to advise on priorities for funding.

(c) Energy Advisory Panel

The function of the panel is to assist in the preparation of the annual energy report which the Government undertook to prepare, as explained at paragraphs 3.31 and 3.32 of the White Paper "The Prospects for Coal: Conclusions of the Government's Coal Review" (CM 2235, March 1993). The panel's objectives are:-

—to offer views on the structure, content and balance of the report against the background of Government energy policy as outlined in the White Paper.

(d) Advisory Committee for the Joint Environmental Markets Unit (JEPU)

The function of the committee is to advise the Department on the priorities and future work of JEPU. Its objectives are:-

—to consider how Government and industry can most effectively identify and exploit environmental market opportunities at home and overseas;

—to assess and recommend specific actions to pursue these objectives.

—to consider how to encourage firms, particularly small and medium sized enterprises to take up new environmental opportunities.

(e) Advisory Committee on Coal Research

The advisory committee was established in 1993 to provide advice to the Department with respect to its coal research and development programme. The terms of reference for the Committee and its membership are listed in annex B of Energy Paper 63, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the functions and objectives of *(a)* the Advisory Council on Research and Development for Fuel and Power, *(b)* the Offshore Industry Liaison Committee and *(c)* the Overseas Projects Board.

Mr. Heseltine: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Advisory Council on Research and Development for Fuel and Power

The council's primary function was to give Minister's detailed technical overview of the research and development plans of the nationalised energy industries. The privatisation of these industries essentially removed the need for this function and with the establishment of the Energy advisory panel in October 1993, ACORD was dissolved.

(b) Offshore Industry Liaison Committee

The function of the committee is to advise the Minister responsible for the oil and gas sector regarding the progress of the United Kingdom offshore supplies industry on the United Kingdom continental shelf. Its objectives are;

— to analyse problems affecting the competitiveness of the industry, identify gaps in its capability and propose strategies for improving its performance and coverage.

(c) Overseas Project Board

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 7 July 1994, *Official Report*, column 295.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy in respect of the requirement on the Official Receiver to implement the provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 when the Official Receiver is undertaking the investigation of possible offences referred to him by contractors undertaking case administration work.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Legal advice indicates that the role of official receivers in conducting further interviews of bankrupts and company directors would remain unchanged.

Package Travel Directive

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which member states of the European Union have transposed the package travel directive into their national law; and on which dates.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The United Kingdom implemented the directive on package travel, package holidays and package tours on 23 December 1992.

Information on the transposition of Community legislation into national law is available on the Commission's CELEX database. This records that the directive has been implemented by the following other member states—the date given is that of the latest piece of implementing legislation shown on the database:

Belgium—1 April 1994
Denmark—21 September 1993
France—17 June 1994
Luxembourg—6 July 1994
Netherlands—26 January 1993
Portugal—6 May 1994

Germany, Spain, Greece, Ireland and Italy are not recorded as having implemented the directive. In Spain implementation is the responsibility of the regional governments.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Total expenditure on energy by the DTI and its agencies was as follows:

	£000
1991–92	5,950
1992–93	5,490
1993–94	5,377

Because agency and departmental staff are co-located on some sites, it is not possible to provide accurate information for expenditure by agencies separately.

Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 583, whether he will show the percentage increase in United Kingdom exports between 1990 and 1992 compared with the weighted average increase in exports from other developed countries, the number of those countries which did better than the United Kingdom and the number which did worse, and which countries on the basis of the latest quarterly figure in each case have done better than the United Kingdom since 1992 and which have done worse.

Mr. Needham: In $US terms United Kingdom exports grew 2.8 per cent. between 1990 and 1992, compared with 9.2 per cent. for the weighted average of the remaining OECD countries. Eighteen countries did better than the United Kingdom and four worse.

Based on the latest available quarterly figures the following eleven OECD countries did better than the United Kingdom in terms of increasing exports in $US terms since 1992: Australia, Canada, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and USA. Ten countries did worse than the United Kingdom: Austria, Belgium/Luxembourg, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and Switzerland. There have been no internationally published Danish export figures since the introduction of Intrastat in January 1993.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 583, what has been the change since October 1990 in United Kingdom export unit values for finished manufactures in terms of dollars; and what have been the figures in *(a)* Germany, *(b)* France and *(c)* Italy.

Mr. Needham: United Kingdom export unit values for finished manufactures in terms of $US increased 1.2 per cent. between October 1990 and August 1994. Comparable figures for Germany, France, and Italy are not readily available, and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 583, if he will publish the United Kingdom share of the volume of exports of manufacturers by the main manufacturing countries in 1970, 1978 and each year from 1987 to 1993; and if he will add corresponding figures for France and Italy.

Mr. Needham: The United Kingdom figures, where available, are given in the CSO publication "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics—Annual Supplement 1992", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Corresponding figures for France and Italy could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 583, what was the reduction in the deficit on the balance of trade in finished manufactures this year to date at an annual rate compared with 1992 in respect of *(a)* all countries and *(b)* for the EEC.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom trade in finished manufactures in total and to the EC is available from the Central Statistical Office's central shared database and is published in the monthly review of external trade statistics. The database and the publication may be accessed from the Library of the House.

Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 583, what was the increase in output of manufacturing *(a)* since 1973 and *(b)* between 1964 and 1973; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The information is available from the Central Statistical Office's central shared database which can be accessed in the Library of the House. Manufacturing output is growing strongly: in the three months to October output was 5.3 per cent. higher than a year earlier.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer 23 November, *Official Report*, column 583. what was the level of import penetration of the United Kingdom market for manufactures in 1979, 1988, 1990, 1992 and 1993 together with his forecast for 1994.

Mr. Needham: The information requested was published until 1989 in "Business Monitor MQ12", which is available in the Library of the House. The Central Statistical Office expects to publish provisional 1993 figures in the "Monthly Digest of Statistics" early in 1995. Figures for 1990 and 1992 are not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 583, what was the level of import penetration in the market for manufactures in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Italy.

Mr. Needham: The information requested was published until 1989 in "Business Monitor MQ12", which is available in the Library of the House. The Central Statistical Office expects to publish provisional 1993 figures in the "Monthly Digest of Statistics" early in 1995. The information requested with respect of France and Italy is not readily available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column 583, whether he will publish the latest figures for import penetration of the United Kingdom market for manufactures by two-digit sectors of the standard industrial classification.

Mr. Needham: The Central Statistical Office expects to publish provisional 1993 data on import penetration by industry sector, in the "Monthly Digest of Statistics", early in 1995.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November 1994, *Official Report*, column 583, what has been the change in the nominal exchange rate for sterling against *(a)* the Deutschmark, *(b)* the ecu and *(c)* the non-ecu currencies since February 1993, together with his estimate of the likely effects on imports and exports of finished manufactures.

Mr. Needham: A selection of exchange rates, including the Deutschmark and the European currency unit, are regularly published in the Central Statistical Office's financial statistics, table 7.1A, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. An exchange rate index for non-ecu currencies is not available and could be calculated only at disproportionate cost. The Government's assessment of trade performance, published in chapter 3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" took into account all relevant factors, including past movements in exchange rates.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November 1994 *Official Report*, column 583, what has been the fall in the value of sterling and the lira since August 1992 together with (i) the balance of visible trade in 1992, 1993 and this year to date in each case in terms of dollars and (ii) the increase since August 1992 in producer prices.

Mr. Needham: Between August 1992 and October 1994 the values of sterling and the lira against the US$ fell 21.0 and 40.4 per cent. respectively. Between August 1992 and July 1994 United Kingdom and Italian producer prices for manufacturing increased 5.1 and 10.1 per cent. respectively.

Visible trade balances

	US$ million		
	1992	*1993*	*January 1994 to date*
United Kingdom	–23,148	–19,833	–9,913[1]
Italy	–10,320	20,760	11,940[2]

Note:

[1] Up to August 1994

[2] Up to June 1994

Sources:

OECD Main Economic Indicators, CSO

Motor Vehicles

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the value of imports and exports of motor vehicle components in 1992, 1993 and 1994 to date for trade with the EEC, together with his estimate of the import content of cars produced or assembled in the United Kingdom in 1973 and 1993 for trade with *(a)* all countries and *(b)* the EEC.

Mr. Needham: Figures of trade in motor vehicle components with EC countries are published in "Business Monitors" MA20 for 1992, MQ20 for 1993 and 1994 to date—which are available in the Library of the House.

Information on the import content of cars produced or assembled in the United Kingdom is not held centrally, and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

"Marketing Your Business"

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much was paid to Strategic Consultants for "Marketing Your Business"; and if he will list other contracts between his Department and this company over the last three years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: "Marketing Your Business" was one of a series of business skills seminar workbooks which were originally written in 1988 by a group of experienced training providers on behalf of the Training Agency. It is not possible to identify the separate cost of writing this workbook. Since April 1992 Strategic Consultants Limited has undertaken the following contracts for my Department:

July 1992—Testing and editing material for two business skills seminar titles—cost £4,284

December 1992—Review and revision of business skills seminar material (5 titles)—cost £5,875

February 1994—Revision of business skills seminar material (3 titles) - cost £7,373

Mr. Mullin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost of producing and distributing "Marketing Your Business"; how many copies were produced; how many have been withdrawn; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: "Marketing Your Business" was one of a series of business skills seminar workbooks originally written in 1988 by a group of experienced training providers on behalf of the Training Agency. It is not possible to identify the separate cost of writing this workbook. The printing, publishing and sale of business skills seminar workbooks is licensed by Her Majesty's Stationery Office to Vector Business Development and involves no cost to my Department. I understand that around 50,000 copies have been produced and distributed since 1988. Distribution has now ceased.

Radioisotopes

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what types, quantities and values of radioisotopes and nuclear materials have been imported from the Russian Federation since 1992.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is not available due to commercial confidentiality.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information has been provided to his Department in regard to the licensing of the imports of radioisotopes from the Russian Federation by Amersham International.

Mr. Needham: Information which businesses provide in support of applications for import licences is treated as commercially confidential.

Hualon

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of the representations he has received objecting to the Government grant to Hualon to set up in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Eggar: Since Hualon's plans first became known my Department has received representations from five organisations within the textile industry and two members of the public.

US Product Liability Laws

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to assist small firms who export to the United States of America to meet the requirements of US product liability laws.

Mr. Needham: My Department regularly provides advice to small firms on US product liability requirements.

A "North America Now" publication on US product liability was prepared earlier this year for DTI by an American lawyer practising in London, and is freely available to British companies. DTI has also held, throughout the United Kingdom, a number of "North America Now" seminars, involving experts in legal and insurance aspects of US product liability.

Copyright

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how he proposes to implement in United Kingdom law the Council directive on the term of protection of copyright and certain related rights, 93/98 EEC.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I intend to implement Council directive 93/98 EEC by regulations amending the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 made under the powers conferred by section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972. The regulations will take into account comments received in response to a consultative document recently issued by my Department on certain matters which the directive leaves to be decided by member states.

National Fibre Optic Network

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects a national fibre optic network to be in place.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Government's policy of telecommunications liberalisation has encouraged substantial investment in modern telecommunications networks. The promotion of competition between interconnected networks is essential if the full benefits of liberalisation are to be realised for consumers. The main fixed link telecommunications operators already have wholly fibre optic trunk networks, and provide fibre optic links to business customers. Cable TV operators are providing fibre closer to the home.

Optical fibre is one of a number of technologies which can be used to provide residential customers with access to communications networks—including optical fibre, coaxial copper cable, copper wire, radio or satellite. For many residential consumers the superhighway applications now being developed are likely to be delivered through using advanced compression technologies over copper networks rather than through wholly fibre optic networks. This process is already underway.

Information Superhighway

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to develop the information superhighway.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Government published a Command Paper, "Creating the Superhighways of the Future: Developing Broadband Communications in the UK", on 22 November, which set out the Government's vision for establishing information superhighways in this country, building on the billions of pounds of investment in telecommunications networks and infrastructure made by the private sector in recent years. Copies are available in the Libraries of both Houses and on the Internet.

Steel

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has made to the

European Commission on the subject of state aids to national steel industries, with particular reference to subsidies provided by the Italian and Spanish Governments; and with what result.

Mr. Eggar: I have urged the European Commission—most recently at the Industry Council on 8 November—to intensify its monitoring of the state aid cases agreed in December 1993 to ensure that the strict conditions agreed then are adhered to; and I obtained a firm commitment that they would take firm action against breaches, including repayment of the subsidy. I am determined that the highly efficient, unsubsidised United Kingdom industry should not be disadvantaged by illegally subsidised competition.

Aluminium

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has made to the European Commission on the subject of state aids to national aluminium industries, with particular reference to subsidies provided by the Italian and Spanish Governments; and with what result.

Mr. Eggar: My officials recently met the Commission to pursue the aluminium state aid cases which my right hon. Friend brought to our attention. When the Commission has completed its inquiries I will write to inform him of the result.

Balance of Trade

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish details of the United Kingdom balance of trade with other members of the European Union for the years since the establishment of the single market.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is published in the 1994 issue of "The Pink Book—United Kingdom Balance of Payments", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Table 9.1 gives the UK balance of trade with other members of the European Union for each year from 1983 to 1993.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those services that have been market tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Of the services market tested, and where an in-house bid was made, the IT services contract was won by Hoskyns Group plc. The contract value will depend on the volume of work.

Mortgage Insurance

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he is taking to ensure that mortgage providers draw consumers' attention to sources of mortgage insurance other than that supplied by the said mortgage provider.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* I am not taking any such action; nor am I persuaded that it would be appropriate to do so. The protection which consumers need is to be told by any person who offers them insurance whether that person is an independent intermediary or is offering only the products of a restricted range of insurers. Such disclosure is a requirement under the general insurance business code of practice of the Association of British Insurers.

Cot Mattresses

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advice he is currently giving retailers on the sale of cot mattresses.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 25 November 1994]:* The Department has been in close contact with the Department of Health over recent claims that cot deaths have resulted from the use of fire retardant treatments in cot mattresses. The theory that flame retardants in cot mattresses released toxic gases, which caused sudden infant death syndrome, was thoroughly investigated by an expert working group set up by the Chief Medical Officer of Health in 1990. The working group concluded—the Turner report, 1991—that this theory was not supported by the experimental evidence.

The Department of Health has advised that there is nothing in the recent claims which invalidates the conclusions of the Turner report of May 1991 and that there is no reason for retailers to withdraw cot mattresses from sale.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health has recently set up a working group of experts to study the questions which were raised by the current media speculation surrounding the research contained in the Rubens Institute study. The Department will be kept fully informed of their deliberations.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the changes in ECGD premium rates for political risks, by country, for 1993–94, 1994–95, 1995–96 and 1996–97.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* ECGD premium rates are reviewed annually. As political risk premiums are set individually for each country, the type of cover required and the terms of individual transactions, it would not be cost-effective to calculate and detail the changes in rates for each country over this period. However looking at all countries overall, ECGD's political risk premiums have fallen on average broadly as follows in the years in question:

1993 by around 20 per cent.
1994 by around 7.5 per cent.
1995 by around 10 per cent.

Any changes to rates for 1996 will depend on the outcome of future reviews.

WALES

Cynon Valley

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has received the report on the Welsh Development Agency's action in relation to the development of certain sites in the Cynon valley.

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Development Agency commissioned an inquiry, undertaken by Grant Thornton, into the actions of the agency in connection with the development of sites in the Cynon valley, Mid Glamorgan. These arose from the establishment of a joint venture board in 1991 comprising the WDA, Cynon Valley borough council and Mid Glamorgan county council. I have received a copy of the report from the chairman of the agency.

The report notes that the inquiry team was granted full access to the agency and Welsh Office papers and also to those of a number of other organisations. It concludes that there is no evidence of improper pecuniary gain or collusion by any of the parties. It concludes, too, that conflicts of interest which arose were properly declared and dealt with by agency board members. But the report identifies weaknesses in the agency's procedures and serious lapses in management control over its joint venture activities. It also questions whether value for money was secured.

The agency chief executive has informed me that he is sending a copy of the Grant Thornton report and the agency's response to the recommendations to the Chairman of the Committee of Public Accounts. I note the comprehensive remedial action contained in the response of the new management and I will be discussing the report's findings and the proposed measures with the chairman. The chairman of the agency agrees with me that the former management's conduct fell short of the standards we expect.

The report examines a number of transactions which also involve Cynon Valley borough council. The council did not allow Grant Thornton access to certain papers, but I hope that those concerned will study the report carefully and, where appropriate, carry out their own investigation of these matters. It would, of course, be for the district auditor to respond to any requests for an inquiry into the council's activities.

The chief executive as accounting officer has also informed the Chairman of the Committee of Public Accounts about other matters which the new management of the agency has been investigating which go back many years. These concern redundancy and pension payments, the underwriting of share issues, the engagement of consultants, procurement issues and breaches of delegated authority. Some of these instances of non-compliance continued until earlier this year.

I have considered the agency's past underwriting activities. The agency has not engaged in underwriting or sub-underwriting since 1991 and has no plans to do so. In my view, however, this is no longer an appropriate role for the WDA, even in relation to Welsh-based companies, and I have so informed the board.

The chairman has assured me that he will continue to investigate and expose all instances of non-compliance which the agency can identify, however long ago they might have occurred, and to continue to act swiftly wherever necessary to bring agency practice and procedures in line with the proper stewardship of public funds. The new management of the agency understands the standards which I and this House expect of it. The chairman has also assured me that he and his senior management team attach the highest importance to open communication between the agency and my Department.

A copy of the Grant Thornton report and the agency's response to the recommendations have been placed in the Library of the House.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what changes he proposes to make to the cash limits for class XV, vote 2 and to the local authority capital cash limit for his Department for the current financial year.

Mr. Redwood: The cash limit on class XV, vote 2 will be reduced by £6,750,000 from £160,331,000 to £153,581,000. The local authority capital limit—WO/LACAP—will be increased by £6,750,000 from £476,465,000 to £483,215,000.

The reduction in the cash limit for vote 2 results from a forecast underspend on urban regeneration schemes and lower than forecast costs for land reclamation projects on account of reduced inflation and competitive pricing.

The increase in WO/LACAP provides for expenditure on information technology for local government reorganisation.

Neither of the proposed changes will add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Railways

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps his Department will be taking to enable Welsh railway lines to meet the required rate of return both before and after privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is for Railtrack to determine Welsh rail investment priorities in the light of its commercial discussions with customers and the availability of resources. These resources might include any support for projects sponsored by local authorities under the strategic development scheme. I do not expect these arrangements to change after the privatisation of Railtrack.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the importance of a railway infrastructure in the overall process of encouraging inward investment and job creation in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Communications are important in the attraction of inward investment and to indigenous companies in Wales. The Government's proposal to transfer the responsibility for the railway to the private sector ensures that they develop in a way that is appropriate to the needs of the industry.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guarantees his Department has sought on the subject of socially necessary services in the Welsh railway network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The franchising director is responsible for deciding passenger service requirements to be included in franchise agreements. My right hon. Friend and I have recently met him and he is aware of the situation in Wales.

Tourism

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest estimate of the total number of people employed in the tourism industry in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of employees employed in tourism-related industries in Wales was 79,300 in September 1991 according to the 1991 census of employment. Employment data at this level of industrial activity are only collected in the biennial censuses of employment and 1991 is the latest year for which data are available. The figure includes only those industries which are classified as tourism related in table 1.14 of *Employment Gazette*, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Dental Services

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what safeguards are in place to protect dental services to the public where an area is not served by a dental practice taking NHS patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: Family health services authorities are able to apply to the Secretary of State for permission to employ salaried dentists in areas where there is a shortfall in NHS provision. The community dental service acts as a safety net for those unable to obtain treatment under the general dental services.

In addition, a general practitioner may refer patients requiring emergency treatment to an oral surgery department of a general hospital.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dentists there are in each Welsh constituency who are prepared to take new patients under the NHS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: The information is not held centrally. Dentists are independent contractors who are free to choose who they can accept onto their NHS dentist list. Most dentists have NHS patients on their lists but may open and close their books to new patients on a daily basis.

If any person has difficulty in obtaining treatment from a general dental practitioner, they should contact their local family health services authority, which is best placed to advise on local availability of dental treatment. This includes reference to the community dental service which offers a safety net provision for those unable to secure NHS treatment from a general dental practitioner.

A483 (Pool Quay)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many fatalities have occurred in road accidents on the A483 trunk road at Pool Quay, Powys since 1 January 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Since 1 January 1988, there have been three fatalities on the A483 trunk road in the vicinity of Pool Quay, Powys. These fatalities occurred on 19 January 1988, 1 February 1993 and 26 November 1994.

Housing

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he has given to district councils on the inspection of properties *(a)* prior to the award of housing benefit and *(b)* after it has been awarded.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Housing benefit regulations do not require properties to be inspected.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures are in place to ensure that properties in multiple occupation do not present any safety or public health hazards.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Houses in multiple occupation must meet standards of fitness for human habitation and fitness for the number of occupants. They must have adequate means of escape from fire and adequate fire precautions. Local authorities have powers to enforce these requirements.

Bridgend and District NHS Trust

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many responses to his consultation paper on the re-organisation of health service administration supported his proposal to transfer the Bridgend and District NHS trust to the West Glamorgan area health authority; and from whom they were received.

Mr. Richards: The Bridgend and District NHS trust does not form part of any health authority. The following respondents to our consultation explicitly supported establishing a new health authority responsibility for commissioning health care for people in West Glamorgan and Bridgend: Clwyd DHA; Gwent Health Commission; Dyfed FHSA; Nevill Hall and District NHS trust; Swansea NHS trust; University Hospital of Wales and Royal Cardiff group; Swansea/Lliw Valley CHC; Children in Wales; MENCAP; and Health Promotion Wales.

Community Care

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Assembly of Welsh Counties social services committee in relation to the adequacy of funding and the consistency of working arrangements with health commissioning authorities in relation to community care for *(a)* the prospective 1994–95 outturn and *(b)* 1995–96.

Mr. Redwood: Community care funding and the distribution of community care resources between county councils is discussed by the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance, which includes the Assembly of Welsh Counties. The resources are allocated to county councils in accordance with distribution formulae ratified by the WCCLGF.

Working arrangements between local authorities and health authorities are for local agreement. The White Paper, "Caring for People", Cm. 849, and subsequent guidance have stressed the need for joint working.

Health Authority Finance

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were *(a)* the surpluses and *(b)* the deficits recorded by each health authority in each of the last tree years.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is as follows:

Health authority	*1991–92 £000*	*1992–93 £000*	*1993–94 £000*
Clwyd	2,703	(3,312)	119
East Dyfed	(2,176)	(112)	(751)
Gwent	500	1,915	4,434
Gwynedd	(231)	(998)	(1,002)
Mid Glamorgan	(478)	1,687	(573)
Pembrokeshire	1,234	(2,126)	94

Health authority	*1991–92 £000*	*1992–93 £000*	*1993–94 £000*
Powys	(126)	116	(1,593)
South Glamorgan	1,103	(906)	2,654
West Glamorgan	101	566	2,430

Source:

Health authorities annual accounts.

Notes:

(i) 1993–94 figures are provisional.

(ii) Figures in bracket indicate deficits.

Sea Fisheries Committee

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in relation to the setting up of a unified sea fisheries committee structure for Wales

Mr. Redwood: Along with other interested parties I have received a paper prepared by the South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee on options for the future structure of sea fisheries committees in Wales.

Wrexham Maelor Hospital

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total cost of phase II of the Wrexham Maelor hospital, Wrexham.

Mr. Richards: The final construction cost of phase II of the Wrexham Maelor hospital was £21.035 million including fees and VAT.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the prime contractor and sub-contractors on phase II of the Wrexham Maelor hospital, Wrexham.

Mr. Richards: The main contractor for phase II of the Wrexham Maelor hospital development was Alfred McAlpine Building North and the only nominated sub-contractor was Evans Lifts Ltd. Additionally there were a substantial number of sub-contractors engaged by the main contractor.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those services that have been market tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Redwood: The following list covers the period October 1992 to date:

Service	*Organisation*	*Tender value*
Managing agents for building works	Kirkham, Williams and Lewis of Newport, Gwent	Not available. Fee based call-off contract.
Staff training	Training Services (Wales) Ltd. of Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan	Total not available. Part call-off contract. Fee for three years non-call-off element £286,750, excluding VAT.

Pigs

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what grant aid is available to pig producers in Wales to convert sow tether and stall accommodation.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. Producers have eight years from 1991 over which to spread these costs.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farming

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people were employed in the farming industry in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement about the unemployment rate among former farm workers.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 1 December 1994]:* a) The number of people employed in the farming industry in the United Kingdom at June in each of the last five years is shown in the table:

Number of persons working on holdings in the United Kingdom—1989 to 1994—farmers, growers and workers

Year	*Number*
1989	646,300
1990	644,600
1991	630,500
1992	624,400
1993	622,300
1994[1]	615,600

Notes:

(a) Source: Agricultural and Horticultural June census.

(b) Includes estimates for minor holdings in England, Wales and Northern Ireland but not for Scotland.

(c) In England and Wales figures exclude School children but include trainees employed under an official youth training scheme and paid at agricultural wages board rates or above. In Scotland and Northern Ireland school children and all trainees are excluded.

(d) Figures include farmers, growers, partners, directors, spouses, managers, regular and hired workers, seasonal and casual workers.

[1] Provisional figures only.

The labour force survey conducted in spring 1994—this is a sample survey of 65,000 private households in the United Kingdom carried out every spring since 1984—showed that there are approximately 31,000 unemployed people in the United Kingdom who recorded their last occupation as farming. This represents an unemployment rate for this socio-economic grouping of 7 per cent., which is significantly lower than the equivalent rate for all socio-economic groupings in the United Kingdom which at this time was 10 per cent.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will set up a working group of officials from his Department and representatives of the fishing industry to review the burdens of existing legislation on fishermen as it relates to bureaucracy;

(2) what representations he has received on deregulation relating to the burdens of bureaucracy on the fishing industry.

Mr. Jack: Following representations from the fishing industry, I secured last June a commitment from the

European Fisheries Commissioner that the Commission would examine how the body of regulation under the common fisheries policy could be simplified. We invited our industry to make suggestions for simplification but it has not yet been able to offer any. A meeting with the industry is now planned which I hope will be able to make some useful progress.

Ostriches

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what current legislation exists to protect the welfare of ostriches at slaughter;

(2) how many ostriches were slaughtered in each year since 1991;

(3) what consideration he has given to introducing provisions to protect the welfare of ostriches at slaughter;

(4) if he will make a statement on the welfare of ostriches at slaughter.

Mrs. Browning: The welfare of ostriches at slaughter is currently protected by the general provisions of the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968 which make it an offence to cause unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress to livestock on agricultural land and the Protection of Animals Act 1911 which makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any domestic animal. New welfare at slaughter legislation to implement the EC slaughter directive will be introduced next year and will provide additional protection for ostriches when slaughtered.

There is no commercial slaughter industry for ostriches at present in this country. Some small numbers will have been killed on farms since 1991 but no figures are available. Officers of the State Veterinary Service will monitor any developments in this area.

Research and Development

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the projected expenditure by his Department on research and development in *(a)* 1994–95 and *(b)* 1995–96.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department's total research and development expenditure for 1994–95 and 1995–96 is estimated to be £136 million and £140 million respectively.

Nitrates

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the cost of implementing nitrate-vulnerable zones in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: Farmers in nitrate-vulnerable zones will be affected in different ways, depending on such factors as the type of enterprise, stocking density and existing storage capacity for organic manure—for example, arable farmers who are already following good agricultural practice should incur no significant cost as a result of the rules which will apply in vulnerable zones. Some intensive livestock units may, however, incur costs through having to transport manure off farm, and provide additional storage during the closed period for the application of organic manure. Costs are being examined and a compliance cost assessment will be issued when the detailed draft action programme of measures is published in 1995.

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of nitrate pollution in the River Stour in Essex and Suffolk; and what information he has about the state of the River Rhine in Germany.

Mr. Jack: Figures for nitrate pollution in the River Stour taken at Langham—the abstraction point used for drinking water purposes—for the 1992 calendar year are set out:

1992	*Nitrate mg/l*
06 January	30.88
08 January	33.05
20 January	49.17
28 January	41.64
03 February	48.73
05 February	47.40
17 February	38.36
25 February	36.77
02 March	33.36
04 March	34.38
16 March	32.69
24 March	31.81
30 March	77.08
01 April	88.60
14 April	27.60
28 April	33.05
05 May	27.55
12 May	25.03
18 May	18.03
27 May	17.01
01 June	15.24
03 June	15.24
15 June	17.19
23 June	14.00
29 June	5.89
08 July	12.36
13 July	11.03
21 July	17.81
27 July	13.51
05 August	13.29
10 August	13.07
18 August	16.57
24 August	9.88
09 September	14.09
14 September	14.57
22 September	19.71
28 September	44.30
07 October	45.19
12 October	42.00
20 October	32.29
27 October	55.38
04 November	47.84
09 November	40.71
17 November	57.15
23 November	54.93
02 December	62.02
07 December	58.03
15 December	61.58

With the Stour exceeding the nitrate parameter of 50 mg/litre eight times out of the 48 samples taken at the abstraction point, the river is considered a polluted water under the terms of the EC nitrate directive and the Nayland nitrate vulnerable zone has been proposed on this basis. We have no detailed information of the nitrate pollution in the River Rhine. However, Germany is expected to designate its entire territory as a nitrate vulnerable zone.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list *(a)* the distribution by month of the dates of birth of each animal in the BSE cohort study and *(b)* the date of birth of each animal that has been confirmed with BSE in each six-monthly period from the start of the cohort study.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following is a table, by month and year of birth, of the number of animals in the cohort study:

	January	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*
1987	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	2	4	3	9
1988	6	4	4	2	3	9	24	86	106	102	56	66
1989	24	18	17	11	8	8	13	16	13	11	2	—

The following tables are of the animals in the cohort study confirmed to have BSE, sorted into six-monthly periods by date of clinical onset and giving details of month and year of birth. It is not known how many of the confirmed cases are offspring and how many are controls as the study is being carried out blind:

1987–88

Period	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*
July–December 1991	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
January–June 1992	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
July–December 1992	—	1	—	3	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
January–June 1993	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
July–December 1993	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
January–June 1994	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
July–December 1994	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	1	2	1	5	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	6

1988–89

Period	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*Total*
July–December 91	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
January–June 92	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
July–December 92	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	8
January–June 93	2	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	4
July–December 93	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	6
January–June 94	—	2	2	—	—	—	—	1	8
July–December 94	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	3
Total	5	5	2	3	0	0	0	1	[1]33

[1] Total for September 1987—April 1989.

Horticultural Survey

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the cost to date of the study of the horticultural sector initiated in October 1993.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* In addition to my own time, and that of my small team of industry advisors, given without charge, I was assisted on an ad hoc basis by a grade 7 official from our horticulture division. The costs, including staff time and travel costs, amounted to about £12,000. As part of the project, we also contributed £10,000 to the Fresh Produce Consortium/Strathclyde university study on the future of the wholesale markets.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Licensing

Mr. Alison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for introducing continuous licensing for commercial vehicles and heavy goods vehicles to mitigate problems of illegal operation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have been asked to reply.

The Government have no plans to introduce continuous licensing for goods vehicles in excess of 3.5 tonnes. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has, however, announced his intention to introduce a number of other measures for goods vehicles—including clarifying their definition and weight, and reducing the number of concessionary classes—which will help to reduce evasion.

M11 Link Road

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total cost to his Department and the Highways Agency *(a)* to occupy the premises in Claremont road, Leytonstone and *(b)* for the security and associated costs of the M11 link road project as a whole; if he will break this expenditure down into its main components; and if he will indicate the extent of the continuing cost.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 12 December 1994:

I have been asked to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about the costs of occupying Claremont Road and security costs for the A12 Hackney Wick to M11 Link Road as a whole, since these are operational matters for the Highways Agency.

We estimate the cost to the Agency of last weeks operation at Claremont Road at about £1 million.

The protestors' action also meant that we were unable to salvage valuable materials from the properties, which had to be rapidly demolished and the resultant rubble carted away to the tip at a cost of £100,000.

The total for other security and associated costs for the whole Link Road project since construction began in September 1993 is about £3 million for security staff costs, together with £185,000 paid in fees to Brays Detective Agency and legal costs of about £180,000.

Levels of security are geared to the perceived likelihood of protest action involving trespass on to sites. If current levels are maintained, expenditure on security staff would be about £500,000 per month. The situation is, however, monitored all the time and if the activity of protestors diminishes, as it now should, this expenditure could, in turn, be reduced. Similarly expenditure on Brays Detective Agency, currently about £25,000 per month, will be reviewed but there remains continuing involvement for them with injunction proceedings at least until the end of January 1995.

Legal costs in this connection will run at about £4,000 per month, but this figure could be higher dependent upon the number and length of Court hearings, which are unpredictable at present.

Eastern European Fishing Vessels

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current estimate of the number of former eastern bloc fishing vessels in United Kingdom waters within the harbour limits of Lerwick; in each case how many are klondykers; what assessment he has made of the implications for safety of life at sea arising from such vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. Bradley to Ms Joan Walley, dated 12 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of former eastern bloc fishing vessels within the harbour limits of Lerwick.

The number of fishing vessels within the harbour limits fluctuates daily in response to changes in weather conditions and the location of the fish shoals. At midday on Tuesday 6 December there were 59 former eastern bloc fishing vessels in Lerwick harbour, all of which are considered to be klondykers. Each of these klondykers has been inspected by surveyors from the Marine Safety Agency (MSA) since the second inspection campaign began in July 1994.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which vessels from the former eastern bloc have been subjected to port state control within the last 18 months; which vessels were klondykers; and if he will give the date and details of the inspections.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R Bradley to Ms Joan Walley, dated 12 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the port state control inspections carried out on vessels from the former eastern bloc.

During the past 18 months, ships from the following former eastern bloc countries have been inspected:

Country	*Number of inspections of klondykers*	*Number of inspections of other ships*	*Total number of port state inspections*
Azerbaijan	—	1	1
Bulgaria	14	15	29
Croatia	—	4	4
Czechia	—	5	5
Estonia	4	9	13
Georgia	—	5	5
Latvia	19	23	42
Lithuania	11	18	29
Poland	1	48	49
Romania	—	11	11
Russia	132	227	359
Ukraine	9	40	49

The Marine Safety Agency publishes monthly a report of ships which have been detained in United Kingdom ports. Full details of former eastern bloc ships inspected and detained since June 1994, when publication began, can be found in these reports.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will request his shipping Minister to include in his visit to Shetland a visit to Lerwick harbour to assess the implications for safe shipping, search and rescue and marine pollution from former eastern bloc-owned klondykers.

Mr. Norris: My noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping visited the Shetland islands on 4 November 1994. His visit included an informative and useful discussion with the chief executive and chairman of the Lerwick harbour trust, as well as providing an opportunity to see at first hand the problems posed by the klondykers.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what joint discussions he has held with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Scottish Office to resolve any problems arising from the klondyker fleet.

Mr. Norris: My noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping met my hon. Friend the Minster with responsibility for agriculture and the environment at the Scottish Office on 31 October to agree a joint approach to tackling the problems arising from the klondyker fleet. The Scottish Office will be consulting on proposals to limit the numbers of fish transshipment licences and to introduce an advance notice requirement for licence applications. In addition, my officials have had several meetings with their counterparts in the Scottish Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Our Departments are working together to produce a further consultation paper on additional measures which could be taken to ensure adequate standards of safety and insurance on these ships.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to establish whether vessels from the former eastern bloc anchored within United Kingdom waters are fully insured.

Mr. Norris: Only oil tankers are required to carry proof of adequate liability insurance. The Marine Safety Agency's inspections of foreign fish factory ships have therefore not included a check of insurance documents.

There is, however, clear evidence that few, if any, of these ships carry adequate insurance.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Norris: The figures are as follows:

(a) Department of Transport Total

1992–93 £	*1993–94* £	*1994–95* £
4,455,870	4,379,338	4,377,023
(b) Executive agencies total		
3,937,470	3,950,681	3,748,965

The figures for 1992–93 and 1993–94 include agencies created at the start of 1994–95.

Donaldson Report

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when and how he proposes to implement each of the recommendations of the Donaldson report.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) on 29 November *Official Report,* columns 657–59.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the roadside enforcement activities of the vehicle inspectorate between April and September 1994; how many people were employed; and how many prohibition notices were issued to *(a)* heavy and light goods vehicles, *(b)* buses and *(c)* coaches.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Vehicle Inspectorate Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. Oliver to Ms Joan Walley, dated 12 December 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about roadside enforcement activities at the Vehicle Inspectorate.

The Vehicle Inspectorate employed, on average, 237 Vehicle Examiners and 164 Traffic Examiners on its roadside enforcement activities between April and September 1994.

I attach a table (Annex A) which shows the number of prohibition notices issued for the same period.

If you have any further questions about these data please contact me.

Number of prohibition notices issued by VI from April to September 1994

	HGV	*PSV*	*LGV*	*Total*
Roadworthiness Enforcement	11,996	1,706	1,552	15,254
Traffic Enforcement	2,658	47	227	2,932
Total	14,654	1,753	1,779	18,186

Notes:

i. Roadworthiness Enforcement includes all prohibitions, although some of the inspections may not have taken place at the roadside.

ii. Traffic Enforcement includes all over weight prohibitions issued, including those issued at port checks, and foreign vehicle prohibitions for drivers' hours offences.

iii. We have used the Inspectorate's standard definitions—Heavy Goods Vehicles, Public Service Vehicles and Light Goods Vehicles. We are not able to break down these groups further—for instance between buses and coaches.

Great Central Railway

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much is owed by the Highways Agency to the Great Central Railway in respect of work carried out at *(a)* Thurcaston on the A6 and *(b)* on the same road between Loughborough and Quorn; and when these payments will be made.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Mike Hall, dated 12 December 1994:

I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about monies owed by the Highways Agency to the Great Central Railway in respect of work carried out on the A6 at Thurcaston and between Loughborough and Quorn.

The only outstanding payment is a further advance of £13,500, plus interest, in respect of compensation for the works at Thurcaston. The payment is being processed and will complete the 90 per cent. advance payment of compensation required by the Land Compensation Act. The balance, with interest, will be paid as soon as final settlement is reached.

Motorway Cleaning

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how motorway cleaning is funded; and what is its annual cost;

(2) how often the M1 in Northamptonshire is cleaned.

Mr. Watts: These are operational matters for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. James Pausey, dated 12 December 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads has asked me to answer your questions to the Secretary of State about motorway cleaning.

The Highways Agency is responsible for ensuring trunk motorways are kept clean in accordance with a statutory Code of Practice issued under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. We spend some £5 millions annually from our maintenance budget on litter clearance, sweeping, grass cutting and other associated cleansing activities. In addition, regular safety patrols are undertaken to check, amongst other things, for hazardous debris.

In Northamptonshire, the County Council is our Agent Authority for this maintenance work. Daily safety inspections are carried out on the M1. Any debris causing a safety hazard to road users is removed as quickly as possible—usually immediately. The presence of litter on the verges and side slopes is noted and cleared as soon as possible. The hard shoulder is swept mechanically every 8–10 weeks. Because of the dangers inherent in gaining access to the central reserve, and the disruption to traffic, cleaning there is undertaken in conjunction with routine or emergency maintenance operations to meet the standards of the Environmental Protection Act.

Road Accidents

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many road accidents occurred where bus lanes and pedestrian crossings meet in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Norris: The required information is not available.

Radioisotopes

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many transportation licences his Department has issued for the import of radioisotopes from the Russian Federation in each year since 1992.

Mr. Norris: None. The Department issues package design approvals for the safe transport of radioactive material. Import licences are issued by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Channel Tunnel Freight Trains

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he is having and with whom about the channel tunnel freight trains and the possible effects this service will have on the local environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: I have met some hon. Members for constituencies traversed by channel tunnel freight trains. I am visiting the West London line on 15 December. A demonstration of new electric locomotives and new rolling stock will be arranged in the new year.

Noise Pollution

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement concerning potential similar cases arising from building the A46-47 link road and the eastern district distribution road in Leicester following the recent Court of Appeal decision to allow Colonel David Owen full compensation for the noise blight which has devalued his home; and what assessment he has made of the effects of potential claims for blight and the rise in costs on the continued viability of the A46-A47 link road and the EDDR.

Mr. Watts: The right to compensation where an interest in land is depreciated by noise from the use of a new or improved highway is set out in part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973. In addition section 246 of the Highways Act 1980 provides highway authorities with a discretionary power to acquire by agreement land to mitigate the adverse effects of constructing or improving a highway.

The A46-A47 link road and the EDDR are roads for which Leicestershire county council is the highway authority. I am advised that the county council does not exercise its discretionary powers in respect of the purchase of properties. Information about the cost of these local road schemes can be obtained from the county council.

Highways Agency

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what public service standard he has set the Highways Agency in terms of response times of reaction to telephoned or written queries from local authorities and members of the general public.

Mr. Watts: Standards for dealing with correspondence are set out in the Highways Agency's business plan. The agency is required to reply to all correspondence within 15 working days of receipt.

Age Concern

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from Age Concern as part of its 1994 annual campaign on transport and mobility; what other representations he has received; and what action his Department has taken to implement the recommendations of the campaigns.

Mr. Norris: The Department has worked closely with Age Concern at national and regional level throughout the year. Ministers and officials have taken part in Age Concern conferences. These have provided an opportunity to hear at first hand the concerns of older people and to work with them in developing appropriate solutions.

We will continue to give priority to meeting the needs of older people as public transport users, pedestrians and motorists.

European Year of Older People

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contribution his Department has made in 1994 to follow up the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in 1993.

Mr. Norris: The Department has, through conducting research and issuing guidelines and advice to local authorities, manufacturers, operators and individuals, continued to develop and promote solutions to the problems faced by older people as public transport users, pedestrians and motorists.

Tyres

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that part-worn tyres imported into the United Kingdom for resale meet the standards required by British law.

Mr. Norris: Further to the answer I gave on 18 November, *Official Report*, column *119*, the measure which applies to both domestic and imported tyres was laid in Parliament on 8 December 1994.

Rolling Stock Leasing Companies

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ensure that the rolling stock leasing companies which remain in the public sector have sufficient passenger train stock to meet the demands of Regional Railways Central in the summer peak of 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: The three rolling-stock leasing companies own almost the whole British Rail passenger fleet. I am not aware of any prospective shortfall of trains to be leased to the central train operating unit in summer 1995.

Railtrack

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when Railtrack will publish its 10-year plan for the railway industry; and who will undertake this role after Railtrack has been privatised.

Mr. Watts: Railtrack will publish its first 10–year investment plan next year. It will continue to be required under the terms of its network operator's licence to do so annually after privatisation.

Rail Investment

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the forecast level of investment for *(a)* Railtrack, *(b)* BR and *(c)* European passenger services for 1995–96; and if he will indicate under each heading how much of this expenditure is committed to projects already authorised and how much is available for investment in projects not yet authorised.

Mr. Watts: Overall investment in the railway industry in 1995–96 is expected to be of the order of £1 billion, of which around a quarter will be financed by the private sector. A detailed breakdown will not be available until the individual budgets have been settled.

Rail Finance

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what grant will be payable to the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising in respect of support for passenger services in 1995–96;

(2) what the external financing limits will be for *(a)* BR and *(b)* Railtrack in 1995–96.

Mr. Watts: The 1995–96 external finance limits for BR and Railtrack, and support to passenger services, will be set out in the "Transport Report 1995".

Road Safety

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost of the present publicity programme "Kill your Speed, Not a Child".

Mr. Norris: Some £2.65 million.

Public Transport (Definition)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the definition of public transport used by his Department.

Mr. Watts: Any form of domestic passenger service by road, rail, air or water which is available for use by the public at large in return for the payment of a fare.

Air Traffic Control

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions the Scottish air traffic control centre has been overloaded by excessive flights over the past five years.

Mr. Norris: Before 1993 if air traffic controllers considered that their workload on their sector had become too high they could submit a report which was investigated by both the unit management and the safety data analysis unit at Gatwick. The figures in Scotland for the period 1989 to 1992 were:

1 sector incident in 1989
4 sector incident in 1990
2 sector incident in 1991
1 sector incident in 1992

In 1993, a new recording system was introduced which cannot be directly compared with the previous system. There were 13 investigations in 1993 and 10 investigations so far in 1994.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what method is used to deal with excess flight pressure on the air traffic control system; and how many times this has been used in the past five years.

Mr. Norris: Within the United Kingdom, National Air Traffic Services establishes a flow rate for each sector of air space which takes into account air traffic controller manning. In order to prevent air traffic control demand exceeding the agreed level in United Kingdom air space the London flow management unit, situated at Heathrow, applies departure and flow restrictions measures. Such measures are designed to ensure that safety is not compromised and are applied throughout the busy times of the day.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Norris: Items in the Department's "Competing for Quality" programmes which have resulted in contracts being let to the private sector are listed.

Item	*Contractor(s)*	*Annual value (£ million, excluding VAT)*
IT and facilities management	EDS	13.895(a)
Computer bureau facilities	Digital	0.238
Distribution services	Eros Marketing Support, HMSO (b)	0.146
Stationery supplies	Dudley Stationery	0.300
Book and periodical procurement	Dawsons, HMSO (b)	0.346 (c)
Office machinery	AM International, Highway Business Systems, Dahle, Berrys of Holborn, HMSO (b)	0.129
Vehicle Certification Agency: microfilming, data storage and reprographics	REM Office Systems—Bristol	0.015
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency forms design	Claydon Heeley	0.080
Vehicle Inspectorate: I strategy support	EDS	0.240
Vehicle Inspectorate: roller brake testing maintenance	VL Test Systems	0.265

Item	*Contractor(s)*	*Annual value (£ million, excluding VAT)*
Vehicle Inspectorate: weighbridge maintenance	Metler Toledo	0.220
Coastguard property management	HSB Partnership, Povall-Worthington, Bell Ingram, W S Atkins	0.440

Road Workers (Injuries)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has of injuries to workers on *(a)* motorways, *(b)* other trunk roads and *(c)* other roads during each of the last five years involved in (i) construction, (ii) repairs and (iii) cleaning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Oppenheim: I have been asked to reply.

The Health and Safety Executive does not record information on injuries to road workers in the form requested.

The table shows the number of injuries to workers while carrying out road surfacing work and highway maintenance for the last five years:

Injuries to workers[1] arising from surfacing and highway maintenance work as reported to the Health and Safety Executive's Field Operations Division 1989–90 to 1993–94—provisional

Year	*Surfacing[3]* *Fatal*	*Major[5]*	*Over 3 day[6]*	*Total*
1989–90	7	133	1,613	1,753
1990–91	6	109	1,464	1,579
1991–92	4	92	1,219	1,315
1992–93	7	95	981	1,083
1993–94[7]	4	105	744	853

Year (b)	*Highway Maintenance[4]* *Fatal*	*Major[5]*	*Over 3 day[6]*	*Total*
1989–90	1	37	1588	1626
1990–91	1	68	1467	1536
1991–92	—	51	1198	1249
1992–93	3	53	926	982
1993–94[7]	—	42	814	856

[1] Employees and self-employed people.

[2] Years commencing 1 April.

[3] Includes road building and repair.

[4] Includes street cleaning, maintenance of street furniture and gritting, etcetera.

[5] As defined under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 and are chiefly amputations, serious fractures and other injuries causing hospitalisation for more than 24 hours.

[6] Injuries causing incapacity for normal work for more than three days.

[7] Provisional.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Benefits

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many families have been eligible for, and what has been the cost to public funds of, *(a)* family income supplement and *(b)* family credit since their introduction.

Mr. Roger Evans: Information is not available on the total numbers eligible for the two benefits.

The table provides details of the number of families receiving either family income supplement or family credit in each year since 1971 and the benefit expenditure for each financial year.

	Financial year	*Families in receipt[2] 000's*	*Cost[3] £ million*
Family Income Supplement (FIS)[1]	1971–72	55	4
	1972–73	92	10
	1973–74	106	13
	1974–75	79	12
	1975–76	63	12
	1976–77	71	18
	1977–78	81	25
	1978–79	89	24
	1979–80	74	27
	1980–81	89	42
	1981–82	124	66
	1982–83	158	94
	1983–84	204	123
	1984–85	207	126
	1985–86	201	130
	1986–87	220	161
	1987–88	224	180
Family Credit[1]			
	1988–89	281	394
	1989–90	319	425
	1990–91	327	494
	1991–92	353	626
	1992–93	448	929
	1993–94	515	1,091

Notes:

[1] Family Income Supplement was introduced in August 1971 and replaced by family credit in April 1988.

[2] Source:

—for 1971–72 to 1973–74 based on a 20 per cent. sample of awards.

—for 1974–75 to 1987–88 based on a 10 per cent. sample of awards.

—for 1988–89 to 1993–94 based on a 5 per cent. sample of awards.

Figures given are for September in each financial year with the exception of 1987–88 where the figure is for October.

[3] *Source:*

Various editions of the public expenditure White Paper and departmental report.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the tables.

	Year	£
DSS Total	1991–92	14,213,000
	1992–93	15,600,000
	1993–94	16,121,000
Benefits Agency	1991–92	10,799,109
	1992–93	11,788,296
	1993–94	10,412,815
Contributions Agency	1991–92	[2]Not applicable
	1992–93	Not applicable
	1993–94	1,483,226
Information Technology Services Agency	1991–92	2,901,788
	1992–93	3,126,456
	1993–94	3,094,726
Resettlement Agency	1991–92	512,103
	1992–93	340,360
	1993–94	305,808
Child Support Agency	1993–94	448,425
DSS (HQ)	1991–92	[1]Not applicable
	1992–93	344,888
	1993–94	376,000

Notes:

A number of the agencies which form the Department have not been in existence for three years.

[1] In the year 1991–92 the DSS—HQ—was not responsible for payment of energy costs, therefore details are not held by the Department.

[2] The Contributions Agency was not responsible for energy costs in the years 1991–92 and 1992–93.

Jobseekers Bill

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the elements of the Jobseekers Bill which promote the assistance of persons without a settled way of life.

Mr. Roger Evans: Clause 25 in the Bill allows the Resettlement Agency to complete its task of disengaging the Government from the running of resettlement units by funding more appropriate provision provided by voluntary organisations, local authorities or private organisations.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy in respect of people who make themselves voluntarily unemployed or who refuse job vacancies continuing to receive automatic hardship payments under the allowance.

Mr. Roger Evans: Sanctioned claimants will not receive automatic benefit payments under the jobseeker's allowance. Claimants who are not in vulnerable groups will receive no benefit for the first two weeks of a sanction; thereafter, they may receive hardship payments at a reduced rate if they can demonstrate that they or their partner would otherwise suffer hardship. Claimants in vulnerable groups—those with children, who are sick or pregnant or have a sick or pregnant partner, or who have caring responsibilities—may have access to hardship payments throughout the period of the sanction.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much of the expected reduction in expenditure on benefits of around £140 million in 1996–97 and £270 million in 1997–98 as a result of the introduction of the jobseekers allowance will arise from each clause of the Jobseekers Bill

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table. Estimates do not take account of tax or behavioural effects.

Policy measure	*Benefit expenditure effect in 1996–97 £ million*	*Benefit expenditure effect in 1997–98 £ million*	*Relevant clause(s) in Jobseekers Bill*
Contributory entitlement six months	–70	–180	Clause 5(1)
No Adult Dependency Increases in contributory benefit	–10	–20	Clause 4(1) and Schedule 2(20)
Unified rates of benefit: effect on 18–24 year old claimants	–20	–30	Clause 4(1)
Treatment of income from occupational and personal pensions	–10	–10	Clause 4(1) and Schedule 1(7)
Waiting days in income-based JSA	–40	–40	Schedule 1(4)
Anti-fraud measures	–10	–10	Clause 27 and 28
Benefit sanctions	–10	–10	Clauses 15 and 16
Treatment of earnings: disregard £10 per week per couple; partners may work up to 24 hours	+20	+20	Clauses 3(1), 4, 9 and 10
Net effect	+140	–270	

Notes:

1. Assumes 2.4 million unemployed; 500,000 unemployment benefit cases; inflow into claimant unemployment of 3.8 million.
2. All estimates rounded to nearest £10 million.
3. Figures may not sum due to rounding.
4. Estimates in cash prices.
5. Excludes measures related to back to work bonus and national insurance contribution rebate.
6. Benefit sanction estimates are net of hardship payments.
7. Estimates are net of any effects in other benefits.
8. Based on 1993 annual statistical inquiry, 1993 and 1994 unemployment benefit statistics, 1993–94 adjudication officer statistics and the policy simulation model using 1990–91–92 family expenditure data.
9. The estimated effects relating to adult dependency increases unified rates assume contributory entitlement lasts six months.

Benefit savings are also likely to arise from aligning the treatment of earnings for contributory claimants with that for income-based claimants. Further information is currently being collected to allow this to be assessed.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his assessment of the number of people who will give up work as a result of their unemployed partners being eligible for non-means-tested benefit for only six months instead of 12 months under the jobseekers allowance.

Mr. Roger Evans: Of the 165,000 people estimated to lose entitlement to contribution-based jobseekers allowance as a result of the length of contributory entitlement being reduced to six months, 55,000 are estimated to have partners with earnings. It is not possible to provide an estimate of the number of these partners who may decide to give up work once contributory benefit is lost. However, any such effect is likely to be small as most couples in this position will be substantially better off with one partner in work than with neither.

We will also be introducing measures which are designed to encourage the partners of jobseekers allowance and income support claimants to remain in work, including increasing the partner's hours threshold from 16 to 24 hours, and introducing the back to work bonus.

Notes:

Estimated using the policy simulation model with 1990–91–92 family expenditure survey data and the 1993 and 1994 unemployment benefit statistics.

All estimates rounded to the nearest 5,000.

Youth Aid and Barnardo's Report

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what response he has made to the Youth Aid and Barnardo's report of 1993, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Roger Evans: Since publication of the report, we have substantially improved access to youth training; the number of young people awaiting a youth training place for eight weeks or more has dropped significantly to around 2,400. Our policy remains one of encouraging young people to take up education, work or training, not dependency on benefits, although income support remains available to young people at risk of severe hardship.

National Insurance

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women in the United Kingdom were still paying the reduced married women's national insurance contributions in 1993–94 at the latest available date.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) on 21 October, *Official Report,* column *381.* Information regarding 1993–94 is not yet complete.

Habitual Residency Test

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what additional resources or training has been given to local Benefits Agency staff to implement decisions under the habitual residency test; and what safeguards exist to ensure the test is not applied in a racially discriminatory way.

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Max Madden, dated 9 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the introduction of the habitual residence test.

An allocation of £800,000 has been distributed among Benefits Agency (BA) District offices and the need for any additional resources is being kept under review as management information is collected about the impact of the new procedures.

Prior to the introduction of the test, self instruction training material was produced by the BA in conjunction with staff from the office of the Chief Adjudication Officer. This material set out the requirements imposed by the test and was issued to Managers of all local BA offices. Managers are responsible for deciding who amongst their staff should receive the training.

The BA is committed to equal opportunities and has published an equal opportunities policy statement which makes it clear that no form of discrimination, whether against customers or staff by customers or staff, will be tolerated. This policy statement has been implemented through local action plans that are regularly monitored. Any complaints or suggestions of discrimination will always be treated seriously and immediately investigated by management. In addition, the Chief Adjudication Officer's staff are currently conducting a monitoring exercise to confirm uniformity in the application of the test and decision making throughout the country and as a part of this exercise will this month hold seminars with local Adjudication Officers.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Information Technology

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the bid by Computer Sciences Corporation to take over the day-to-day running of the information technology operations and support services of the Information Technology Services Agency.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The deadline for initial bids for this procurement was 12pm on 2 December 1994. No bid had been received from Computer Sciences Corporation by this deadline.

Divorce Settlements

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to be able to make a statement to the House regarding clean-break divorce financial settlements for wives and children.

Mr. Burt: The Government are aware of the concerns about the treatment of clean-break settlements in the child support arrangements. We have been conducting our own review of the child support system and are now considering carefully the recent report of the Social Security Select Committee. We will respond with proposals for policy changes in due course.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will now summarise in a report to the House the responses to his consultation paper on the Government's proposals in regard to discrimination against disabled people, or place a summarised version of the responses in the Library.

Mr. Hague: I intend to publish an analysis of the responses when it is available. Copies will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will make it his policy to draft his proposed Bill on discrimination against disabled people in such a way that its scope will not prevent any attempt to substitute a disability rights commission, with the powers provided for by the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, for the proposed National Disability Council;

(2) if he will make it his policy to draft the money resolution for his proposed Bill on discrimination against disabled people in such a way as not to preclude amendments to substitute a Disability Rights Commission, with the powers provided for by the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, for the proposed National Disability Council.

Mr. Hague: We are in the process of drafting the Bill. The Bill's scope and the money resolution will depend on the final contents. It is not our intention to draft the Bill in such a way as to rule out full discussion of this issue.

Pensions

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the amount of the normal uprating in April 1995 for *(a)* a single pensioner not on income support, *(b)* a pensioner couple not on income support, *(c)* a single pensioner on income support, *(d)* a pensioner couple on income support and alongside set out the money over and above that uprating for VAT home heating compensation.

Mr. Roger Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 8 December to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr Gale), *Official Report*, column *376.*

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information requested by the hon. Member is published in the "Market Testing Bulletin", copies of which are held in the Library.

Project	*Value £ million*	*Successful tenderer*
ITSA Audit	1.2	CSL Ltd
HQ A and OS Facilities Management	0.68	TFM (Granada)
CA Cleaning	0.73	ISS Contract Cleaning Ltd
BA Storage Archives	0.46	Britannia Data Management
ITSA ACC1 Livingston	6.1	ISSC
BA Publishing	4.08	Management Employee Buyout
BA A and OS Wales & Central AD3	1.39	Group 4
BA Storage Printed Materials	2.56	HMSO
BA A and OS Longbenton	0.86	Manpower plc
BA A and OS Wales & Central AD2	1.28	Procord Ltd
BA A and OS Wales & Central AD3	0.59	Turner & Townsend FM
BA A and OS Southern AD7	2.25	BET Facilities Management
BA A and OS SAD1	2.07	Group 4
ITSA Security Guarding	0.42	Wakenhut UK
BA A and OS Southern AD4	5.13	Haden Facilities Management
BA A and OS Wales & Central AD2	1.26	BET Facilities Management
BA A and OS Southern AD2	5.07	BET Facilities Management
BA A and OS Wales & Central AD5	2.63	Procord Ltd
BA A and OS Southern AD5	4.82	Serco Ltd
BA A and OS Wales & Central AD7	3.88	BET Facilities Management
BA A and OS Wales & Central AD2	1.32	BET Facilities Management
BA A and OS Southern AD7	1.51	BET Facilities Management
BA A and OS Southern AD1	1.09	Group 4
BA A and OS Scotland & Northern AD1	0.83	Mowlem Facilities Management
BA A and OS Wales & Central AD1	0.72	Mowlem Facilities Management
BA A and OS Wales & Central AD1	0.18	Reliance Security Services
BA A and OS Scotland & Northern AD2	3.6	BET Facilities Management
BA A and OS Wales & Central AD6	0.77	Turner & Townsend FM
BA A and OS Quarry House Facilities Management	[1]0.84	TFM Granada
BA A and OS Quarry House Word Processing		Manpower
BA A and OS Quarry House Office Support		Manpower
BA A and OS Quarry House Security		Centuryan
BA A and OS Quarry House maintenance		Crown House AMT
BA Training Wales & Central AD1	[2]12.48	Group 4
BA Training Wales & Central AD2		Group 4
BA Training Wales & Central AD3		Group 4
BA Training Wales & Central AD5		City College Manchester
BA Training Wales & Central AD6		City College Manchester
BA Training Southern AD4		Plymouth College

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[1] The cost of the service that went out to tender for the Quarry house contracts cannot be broken down into individual contracts as this is a notional figure.

[2] Due to the nature of the market test BA Training was submitted to, much of the information cannot be obtained at contract level, having been calculated on a national level at the time. The value of £12.48 million therefore includes the 16 in-house wins.

VAT (Fuel)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much compensation towards the extra cost of value added tax on domestic fuel there will be within the benefit rates from next April for pensioners and disabled people.

Mr. Lilley: Average amounts of compensation are shown in the table. Fuel prices have fallen in real terms over the last two years inclusive of VAT. Pensioners and disabled people should therefore have experienced gains in addition to those due to VAT compensation next year exceeding the impact of eight per cent. VAT on average fuel bills.

	VAT: 8 per cent. of estimated average fuel bill, for each group of recipients, in 1995–96 —per week £	*Compensation in 1995–96—per week. (includes amounts added into benefit rates in 1994–95 and 1995–96)* £
Pensioners[1]	0.85	0.90
Disabled people[2]	0.90	1.00

[1] The average of VAT and compensation for all single people over pension age, and all couples where the head of the couple is over pension age.

[2] The average of VAT and compensation for all single disabled people, and all couples where at least one person in the couple is disabled.

Note:

Modelled using the 1990–91–92 family expenditure surveys, uprated to 1995–96 levels. Amounts of VAT and compensation are calculated at benefit unit level. Estimates of VAT for pensioners are similar—within 5p—to those produced by Age Concern from the 1993 family expenditure survey.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the changes to his proposals, consequent upon the decision not to proceed with the second phase of value added tax on domestic fuel following his annual review of national insurance contributions.

Mr. Lilley: The revised contribution rates and thresholds are in the table.

CLASS 1
Lower Earnings Limit[1] £58 a week
Upper Earnings Limit £440 a week

Employees contributions[2]

Initial rate 2 per cent.—on earnings up to the LEL
Main rate 10 per cent.—on earnings between the LEL and UEL

Employer contributions[2]

Weekly earnings	*Contribution rate*
£58-£104.99	3 per cent.
£105-£149.99	5 per cent.
£150-£204.99	7 per cent.
£205 and over	10.2 per cent.

CLASS 2
Self employed rate[1] £5.75 a week
Limit of net earnings for exception from
Class 2 liability[1] £3,260 a year

CLASS 3
Voluntary contributions rate £5.75 a week

CLASS 4
Lower Profits Limit £6,640
Upper Profits Limit £22,880

Contribution rate 7.3 per cent.

Note:

[1] Revised in light of the decision not to proceed with the second phase of VAT. [2] Not contracted-out rates shown. A contracted-out rebate of 3 per cent. for employers and 1.8 per cent. for employees applies to earnings between the lower earnings limit and the upper earnings limit.

Benefit Upratings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost, in a full year, of full uprating of child dependency additions of all categories using their year of introduction as a base.

Mr. Roger Evans *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* The estimated net cost would be £90 million in 1994–95:

Notes:

1. The estimate has been calculated by:
    - (i) taking the child dependency increase rate—CDI—for the eldest child payable in 1948, the year of introduction; then
    - (ii) inflating that figure to take account of upratings from 1948 up to and including April 1994. The percentage rate of increase used is the same as that of personal retirement pension; then
    - (iii) deducting the rates of child benefit payable from April 1994 to arrive at the rates that would apply for both the eldest child and subsequent children; then
    - (iv) following conversion to an annual gross figure, applying an offsetting reduction on expenditure on income-related benefits.
2. The estimate excludes the cost of restoring sickness benefit, maternity allowance and unemployment benefit CDIs, which were discounted with effect from November 1984.
3. The estimate has been rounded to the nearest £5 million and should be treated with caution owing to small sample sizes.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 13 December 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which of the appointments made to public bodies by his Department were advertised in the period from April 1992 to December 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Four appointments to the Law Commission were advertised in the period from April 1992 to December 1993, although three of those appointed did not take up post until 1994.

In addition, two vacancies for barristers on the Legal Aid Board were also advertised in *Bar News*, a publication distributed to all subscribing members of the Bar.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is his Department's policy regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will list *(a)* the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* the cost in each case in the period April 1992 to December 1993.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The use of executive search consultants is one of the recruitment options considered when making public appointments. Such consultants were not, however, used in the period in question.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department has not employed any special advisers during the last five years.

Magistrates Court Service

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he will announce the results of the review conducted by his Department and the magistrates courts service into the operation of the formula for allocating revenue grant to the magistrates courts service.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has today completed his consideration of the proposals made by the working group, comprising representatives of the service and his Department, and of the representations made by the service regarding those proposals.

The Lord Chancellor has concluded that the review has demonstrated that the current formula for revenue grant allocation, introduced on 1 April 1992, as set out in the answer given on 18 October 1991, *Official Report*, column 288, does not represent the best method of allocation. It does not adequately encourage local managers to achieve the best value for money in their use of resources, while also reflecting the varying needs of magistrates courts committees. He, therefore, intends to allocate revenue grant in 1995–96, and in subsequent years, on the basis of a revised formula. The allocation formula will operate on the following basis:

	Per cent.
Average expenditure outturn over the previous 5 years, expressed at constant prices	45
The annual estimate of general population produced by the Office of Population Census and Surveys	10
Completed weighted caseload, averaged over a 3, growing to 5, year rolling period	35
Fine enforcement averaged over a 2, growing to 5, year rolling period	5
Time taken to deal with triable either-way and indictable only cases, averaged over a 2, growing to 5, year rolling period	5

The Lord Chancellor intends, over the coming years, to reduce the areas of expenditure which are wholly or partially excluded from the cash limiting formula. In a number of instances this will be subject to further consideration, in conjunction with the service, of suitable alternative procedures. There are also a number of further matters he wishes his Department to consider. All of these will be subject to consultation with the service. Copies of a paper setting out the full details of the allocation formula to apply from 1995–96 onwards, the issues for further consideration and the allocations to apply for 1995–96 have been placed in the Library of the House and sent today to members of the Magistrates Courts Consultative Council, the clerks to all MCCs and the chief executives of all paying authorities.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Lord President of the Council which of the special advisers serving in his office during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Newton: All special advisers are currently required to have positive vetting.

TRANSPORT

Thames Transport

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions the River Thames working group has reached from its study into transport on the Thames.

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions the River Thames working group has reached from its study into transport on the Thames.

Mr. Norris: The River Thames working group has now completed its work examining the potential for increasing traffic on the River Thames and its report will be published tomorrow. The Thames is a unique river with its own special characteristics, opportunities and problems. The group has concluded that there is scope for increasing freight volumes and for improving tourist services and suggests what is needed to allow this to happen. I will place a copy of the report in the Library tomorrow.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Dr. Mawhinney: All special advisers are currently required to have positive vetting.

Payment of Bills

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of invoices to his Department were paid within agreed terms or 30 days for the last financial year.

Mr. Norris: A total of 93.6 per cent.

Buses (Wheelchair Accessibility)

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance is given to bus and minibus manufacturers and operators by his Department on the provision of adequate restraint of wheelchairs in buses and minibuses, on the provision of seat belts to restrain wheelchair occupants and on the suitability of various types of wheelchair for carrying occupants in buses and minibuses; what information he has on the extent to which such guidance has been adopted by bus and minibus manufacturers; and what representations he has received with respect to amendments to any existing guidance or codes of practice covering the above issues.

Mr. Norris: Guidance is given in a code of practice entitled "The Safety of Passengers in Wheelchairs on Buses". This code of practice is used by vehicle inspectorate certifying officers when examining vehicles, designed for the carriage of passengers in wheelchairs, for public service vehicle certification. The code deals with the restraint of both wheelchairs and their occupants and takes account of the various types and sizes of wheelchair available, including those powered by electricity. The only deviation which has been allowed from the terms of the code is in respect of low-floor buses and we will review the recommendations of the code when trials on these buses are complete.

Information on the extent to which manufacturers have taken up this guidance is not available but we are aware that, in addition to PSVs, local authorities and voluntary groups have adopted the recommendations of the code for vehicles which they operate.

Research

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what sum was spent by his Department on research in each of the last 10 years; what percentage this was of the total annual budget; what is the research budget for the forthcoming year; what percentage this is of his total budget; and what additional new research is to be undertaken.

Mr. Norris: The figures requested are given in the following table:

Year	*Net research expenditure*	*Research as a percentage of total expenditure*
1985–86	25.0	0.9
1986–87	24.6	0.9
1987–88	26.4	1.0
1988–89	27.2	1.0
1989–90	28.6	0.8
1990-91	30.5	0.7
1991–92	36.4	0.7
1992–93	39.7	0.6
1993–94	39.0	0.7
1994–95	38.0	0.6
1995–96	39.0	0.9

Gospel Oak to Barking Line

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements will be made after privatisation to fund resignalling of the Gospel Oak to Barking line between South Tottenham and Woodgrange Park; and what is the estimated cost for such works.

Mr. Norris: Investment in rail infrastructure is a matter for Railtrack in consultation with the franchising director and train operating companies. This relationship will not be affected by privatisation.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what resignalling, infrastructure repair and improvement works programme for the South Tottenham to Gospel Oak section of the Gospel Oak to Barking line prior to the flotation of Railtrack are planned and authorised by his Department; what arrangements will be made after privatisation to fund such projects where there are economic, social and environmental benefits to the local community; and what is the estimated cost for such planned or projected works.

Mr. Norris: I understand that the Barking to Gospel Oak line is being looked at in the context of plans Railtrack is currently developing for the whole of the North London line, in consultation with the train operating company, North London Railways. The signal cabling between South Tottenham and Wanstead Park is currently being replaced and is scheduled for completion by 12 December. Investment in rail infrastructure is a matter for Railtrack in consultation with the franchising director and train operating companies. This relationship will not be affected by privatisation.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the delays to the existing passenger train service caused by the absence of signals between South Tottenham signal box control area and Wanstead Park on the Gospel Oak to Barking line when additional trains are routed over the line; and if the resignalling installation planned between South Tottenham and Woodgrange Park as part of the Liverpool Street resignalling project remains in the resignalling programme currently authorised by his Department.

Mr. Norris: The signal cabling between South Tottenham and Wanstead Park is currently being replaced and this has resulted in trains being delayed by 30 seconds. No other delay assessments have been carried out. No plans currently exist for full resignalling between South Tottenham and Woodgrange Park.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what restrictions exist on the weight or type of train permitted to use the railway between Woodgrange Park and South Tottenham on the Gospel Oak to Barking line or between South Tottenham and Gospel Oak; why such restrictions exist; what remedial works are planned to eliminate such restrictions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: I understand that the route is classified at 90 tonne gross laden weight for four axle bogie vehicles but, due to lack of capacity on six bridges, the classification is reduced to 75 tonnes. Railtrack plans to strengthen or reconstruct these structures over the next four years.

Buses

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will support the retention of the traditional double-decker omnibus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Yes. a European Commission proposal for a directive on bus and coach construction is expected next year. We will be seeking any necessary amendments to ensure the survival of not only the double-decker but any other type of vehicle whose economic future may be threatened by the provisions of the directive.

Bridges

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken to conduct a general condition survey of all road bridges over and under both operational and disused railways in the north London area, following the failure and collapse of Crouch Hill bridge over the former railway alignment in north Islington; what Government funding is available to local authorities, Railtrack or any other authority responsible for maintenance and repair of bridges more than 30 years old; and what information he has as to why the bridge collapsed.

Mr. Norris: The authorities responsible for the structures in question are required to ensure that they are maintained in a safe condition and to carry out regular inspections as appropriate.

The bridge at Crouch hill is owned by the local highway authority, the London borough of Islington. The partial collapse of the bridge occurred while strengthening work was under way. Investigation of the cause of the collapse is a matter for the borough and those involved with the strengthening operations.

Central Government funding is available to local highway authorities to assist their programmes of bridge assessment and strengthening. This can include funding of the assessment of structures owned by Railtrack.

Railway Regulator

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many examinations by the railway regulator into track access charges and train leasing costs have been made; when he expects the regulator to report; and if the regulator's conclusions will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Watts: The rail regulator informs me that his office is nearing completion of a review of Railtrack's track access charges for both franchised passenger services and freight services. Consultation papers, "Framework for the Approval of Railtrack's Track Access Charges for Franchised Passenger Services" and "Framework for the Approval of Railtrack's Track Access Charges for Freight Services", were published by the office in June and October respectively. A policy statement, "Railtrack's Track Access Charges for Franchised Passenger Services: Developing the Structure of Charges", was published in November. Copies of all these documents have been placed in the Library of the House. The regulator intends to publish final policy statements on the levels of passenger and freight access charges in January.

The regulator has not undertaken any examination of train leasing costs, which are not subject to his approval.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the introduction of automated first registration and licensing involves a transfer of an undertaking from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to motor dealers within the meaning of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Stephen Curtis to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 13 December 1994:

Thank you for your recent question about the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to the Automated First Registration and Licensing Project. Interpretation of the law is for the Courts and this matter has not been tested in this way. However as always I would be very happy to discuss such matters with members of the staff and their representatives if they consider it would be helpful.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the numbers of commuters likely to benefit form the channel tunnel rail link; and how much subsidy per head he intends to authorise.

Mr. Watts: The Government intend to secure substantial capacity on the channel tunnel rail link for domestic passenger services. The four consortia invited to bid for the role of promoter have been asked to submit bids on two bases: to provide capacity for eight and 12 trains per hour each way during the peak. The precise service specification will be determined in the light of the bids received. The amount of subsidy will be determined as a result of the competition currently under way and of the competition which the Government intend to hold at a later stage to select an operator to run domestic services.

Air Traffic Control

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how much funding is required to complete the new Scottish air traffic control centre;

(2) when the new Scottish air traffic control centre will be operational;

(3) on what date the oceanic control centre equipment known as flight data processing system, FDPS II, will be in operation; and where this new equipment will be housed;

(4) what arrangements are being made to handle the expected increase in air traffic over air space covered by the Scottish air traffic control centre.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* The new Scottish centre—NSC—is being built at a cost of approximately £200 million to meet the predicted increase in the level of air traffic movements over Scotland and the north Atlantic. The CAA plans to have the NSC operational by 2000.

The CAA aims to have the new flight data processing system—FDPS—installed and operational in the NSC by 1998, subject to the satisfactory conclusion of a contract under the private finance initiative.

Re-sectorisation of the Scottish air space is being carried out to ensure that there is adequate capacity available until the new Scottish centre commences operation.

Passenger Transport Grant

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what level of metropolitan grant will be payable to the English passenger transport executives for 1995–96; and what total grant will be payable by all passenger transport executives to passenger train operators for 1995–96.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* We intend to lay before Parliament, early next year, a special grant report in respect of the metropolitan railway grant for 1995–96 in England and Wales.

Total grant payable to the English PTEs will be calculated pursuant to that report, based on the costs of passenger train operations in all the PTE areas.

PRIME MINISTER

Inward Investment, Chester

10. **Mr Brandreth:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to visit the City of Chester to discuss inward investment.

The Prime Minister: I have no immediate plans to do so. However, I am aware of the success that Chester has enjoyed in recent years in attracting inward investment to the city.

Ministers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) how many Ministers there were in the Home Office in 1978; how many there are now; and to what extent the current responsibilities and work of the Department are different from those in 1978;

(2) how many Ministers there are in the Department of Trade and Industry; how many there were in the Department of Trade and Industry in 1978; and to what extent the current responsibilities and work of the Department are different from those at that date;

(3) how many Ministers there are in the Department of the Environment; how many were in the corresponding Department in 1978; and to what extent the work and responsibilities of that Department have changed since that date.

The Prime Minister: This is a matter of public record. The current details of ministerial responsibilities are contained in the Cabinet Office's "List of Ministerial Responsibilities", which is available in the Library of the House.

Honours System

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 2 December 1994, *Official Report,* column *923,* if he will identify *(a)* the 15 people who have had an honour cancelled since 1979 and *(b)* the nature of the disrepute in each of these cases.

The Prime Minister: No. The names have been published in the *London Gazette.*

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Nagorno-Karabakh

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe with particular reference to Nagorno-Karabakh; what further action Her Majesty's Government propose taking within the UN Security Council in relation to peacekeeping forces in Nagorno-Karabakh; and whether Her Majesty's Government have been invited to participate in any way in relation to peacekeeping in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made last week, *Official Report,* 7 December 1994, columns *220–22.* In relation to Nagorno-Karabakh, we welcome the outcome of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe's Budapest summit as a positive step towards a peaceful resolution of that tragic conflict.

We will fully support the co-ordinated efforts of the CSCE Minsk group and the Russian Federation to work with the parties to the dispute in achieving a political agreement which will make it possible to establish a multinational peacekeeping operation. We will be ready to support appropriate action in the United Nations Security Council when that agreement has been reached.

We have undertaken to provide a small number of signals personnel for a possible CSCE monitoring mission in Nagorno-Karabakh. Any further contribution would have to be considered in the light of our other commitments, and of the conditions under which a peacekeeping operation was to be established.

Ecclesiastical Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Prime Minister what is the total number of ecclesiastical appointments for which he is responsible; and if he will list them.

The Prime Minister: I have already advised the hon. Member of the main categories of appointments, including church appointments, for which I am responsible. But the total number, including those appointments on which I advise Her Majesty the Queen, cannot be accurately calculated since I have discretion in some cases as to how many appointments I make; and in the case of church appointments, some vacancies fall casually and unpredictably to the Crown by virtue of the royal prerogative.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Prime Minister which of the special advisers serving in his office during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

The Prime Minister: All special advisers are currently required to have positive vetting.

ENVIRONMENT

Private Sector Rented Accommodation

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the average private sector residential rent in *(a)* Southampton, *(b)* Portsmouth and *(c)* Hampshire; and, in each case, what is the total number of private sector residential tenancies.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Information is not available on the average private sector residential rent in Southampton, Portsmouth and Hampshire. Details of the number of private sector residential tenancies in these areas are contained in table 20 of the 1991 "Census County Report: Hampshire", part 1.

Domestic Waste Disposal

Mr. Scott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities in England dispose of their domestic waste *(a)* by incineration and *(b)* by the use of landfill sites.

Mr. Atkins: Information on the waste disposal practices of individual local authorities is not held centrally.

Approximately 20 million tonnes of domestic waste arise annually in England and Wales. Of this, around 85 per cent. is landfilled and 10 per cent. is incinerated. There are currently 21 incinerators for the disposal of municipal waste operating in the United Kingdom.

Energy Efficiency

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information and data from the 1991 English house condition survey on energy consumption, energy efficiency and condition of housing he has provided to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Data on the subjects mentioned by the hon. Member are contained in the report of the survey, which is a public document.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each metropolitan district and London borough the value of the funding for the first year of the single regeneration budget, the bid for funds from the first year of the single regeneration budget, the totals received under the urban programme in 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95 and the totals for section 11 funding in 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95.

Mr. Curry: The bids received for funding new projects under the single regeneration budget and the 201 successful bids announced on 6 December represent comprehensive responses by partnerships to local needs, which in some cases cross local authority boundaries. As a result, the information requested is not available in the form sought, but I sent details of all the successful bids to the hon. Member on 5 December.

Details of funding provided under the urban programme and section 11 in each metropolitan district and London borough is given in the tables. The section 11 grant allocations for 1994–95 include Home Office funded projects and those funded from the single regeneration budget.

Funding under the urban programme

£ million

	1992–93	*1993–94*	*1994–95 allocation*
Metropolitan Districts			
Barnsley	1.995	1.219	0.700
Birmingham	20.295	13.558	6.779
Bolton	3.712	2.055	0.282
Bradford	4.177	2.865	1.462
Coventry	4.287	2.786	1.367
Doncaster	2.069	1.141	0.627
Dudley	1.448	0.941	0.461
Gateshead	—	4.798	2.459
Kirklees	1.082	0.662	0.343
Knowsley	4.749	2.378	0.946
Leeds	4.783	3.178	1.554
Liverpool	16.763	11.043	5.675
Manchester	[1]19.401	8.349	3.738
Newcastle	[2]15.057	4.871	2.378
North Tyneside	3.030	1.974	0.951
Oldham	3.563	2.384	0.965
Rochdale	3.496	2.263	1.047
Rotherham	2.067	1.336	0.667
St. Helens	1.568	1.098	0.593
Salford	[1]	4.280	1.120
Sandwell	4.260	2.801	1.261
Sefton	1.612	0.910	0.516
Sheffield	5.482	3.655	1.762
South Tyneside	4.574	2.938	1.502
Sunderland	4.650	3.073	1.148
Walsall	1.662	0.922	0.429
Wigan	2.555	1.527	0.634
Wirral	3.377	2.154	1.168
Wolverhampton	4.782	3.127	1.494
London Boroughs			
Brent	2.483	1.351	0.573
Greenwich	1.401	1.013	0.436
Hackney	4.890	3.041	1.269
Hammersmith and Fulham	2.321	1.557	0.654
Haringey	2.747	1.852	0.869
Islington	7.875	5.311	2.445
Kensington and Chelsea	1.716	1.115	0.546

Funding under the urban programme

£ million

	1992–93	*1993–94*	*1994–95 allocation*
Lambeth	7.790	5.340	2.731
Lewisham	2.278	1.326	0.567
Newham	2.929	1.755	0.811
Southwark	2.477	1.622	0.669
Tower Hamlets	4.011	2.723	0.880
Wandsworth	2.918	1.918	0.450

[1] combined funding given to Manchester and Salford in 1992–93

[2] combined funding given to Newcastle and Gateshead in 1992–93

Funding Under Section 11

£ million

	1992–93	*1993–94*	*1994–95 allocation*
Metropolitan Districts			
Birmingham	7.498	7.895	5.551
Bolton	1.089	1.171	0.881
Bradford	5.892	6.084	4.468
Bury	0.409	0.486	0.355
Calderdale	1.073	1.165	0.853
Coventry	2.853	3.033	2.254
Doncaster	0.112	0.164	0.119
Dudley	1.248	1.327	1.030
Gateshead	0.031	0.063	0.044
Kirklees	3.143	3.472	2.515
Leeds	2.191	2.542	1.983
Liverpool	0.176	0.217	0.165
Manchester	2.746	3.029	2.329
Newcastle	0.438	0.467	0.342
North Tyneside	0.151	0.162	0.116
Oldham	2.443	2.618	1.968
Rochdale	1.455	1.587	1.193
Rotherham	0.432	0.476	0.352
St. Helens	0.010	0.019	0.014
Salford	0.062	0.065	0.047
Sandwell	1.513	1.644	1.281
Sheffield	2.642	2.635	1.870
Stockport	0.100	0.103	0.076
Sunderland	0.111	0.116	0.087
Tameside	0.809	0.825	0.627
Trafford	0.287	0.329	0.243
Wakefield	0.348	0.437	0.322
Walsall	2.049	2.174	1.598
Wigan	0.056	0.060	0.044
Wirral	0.064	0.110	0.087
Wolverhampton	1.973	2.104	1.575
London Boroughs			
Barking and Dagenham	0.335	0.323	0.231
Barnet	1.479	1.287	0.964
Bexley	0.093	0.193	0.125
Brent	2.780	3.011	2.142
Camden	1.372	1.602	1.161
Croydon	1.203	1.446	1.027
Ealing	2.799	3.682	2.802
Enfield	1.240	1.644	1.219
Greenwich	1.573	1.856	1.354
Hackney	4.357	4.323	3.382
Hammersmith and Fulham	0.916	1.056	0.780
Haringey	2.183	3.389	2.730
Harrow	0.877	0.974	0.719
Havering	0.052	0.051	0.039
Hillingdon	0.440	0.496	0.369
Hounslow	1.754	1.899	1.390
Islington	1.980	2.103	1.502
Kensington and Chelsea	1.140	1.204	0.933
Kingston upon Thames	0.120	0.152	0.107
Lambeth	1.260	1.615	1.110
Lewisham	2.078	2.178	1.637
Merton	0.521	0.706	0.490
Newham	3.013	3.404	2.462
Redbridge	1.182	1.239	0.933
Richmond upon Thames	0.063	0.077	0.056
Southwark	2.339	2.543	1.965
Sutton	0.056	0.063	0.047
Tower Hamlets	8.922	9.703	7.211
Waltham Forest	1.893	2.149	1.639
Wandsworth	1.993	2.083	1.608
Westminster	1.876	2.046	1.543

Notes:

The figures include payments to local authorities, grant-maintained schools, further education colleges and sixth form colleges.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the successful single regeneration on budget bids in the west midlands region was for housing projects which would previously have qualified for funding under the estates action programme.

Mr. Curry: Of the 13 successful west Midlands bids for the single regeneration budget, six contain housing projects which would previously have been eligible to be considered for estate action funding. These housing projects will receive £23 million of the total west midlands SRB funding of £156.686 million.

English Nature (Grants)

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has given English Nature on the issuing of grants to voluntary bodies; and if he will list the nature of the work undertaken by those bodies that have been assisted.

Mr. Atkins: English Nature is provided with comprehensive advice on grant giving in its financial memorandum. Summaries of grants given and the work undertaken by grant-aided bodies are included in English Nature's annual reports.

VAT (Fuel)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has about the proportion of disposable income which will be used by households to maintain a temperature of 16 deg C inside their homes over the winter months as a result of the imposition of VAT of 17.5 per cent. on fuel, taking account of the compensation package; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the environmental and public health impacts of the imposition of VAT at 17.5 per cent. on domestic fuel bills.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that the proposed increase in VAT on domestic fuel bills will not now take place.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account had been taken of the information and data obtained for the 1991 English house condition survey when calculating the compensation package associated with value added tax on domestic fuel bills.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: It is not possible to specify the account which was taken of any particular source of information among the many that were considered as the package of help for VAT on fuel was prepared. The package directed additional resources to vulnerable groups, especially pensioners, who were among those highlighted in the English house condition survey.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to include energy efficiency in the housing fitness standard following the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel bills; and what proportion of disposable income he considers reasonable for maintaining a temperature of 16 deg C within homes.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We have no proposals. The proportion of disposable income reasonable for maintaining a temperature of 16 deg C will depend on the disposable income of the individual household.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Gummer: Twenty-five.

Rio Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what additional measures he intends to introduce to assist in meeting the carbon dioxide reduction targets agreed at the 1992 Rio conference following the Government's decision to abandon the planned second tranche rise in VAT on domestic fuel and power.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) on 12 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *435*.

National Parks

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) which local authorities appoint representatives to serve on national park committees; and how many people each appoint;

(2) how many people he appoints to each national park committee;

(3) if he will list all the constituencies which form part of national parks.

Mr. Atkins: The information is set out in the table. Information relating to national parks in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

National Park		*Local authority and number of appointees*	*Secretary of State appointees*	*Constituencies forming part of National Parks*
Dartmoor	Devon CC	11	7	Devon West and Torridge
	South Hams DC	1		Teignbridge
	Teignbridge DC	1		Tiverton
	West Devon DC	1		South Hams
Exmoor	Somerset CC	10	7	Bridgwater
	Devon CC	3		Taunton
	West Somerset DC	2		Devon North
	North Devon DC	2		
Lake District	Cumbria CC	16	10	Copeland
	Allerdale DC	1		Westmorland and Lonsdale
	Copeland DC	1		Penrith and the Border
	Eden DC	1		Workington
	South Lakeland DC	1		
North Yorkshire Moors	North Yorkshire CC	12	9	Langbaurgh
	Cleveland CC	2		Richmond (Yorkshire)
	Langbaurgh DC	1		Scarborough
	Ryedale DC	1		Ryedale
	Scarborough DC	1		
	Hambleton DC	1		
Northumberland	Northumberland CC	18	10	Berwick upon Tweed
	Alnwick DC	1		Hexham
	Berwick-upon-Tweed DC	1		
	Tynedale DC	1		
Peak District	Derbyshire CC	8	11	Derbyshire North East
	Sheffield CC	2		Littleborough and Saddleworth
	Staffordshire CC	2		Staffordshire Moorlands
	Cheshire CC	2		Derbyshire West
	Staffordshire			Sheffield Hallam
	Moorlands DC	1		Colne Valley
	Derbyshire Dales DC	2		Macclesfield
	Barnsley MBC	1		Sheffield Hillsborough
	Oldham MBC	1		High Peak

National Park	Local authority and number of appointees		Secretary of State appointees	Constituencies forming part of National Parks
	North East Derbyshire DC	[1]1		Barnsley West and Penistone
	Kirklees MBC	2		
	High Peak BC	1		
	Macclesfield BC	[1]1		
Yorkshire Dales	North Yorkshire CC	12	8	Richmond Yorkshire
	Cumbria CC	1		Skipton and Ripon
	Richmondshire DC	1		Westmorland and Lonsdale
	South Lakeland DC	1		
	Craven DC	1		

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[1] These authorities share two places on the Peak Park Board on a two-year rotating basis.

Housing

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list *(a)* the sum paid out in housing benefit (i) to council and (ii) to non-council tenants and *(b)* the sum tenants received in housing revenue account subsidy in each local housing authority area in 1993-94; and what is the size of the surplus or deficit in each local housing authority.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 12 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *433*.

Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total sum claimed in *(a)* expenses and *(b)* attendance allowances by councillors on Hampshire district councils and Hampshire county council in the most recent year; and how many councillors in total serve on these councils.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Details of expenses and attendance allowances payments made by local authorities to councillors are not held centrally, but 102 councillors serve on Hampshire county council, and a total of 586 on the Hampshire district councils.

Housing Association Rents

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage change in rents for new housing association assured tenancies between 1989 and 1994; and what has been the change in the retail prices index over the same period.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) on 30 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *724*.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to keep the system of local authority funding under review.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: It is already our policy to do so.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase credit approvals and capital grants to local authorities in 1995–96 to maintain current expenditure levels.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Capital allocations to local authorities in 1995–96 will reflect the Government's general policy on public expenditure control. However, central Government support is only one means through which local authorities can undertake capital expenditure; they can also finance it out of usable capital receipts from the sale of assets, and from revenue. Authorities therefore have some scope to fund higher levels of capital expenditure if they choose to do so.

National Non-domestic Rate

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to allowing the national non-domestic rate to be placed under local authority control.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I have no plans to return the setting of non-domestic rates to local authority control.

Local Authorities (Pensioners)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to alleviate the additional costs placed on local authorities for compensation to pensioners.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My right. hon. Friend the Secretary of State laid the Local Government (Compensation for Redundancy) Regulations 1994 before the House on 5 December. These allow local authorities to compensate pensioners whose payments were reduced following the Court of Appeal judgment in Allsop *v.* North Tyneside MBC. Where authorities choose to make such payments, they must do so from their own available resources.

Fire Safety

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding the responsibilities of landlords in ensuring fire safety in houses of multiple occupation.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Housing (Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Regulations 1990—SI 1990 No. 830—require managers of HMOs to ensure the repair, maintenance and good order of means of escape from fire, including display signs, and apparatus, systems and other things provided by way of fire precautions. The manager is also required to take reasonable precautions for the general safety of residents, which can include fire precautions. Failure to comply is punishable by a fine not exceeding level three on the standard scale, which is currently £1,000.

Local housing authorities have the power to serve a notice under section 352 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended, requiring the person having control of or managing the house to provide adequate means of escape from fire and other fire precautions. Failure to comply is punishable by a fine not exceeding level four on the standard scale, currently £2,500. Local authorities may carry out works in default and recover their expenses from the person on whom the notice was served.

Landlords may also have a general duty under section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 to conduct their undertaking in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that persons not in their employment are not exposed to risks to their health or safety, and this can include tenants in HMOs. The risks can include fire risks. Failure to comply is punishable by a fine not exceeding £20,000.

Rented Housing

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate has been made of the number of new homes available for rent which need to be built in the area of each housing authority in England.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Department does not make such estimates. Local housing authorities make assessments of the full range of housing needs when they draw up their housing strategy statements for their areas. Authorities are expected to publish their statements.

Non-domestic Rating

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes are now proposed to the current system of appeals against non-domestic rating assessments in England and Wales, in the light of responses to the consultation papers.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, together with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, has decided to streamline the current arrangements and make them simpler for business to use. The changes will apply to appeals against the new rating lists which come into effect on 1 April 1995.

There was a full and helpful response to the consultation papers we issued in September. There was a warm welcome for our proposals that the Valuation Office agency should notify occupiers direct of their proposed new rateable value in January, instead of leaving them to find it out when they receive their rate bill for 1995–96; to abandon the six-month limit on submission of appeals following a material change of circumstances, or relevant tribunal or court decision; and to shorten from six months to three the period after which the VOA has to pass an unresolved appeal on to the valuation tribunal. We will therefore proceed with all these reforms.

We had also proposed a tightening up of the current system of time limits for appeals against the values originally shown in the list, which has not worked well. Respondents endorsed our analysis of the problem but many favoured the more radical step of abolishing the time limits altogether, on the grounds that their potential benefits were outweighed by the practical drawbacks. We found their representations persuasive. We have therefore decided that ratepayers should be able to appeal on any of the permitted grounds at any time during the currency of the list.

These new arrangements will be far easier for business, particularly small business, to deal with and will help to ensure speedier settlement of appeals. We will be bringing forward regulations to implement them in the new year.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering Personnel Services

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his proposals for extending compulsory competitive tendering to local authority personnel services.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Government announced on 10 November 1992 their intention to extend compulsory competitive tendering to local authority and other defined authorities' corporate and professional services, including personnel services. My officials have subsequently had valuable discussions with a joint services working group which included representatives of the local authority associations and the Audit Commission and Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy on how the CCT regime might be applied to personnel services.

Following these discussions, we are today issuing a consultation paper inviting comments on the Government's detailed proposals for extending CCT to personnel services. This follows similar consultations for local authorities' housing management, legal, construction and property, IT and finance services. It represents the last of the services which are being considered for inclusion in the CCT regime.

Copies of today's consultation paper will be placed in the Library. It proposes a definition which captures a range of authorities' personnel services, including training and human resource management, but does not encompass the day-to-day line management functions undertaken by many staff.

Authorities will wish, for a variety of reasons, to retain certain elements of personnel work in-house, both to enable an authority to fulfil its democratic responsibilities and to act as an expert client for bought-in services. We propose that local authorities be permitted to carry out up to 65 per cent. by value of personnel work using their own staff without going through competition. Authorities will be able to retain at least £300,000 worth of defined activity work in-house free of competition. This is intended to recognise and encourage the mixed economy of in-house and contracted-out service provision which is a feature of personnel services.

As with previous consultations on professional services, the consultation paper also gives details of modifications which we intend to make to the statutory framework for competitive tendering. This will ensure that authorities will continue to be able to deliver services in a way which meets their own operational objectives.

Following careful consideration of comments received on the proposals included in this consultation document, I will submit to the House the statutory instrument required under the Local Government Act 1988 to give effect to our proposals. I anticipate that, subject to the conclusions we draw from consultation and to parliamentary approval of the subsequent order defining the activity, CCT for personnel services will take effect from 1 October 1996 in metropolitan districts, London boroughs and certain other defined authorities.

For shire local authorities, personnel CCT will take effect once the Local Government Commission's review of local authority structure is complete and, where appropriate, changes have been made. The implementation timetable for the new police authorities will be the subject of separate consultation.

My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales are issuing separate consultation papers. The proposals contained therein follow much of what I have outlined above, although implementation dates will again take account of the programme for local government restructuring in both those countries.

Experience with the services already subject to CCT has shown that competition brings not only financial savings but also significant improvements in the management, efficiency and quality of public services. I fully expect that CCT will bring the same benefits to personnel services.

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about compulsory competitive tendering in relation to local government review and reorganisation and about the introduction of CCT for legal services, construction and property services and further manual services.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: On 2 August, my Department issued and invited comments from local authorities, industry and others on draft regulations and a draft guidance paper for shire county and district authorities, containing detailed proposals for the operation of compulsory competitive tendering in shire authorities during the period of local government review and reorganisation. These amplified the proposals announced by my predecessors on 29 March 1993, *Official Report,* column *55,* and 17 December 1993, *Official Report,* column *1096.*

The Government's main objective in determining these arrangements is to strike the right balance between maintaining and extending the benefits which CCT has brought to local authorities and the users of their services and easing administrative burdens on local authorities undergoing reorganisation.

One hundred and forty-seven organisations commented on the proposals. I have considered these, and have now made regulations under sections 19 and 26(4) of the Local Government Act 1992. The regulations will be laid next week, and my Department will then also issue the guidance paper to local authorities, a copy of which I shall place in the Library. Both the regulations and the guidance paper take account of the many comments and helpful suggestions received.

The guidance paper confirms that CCT for professional support services will start to come into effect two years after the coming into being of individual reorganised authorities, giving them good time in which to decide upon their new organisational structure, consider how they wish to organise their business and review their approach to the provision of support services.

As regards shire counties or districts which are unchanged following local government review, the proposal reflected in the August consultation drafts was that CCT for professional services would start to come into effect from April 1998. However, I have concluded that I wish to reconsider this timetable, in the interests of securing the benefits of competitive tendering as soon as possible in "status quo" authorities. I shall therefore consult local authorities further in the new year on alternative proposals. Any new arrangements, if adopted following consultation, will ensure that status quo authorities will have at least as much time to prepare for and implement CCT following the decisions on their future, as the two years provided for reorganised authorities following their establishment.

The 1992 Act regulations and the guidance paper confirm the timetable arrangements previously announced for the implementation of housing management CCT. Local authorities are making good progress with their preparations, including consultation with their tenants. I have, however, decided to drop the proposal in the August consultation drafts to link the HMCCT exemption for the reorganised authorities to preparation of a detailed specification which their direct service organisations would have to meet.

For other services already subject to CCT, the requirement to invite external tenders will be lifted in authorities undergoing reorganisation, for the period between the making of statutory reorganisation orders and 18 months after successor authorities take over, in recognition of the pressure of work on outgoing and successor authorities in this period. This exemption does not apply to short-term and low-value contracts which do not normally involve significant administrative effort. These are defined as work which will last for less than 12 months or be less than £200,000 in annual value. I have considered local authorities' arguments for widening this exemption, but have not been persuaded that this would be appropriate. As indicated in the August consultation drafts, all local authorities must at all times maintain DSO accounts, meet the specified financial objectives and maintain services fully to specification.

The other arrangements provided for in the 1992 Act regulations and guidance paper are as set out in the August consultation proposals. I shall place in the Library a list of the consultation responses received. Copies of individual responses can be obtained through the Library.

On 2 November, the House approved orders under section 2(3) of the Local Government Act 1988, to extend CCT to legal services, construction and property services, and three further manual services—security work, supervision of on-street parking and management of vehicles. I have now made regulations under section 6(3) of the 1988 Act, which set out the timetable for these services to become subject to CCT, and the proportions of legal services and construction and property services to be subject to completion.

These regulations give effect to the Government's decisions which my predecessor announced on 14 June 1994, *Official Report,* column *346,* and 19 July 1994, *Official Report,* column *109,* and which I set out to the House on 2 November 1994, *Official Report,* column *1606,* other than as regards the implementation timetable for "status quo" shire authorities, on which, as I have indicated, the Government wish to consult further with local authorities. Further 1988 Act regulations will be made to give effect to the decisions taken on this aspect of the arrangements, following the further consultation.

Nickel and Vanadium Emissions

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those large combustion plants which emit nickel and vanadium, the fuel they burn, the total annual emissions permitted for each plant of nickel and vanadium, the actual total annual emissions of nickel and vanadium for each plant in the last three years and the maximum emission rate of nickel and vanadium for each plant.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer Thursday 8 December 1994]:* All large combustion plants burning oil, coal or orimulsion will release vanadium or nickel. The table provides as much information as the inspectorate has been able to assemble without disproportionate expense. This information covers 1993.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution authorises releases of these substances in different ways depending on the detail of the application for authorisation under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the local circumstances. Some of these substances are given specific limits, but, in all cases, there is a residual duty under the Act to use best available techniques not entailing excessive cost to prevent the release of all prescribed substances, which include release to air of vanadium, nickel and their compounds, and to render harmless any other substance, which is not prescribed.

		Vanadium release to air			*Nickel release to air*		
Site	*Fuel*	*Maximum Rate (mgm/m^3)*	*Annual Permission (tonnes)*	*Annual Actual (tonnes)*[2]	*Maximum Rate (mm/m^3*	*Annual Permission (tonnes)*	*Annual Actual (tonnes)*[2]
National Power Pembroke	HFO (Heavy Fuel Oil)	0.21	[1]—	14	0.042	[1]—	3
National Power Aberthaw A	Coal and HFO	0.583	[1]—	7.5	0.378	[1]—	5
National Power Aberthaw B	Coal and HFO	0.378	[1]—	7.5	0.185	[1]—	5
National Power Uskmouth	Coal and HFO	0.22	[1]—	0.16	0.14	[1]—	0.10
National Power West Burton	Coal	0.15	[1]—	12.3	0.14	[1]—	8.2
National Power Blyth A	Coal	0.64	[1]—	—	392	[1]—	—
National Power Blyth B	Coal	0.229	[1]—	—	0.14	[1]—	—
National Power Eggborough	Coal	0.22	[1]—	—	0.14	[1]—	—
National Power Drax	Coal	0.22	[1]—	—	0.14	[1]—	—
National Power Skelton Grange	Coal	0.604	[1]—	—	0.392	[1]—	—
Powergen Ince	Orimulsion or HFO	—	160	27 (1993) 75 (1994)	—	[1]—	—
Powergen Ratcliffe-on-Soar[3]	Coal	0.4	[1]—	1	0.019	[1]—	0.45
Powergen Drakelow	Coal and HFO	—	[1]—	—	—	[1]—	—
National Power Rugeley A & B	Coal and HFO	0.22	[1]—	—	0.14	[1]—	—
National Power Willington	Coal and HFO	0.6	[1]—	—	0.39	[1]—	—
National Power Ironbridge	Coal and HFO	0.22	[1]—	—	0.14	[1]—	—
Powergen Richborough	Orimulsion	—	40	6.17	—	[1]—	0.81
Powergen Grain	HFO	—	[1]—	less than 50	—	[1]—	less than 11
National Power Littlebrook	HFO	—	[1]—	less than 348	—	[1]—	less than 79
Powergen Kingsnorth	Coal	—	[1]—	less than 26	—	[1]—	less than 31
National Power Fawley	HFO	3	[1]—	—	—	[1]—	—
National Power Didcot	Coal and HFO	0.22	[1]—	—	0.14	[1]—	—

[1] No limit specified in the authorisation document.

[2] Annual actual releases have been calculated from information in the application together with 1993–94 operating data. These figures are believed to be reasonably representative of releases for 1993. There is little information available for the last three years.

[3] This power station has limits of 0.435 for vanadium and 0.175 for nickel with respect to releases to water.

Sites of Community Interest

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with his counterparts in France, Ireland, Spain and Portugal concerning equivalence of progress on the designation of sites of community interest in the Atlantic biogeographical region, pursuant to article 1(c)(iii) of the EU habitats directive.

Mr. Atkins: A meeting attended by representatives of the Commission and relevant member states of the Atlantic biogeographic region to establish a common understanding for the application of the directive to the region and on aspects of implementation was held in Edinburgh from 12 to 14 October. Member states reported their progress on the identification of candidate sites of Community interest. Community-wide discussions on these topics are held at regular meetings of the adaptation committee for the directive, chaired by the Commission.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Gummer: All special advisers are required to have positive vetting.

Radioactive Waste Disposal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the contract recently awarded to Safeguard International to assume the responsibilities of the national radioactive waste disposal service was put out to competitive tender.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

Arrangements for the provision of this service are a management matter for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fire Advisory Panel

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the remit of the proposed fire advisory panel will include advice to the Government on national standards.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Government are currently considering the 61 conclusions and recommendations in the report of the review of fire safety legislation and enforcement in the light of responses to the recent public consultation exercise. No decisions have been taken on any of the recommendations, including those relating to the proposed new advisory panel.

Morgan Report

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to implement the recommendations of the Morgan report relating to the role of local councils.

Mr. Maclean: The Government issued their response to the Morgan report in December 1992. A copy was placed in the Library. We see no need to implement the specific recommendations in the report about the role of local authorities in crime prevention.

Dyfed Powys Police

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the funding of the Dyfed Powys police in both cash and real terms in each year since 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The following table shows the total amounts of Home Office grant, in cash terms and at 1993–94 prices, paid to the Dyfed Powys police between 1987–88 and 1993–94 in respect of both current and capital expenditure.

Home Office grant payments—Dyfed Powys police

	£ million *Grant paid*	*Grant at 1993–94 prices*
1987–88	12.154	17.067
1988–89	12.899	16.977
1989–90	15.056	18.522
1990–91	16.038	18.267
1991–92	18.925	20.281
1992–93	20.848	21.486
1993–94	22.828	22.828

The balance of the funding is made up of revenue support grant, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, national non-domestic rates and a precept on billing authorities for the proportion of the budget met by the community charge or the council tax.

Armley Prison (Young Offenders)

Mr. Michael: to ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* remanded and *(b)* sentenced prisoners aged under 21 years have been received into Armley prison since 1 August 1994; what was the number of such prisoners detained in Armley prison at the most recent convenient date; and why prisoners of this age are being held at Armley rather that at Moorland young offender institution.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 13 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about young offenders at Leeds prison.

There are currently no prisoners aged under 21 years detained at Leeds. Such prisoners have been held at Leeds on two occasions since August 1994.

In one case, a sentenced prisoner aged 20 who had been reclassified as adult was held at Leeds, in view of his record of behaviour in custody. He had taken hostages and committed affray and was unsuited to young offender conditions. He was released from custody in September 1994. The other case involved a remand prisoner who claimed he was 21. He was only held at Leeds for two days until a check with the Registrar of Births proved that he was under 21 and he was transferred to Doncaster.

British Citizen Children

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many cases over the past three years immigration enforcement action with a view to removal from the United Kingdom has been commenced against custodial parents of minor British citizen children; in how many such cases a custodial parent has been removed from the United Kingdom whether accompanied or not by the British citizen child or children; what is the breakdown by nationality of parents of British citizen children against whom such enforcement action has been commenced; and at what level of seniority decisions are taken to commence enforcement action which affect the rights of British citizen children.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The level of seniority at which decisions to commence enforcement action against the parent(s) of a British citizen child may vary according to the type of case, but in all such cases the decision to remove the parent(s) is taken at ministerial level.

Secure Remands (Juveniles)

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the Government intend to defray the costs of local authorities accommodating juveniles subject to court ordered secure remands.

Mr. Howard: It is intended that the Home Office will pay fees to local authorities in accordance with a tariff which will be established in consultation with interested parties, including the local authority associations. My Department will initiate discussions about the basis of the tariff in due course.

Police Funding Formula

Sir Irvine Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the police funding formula for South Yorkshire; and what assessment he has made of its effect.

Mr. Maclean: Under the Government's proposals announced on 1 December, £146.22 million will be available to the South Yorkshire police in 1995–96.

The new police funding formula has bee constructed by considering the determinants of the need for policing. The approach is similar—but more developed—to that of the formula which has been used since 1990 to distribute additional manpower to forces. Police needs are identified as falling into six main areas—maintaining a stable presence in the community, responding to calls for assistance, dealing with crimes, traffic management, maintaining public order, and community relations. Police pensions are also taken into account.

The new analyses were considered in the context of factors that have previously been used to assess expenditure needs. We concluded that, for 1995–96, the size of approved police establishments should be included in the formula. As a result, the extent of change next year will be limited.

Immigration Rules

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will investigate whether Bulgarian replacement crews due to arrive in Glasgow on 8 December are adhering to all immigration rules in respect of the Bulgarian fishing vessels Afala, Aktinia, Kaprela, Ofelia and Rotalia in United Kingdom waters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Under the immigration rules people seeking entry to join a vessel as members of its crew are eligible for admission if they are under contract to join a ship due to leave British waters. If the immigration officer is so satisfied he will grant leave to enter.

Merseyside Police

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial support *(a)* he provided to Merseyside police in 1993–94 and *(b)* is proposed for 1994–95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Maclean: Details of Home Office grant payments to Merseyside police in respect of current and capital expenditure are as follows:

£ million

	Current expenditure	*Capital expenditure*
1993–94 (actual)	103.267	3.044
1994–95 (estimated)	109.622	3.708

Police Authorities, Wales

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was *(a)* the cash increase and *(b)* the percentage increase in grants and moneys to each of the police authorities in Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There are no separate standard spending assessments—SSAs—for police authorities in Wales for this or previous years, on which to base year-on-year comparisons. County council SSAs include provision for police services. Expenditure on policing is determined by county councils in the light of their statutory responsibilities, local needs and available resources. Fifty-one per cent. of actual net police expenditure—both capital and current—is met by Home Office grant. The increase in police grant payable to each Welsh police authority between 1992-93 and 1993–94, in cash and percentage terms, is as follows:

Authority	*1992–93 £ million*	*1993–94 £ million*	*Cash difference £ million*	*Percentage difference*
Dyfed Powys	20.848	22.827	+1.979	+9.5
Gwent	21.852	21.770	–0.082	–0.4
North Wales	29.332	31.105	+1.773	+6.0
South Wales	67.177	69.310	+2.133	+3.2

From 1 April 1995 police authorities will become freestanding authorities with their own cash-limited police grant and SSA allocations, the proposals for which were announced on 1 December.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make available more grants to the North Wales police authority in order to facilitate the provisions of more police officers and special constables on the beat on housing estates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Proposed allocations of grant to police forces were announced by my right hon. and learned Friend in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 1 December at columns *844-45*. It is for the chief constable in consultation with his police authority to decide how the available resources should be deployed in the force area.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to meet the police authority in North Wales to discuss its budget provisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to meet the North Wales police authority. The setting of the force budget is a matter for the police authority.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers are currently held in HMP Winchester; and how long these individuals have been held under Immigration Act powers.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: As at 8 December 1994, a total of five people who had sought asylum were detained at HM prison Winchester. All these cases have spent between two to six months in detention at HM prison Winchester.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, columns *159–61*, how long each of the detainees referred to in table C had been in police cells.

Mr. Nicholas Baker *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* Figures for the length of detention of those detained in police cells on 18 November 1994 are not available retrospectively and details relating to those currently detained could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the number of applications for asylum *(a)* made at ports and *(b)* made in the country in each month in 1993;

(2) what was the number of applications for asylum *(a)* made at ports and *(b)* made in the country in each month in 1994.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is given in the table.

Applications[1] received for asylum in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by location of application and month, 1993 to end-November 1994

Number of principal applicants

	1993			*1994*		
	Applied in port	*Applied in-country*	*Total[2]*	*Applied in port*	*Applied in-country*	*Total[2]*
January	600	1,355	1,960	775	1,575	2,350
February	440	1,740	2,180	720	1,285	2,000
March	515	1,250	1,765	770	1,990	2,755
April	420	1,400	1,820	790	1,720	2,505
May	660	1,205	1,865	760	1,895	2,650
June	560	1,290	1,850	735	1,730	2,465
July	660	1,335	1,995	755	1,890	2,645
August	590	705	1,295	900	1,795	2,695
September	625	1,360	1,990	1,315	2,385	3,695
October	655	945	1,600	950	2,045	2,995
November	665	1,140	1,805	745	2,375	3,125
December	925	1,320	2,245	—	—	—
Total	7,320	15,050	22,370	9,210	20,680	29,890

[1] Provisional and estimated figures rounded to the nearest 5.

[2] Figures exclude applications made overseas.

War Crimes Act 1991

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which audit body is responsible for value for money spent on investigations under the War Crimes Act 1991; what the budget is for these investigations; and what spending is already committed.

Mr. Maclean: The Metropolitan police war crimes unit is responsible for investigations carried out under the War Crimes Act 1991 in England and Wales. The unit's expenditure is subject to audit by the Metropolitan police service internal audit branch and the National Audit Office.

Provision for police specific grant included £500,000 to support the Metropolitan police in their war crimes investigations in 1994–95. After precept, this amount generated a sum of £962,000. A total of £589,850 had already been spent by 31 October 1994 and the remaining is committed expenditure.

Entry Visas

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present waiting time for interview for entry visas for the United Kingdom at British high commission offices in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India for *(a)* husbands, *(b)* wives and *(d)* fiancés and fiancées.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information on waiting times to first interview for applicants in the settlement queues in Pakistan and India is published in table 2.5 of the Home Office Statistical Bulletin issue 25/94 "Control of Immigration: Statistics UK First and Second Quarters 1994" published on 20 October 1994, a copy of which is in the Library. Information on Sri Lanka is not collected centrally.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Home Office leases one property used, for security reasons, as the London residence of the Home Secretary of the day. The total expenditure on energy—gas and electricity—at the property in each of the last three financial years was:

1991–92: £1,079
1992–93: £1,628
1993–94: £4,699

Disclosure of Evidence

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *915*, when he expects to complete his consideration on the disclosure of evidence; and what plans he has for announcing the outcome.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We are making arrangements to give effect to the judgment of the Divisional court in ex parte Hickey and others, which concerned the procedure by which decisions are taken in cases where it is represented to us that a miscarriage of justice has occurred. Separately, the case of Mr. Malone, one of the applicants to the Divisional court, was referred to the Court of Appeal on 8 December.

DEFENCE

Drug Testing

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to introduce random compulsory drug testing in the armed forces.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to introduce random compulsory drug testing in the armed services.

Mr. Soames: The House will be aware that we have for some time been working on plans to introduce random compulsory drug tests in the armed forces.

The Government attach very high priority to tackling the problem of drug misuse. This is reflected in the proposals set out in the recent Green Paper "Tackling Drugs Together". In the spirit of the Green Paper, a number of measures are already taken in the armed forces to educate recruits and service personnel about the dangers of drugs, and the unlawful possession or supply of a controlled substance is contrary to service as well as civilian law.

Following detailed studies, a broad policy framework was agreed last year for the introduction of a compulsory drug testing regime in each of the three services, should that be judged necessary. I can now announce that, following an anonymous trial of testing procedures in the Army, we have decided as a further deterrent to introduce compulsory drug testing in the Army.

With immediate effect, Army personnel may be required to provide urine specimens for testing at any time and with no prior warning. Personnel who are tested positive or who refuse to provide a specimen will in the case of officers be required to resign and soldiers will normally be discharged. Lance corporals and below may in certain circumstances be given a second chance and allowed to remain in the Army for counselling.

The Royal Navy is initiating compulsory drug testing trials, which will allow decisions to be taken as to whether there is a need to introduce a drug testing regime. The Royal Air Force does not need to introduce compulsory drug testing for the moment, but it is keeping its policy under review. In the meantime the RN and RAF will continue to apply other measures to deter drugs misuse.

Quangos

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many quangos his Department was responsible for *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in the latest year for which a number is available;

(2) if he will list *(a)* those quangos his Department has abolished since 1979 and *(b)* those quangos established since 1977.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Skyes) on 25 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *458*. No records are available prior to 1979.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of quangos to which he is responsible for appointing members are employed by companies which supply his Department.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many members of quangos to which he is responsible for appointing members have previously served as councillors representing *(a)* the Conservative party, *(b)* the Labour party and *(c)* the Liberal Democrat party;

(2) how many members of quangos to which he is responsible for appointing members have stood as candidates for boroughs, city, district or county councils for *(a)* the Conservative party, *(b)* the Labour party and *(c)* the Liberal Democrat party;

(3) how many members of quangos to which he is responsible for appointing members have stood as parliamentary candidates for *(a)* the Conservative party; *(b)* the Labour party and *(c)* the Liberal Democrat party;

(4) how many known members of *(a)* the Conservative party, *(b)* the Labour party and *(c)* the Liberal Democrat party currently serve on quangos to which he is responsible for appointing members;

(5) how many members of quangos to which he is responsible for appointing members currently serve as councillors representing *(a)* the Conservative party, *(b)* the Labour party and *(c)* the Liberal Democrat party.

Mr. Soames: Members of Ministry of Defence non-departmental public bodies are appointed on the basis of suitability and merit. Information on members' political allegiance and record is neither sought nor held and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

United Nations Peacekeeping

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations he has had with the Foreign Secretary in drawing up clear operational guidelines for future United Nations peacekeeping.

Mr. Soames: The United Kingdom has played an active part in discussions aimed at enhancing the capacity of the United Nations to mount peacekeeping operations. In addition, the British Army is developing a manual on peacekeeping on which there has been consultation with the United Nations. My Department is in regular contact with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on these matters.

Consultants

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will *(a)* list those consultancy contracts awarded by his Department in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993 and *(b)* the purpose of each individual contract.

Mr. Freeman: The Department's central contracts branch has placed in excess of 500 contracts with consultants in each of the last few years. In addition to this figure, consultancy contracts are placed as part of specific projects and as low value orders of under £10,000. Under the Department's arrangements for the delegation of contractual authority, such contracts are placed without reference to the central contracts branch and so cannot be identified separately.

In view of this and the large number of centrally placed contracts involved over the last 15 years, an answer to this question could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Animal Testing

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, column *898*, if he will list *(a)* the type of animals used for experiments and *(b)* the nature of the experiments for 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Soames: The species of animals used by the Department for experiments were rats, mice, guinea pigs, rabbits, sheep, goats, pigs, miniature pigs, marmosets and rhesus monkeys.

These experiments were designed to:

Investigate gravitational effects;

demonstrate the results of exposure to different pressures of air or oxygen;

assess the potential harm of chemical or biological agents;

devise medical countermeasures;

demonstrate the efficacy of and safety of medical counter-measures;

All the experiments involving the use of animals fully meet the spirit and letter of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Exercise Iron Tempest

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many close air support missions with cannon were flown by Jaguar aircraft over Salisbury plain training area during Exercise Iron Tempest.

Mr. Soames: The planned close air support mission by two Jaguar aircraft on 10 December was cancelled due to poor weather, and no such missions were therefore flown.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to keep the United Kingdom's nuclear deterrence under constant review.

Mr. Soames: We continue to keep our defence policy as a whole under review. We believe, however, that our nuclear forces continue to provide the ultimate guarantee of this country's security and remain an important element of NATO's strategy of war prevention.

Official Service Residences

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what savings he plans to make from the official service residences.

Mr. Soames: The review by Sir Peter Cazalet of representational entertainment in the armed forces, which is examining the requirement for senior officers to entertain and the means by which the entertainment should be carried out, will in particular consider whether there are alternative and more cost-effective means than the use of official service residences and other service married quarters, and, in the light of that, whether any properties can be disposed of. I shall report to the House in due course on the outcome of this work.

Redundancies

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations he has had with the Secretary of State for Employment in formulating a policy for the provision of high-grade training for service personnel made redundant.

Mr. Soames: The successful improvements introduced into the services resettlement programme, following "Options for Change", were developed with the full co-operation and assistance of the Department of Employment. In addition to participating in the strategic planning of the programme, Department of Employment staff work closely with my Department to provide a range of services which ensure that those leaving the armed forces have available the advice, training and job search opportunities to help best exploit their service skills in moving to a second career.

Research

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sum was spent by his Department on research in each of the last 10 years; what percentage this was of the total annual budget; what is the research budget for the forthcoming year; what percentage this is of his total budget; and what additional new research is to be undertaken.

Mr. Freeman: The sums spent on research and development by the Department for the last 10 years were reported in the statistical supplement to the 1994 "Forward Look of Government-funded Science, Engineering and Technology." The expenditure on research and development and the percentage that this expenditure was of total departmental expenditure are as follows:

	R and D expenditure £ millions	*Percentage of total expenditure*
1985–86	2,018.2	11.1
1986–87	1,941.5	10.5
1987–88	1,910.7	10.1
1988–89	1,879.8	9.8
1989-90	2,028.6	9.8
1990–91	2,062.9	9.5
1991–92	2,267.0	9.8
1992–93	2,220.9	9.4
1993–94	2,461.1	10.5
1994–95	2,314.6	9.9

The expenditure on research and development in the coming year has still to be determined, and will be reported in the statistical supplement to the 1995 "Forward Look".

Information on new research areas is given in paragraph 437 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1994"—Cm 2550.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Soames: All special advisers are currently required to have a security clearance which will depend on the level of access they require to carry out their duties.

Military Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the share by value, and the total value in current and standard prices, of British production of *(a)* warships, *(b)* aircraft for military purposes, including the training of pilots, and *(c)* tanks and other armoured vehicles which was for (i) domestic and (ii) export purposes in each year since 1984.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have been asked to reply.

The information is given in the following tables.

Table 1: Defence production expenditure for domestic (United Kingdom) use

£ millions

	Sea equipment	*Air equipment*	*Fighting vehicles*
Current prices			
1984–85	1,925	3,003	131
1985–86	2,128	2,761	155
1986–87	2,134	2,644	148
1987–88	2,475	2,807	212
1988–89	2,421	2,652	235
1989–90	2,642	2,717	180
1990–91	2,700	2,718	252
1991–92	2,809	2,930	243
1992–93	2,720	2,460	149
1993 prices			
1984–85	1,210	1,887	82
1985–86	1,413	1,833	103
1986–87	1,464	1,813	102
1987–88	1,784	2,023	153
1988–89	1,850	2,027	180
1989–90	2,161	2,223	147
1990–91	2,350	2,366	219
1991–92	2,604	2,716	225
1992–93	2,630	2,379	144

Source:

Table 1.6 UK Defence Statistics series or from the Defence Analytical Services Agency, table 2.1 "Economic Trends", October 1994.

Notes:

Sea equipment includes the full militarisation of the standard equipment.

Air equipment excludes the cost of training pilots. This information is not available.

Fighting vehicles excludes maintenance.

Estimates of 1993 prices were derived from current price figures using the implied deflator for GDP at market prices.

Table 2: United Kingdom exports of defence equipment

£ millions

	Warships	*Military aircraft and parts*	*Armoured fighting vehicles and parts*	*SBAC identified additional aerospace equipment*
Current prices				
1984	40	212	146	1,310
1985	4	174	127	940
1986	12	192	87	1,312
1987	61	326	56	1,853
1988	26	813	59	1,406
1989	41	1,524	52	717
1990	3	1,206	70	1,904
1991	8	1,367	66	807
1992	3	838	89	811
1993	24	1,310	147	n/a
1993 prices				
1984	25	133	92	823
1985	3	116	84	624
1986	8	132	60	900
1987	44	235	40	1,335
1988	20	621	45	1,074
1989	34	1,247	43	587
1990	3	1,050	61	1,657
1991	7	1,267	61	748
1992	3	810	86	784
1993	24	1,310	147	n/a

Source:

Table 1.11 UK Defence Statistics series or the Defence Analytical Services Agency.

Table 2.1 "Economic Trends", October 1994.

Notes:

These figures for exports of identified defence equipment are understated because of dual-use products, for example Land Rovers.

The estimates of additional military exports are based on figures from the Society of British Aerospace Companies. They relate only to those items where the official commodity classifications do not distinguish between military and civil aerospace equipment.

These are liable to alter from year to year in line with changes to the classifications.

Exports for collaborative projects are excluded.

Estimates of 1993 prices were derived from current price figures using the implied deflator for GDP at market prices.

n/a—Not available.

Departmental Telephone Bills

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were his Department's telephone bills in each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: The Department's direct telephone running costs for the year's 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 were £67.1 million, £64.9 million and £61.4 million respectively. Figures prior to these dates are not available.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Attorney-General which of the special advisers serving in his Departments during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

The Attorney-General: There have been no special advisers in the Departments for which I am responsible during the last five years.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: All special advisers are currently required to have positive vetting.

Consultants

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his Department's policy regarding the use of executive search consultants in making appointments to public bodies; and if he will list *(a)* the appointments where such consultants have been used and *(b)* the cost in each case in the period April 1992 to December 1993.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: It is the policy of my Department to follow the guidance provided in the "Guide on Public Appointments Procedures" which advises that the use of executive search consultants is one option which may be appropriate for certain full and some part-time posts.

Executive search consultants were used for the appointments of the Director General of the Research Councils and chief executives of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, Natural Environment Research Council and the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council. The total cost was £78,960 including VAT. This fee was negotiated to cover all four appointments and it is not possible to disaggregate the figure.

Research Council

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what decisions were taken on the fourth framework programme at the Research Council on 1 December.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Council reached agreement on the remaining aspects of the fourth framework programme. This will enable the Commission to issue calls for proposals on most, if not all, of the outstanding specific programmes in December. We believe that the framework programme presents United Kingdom researchers with a worthwhile challenge to which they will be able to respond fully, as they have done in the past.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Casual Staff

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the costs of recruiting, appointing and training casual staff appointed to replace casual staff whose period of placement has expired.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Casual staff are recruited where the requirement for staff is likely to be for less than 12 months. Exceptionally, their appointment can be extended. The need to replace casual staff with other casual staff does not therefore usually arise. Recruitment costs of casual staff are minimal.

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *583*, what has been the change in manufacturing output since *(a)* 1973 and *(b)* 1979 together with the change in imports of manufactures.

Mr. Needham: The information is available from the Central Statistical Office's central shared database which can be accessed in the Library of the House.

Companies House

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to publish the reports of consultants SRU Ltd. into *(a)* the privatisation of Companies House, *(b)* the concept of competing company registrars, and *(c)* the contracting out of Companies House; and what view was expressed by SRU Ltd. on whether its report into the contracting out of Companies House should be published.

Mr. Heseltine: I expect to publish SRU's report on the possibility of contracting out Companies House services when I announce a decision on the future of Companies House.

Tile Manufacturing

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *705*, what criteria he has established to assess the likely impact on the United Kingdom tile and sanitary ware industry of investment projects; and if he will publish details of the assessment he has made of the likely impact of the investment project in Merseyside on existing United Kingdom tile manufacturing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No specific criteria have been established for the tile and sanitaryware industry. All applications are appraised against published criteria. This includes not only the likely impact that an investment might have on United Kingdom industry but also the extent to which the national and regional economy would benefit from any offer of assistance. This information is commercially confidential and is not available for publication.

Insolvency Service

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advice he has received on the effect contracting out of the Insolvency Service might have on the future disqualification and prosecution of bankrupts.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Stoy Hayward reported that the contracting out of the Official Receiver's case administration functions upon the making of the insolvency order would enable him to concentrate more on his investigatory role.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advice he has received on the effects of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on the contracting out of the Insolvency Service.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: No decision to contract out has been taken; it is, therefore, too early to consider the issue of Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, the implications of which may not become clear until the nature of proposals in any bidding process could be assessed.

Fire Safety

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the organisations and individuals who submitted written responses to the proposals of the interdepartmental fire safety scrutiny team contained in the report "Fire Safety Legislation and Enforcement".

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To date, some 460 organisations and individuals have provided written comments on the report of the interdepartmental scrutiny of fire safety legislation and enforcement.

I have placed a copy of the list in the Library of the House.

British Coal Enterprise

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the contribution by British Coal Enterprise to the welfare and economy of coalfield areas; and if he will make a statement on its future.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The job creation and economic regeneration efforts of British Coal Enterprise in areas affected by colliery closures are well known and recognised.

The Government and British Coal are currently exploring options for the services provided by British Coal Enterprise. No final decisions have been taken about its future.

EC Legislation

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what liaison arrangements exist between his Department and overseas posts in order to provide him with information about the implementation in other member states of European Community legislation.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Overseas posts are under standing instructions to report on the general position on implementation of single market legislation in other member states; and on implementation of specific measures when requested.

Pearl Assurance Ltd

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints have been received about Pearl Assurance Ltd. within the past year.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: It is not this Department's policy to disclose publicly information relating to individual companies.

Post Office

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the automation of Post Office business.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* The project to automate the payment of benefit at post offices has two main aims: to provide the post office network with a streamlined and modern business infrastructure; and to help the Benefits Agency ensure that losses through payment fraud are minimised. It will put new electronic terminals in 20,000 post offices and will play a key part in supporting an expanded range of products and services for the 28 million people who visit them each week. When complete it will put post offices at the leading edge of using technology to improve services to customers.

Following rigorous evaluation of formal bids from potential suppliers, five have been asked to develop their ideas further. Detailed proposals will be considered and tested over coming months, with a final decision on the choice of system and supplier being made next winter. We expect to see the first offices automated in the spring of 1996.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Ancram: The total expenditure by Northern Ireland Departments and agencies in each of the three years is given in the table:

	1991–92 £ millions	*1992–93 £ millions*	*1993–94 £ millions*
Departments	19.50	19.09	19.11
Agencies	0.49	0.59	1.17

Labour Statistics

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the latest figures for the number of employees in the *(a)* catering, *(b)* clothing manufacture, *(c)* linen and *(d)* road haulage industries.

Mr. Ancram: The latest available figures from the quarterly employment survey show that at June 1994 there were an estimated 22,990 persons employed in hotels and catering and 14,800 employed in the manufacture of footwear and clothing. More detailed figures on industrial activities such as linen and road haulage are available only from the census of employment. Results from the September 1991 census show that there were 1,866 persons employed in the linen industry and 4,243 in road haulage.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been unemployed for more than *(a)* six months and *(b)* 12 months.

Mr. Ancram: The latest available figures, for October 1994, show that in Northern Ireland 65,326 people have been unemployed for more than six months and 53,049 have been unemployed for more than 12 months.

Ophthalmology Out-patient Clinics

Rev. Martin Symth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many referrals from general practitioners to ophthalmology out-patients clinics were made in 1990–91 and 1991–92.

Mr. Moss: The information details the number of general practitioner written referral requests to opthalmology out-patient clinics in Northern Ireland:

Year	*Number of referrals*
1990–91	10,452
1991–92	13,050

Hill Farming

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what acreage has been put into regeneration of the natural habitat in hill farming.

Mr. Ancram: By June 1994 about 220,000 hectares of hill land had been designated under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme. To date, 30,000 hectares of this area have been entered into agreements under which farmers agree to pursue farming practices which aim to protect and enhance the natural environment of their farms.

Pigs

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grant aid is available to pig producers in Northern Ireland to convert sow tether and stall accommodation.

Mr. Ancram *[holding reply 12 December 1944]:* Grant assistance is available to pig producers in Northern Ireland under the sub-programme for agriculture and rural development for the conversion or replacement of existing dry sow accommodation at a grant rate of 30 per cent. of expenditure of up to £25,000.

Health Authority Finance

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what *(a)* surpluses and *(b)* deficits were recorded by each health authority in each of the last three years.

Mr. Moss *[holding reply 12 December 1994]:* As cash-limited organisations, health and social services boards are not permitted to overspend, that is, to make cash deficits. However, goods and services, for example equipment, building works etcetera, ordered in one financial year are frequently not received until the next. This can lead to "surpluses" in one year, when the allocation has been underspent, and "deficits" in the following year, when that year's allocation is overspent.

The "surpluses" and "deficits" for Northern Ireland's four health and social services boards for the periods 1991–92 to 1993—94 are as follows:

	Northern £	*Southern* £	*Eastern* £	*Western* £
1991–92	5,577,831	4,502,548	7,710,908	3,227,379
1992–93	1,012,744	(2,276,927)	9,394,771	2,346,866
1993–94	1,543,080	931,037	(1,755,150)	2,233,802

Notes:

Figures in brackets indicate "deficits". Figures quoted for 1993–94 exclude surpluses made by general practitioner fundholders.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Colombia

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid was provided to Colombia in 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Aid provided to Colombia in financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, and 1992–93 was £3.66 million, £3.789 million and £2.433 million respectively. The provisional figure for 1993–94 is £2.454 million. Assistance included technical co-operation, emergency aid support, aid and trade provision activity, and anti-drugs technical assistance.

Colombia no longer qualifies for aid and trade provision support, but other programmes continue. Priorities agreed with the Government of Colombia for the technical co-operation programme include the modernisation of public sector administration and the sustainable management of renewable natural resources. Assistance in the latter sector has concentrated on coffee pest and disease control, and the post-harvest processing of fruit and vegetables.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evaluation of the standards of human rights in Colombia his Department has undertaken during the last five years; what were the findings; how they affected the evaluation of aid to the Colombian regime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Our ambassador in Bogota reports regularly on human rights in Colombia. Our embassy is in frequent touch with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental organisations in Colombia, as well as with our European Union partners on human rights issues.

Human rights violations in Colombia have complex causes. Illegal drugs production and trafficking, the activities of guerrilla organisations and military and para-military forces, failure to bring successful prosecutions, as well as conditions of poverty and social inequality all contribute to the high level of abuses there. The administration of President Samper is addressing these issues frankly and openly. The priority which the Government of Colombia attach to these issues is welcome. We wish them success in their attempt to improve human rights observance.

Human rights considerations have not significantly affected decisions on the nature of our modest bilateral aid programme with Colombia. The programme is entirely technical co-operation, operating mainly through non-governmental organisations and autonomous institutions.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to the UN Secretary-General's Rwanda emergency normalisation plan.

Mr. Baldry: Britain has provided bilateral assistance for priority health care, refugee repatriation, infrastructure repair and help to Rwanda Government ministries. The European Union's new programme of rehabilitation assistance, worth approximately £52 million, will include help for Kigali airport, road repair, health and education. The United Kingdom share of this programme is about £9 million.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries have responded to the Rwanda trust fund: how much they have contributed; and what is the proposed United Kingdom contribution.

Mr. Baldry: We understand that to date the Dutch have contributed $5 million to the UN trust fund for Rwanda. We will consider whether to make a contribution as part of our preparations for the United Nations development programme round table on Rwanda in January 1995.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution is made by Her Majesty's Government to the training of civilian police in Rwanda.

Mr. Baldry: We have not been asked to help bilaterally in training civil police and have no plans to do so given the very different Rwandan and British policing systems.

European Aid

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures he has taken to ensure that the United Kingdom will be able to honour its share of the commitment made at the Edinburgh summit to increase European aid by 60 per cent. by the end of the decade.

Mr. Baldry: British contributions to both the European development fund and the EC aid budget are charged to the United Kingdom aid programme. The levels agreed for the aid programme in this year's public expenditure survey, for the years 1995–96 to 1997–98, include provision in each year for these costs. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary would expect to put forward proposals for later years, in future public expenditure surveys, on the same basis.

Aid Provision

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent the human rights record of a country is a criterion for the provision of aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Aid allocation decisions take account of a range of criteria. These include human rights as part of good government. Other criteria include poverty and commitment to appropriate development policies.

Trade Unions

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of know-how fund money has been allocated by country to the Trades Union Congress or to trade unions to support the development of democratic trades unionism in the countries covered by the know-how fund for the years *(a)* 1991–92, *(b)* 1992–93 and *(c)* 1993–94.

Mr. Baldry: The know-how fund has allocated some £200,000 to trades union-related assistance in the region since 1991. Further funds have been allocated, and new projects are being planned.

The breakdown by country, expressed as a percentage of the total country programmes, is as follows:

Country	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Bulgaria	2.49	0.09	0.00
Czechoslovakia	0.11	0.53	0.00
Czech Republic	0.00	0.00	0.13
Hungary	0.02	0.00	0.00
Poland	0.27	0.99	0.00
Romania	0.58	0.00	0.45
Russia	0.00	<0.01	<0.01

Energy Efficiency Projects

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 22 November, *Official Report,* column *70,* about energy efficiency projects, if he will list the members of the British Soviet business consortium awarded the energy efficiency training project for Russia in 1992–93.

Mr. Baldry: The Members of the British Soviet business consortium awarded the energy efficiency training project for Russia in 1992–93 were British Gas, British Coal, Scottish Power, NIFES, WS Atkins, Linden Consulting Partnership, BICC-Andover Controls, GEC-Satchwell Controls, Freeman Group, Babcock, Phoenix Burners-Nor Ray Vac, Lighting Enterprises Consultancy and March Consulting Group.

Eritrea

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what Overseas Development Administration assistance currently goes to Eritrea.

Mr. Baldry: In 1993–94 Eritrea received £5.8 million in bilateral assistance, including emergency aid. Eritrea is also a recipient of multilateral assistance to which Britain makes a significant contribution. Our share of the European Union's rehabilitation and development assistance since 1993 is £7 million. Eritrea also receives emergency aid from the European Union.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Royal Palaces

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which *(a)* occupied and *(b)* unoccupied royal palaces have fire certificates.

Mr. Sproat: Under the terms of the Fire Precautions Act 1971, fire certificates are required only for premises employing more than 20 persons or more than 10 persons above the ground floor. Therefore, only specific areas of royal palaces require fire certificates.

(a) occupied royal palaces: At Windsor castle, certificates have been issued for the Round tower and the Saxon tower. Applications are being processed for two other areas.

Applications are being processed for eight areas in other places.

(b) unoccupied royal palaces: At the Tower of London a certificate has been issued for the new armouries. Applications are being processed for one other area at the tower and two areas at Hampton Court palace.

Millennium Fund

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to use the millennium fund to build a permanent museum or monument dedicated to those who suffered and died during the period of African enslavement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: It will be for the millennium commissioners to determine the purposes to which they apply their share of the national lottery proceeds in response to the applications they receive. Copies of the Millennium Commission's detailed guidance on how to make applications for lottery funds, along with those produced by the other distributing bodies, have been placed in the Library of the House.

Export of Works of Art Review

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when the report of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art, 1993–94, will be published.

Mr. Dorrell: The reviewing committee's annual report, 1993–94, has been published today, and copies have been laid before Parliament.

Television Licence Fee

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what would be the cost of a 25 per cent. reduction in television licence fees paid by single pensioner households; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* The current cost of providing a 25 per cent. reduction in television licence fees for all single pensioner households would be about £60 million per annum.

National Lottery

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to monitor the weekly expenditure of households in the United Kingdom on national lottery tickets.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* I understand that the family expenditure survey includes an explicit code to capture expenditure on the national lottery.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which of the special advisers serving in his Department since its establishment were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Dorrell: I do not currently have any special advisers, but all special advisers were required to have positive vetting.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Dorrell: My Department was established in April 1992 but did not occupy its own premises until May 1993. In the year 1993–94 we spent £72,089 on energy for offices and buildings. In the current year to date we have spent £39,902.

My agencies the Royal Parks agency and the Historic Royal Palaces agency are unable to identify the energy costs for offices and buildings as much of their energy expenditure is in respect of lighting and maintaining parks, gardens and grounds.

TREASURY

Smuggling

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an assessment of the effect of the enforced retirement of substantial numbers of Customs and Excise officers on the continuing problem of beer and Scotch whisky smuggling.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The fundamental expenditure review—FER—carried out by Customs and Excise will mean that the Department reduces in size by about 4,000 over five years. All possible steps will be taken to avoid redundancy and it is envisaged that the reductions will be achieved through natural wastage and voluntary severance schemes.

The amount or resources devoted to detecting the smuggling of alcoholic drinks and tobacco products will not be affected by the FER. Indeed, there will soon be a modest increase in the number of excise verification officers deployed by the Department.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Customs and Excise officers are involved in reducing drug smuggling and the unauthorised importation of alcoholic drinks in the financial year 1994–95; and how many officers will be involved in each of the next three years.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: In 1994–95 Customs expects to have deployed about 5,100 staff years on drugs control work. As well as including staff years from the customs function, this figure includes elements on investigation, intelligence, legal support, training and information systems.

Enforcement techniques established in Customs over recent years have increased the use of better targeted, intelligence-led interceptions in place of static routine checks. This has enabled a more effective enforcement effort while allowing freer movement of legitimate traffic. The customs fundamental expenditure review shows that further moves in this direction can be made.

To combat smuggling of excise goods from other EU member states, Customs has allocated some 240 staff to single market excise work, most of whom are specially trained excise verification officers. The EVO effort is intelligence directed, and is supported by specialist investigation staff and the control measures taken by Excise and VAT visiting officers.

The resource will not be affected by the fundamental expenditure review. Indeed, there will be a modest increase in the number of EVOs deployed by the Department. However staff numbers for the next three financial years have not yet been finally determined.

Beer

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from other countries of the European Union about the movement towards parity of duty on beer.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No representations have been received from other countries of the European union about the movement towards parity of duty on beer.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the volume of beer purchased at French ports by customers on day visits from the United Kingdom; and what is his estimate of the effect of such sales on the domestic beer industry.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Customs estimates that before allowing for additional consumption, the total value of personal beer imports from the EU by legitimate cross-border shoppers is equivalent to less than 1 per cent. of the United Kingdom market.

Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the net rate of return on exports of manufactures, as defined in the Central Statistical Office "First Release" (94) 205, for each quarter from 1975.

Mr. Nelson: Estimates for net rate of return on exports of manufactures are unavailable. The net rate of return for manufacturing companies defined in the CSO "First Release" is derived from the gross operating surplus and net capital stock employed by such companies. The CSO does not collect information on whether the operating surplus and capital stock employed relate to manufacturing for domestic markets or for export. Many businesses would be unable to provide a meaningful split, particularly of capital stock employed.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what grounds he is forecasting a continuing decline in the United Kingdom share of world trade in manufactures in his "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Mr. Nelson: The United Kingdom is forecast to increase its share of export markets in 1994 and 1995. However, United Kingdom export markets are forecast to grow a little slower than world trade because trade in Europe—our main export market—is projected to rise more slowly than trade between Asian economies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the Treasury calculates the profitability of exports of *(a)* manufactures and *(b)* services; and how these calculations compare with the estimate of profitability of domestic manufacturers.

Mr. Nelson: Export profit margins for manufactures are calculated from the ratio of manufacturing export prices to estimated manufacturing costs. Estimates of export profit margins for services are not available. It is estimated that manufacturers' export profit margins have risen faster recently than their margins on production for the domestic market.

Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what evidence he has to show that the increase in non-oil imports in 1994 compared to 1993 mentioned in paragraph 3.5 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", is due to import substitution rather than a falling off in United Kingdom demand for goods of the same description; and if he will publish the forecast change in import penetration in each of the principle import-competing and export industries in 1994 compared with 1993 and 1992.

Mr. Nelson: Import price competitiveness for manufactured goods, which accounts for around 80 per cent. of trade in non-oil goods, is estimated to be more than 6.5 per cent. better than in the first three quarters of 1992. Historical experience suggests that improvements in price competitiveness lead, over a period of time, to lower import penetration than would otherwise have occurred. The Treasury does not publish forecasts of import penetration for individual industries.

Exchange Rate

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the economic conditions which in the Government's assessment has to be fulfilled before a rate of exchange can be described as competitive.

Mr. Nelson: A nation's competitiveness depends on much more than its exchange rate. Our ability to sell goods and services into world markets and achieve a sustained rise in living standards depend fundamentally on improving productivity and controlling costs. Policies directed at permanently low inflation and competitive markets provide the best environment in which to achieve this.

Inflation

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to shadow the deutschmark to bring down the rate of inflation.

Mr. Nelson: The Government's monetary policy is clearly set out at paragraph's 2.03 to 2.08 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1995–96". Minutes of the discussion at the Chancellor's monthly monetary meetings with the Governor of the Bank of England are also published. Movements in the exchange rate are considered as part of general assessments of monetary conditions in setting monetary policy. The Government recognise the value of a stable exchange rate but do not set target rates.

Inheritance Tax Exemptions

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *760*, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the publicity to make the public aware of access arrangements.

Sir George Young: The level of publicity to be given to the agreed public access arrangements required in return for conditional exemption is negotiated on a case-by-case basis by the heritage advisory agencies which have the appropriate experience and expertise. Owners of conditionally exempt land are required to submit annual reports to the responsible heritage body covering the undertakings they have given, including the publicity given to the public access arrangements. In addition, the heritage advisory agencies make on-site visits to conditionally exempt land. The Inland Revenue also separately reviews all such cases at five-yearly intervals. There is no evidence that publicity given to public access arrangements is deficient.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the number of countryside sites where public access has been granted by the landowner in return for exemption from inheritance tax in *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1993–94 and *(c)* 1994–95 to date.

Sir George Young: I refer to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 30 November, *Official Report*, column *760*. As I explained, figures for designations of land alone on a year-by-year basis are not available at acceptable cost.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *760*, if he will list the counties where public access has been granted by landowners in return for exemption from inheritance tax.

Sir George Young: A list for conditionally exempt land alone is not available at acceptable cost. The counties in England where public access has been granted by owners of land and buildings in return for conditional exception from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax are as follows:

Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cheshire
Cornwall
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Devon
Dorset
Essex
Gloucestershire
Hampshire
Herefordshire and Worcestershire
Hertfordshire
Humberside
Isle of Wight
Kent
Lancashire
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Merseyside
Norfolk
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
North Yorkshire
Nottinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Shropshire
Somerset
Staffordshire
Suffolk
Surrey
Sussex
Warwickshire
West Yorkshire
Wiltshire

Overseas Debt

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how much debt owed by developing countries has been cancelled by the Paris Club since the introduction of the Trinidad terms in 1990;

(2) how much debt owed by severely indebted low-income countries has been cancelled by the Paris Club since the introduction of the Trinidad terms in 1990.

Mr. Nelson: The following figures are World bank estimates of debt forgiveness since 1990 by the Paris Club, in net present value terms:

		US$ billion
(a)	All Developing Countries	2.2
(b)	Severely Indebted Low Income Countries SILICs (as of end 1993)	1.7

Tax Relief

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what circumstances tax relief is available for expenditure in connection with public duties of the taxpayer or of his or her spouse; what limit applies to the amount; and for which individuals exceptional arrangements are made.

Sir George Young: There are various tax deductions and reliefs available to individuals in connection with public duties, as for other employees and officeholders. More information is in the Inland Revenue "Guide to Benefits and Expenses"—booklet 480—copies of which are available in the House Library.

VAT (Public Transport)

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue likely to be generated by the imposition of VAT on non-essential public transport during the financial year beginning 1 April 1994.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None. The changes come into effect from 1 April 1995.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if his proposals to extend value added tax on public transport apply to *(a)* boat trips on (i) inland waterways, (ii) estuaries and (iii) coastal waters, *(b)* private railways, *(c)* coach tours and *(d)* road trains.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* The proposed restrictions to the VAT zero-rating for public passenger transport will not affect boat trips—including the Isle of Wight ferry—which are currently zero-rated and which take place on the open sea, inland waterways or other waters to which the general public have access. Coach tours will also be unaffected. Similarly, the VAT position of the other examples cited in the question will remain unchanged except where they are covered by admission charges to places such as theme or safari parks or working museums. In these cases, where admission charges are apportioned at present, they will become wholly liable to VAT at the standard rate.

Steam Railways

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he intends to apply value added tax to fares on steam railways operated by railway preservation societies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have no plans to disturb the current VAT zero-rating for public passenger transport, including steam railways, where the service is confined to that of public transport in its widely accepted sense. I can confirm that the proposed restrictions to the zero-rating under the VAT (Transport) Order 1994 will not normally affect steam railways, and therefore most operators will be able to continue to apply the zero rate. The exception is when payment for admission to places such as theme or safari parks or working museums includes a steam engine ride. In these cases, where admission charges are apportioned at present, they will become wholly liable to VAT at the standard rate.

Tax Yields

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the yield in 1992–93 and 1993–94 and the latest estimate of yield for 1994–95 from *(a)* petrol duty, *(b)* derv duty, *(c)* vehicle excise duty, *(d)* VAT on petrol and derv rate, *(e)* VAT on vehicle sales and *(f)* car tax.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The tax yield is as follows.

Figures in £ billions	*Petrol duty*	*Derv duty*	*VED*	[1]*VAT on petrol and derv*	[2]*VAT on vehicle sales*	*Car tax*
1992–93	8.2	3.0	3.3	1.6	2.9	0.6
1993–94	8.8	3.7	3.6	1.7	3.3	0.0

[1] Derived from Central Statistical Office estimates of consumers' expenditure.

[2] Non-reclaimable VAT.

The total revenue in 1994–95 expected from all hydrocarbons including minor oils is £14.6 billion from VED £3.8 billion.

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the level of real interest rates *(a)* on 7 December and *(b)* on 1 December in (i) August 1992 and (ii) 1978.

Mr. Nelson: Real interest rates can be calculated in several ways, using either short or longer-term nominal interest rates, and either past or expected future rates of inflation.

Data on interest rates and inflation are available in the CSO publications "Financial Statistics" table 7.10 and "Economic Trends" table 3.1. Data on expected future inflation rates are published in the Treasury's monthly review of independent forecasters, and the Bank of England's inflation report.

As at close 1 and 7 December 1994 three-month and 10-year nominal interest rates were:

	3 month	*10 year*
1 December	6.19	8.58
7 December	6.38	8.74

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the effect of the ½ per cent. increase in lending rates on the cost of the PSBR for the rest of the current financial year; and what is his estimate of the PSBR for the next financial year.

Mr. Nelson: The effect of the ½ per cent. increase in lending rates on the cost of financing the public sector borrowing requirement for the current financial year will depend upon the level and structure of interest rates, the rate of inflation and the type of debt issued.

My latest estimate of the PSBR for 1995–96 is £21.5 billion.

VAT (Fuel)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the cost in interest of substituting borrowing for the deficiency caused by not raising VAT on heating from 8 per cent. to 17½ per cent. for *(a)* the rest of the present year and *(b)* the whole of next year.

Mr. Nelson: The cost of servicing any particular amount of borrowing will depend upon the level and structure of interest rates, the rate of inflation and the type of debt issued. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor announced to the House on 8 December measures to ensure that not raising VAT on fuel and power to 17½ per cent. will have no significant impact on borrowing either this year or next year.

Imports and Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount by which imports and exports of manufactures were under or over-recorded in 1993 compared with the old system of recording in the case of trade with the EEC; and what is his estimate currently.

Mr. Nelson: Revised adjustments for under-recording of United Kingdom imports and exports to and from other European Union countries were given in the August 1994 edition of "Economic Trends", which announced the outcome of a review of the Intrastat system carried out by the Central Statistical Office and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. The effect on the statistics for trade in manufacturers was as follows:

United Kingdom trade with other European Union countries
Manufacturers (SITC Rev. 3 section 5 to 8)
(1993, million on a balance of payments basis)

	United Kingdom imports	*United Kingdom exports*	*Balance*
Pre review	55,533	52,098	–3,435
Post review	55,748	51,878	–3,870
Revision	+215	–220	–435

The review also established that there were faults in the old system of recording which caused, for example, total imports from other European Union countries to be overstated by an estimated £2,175 million in 1992. Estimates of the effect of the changed recording system at the level of manufactured goods are not available.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the planned reduction in the number of Her Majesty's Customs officers based at each of the Welsh ports and airports.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* The reduction in the number of Her Majesty's Customs officers based at each of the Welsh ports and airports has not yet been decided.

Changes at particular ports and airports will be determined by the head of the executive unit in Wales. Factors to be taken into account will be the assessment of risk in locations together with his ability to make maximum use of flexible anti-smuggling teams.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many litres of alcohol Customs and Excise officers have intercepted; and what value of drugs and alcohol have been seized by Customs and Excise officers in Devon and Cornwall in each of the last three years.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The following amounts have been seized by Customs and Excise officers in Devon and Cornwall over the last three years:

Year	*Litres of alcohol*	*Value of drugs* £	*Value of alcohol* £
1992	54	10,772,849	685
1993	16,658	14,487,868	24,855
1994 (up to 30 November)	7,059	28,199,289	17,836

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the assumptions he made as to the increase in gross domestic product when forecasting the PSBR for 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* The assumptions for GDP growth which underlie the PSBR projections are set out in table 3A.1 of the 1995–96 "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those services that have been market-tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* In Her Majesty's Treasury, no services have been awarded to a private sector supplier as a result of market testing which involved an in-house team. However, following a strategic decision to contract out most internal audit work, contracts were awarded, following competition, to Price Waterhouse and Touche Ross.

Consumer Spending and VAT

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were at 1993 prices *(a)* for 1978 and *(b)* for the last available year (i) total consumer spending, (ii) the value added tax take and (iii) column (ii) as a percentage of (i).

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* Estimates of consumers' expenditure and value added tax are not readily available at 1993 prices. Information at current prices is available as indicated below on the CSO database which may be accessed via the House of Commons Library.

Consumers' expenditure—series AIIK

Total value added tax—series GTAS

Thin Capitalisation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is his policy that the thin capitalisation proposals issued by the Inland Revenue on Budget day are intended to apply to the voluntary sector; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* The thin capitalisation proposals were not intended to have an adverse effect on the voluntary sector. It is now apparent that, in some cases, they could do so. I therefore intend amending the provision at the Committee stage of the Finance Bill to exclude charities and their subsidiaries from its scope.

Occupation Pensions

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list each of the occupational pension schemes covered by Government guarantees and give details of the main elements of each scheme.

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* Occupational pension schemes covered by Government guarantees are:

The National Rivers Authority (Closed Fund);

British Coal (Closed) Schemes and;

The Pensioners Sections of the Railways Pension Scheme.

Details of the pension benefits are available from the schemes themselves.

SCOTLAND

Health Boards and Hospital Trusts (Property)

Mr. Galbriath: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses on their property were in private ownership for each health board and hospital trust.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave him on 1 December at column *835.*

Scottish Heart Transplant Centre

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the number of operations predicted for the year 1994 in the initial proposal for the Scottish heart transplant centre;

(2) how many operations the Scottish heart transplant centre at Glasgow royal infirmary is contracted to do each year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Greater Glasgow health board's bid in 1991 for the heart transplant service predicted an activity of 25 patients for year one, rising to 50 patients per annum in subsequent years.

The contracted activity level for heart transplants in 1994–95 has been set at 25 based on the actual activity over the last two years—23 operations in each year.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Lang: There was a total of 4,101 written and 425 oral parliamentary questions tabled for my Department between 26 November 1993 and 11 November 1994. Of these, 91 were answered on the basis that the information was not held centrally.

Schools Finance

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total figure for the financial balances held by all *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information sought is not held centrally. Nor will such information be available generally until devolved school management—DSM—arrangements are fully in place. The target date for final implementation of the DSM arrangements in Scottish schools is April 1998.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce his plans for funding the costs of local government reorganisation in 1995–96.

Mr. Lang: Following consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, I have decided that, with one exception, all the provision for the costs of local government reorganisation which I expect will be incurred in 1995–96 should be allocated to the new shadow councils rather than to the existing authorities. I plan to allocate a total of £36 million to the shadow councils. This sum is entirely additional to the 1995–96 settlement for the existing local authorities which I announced on 29 November. In terms of section 25 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, the shadow councils may be funded either by grant or by borrowing consent. I am still considering which of these funding methods to use and I shall announce my decision as soon as possible. COSLA is being consulted about the distribution of the £36 million among the shadow councils.

The one exception is provision of £5 million to cover the estimated cost of the elections of the shadow councils in April. That provision is included in the 1995–96 settlement for the existing authorities. A new grant-aided expenditure—GAE—assessment will be created for this amount and the GAE will be distributed among the nine regional councils on a basis agreed with COSLA.

It is clearly important that, in order to achieve as smooth a transition to the new structure as possible, the existing authorities play their full part during 1995–96 in helping the shadow councils to prepare for reorganisation. However, I would not expect the existing authorities to incur additional costs next year as a result of reorganisation. My impression is that the preparation work which is already under way in many authorities is, in the great majority of cases, being carried out by existing staff. I expect that that will also be the case next year. Where the existing authorities do incur costs next year in preparing for reorganisation, I would expect these to be offset by a rundown in their staffing and other activity as 1 April 1996 approaches. In other words, I would expect to see, in general, changes in one cancelling out changes in the other. But if a situation were to arise in which an existing authority had to undertake a major piece of preparation work which, for example, involved the recruitment of extra staff or the commissioning of consultants, I would expect such work to be undertaken only with the agreement of the relevant shadow council or councils and with the costs being met by that council or those councils concerned.

I consider that the provision that I am making for reorganisation costs in 1995–96 and the approach which I have outlined with regard to its distribution will ensure that the process of reorganisation will proceed smoothly and efficiently in the lead up to the transfer to the new councils on 1 April 1996.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce the provision that he has made in his public expenditure plans for Government-supported expenditure and aggregate external finance in 1996–97 and 1997–98.

Mr. Lang: My plans for Government supported expenditure—GSE—and aggregate external finance—AEF— for 1996–97 and 1997–98 and the actual figures for 1995–96 which I announced on Budget day are shown in the following table. The plans for 1996–97 and 1997–98 will, in the normal way, be subject to review in future public expenditure surveys.

	1995–96 £ million	*1996–97 £ million*	*1997–98 £ million*
GSE	6,116.9	6,211	6,201
AEF	5,306.0	5,336	5,300

Community Care

The above amounts of GSE and AEF are inclusive of the following sums which are being transferred to local authorities in respect of their care in the community and the independent living fund responsibilities.

1995–96 £ million	*1996–97 £ million*	*1997–98 £ million*
172.1	211.6	245.0

Local Government Reorganisation

In determining my plans for GSE and AEF for the two forward years, I have assumed that the new councils will incur local government reorganisation related costs of £70 million in 1996–97 and £20 million in 1997–98. The 1996–97 figure is £15 million greater than I assumed in my 1993 public expenditure plans. Twelve months ago I estimated that redundancy costs of £15 million would be incurred in 1995–96. I have now transferred this provision to 1996–97. In all, I am assuming that redundancy costs totalling £43 million will be incurred as a result of reorganisation. I am making provision for £40 million of these costs to be met in 1996–97 and £3 million in 1997–98. I expect other reorganisation related costs to amount to £30 million in 1996–97 and £17 million in 1997–98.

The new local government structure will be cheaper to operate than the existing one and I estimate that savings of £40 million per annum will be achieved from 1997–98. I recognise, however, that this full level of annual saving may not be achievable in the first year of the new structure, given that councils are likely to require time to shed the surplus staff which they inherit from the existing authorities. My plans therefore assume a saving of £30 million in 1996–97.

Overall, therefore, my plans assume reorganisation related net costs of £40 million in 1996–97 and net savings of £20 million in 1997–98.

Orthopaedic Consultants

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of vacant consultant orthopaedic posts; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are aware of two vacant consultant posts in orthopaedic surgery. The establishment of senior registrars in the specialty was increased from 21 to 23 earlier this year.

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to ensure that public access is maintained to Forestry Commission land which passes into private ownership.

Sir Hector Monro: We introduced arrangements in 1991 for securing continued public access to woodlands sold by the Forestry Commission. We have recently reviewed these arrangements and concluded that they should be strengthened. Further details are given in "Our Forests—The Way Ahead"—Cm 2644—a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Lang: During the last five years all special advisers in my Department have been subject to positive vetting.

Health (Revenue Allocations)

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what revenue allocations he has made to health boards, the Common Services Agency and the State hospital for 1995–96; what allocation provision he has made to those bodies for capital expenditure; and what provision for capital expenditure he proposes to make within the external financial limit for NHS trusts.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has allocated £2,595.3 million to health boards to meet their revenue expenditure commitments on hospital and community health services in 1995–96. The Common Services Agency has been allocated £104.6 million and the State hospital £12.9 million.

Taken with health boards' own cash releasing efficiency savings these allocations give an increase in available resources of 5.1 per cent. for health boards, 0.7 per cent for the Common Services Agency and 4.62 per cent. for the State hospital.

Capital provision of £18.4 million has been made for direct expenditure by health boards, the Common Services Agency and the State hospital. In addition, my right hon. Friend proposes to provide within NHS trusts' external financing limit for gross capital expenditure of some £212.4 million.

Details of the allocations are contained in the following table.

NHS in Scotland Allocations: 1995–96

Health Board	*Revenue allocation £000*	*Capital allocation £000*	*Capital provision for trusts by board area £000*
Argyll and Clyde	217,251	970	9,261
Ayrshire and Arran	179,324	0	17,906
Borders	57,702	110	2,731
Dumfries and Galloway	79,674	160	5,634
Fife	163,893	180	16,039
Forth Valley	128,578	15	7,213
Grampian	249,500	90	15,138
Greater Glasgow	517,977	565	45,080
Highland	108,180	270	7,276
Lanarkshire	249,373	0	16,008
Lothian	380,652	110	33,835
Orkney	11,993	4,845	N/A
Shetland	13,310	2,960	N/A
Tayside	217,552	220	23,405
Western Isles	20,895	2,250	N/A
CSA	104,565	8,300	N/A
State Hospital	12,938	5,685	N/A
Scottish Ambulance Service	N/A	N/A	9,840
Unallocated	N/A	N/A	3,000
Scotland	2,713,357	26,730	212,366

Travelling People

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has held with the representatives of travelling people in Scotland concerning those sections of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which relate to trespass; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* None. My right hon. Friend has an advisory committee on issues concerned with travelling people, on which the traveller community in Scotland are represented.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if his advisory committee on Scotland's travelling people will draw up guidelines relating to those sections in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which relate to trespass; how they may be administered by local authorities and police forces; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* It would not be appropriate for the advisory committee to issue guidelines on those sections of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 which relate to trespass in Scotland. The Scottish Office has, however, recently issued a guide which gives basic information on the provisions of the Act as it affects

Scotland. This has been sent to chief executives of local authorities, chief constables and to other interested parties. Interpretation of the new powers on trespass is essentially a matter for the police and the courts to determine. Notwithstanding the new provisions on trespass in the Act, the policy of toleration of illegal encampments will continue to apply where local authorities have not achieved the targets set by the Secretary of State for traveller site provision.

Hospital Construction, Lanarkshire

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has yet received plans from Lanarkshire health board for the construction of a new hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* No. Lanarkshire health board is currently considering plans for the facility that will afford future occupants maximum privacy and dignity.

Chapter 10.5 Scheme

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will continue to support the chapter 10.5 scheme;

(2) what recent representations he has received concerning the review of the chapter 10.5 scheme by the Scottish Office; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* Representations have been received recently from the Scottish General Medical Services committee and from a number of general medical practitioners.

The chapter 10.5 payments scheme—so called because it derives from chapter 10.5 of the 1989 White Paper "Working for Patients"—was introduced by the then Secretary of State in April 1990. Its purpose was to safeguard the position of doctors in the less populated parts of Scotland who it was thought might be unable to maintain or increase their income under the revised remuneration arrangements of the new GP contract which placed more emphasis than previously on capitation-based payments. A fund of £1.204 million per annum was established in Scotland. There is no equivalent scheme in England. In the event there has been less of a move towards capitation-based remuneration than expected. The position is currently under review.

Deprivation

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what recent representations he has received concerning the change in calculation of deprivation payments from an 8 Jarman index to a 7 Jarman index; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will assess the effects of the change in calculation of deprivation from an 8 Jarman index to a 7 Jarman index on the incomes of general practitioners in Scotland; and what comparisons he has made with the incomes of general practitioners in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* Representations have been received recently from the Scottish General Medical Services committee and from a number of general medical practitioners.

There was no change in overall expenditure on deprivation payments to GPs in Scotland as a consequence of the move from a Jarman 8 index to a Jarman 7 index in 1991. The change was designed to be cost neutral. The use of enumeration districts—around 300 people—as the basis of payment rather than post code sectors—around 5,000 people—allows for better targeting of payments.

I am satisfied that GPs in Scotland are not disadvantaged by the application of a Jarman 7 index in relation to their colleagues in England where the Jarman 8 index continues to be applied at electoral ward level of around 5,000 people.

In 1993–94 GPs in Scotland received some £3.8 million under the scheme which is currently based in 1981 census data. Negotiations are under way with the profession about updating the scheme using data from the 1991 census.

Astronomer Royal

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he hopes to fill the position of Astronomer Royal for Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* Advice will be given shortly to Her Majesty the Queen on an appointment to the Office of Astronomer Royal for Scotland.

Forth Bridge

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what provision he has made for public expenditure in each of the years 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98 in connection with the planning for and construction of all approach roads and other building operations in connection with the proposed second Forth road bridge; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what financial provision he has made for all expenditure in connection with the proposed second Forth road bridge in 1995–96, 1996–97 and 1997–98; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* My right hon. Friend's spending plans include provision for further expenditure on the proposals under examination in the "Setting Forth" studies amounting to £4 million, £2 million and £2 million in the years 1994–95, 1995–96 and 1996–97 respectively. The deployment of these provisions will be dependent on decisions yet to be taken in relation to these proposals and it may be necessary to make additional provision in respect of land claims which may occur in the years in question. My right hon. Friend is currently considering detailed feasibility studies into all aspects of the proposals and the comments received on these studies.

WALES

Single-sex Wards

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will direct health districts to move to the provision of single-sex wards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: Hospitals are already required to provide services which take account of an individual's privacy and dignity. The issue of single-sex wards is one that my right hon. Friend and I will consider when the present edition of the patients charter for Wales is reviewed.

Dual-sex Wards

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dual-sex wards exist in each of the health districts of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is not held centrally.

Cot Deaths

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cot deaths there have been in Wales for each of the last 10 years, broken down by county.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is given in the table.

Cot deaths[1]—infants, and children under 5: Wales 1983–92

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Clwyd	7	7	8	12	20	12	5	3	8	2
Dyfed	7	0	8	13	5	11	5	11	8	1
Gwent	9	9	12	7	13	14	14	8	6	6
Gwynedd	6	5	2	4	5	4	5	7	7	3
Mid Glamorgan	15	10	19	16	23	15	17	17	10	8
Powys	3	4	7	3	5	3	0	4	2	2
South Glamorgan	14	12	16	12	14	10	12	7	10	4
West Glamorgan	4	3	5	8	13	14	12	5	4	7
Wales	65	50	77	75	98	83	70	62	55	33

Source:
OPCS.
Note:
[1] All sudden infant deaths where sudden infant death syndrome, cot death or similar term was entered on the death certificate even when other causes were also given. Deaths of children aged one to four are included; there were 29 over the 10-year period.
1993 data for Wales will be published in an OPCS monitor on 15 December; data for counties will be made available on request from OPCS after that date.

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Redwood: The required information for my Department is:

	1991–92 £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
Welsh Office	622,399	553,262	513,016
ADAS agency Wales	[1]—	70,126	49,229
Planning Inspectorate agency	[1]—	2,298	2,348
Cadw agency	N/A	N/A	N/A

[1] Agencies not established.
N/A. Figures not available.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure on energy for each property owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Redwood: My Department has no properties for sole use by Ministers. Ministers have rooms in properties in Cardiff and London. Total Welsh Office expenditure on energy for each of these properties for the last three years was:

	1991–92 £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
Cathays Park, Cardiff	283,155	293,810	298,807
Gwydyr house, London	9,179	7,219	9,456

The Welsh Office is withdrawing from other buildings, saving money on energy in those as it does so.

Oriel Bookshop

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will discuss with the chairman of the Welsh Arts Council its intention to sell off the Oriel bookshop in Cardiff to HMSO; and if he will seek to ensure that, in any such change the role of the bookshop as a main outlet of Welsh language publications and music in Cardiff will be safeguarded.

Mr. Richards: The Arts Council of Wales issued invitations to tender for the management of the book selling operations at the Oriel bookshop in Cardiff on 9 September 1994. The Arts Council will be considering the report of its project board at its meeting on 15 December; some aspects of the report have been submitted to the Welsh Office for approval, and these are under consideration. It will be a matter for the Arts Council as to whether the project board's recommendations are accepted.

The successful tenderer will need to provide services at least equal to those provided by Oriel, including the provision of Welsh language books and periodicals.

Since the Arts Council is conducting the contracting-out process in accordance with Government guidance on market testing, and the choice of tenderer rests with the Arts Council, my right hon. Friend and I do not intend to meet the chairman to discuss the matter.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people currently serve on the boards of each of the NHS trusts as lay appointees; and what is the total cost of their emoluments.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is included in "Appointments by the Secretary of State for Wales", which is held in the Library of the House and is regularly updated.

Consultants

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was his Department's expenditure on *(a)* management and *(b)* other consultants in each year from 1990 to 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Expenditure on management and other consultants engaged by the Welsh Office is as follows:

Year	*Total payments £000*
1990–91	229
1991–92	1,109
1992–93	1,416
1993–94	1,454
1994–95[1]	427

[1] year to date

Since 1993, my Department has significantly reduced its use of consultants which is reflected in the year to date figure 1994–95.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide figures for 1993–94 and 1994–95 to date for the number of occasions on which management or other consultants have been engaged *(a)* by his office and *(b)* by non-departmental public bodies in Wales; and what were the total amounts of authorised payments for those consultants in both years.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 November 1994]:* Details of management and other consultants engaged by the Welsh Office are as follows:

	Number of occasions	*Total payments—£000s*
1993–94	87	1,454
1994–95[1]	37	427

[1] Year to date.

Information for non-departmental public bodies is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Home Tuition

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how long it takes on average for each local education authority to arrange home tuition for children; what is the greatest and least time recorded by each local education authority to provide home tuition; and if the speed of provision has improved over the last three years;

(2) what has been the average time provided for home tuition by each local education authority in each of the last three years; and what was the greatest and least amount of time provided for children in each local education authority;

(3) how many children received home tuition in each of the last three years; and if he will list the numbers by local education authority, distinguishing between primary and secondary school pupils.

Mr. Richards: This information is not available centrally.

Pupil Exclusions

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children have been excluded in each of the last three years from school *(a)* temporarily and *(b)* permanently, listing the schools by local education authority area.

Mr. Richards: Figures for each of the last three years are not available. Information on permanent exclusions from maintained schools in Wales was collected by the Welsh Office over a two-year period, starting with the summer term 1990, under the national exclusions reporting system. A total of 192 permanent exclusions were reported during this period. It is not possible to provide a breakdown of the figure because of assurances given as to confidentiality.

Hospital Tuition

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children received hospital tuition in each of the last three years, if he will list *(a)* the hospitals where it was provided and *(b)* the amount of time provided on average along with the greatest and least time provided for children in each hospital.

Mr. Richards: Information on the education of children in hospital classes is not held centrally. There is presently one hospital school in Wales, the Harvey Jones adolescent unit, maintained by South Glamorgan local education authority. There are currently 13 children between the ages of 11 and 16 in the unit.

Wrexham Maelor Hospital

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps were taken to ensure work on phase 2 of the Wrexham Maelor hospital, Wrexham, was carried out according to schedule; and what checks were made on the subcontractors.

Mr. Richards: The project management of phase 2 of the Wrexham Maelor hospital was carried out by the Welsh Health Common Services Authority in accordance with the mandatory health building procedural guidance.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many complaints have been received from subcontractors on phase 2 of the Wrexham Maelor hospital, Wrexham, about non-payment from the prime contractor.

Mr. Richards: Payment disputes are a matter for the contracting parties. I understand that two subcontractors have complained about aspects of payment and one of them is currently pursuing the matter through court proceedings against the main contractor.

Dental Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ensure the availability of free national health dentistry to all who require it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: This Government remain committed to a comprehensive NHS dental service and the Green Paper "Improving NHS Dentistry" reinforces our commitment

> "to ensure that all patients who want NHS services have adequate access to them".

It is for health authorities to assess the adequacy of NHS dental services in their locality and it is for them to decide on the extent of community dental services they need to contract in light of local circumstances. Family health services authorities are encouraged to seek the Secretary of State's permission to employ salaried dentists in areas where there is a shortfall in service provision.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Redwood: All special advisers are currently required to have positive vetting.

Health Service Staff

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the costs of *(a)* managers and administrators and *(b)* medical staff in the health service in Wales for each year from 1979 to 1994.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 November 1994]:* The information requested is set out in the table:

Medical and front-line support

	(1) Administrative and clerical £000	*(2) Directly employed NHS staff £000*	*(3) FHSA contractual staff £000*
1979–80	27,837	159,593	27,238
1980–81	33,986	220,857	36,434
1981–82	36,702	239,751	40,921
1982–83	37,504	261,243	46,444
1983–84	42,697	278,551	50,538
1984–85	46,136	303,396	56,803
1985–86	48,130	327,455	55,020
1986–87	50,430	360,269	63,485
1987–88	57,170	408,732	70,996
1988–89	63,526	475,481	82,607
1989–90	73,630	542,564	86,186
1990–91	87,367	593,407	91,753
1991–92	107,018	626,260	121,454
1992–93	117,687	683,080	124,219

Source:

Annual accounts—financial returns of HAs, SHAs, FHSAs and Pembrokeshire NHS trust.

Notes:

(1) Final figures for 1993–94 are not yet available.

(2) Column (1) figures include the salaries and wages of general and senior managers, and administrators and clerks in health authorities, SHAs, FHSAs and Pembrokeshire NHS trust, including agency staff.

(3) Column (2) figures include the salaries of medical, dental, nursing, professional and technical staff employed in HAs, SHAs, FHSAs and Pembrokeshire NHS trust. They exclude the costs of ancillary, maintenance and ambulance staff.

(4) Column (3) figures include the estimated earnings and staff costs of GPs and dentists. Those for pharmaceutical and ophthalmic contractors cannot be disaggregated from service costs and are not included.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of *(a)* managers and administrators and *(b)* medical staff working within the health service in Wales in each year from 1979 to 1994.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 November 1994]:* The information is given in the table:

Medical and front-line support

	[1]Administrative and clerical (whole-time equivalents)	*[2]Directly employed NHS staff (whole-time equivalents)*	*[3]FHSA contractual staff (numbers, of people employed full-time or part-time)*
1979	6,229	25,303	2,329
1980	6,287	26,749	2,373
1981	6,398	27,629	2,415
1982	6,446	28,391	2,500
1983	6,530	28,824	2,572
1984	6,675	29,700	2,618
1985	6,837	30,606	2,692
1986	6,969	30,959	2,725
1987	7,087	31,780	2,811
1988	7,326	32,239	2,863
1989	7,667	32,839	2,936
1990	8,185	33,160	2,979
1991	8,865	33,548	3,000
1992	9,498	34,318	3,037
1993	10,082	34,517	3,075
1994	9,905	N/A	N/A

[1] These figures include all administrative, clerical and managerial staff employed by health authorities, NHS trusts, family health services authorities and the Welsh Health Common Services Authority at 30 September.

[2] These figures include:

—medical and dental staff—working in the hospital and community health service, excluding hospital practitioners and clinical assistants.

—nurses and midwives—excluding pre-registration learners.

—professional and technical staff.

Since 1991, student and pupil nurses have been classified as students and are no longer included in NHS staff figures.

[3] These figures include GPs, principal and assistant dentists, ophthalmic medical practitioners and ophthalmic opticians. Staff directly employed by contractual staff—e.g., practice nurses—are not included since complete information is not collected centrally.

Tourism

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total value of section 4 grants distributed by the Wales tourist board in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* The amounts for the years in question are:

1991–92 £	*1992–93 £*	*1993–94 £*
3,617,000	3,738,000	4,092,000

EDUCATION

Performance Tables

10. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what prospects there are for the assessment of added value in schools arising from the introduction of testing and the publication of performance tables.

Mr. Forth: We are giving priority to the development of a reliable measure of value added by schools. The report by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority taking this work forward has just been published and copies have been placed in the Library. My right hon. Friend has now commissioned the SCAA to undertake further developmental work.

19. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals she has for making school performance tables a measure of value added.

Mr. Forth: We shall include value added in school performance tables as soon as reliable, easily understood measures are available. As the recent report by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority recognised, such measures cannot be calculated until the same cohort of pupils has been reliably tested at different ages.

Grant-maintained Schools

16. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the latest figure she has for the number of schools that have now voted in favour of grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: To date, a total of 1,153 schools in England have voted in favour of grant-maintained status.

29. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the circumstances in which she has required a second ballot on grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: Under the Education Act 1993, a second ballot on whether a school should apply to become grant-maintained is required if fewer than 50 per cent. of eligible parents vote in the ballot, or the result is a tie.

My right hon. Friend has powers to declare a ballot void and require that a fresh ballot be held if it appears to her that the ballot has not been held in accordance with provisions in the 1993 Act, that the governing body has not acted in accordance with the statutory guidance, that there has been interference in the ballot process or that voting in the ballot has been influenced to a significant extent by false or misleading information.

To date, six ballots have been declared void using the powers in the 1993 Act and those they superseded in the Education Reform Act 1988. In one case, this was as a result of the dissemination of false or misleading literature. Ballots held at the other five schools were declared void because of irregularities in the electoral roll.

Self-defence Courses

17. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to introduce self-defence courses for girls in schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: None. It is for schools to decide what to offer their pupils outside of the minimum statutory national curriculum which applies to all pupils, regardless of gender.

School League Tables

18. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to provide new data in school league tables.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend will be consulting in due course on the content of the 1995 performance tables, taking account of feedback on this year's tables. In the longer term performance tables will include the national curriculum assessment results of 11-year-olds and, as soon as reliable and easily understood measures have been developed, data on value added.

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she has made of the extent to which the Government's school league tables reflect the true record of schools, with particular reference to Rochdale.

Mr. Forth: The information in the performance tables was provided by or checked with the schools concerned prior to publication. We have not been notified of any errors in the data in respect of schools in Rochdale.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what support he has received from educational organisations for the introduction of league tables for schools.

Mr. Forth: In commenting earlier this year on proposals for the 1994 round, many organisations acknowledged that the annual performance tables provide information that parents and others want about the performance of schools and colleges. A range of different views were expressed about the coverage and presentation of the data.

School Funding

20. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement about funding for schools for the coming year.

Mr. Robin Squire: Education standard spending will increase by 1.1 per cent. in 1995–96. Local authorities will decide what to spend on the various services for which they are responsible, including schools.

Pupil Numbers, Liverpool

21. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children in Liverpool are currently educated in schools with classes of over *(a)* 30 children and *(b)* 35 children; and how many such classes there are.

Mr. Robin Squire: In January 1994, 14,250 pupils were in 439 classes of more than 30 and, of these, 960 pupils were in 26 classes of more than 35. But the great majority of Liverpool pupils were in classes smaller than these.

Discretionary Grants

22. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations she has received regarding the availability of discretionary grants.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has received representations from a variety of sources about the availability of discretionary awards.

Further Education, Rotherham

23. **Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the funding of further education in Rotherham.

Mr. Boswell: The funding of further education in Rotherham is a matter for the Further Education Funding Council.

Nursery Education

24. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to further the spread of pre-school education and playgroups.

25. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement about her future plans for the expansion of nursery education.

26. **Ms Hodge:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans her Department has to expand nursery provision for children under the age of four.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has established a task force to draw up proposals to implement my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's commitment to provide a pre-school place for all four-year-olds whose parents wish them to take it up. We are looking at a range of options to achieve the Prime Minister's target. As the expansion is achieved we want to ensure that it will add to the choice parents have among a range of provision—public, private and voluntary.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress has been made in her policy in respect of universal nursery education.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is looking at a range of options and is consulting widely with practitioners and existing providers of pre-school provision with a view to drawing up detailed proposals to fulfil my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's commitment to provide, over time, a pre-school place for all four-year-olds whose parents wish to take it up.

Technology Colleges

27. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have now obtained technology college status.

Mr. Robin Squire: To date, 50.

Expenditure Priorities

28. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what advice she gives local education authorities in respect of their priorities for expenditure.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is for local authorities to make their own decisions about spending priorities within the total resources available to them. We do, however, encourage spending in particular areas through our specific grants programmes and through the allocation of credit approvals.

City Technology Colleges

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the record of *(a)* city technology colleges and *(b)* the CTC in Birmingham, in the school league tables.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) on 5 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *125*. The table shows something of the progress that the city technology colleges are making. Of the 10 CTCs which had pupils taking GCSEs in 1994, four bettered the average of their local education authority on the measure of five or more GCSEs at A to C, four improved their results over last year, and all exceeded the local LEA average for pupils gaining one or more grades A to G.

Kingshurst CTC in Solihull takes pupils from Solihull and from Birmingham. The college's GCSE results are above the national average, on a par with the Solihull average, and well above the average for Birmingham.

State Schools (Private Industry)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the policy of attracting private industry into state schools; and if she will be considering a new approach to providing vocational education in schools.

Mr. Forth: The Government's education policy has consistently encouraged greater interaction between business and schools. The latest data show that 90 per cent. of maintained secondary schools and over half our primary schools now have links of some kind with business, and the range and nature of the interaction is growing broader. General national vocational qualifications are already providing a new approach to vocational education in schools. More than 1,500 schools are now approved GNVQ centres. In October, a GNVQ scholarship scheme was launched with sponsorship from 12 major companies.

Language Training

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to improve the linguistic abilities of children; and if she will examine the best practises in language training in other EEC countries.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend aims to raise linguistic competence principally through the national curriculum, which requires all pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 to study a modern foreign language. She also provides grant to the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, whose working brief is to promote a greater national capability in languages. In addition, she recently announced plans to extend the specialist schools programme to include modern foreign languages.

My right hon. Friend is informed of practice in other member states through our participation in European Community activities such as the Lingua programme.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions she has had with the Home Secretary on section 11 funding for the next financial year.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend keeps these matters regularly under review with ministerial colleagues. She was pleased that her Department has been able to contribute £5 million in each of the 1995–96 and 1996–97 financial years towards the additional funding for section 11 grant announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on 22 November *Official Report*, column *64*.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations she has had from the

Confederation of British Industry on the length of the capital expenditure programme replacement cycle.

Mr. Robin Squire: None.

Research

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what sum was spent by her Department on research in each of the last 10 years; what percentage this was of the total annual budget; what is the research budget for the forthcoming year; what percentage this is of her total budget; and what additional new research is to be undertaken.

Mr. Forth: The sums spent on research and development by the Department for the last 10 years were reported in the statistical supplement to the 1994 "Forward Look" of Government-funded science engineering and technology. The expenditure on research and development and the percentage that this expenditure was of total Departmental expenditure are as follows:

	R&D Expenditure £ million	*Percentage of total expenditure*
1985–86	70.7	2.9
1986–87	68.9	2.7
1987–88	105.4	3.7
1988–89	73.4	2.1
1989–90	75.1	1.5
1990–91	87.8	1.6
1991–92	53.0	0.8
1992–93	43.4	0.6
1993–94	22.3	0.2
1994–95	[1]23.1	0.2

[1] Provisional.

The R and D figures do not include research carried out or funded by the Department's funding agencies.

Total departmental expenditure covers central Government expenditure and grants to local authorities within the Department of Education's programme.

The expenditure on research and development in the coming year has still to be determined, and will be reported in the statistical supplement to the 1995 "Forward Look".

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which of the appointments made to public bodies by her Department were advertised in the period from April 1992 to December 1993.

Mr. Boswell: The Department placed no advertisements for the members of public bodies during the period in question. It did, however, place an advertisement for the first chief executive of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, as responsibility for that appointment lay with the Secretary of State.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which of the special advisers serving in her Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Boswell: All special advisers have been positively vetted.

Higher Education (Application Refusals)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is her estimate of the annual number of students whose applications to take courses at colleges of higher education are refused.

Mr. Boswell: Higher education colleges received some 162,000 applications for entry to full-time undergraduate courses by the polytechnics central admissions system during the 1992–93 applications cycle. On the broad assumption that each applicant made on average 3.2 applications, this is equivalent to some 51,000 total applicants. Some 32,000 students were admitted to the relevant courses in the academic year 1993–94. This suggests that an estimated 19,000 or 37 per cent. of applicants may have gained entry elsewhere, withdrawn from the system, deferred entry or been refused places. These figures include applicants who will not have been considered suitable for higher education.

Student Awards

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether there is any difference under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations 1994 in the assessment of parental income in respect of a student whose parents are *(a)* marred or *(b)* cohabiting on the assumption that the parents in either case have identical financial circumstances and no other dependants.

Mr. Boswell: Under the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations the assessment of the parental income of married and cohabiting parents in identical financial circumstances will usually be the same, unless one of the cohabiting parents is wholly or mainly financially dependent on the other.

Schools Expenditure

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total figure for the financial balances held by all *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department is at present collating the information on balances contained in the outturn statements prepared by local education authorities for the financial year 1993–94 under section 42 of the Education Reform Act 1988, and I will write to the hon. Member when this work is complete.

Older People (Learning)

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what contribution her Department has made in 1994 to follow up the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in 1993.

Mr. Boswell: The Department for Education is committed to working with employers and other providers of education and training to maximise participation and attainment by people of all ages, as the national targets for education and training make clear.

Specifically, the Department provides a programme of grants to a number of voluntary bodies—including the Pre-Retirement Association—for work with older learners. The Department also funds the family literacy initiative, which promotes inter-generational learning.

HEALTH

Scarborough and North East Yorkshire Trust

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she or her Department has had with the chairman of the Scarborough and North East Yorkshire Health Care NHS Trust, following his remarks in the course of a mental health review meeting in January 1994; what plans she has to seek his resignation; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 20 October at columns *310–11*.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of financial support the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts receives from her Department.

Mr. Sackville: In the current financial year, the Department has, to date, agreed to payments totalling £58,500 towards the cost of specific projects undertaken by the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts. The Department does not offer financial support to the association's general running costs.

GP Fundholding

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on representations by Angela Fulter, director of the King's Fund, on the use of general practitioner fundholders' resources for the purchase of property and property improvements to fundholder premises;

(2) what arrangements she is intending to make for the return to the taxpayers of financial resources used by fundholders for the purchase of property and property improvement to fundholders' premises, where fundholder general practitioners dispose of their practices' pecuniary interests on retirement.

Mr. Malone: Under the National Health Service (Fund-holding Practices) Regulations 1993, general practitioner fundholders may use efficiency savings to improve practice premises where this is for the benefit of patients. These rules are kept under review. Fundholding general practitioners may not use efficiency savings to purchase new premises.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has of fundholding general practitioner practices selling premises purchased out of public funds for windfall profits.

Mr. Malone: None.

Prescriptions

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her best estimate of the average number of prescription items used each year by people over state retirement age.

Mr. Malone: In 1993, some 176.5 million prescription items were dispensed free of charge by community pharmacists and appliance contractors in England to people who declared on their prescription form that they were either a woman aged 60 and over or a man aged 65 and over. This equates to an annual average of 17.6 prescription items per head for each person of state retirement age or over, resident in England.

Burnley Health Care NHS Trust

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, columns *133–34*, what considerations she took into account when deciding to correspond privately with the former chairman of Burnley Health Care NHS Trust.

Mr. Malone: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State took all relevant factors into account, in particular her duties in respect of the National Health Service Trusts (Membership and Procedure) Regulations 1990 and reports of recent events at Burnley Health Care NHS Trust, in deciding to write privately to the former chairman.

NHS Patient Statistics

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated by the national health service on an *(a)* out-patient and *(b)* in-patient basis in 1979, 1986, 1990 and 1993.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table:

General and acute specialties

Thousands

	Out-patients first attendances	*Ordinary admissions and day cases finished consultant episodes*
1979	6,771	[1]5,099
1986	7,835	[1]6,446
1990–91	7,593	6,936
1993–94	8,832	8,205

Notes:

[1] Figures have been adjusted to take account of the change from discharges and deaths to finished consultant episodes.

Sources:

1979 and 1986, SH3 returns; 1990–91 and 1993–94, KH09 and KP70 returns.

Life Expectancy

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was life expectancy for men and women at one year, in 1979, 1986, 1990 and 1993.

Mr. Sackville: Data on life expectancy at birth in England and Wales for men and women in 1993 are not available. Life expectancy data for the years 1979, 1986, 1990 and 1992, the last available year, are shown in the table:

Year	*Males*	*Females*
1979	70.3	76.4
1986	72.1	77.9
1990	73.1	78.8
1992	73.8	79.2

"The Health of the Nation"

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on which dates the Cabinet Committee on "The Health of the Nation" met between October 1992 and October 1994;

and on which dates its sub-committees met during the same period.

Mr. Sackville: Details of the timing of meetings of ministerial committees are not given.

Non-executive Directors

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list *(a)* the vocational and *(b)* party political background of the non-executive directors of (i) Brighton Healthcare NHS Trust, (ii) South Downs Healthcare NHS Trust, (iii) the Brighton family health services authority and (iv) East Sussex district health authority; and which of them live in the area covered by the body concerned.

Mr. Malone: The names and occupations of non-executive directors of Brighton Healthcare NHS Trust and the South Downs Healthcare NHS Trust are as shown.

Brighton Healthcare NHS Trust

Mr. J. Whicker: Retired bank director
Mr. R. Stiles: Chartered surveyor
Ms S. Innes: Consultant, The Open College
Professor C. Carnall: Director of Graduate Studies
Vacancy

South Downs Health NHS Trust

Mr. Q. Barry: Solicitor
Mrs. J. Langston: Youth worker
Lady H. Trafford: Company director
Mr. R. Brett: Bank area director
Mr. R. Davenport: Information systems manager

NHS trusts do not have a defined catchment area in which directors could be deemed to live.

The appointment of non-executive members of district health authorities and family health services authorities is a matter for regional health authorities which have details of vocational background and addresses of appointees.

Information on the political affiliation of appointees is not collected.

Long-term Care

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what savings have been made since April 1993 for the national health service by the transfer of funding of continuing care of elderly people to local authorities;

(2) what consideration she has given to using the savings from the transfer of funding of continuing care to local authorities to be available for the use of councils in providing this service.

Mr. Bowis: As a pre-condition of the community care special transitional grant, local authorities have been required to reach agreements with health authorities on their respective responsibilities for long-term care. When reaching these agreements we have made it clear that any changes to long-term care responsibilities should be agreed between the two agencies, including, if appropriate any transfer of resources under section 28A of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1977.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to ensure that people with acute health needs in continuing care are cared for in hospital and not in a domestic setting.

Mr. Bowis: On 12 August we issued, for consultation, draft guidance on national health service responsibilities for meeting long-term health care needs. The guidance reminded health authorities that they have a responsibility for securing care for people with continuing health care needs. Such care can be provided in a variety of settings, including hospitals or appropriate facilities in the independent sector.

Orthopaedic Posts

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of vacant consultant orthopaedic posts; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: There were 31 vacant consultant posts in trauma and orthopaedics in England at 30 September 1993. As a snapshot of vacancies on a single date, they may not fairly reflect the average number of vacancies over the year as a whole.

Multiple Births

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many sets of *(a)* twins, *(b)* triplets, *(c)* quadruplets, *(d)* quintuplets and *(e)* sextuplets were born in England in 1993; what was the total number of maternities in England and Wales; and how many multiple births of each type were conceived as a result of (i) in-vitro fertilisation, (ii) gamete intra-fallopian transfer and (iii) other forms of assisted conception.

Mr. Sackville: There were 668,511 maternities in England and Wales in 1993, of which 8,302 resulted in twins, 234 in triplets, 12 in quadruplets and one in sextuplets.

Information on multiple births in 1992 following assisted conception—the latest year for which figures are available—is contained in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority's annual report. Copies of this report are available in the Library.

NHS Staff Salary Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 3 November, *Official Report*, column *1267*, if she will now update the information on NHS staff salary costs to include figures for 1993–94 and a recalculation of figures for previous years on the new 1993–94 basis.

Mr. Malone: Information on 1993–94 national health service staff salary costs will be placed in the Library. Information on previous year figures at 1993–94 prices was included in the reply I gave the hon. Member on 3 November at column *1267*.

Research

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sum was spent by her Department on research in each of the last 10 years; what percentage this was of the total annual budget; what is the budget for the forthcoming year; what percentage this is of her total budget; and what additional new research is to be undertaken.

Mr. Malone: The sums spent on research and development by the Department of Health over the last 10 years were reported in the statistical supplement to the "Forward Look of Government-Funded Science, Engineering and Technology 1994", and earlier editions of the "Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development". These figures are set out in the table, together with the percentage of the total Department's spending represented by the research.

Year	*DH research spending (£ million)*	*Percentage of total DH spending spent on research*
1985–86	20.1	5.56
1986–87	28.8	7.40
1987–88	28.4	6.88
1988–89	33.7	8.04
1989–90	38.7	5.65
1990–91	47.0	6.83
1991–92	56.2	7.90
1992–93	53.0	6.86
1993–94 (estimate)	54.1	3.88
1994–95 (estimate)	50.1	3.14

These figures exclude spending on the national health service and on NHS research and development. The constituent parts of total departmental spending have changed over the last 10 years, making comparison difficult across different years.

Department of Health expenditure on research and development in the coming year has still to be determined, and will be reported in the statistical supplement to the 1995 forward look.

New and future Departmental strategic research initiatives within the Department's centrally commissioned programme include studies in primary care, mental health services, community health services, personal social services, public and environmental health, information technology, skill mix, effectiveness of purchasing models and prescribing.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which of the special advisers serving in her Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Sackville: All special advisers are currently required to have positive vetting.

Patients' Complaints

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 November, *Official Report,* columns *323–24,* when she will publish data for 1993–94 on patient complaints.

Mr. Malone: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 12 December, *Official Report,* column *472.*

EMPLOYMENT

Career Development Loans

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inquiries about career development loans were received *(a)* during the 1993–94 financial year and *(b)* in response to his Department's advertising campaign.

Mr. Paice: During the 1993–94 financial year 90,275 career development loan inquiries were received, of which 36,390 were in direct response to the CDL advertising campaign.

Labour Statistics

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women are economically active at age 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65 years and over.

Mr. Oppenheim: The available information from the labour force survey is given in the following table:

Economic activity rates by age—spring 1994 (not seasonally adjusted) Great Britain

Per cent.

Age (years)	*Males*	*Females*
55	82	64
56	79	59
57	74	57
58	75	51
59	70	45
60	66	34
61	57	30
62	50	25
63	46	21
64	39	18
65 and over	7	3

Source:

Labour force survey.

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his current estimate of the number of people who leave the work force each year; and if he will differentiate between those who leave due to retirement, ill-health, unemployment and other reasons.

Mr. Oppenheim: Of those people classified as economically inactive—that is, not employed or ILO unemployed—in the spring 1994 labour force survey for Great Britain, 1,020,000 people said that they had been in employment a year earlier. Reasons given for leaving their last job were: retirement, 22 per cent.; ill-health, 16 per cent.; redundancy, dismissal or a temporary job ending, 15 per cent.; other reasons, 47 per cent.

Further, of those people classified as ILO unemployed in spring 1994, 760,000 people said they had been in employment a year earlier. The reasons given for leaving employment were: redundancy or dismissal, 32 per cent.; temporary job ending, 18 per cent.; other reasons, 50 per cent.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of staff employed by the Health and Safety Executive in each of the last five years.

Mr. Oppenheim: The total number of staff employed by the Health and Safety Executive in each of the last five years is shown in the table:

Year (1 April)	*Number of staff employed by HSE*
1990	3,698.0
1991	3,877.0
1992	4,321.0
1993	4,537.5
1994	4,544.5

Note:

Figures show full-time equivalent staff.

Part-time staff counted as 0.5.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what consideration he has given to the German model of a firm employment status for apprentices and industry-agreed allowances for trainees; and what plans he has to recommend it in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Paice: It is up to employers offering apprenticeship training to decide on employed status and wage levels. Under modern apprenticeships the aim is to offer apprentices employed status as soon as possible and to ensure that realistic wages or allowances are set which reflect the cost of training to the employer and the expectation on behalf of the trainee of higher wages when qualified.

Pay Differentials

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what study he has made of the effect of reduced pay differentials in Germany.

Mr. Oppenheim: The Department has made no such study.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage employers to lower pay differentials.

Mr. Oppenheim: None. Pay is a matter to be determined by the employers and employees concerned. Employers are best able to judge what pay is needed to recruit, retain and motivate their employees at all levels.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the role of pay differentials in the development of trust between workers and management.

Mr. Oppenheim: None. Pay is a matter for the employers and employees concerned.

Managerial Pay Awards

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with the Prime Minister about managerial pay awards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Oppenheim: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State periodically discusses pay at all levels and its implications for the economy and jobs with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and colleagues. As the Government have made clear on a number of occasions, the remuneration of directors is a matter for companies and their shareholders, within the framework of company law.

Management and Work Force Co-operation

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage co-operation between management and work force in United Kingdom industry; and if he will review his policy.

Mr. Oppenheim: The Government believe that co-operation between management and workers is best promoted on a voluntary basis. Only in this way can companies develop flexible arrangements which suit the needs of their business and their employees. Legislation, such as the European works councils directive, is too rigid and not the way to encourage good practice. Compulsion would restrict flexibility, add to costs and stifle innovation.

The Government continue to encourage voluntary employee involvement practices. Our joint campaign with the Confederation of British Industry, "Managing for Success", offers guidelines on involving employees in aspects of business performance.

The Government published a booklet, "The Competitive Edge", describing good practice and successful examples of employee involvement, in May this year. A copy is available in the Library.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cuba

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the USA Government to seek the normalisation of relationships with Cuba; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We believe that United States-Cuba relations are primarily a matter for the two Governments concerned, not third parties.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his preferred number of members of UNESCO's board.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are of the opinion that international bodies operate more efficiently and cost effectively with small governing bodies. We were therefore not happy with the decision taken at the recent 145th session of the executive board to recommend an increase in the size of the board from 51 to 58. We would have preferred the executive board to recommend a decrease in its size. Failing that, we would have liked to see the status quo maintained.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what he estimates would be the cost of renewing the United Kingdom's membership of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We estimate that the cost of renewing the United Kingdom's membership of UNESCO would be £11 million per annum.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his preferred level of subsistence payments to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation based members.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We believe that subsistence rates for the UNESCO executive board meetings should be paid only to members from least developed countries and the level reduced to bring it in line with the arrangements in the other UN specialised agencies. At present, all UNESCO executive board members receive a daily subsistence rate based on 140 per cent. of the UN rate plus $5 for the duration of the twice-yearly executive board sessions.

Rwanda and Zaire

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements have been made to protect humanitarian aid workers operating in the refugee camps in Rwanda and Zaire.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The non-governmental organisations working in the Rwandan refugee camps have, with the advice and assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, made their own security and contingency arrangements. We maintain regular contact with British NGOs and UN agencies over the security in the camps and are continually monitoring the situation.

The UN Secretary-General recently outlined several options for international action to address the security situation in the camps. The Security Council has asked him to investigate the practicalities of the proposals and we await his further response.

East Timor

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he received a letter and petition about East Timor from the justice and peace group of St. Charles' church, Gosforth; and when he proposes to reply to it.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have been unable to trace any letter from the justice and peace group of St. Charles' church. A petition with a large number of signatories from the Gosforth area was received in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 20 May 1994. No reply was sent because in the absence of any covering letter it was unclear to whom it should be addressed. If the hon. Member would like to forward a copy of the justice and peace group's letter, I would be happy to reply.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been Her Majesty's Government's response to the proposal of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany for the establishment of an international nuclear weapons register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: We and other NATO allies have explained our reservations about this proposal to the German Government.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the establishment of an international nuclear weapons register;

(2) what discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts on the proposal of the Federal Republic of Germany to establish an international nuclear weapons register; and if he will make a statement on their progress.

Mr. Hurd: We have discussed the German proposal with NATO allies. We have concluded that the proposal would not make the positive and practical contribution to nuclear arms control which the German Government hoped.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been Her Majesty's Government's response to President Yeltsin's invitation to all five nuclear weapons states to enter strategic nuclear arms control talks.

Mr. Hurd: We took careful note of all President Yeltsin's references to nuclear arms control in his speech at the United Nations General Assembly. We have not received any detailed representations from the Russians.

Disarmament Conference

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recommendations his Department is making regarding the current review of the agenda of the conference on disarmament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: We participate actively in the review of the agenda of the conference on disarmament. We want the agenda to reflect a sensible balance between nuclear and conventional issues.

Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to seek a consensus decision on the extension of the non-proliferation treaty at next year's extension conference.

Mr. Hurd: We will be seeking an indefinite and unconditional extension of the non-proliferation treaty. We would welcome it if that decision could be achieved by consensus.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's assessment of the progress that has been made towards the achievement of the objectives of articles I and II of the non-proliferation treaty since its entry into force.

Mr. Hurd: We believe that there has been widespread compliance with both articles since the treaty entered into force in 1970. But we have at times been concerned about suspected nuclear weapons development programmes which would have been in breach of treaty obligations.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's assessment of the progress that has been made towards the achievement of the objectives of article IV of the non-proliferation treaty since its entry into force.

Mr. Hurd: We believe that there has been considerable progress towards the wide use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the compatibility of a significant increase in the capability of the United Kingdom's strategic nuclear forces with its obligation under article IV of the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Hurd: The effect of recent changes to the United Kingdom's nuclear forces will be to reduce the explosive power of our operational nuclear inventory by more than 25 per cent. below the 1990 level.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards including a clause in a comprehensive test ban treaty that would permit nuclear tests to be conducted under exceptional circumstances.

Mr. Hurd: We would expect a comprehensive test ban treaty, in line with a number of international treaties in this field, to include a clause allowing parties to exercise their national sovereignty by withdrawing if they decided that extraordinary events related to the subject matter of the treaty had jeopardised their vital national interests.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards including a clause in a comprehensive test ban treaty that would permit state parties to withdraw from the treaty after five or 10 years if they felt that further testing was required.

Mr. Hurd: The conference on disarmament is examining many proposals, including on withdrawal from a CTBT after a certain period, but no decisions have yet been taken. We have made clear our desire to secure an indefinite, effective and verifiable treaty which bans all nuclear tests.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy regarding the choice of the implementing authority for a comprehensive test ban treaty; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The CTBT authority will need to implement an effective and verifiable treaty. It is too early to decide on the details of the authority's organisation and operations.

Negative Security Assurance

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Government will consider removing the condition attached to the United Kingdom's negative security assurance which exempts non-nuclear weapons states that are in an alliance or association with a nuclear weapons state from that assurance.

Mr. Hurd: No. We would not wish to forswear the possible use of our nuclear deterrent in the case of an attack on the United Kingdom, its dependent territories, its armed forces or its allies by a non-nuclear weapons state in association or alliance with a nuclear weapons state.

Casablanca Conference

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the Casablanca conference, its outcome and British involvement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I led a delegation of over 50 British business men and officials to the economic summit for the middle east and north Africa held in Casablanca from 30 October to 1 November. We fully share the objective of promoting regional economic development and, in particular, encouraging private sector involvement. We and our EU partners will continue to support this initiative through our participation in the follow-up conference to be held in Amman next year, and through the regional economic development working group which the EU chairs.

Arms Trade

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions are currently taking place with *(a)* the United Nations, *(b)* the European Union or *(c)* other international forums on means of restricting the arms trade.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom strongly supports international efforts to promote responsibility in arms exports. Last month in the first committee of the UN General Assembly, the EU tabled a draft resolution proposing a UN code of conduct on conventional arms transfers. But after considerable opposition from other delegations, the draft resolution was withdrawn. An EU working group on conventional arms exports meets regularly. We are currently involved in multilateral negotiations on proposed new arrangements to promote transparency and responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and sensitive dual-use goods.

Western Sahara

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the registration of voters in the Western Sahara has now been completed; what assessment he has made of the extent to which parties accept that this has been done in a fair way; and when the referendum on the future of the Western Sahara will take place.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The deadline for the submission by the parties of applications to vote passed on 25 October. Individuals can still register their applications. Polisario has expressed concern at the large number of last-minute applications submitted by the Moroccan authorities. The UN is still identifying the voter applicants. Despite the UN Secretary-General's recent announcement that additional UN offices will be opened to process applications, this exercise is expected to take several months. It is unlikely that the referendum will be held before next summer.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Baldry: All the special advisers in my Department during the past five years have been subject to positive security vetting.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he intends to lay before the House the first report by Lady Anson, the independent monitor of refusal of entry clearance where there is no right of appeal.

Mr. Hurd: I have arranged for Lady Anson's first report to be laid before both Houses today and copies to be placed in the House Libraries. I welcome the report and note Lady Anson's recommendations, which will be carefully considered. Some have already been implemented.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Coarse Fishing

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received concerning changes to the protective close season for coarse fishing; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Jack: We have received some 250 objections, from angling bodies, conservation organisations and individuals, to various aspects of the National Rivers Authority's proposals for the introduction of uniform arrangements in England and Wales for a close season for coarse fish. These included objections to both the proposed abolition of the close season on those stillwaters which are at present subject to such restrictions and to the proposed imposition of a close season on waters where currently no such rules apply. The NRA has now submitted its proposals for confirmation. In deciding whether to confirm the proposals, we will take into account both the NRA's case for proposing these changes and the objections to them that we have received.

British Fishery Protection Service

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if British fishery officers are authorised to work outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: Yes. British sea fishery officers have powers under the Sea Fish Conservation Act 1967, as amended, to enforce fisheries legislation on all vessels within British fishery limits and on UK fishing vessels anywhere outside those limits.

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the British fishery protection service is authorised to work outside the limits of the waters under the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: All commissioned officers of the Royal Navy's fishery protection squadron are empowered, as British sea fishery officers, to enforce European Union fisheries legislation on all vessels within British fishery limits and on UK vessels anywhere outside these limits. The Royal Navy's fishery protection squadron may also undertake operations relating to the protection of UK vessels from harassment within or outside British fishery limits.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Olner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of slaughterhouses in England with EU export certificates for each standard region of the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Browning: MAFF's records of slaughterhouses in England are maintained by state veterinary service region. At 8 December 1994 the number of slaughterhouses fully approved under EC directives 64/433/EEC for red meat and 71/118/EEC for poultry meat and therefore eligible to export to other member states of the European Union was 75 and 135 respectively. The breakdown by English region was:

Region	*Red meat*	*Poultry meat*
Eastern region	17	44
South Eastern region	7	15
South Western region	16	12
Midlands and Western region	20	42
Northern region	15	22

Embassies

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what contacts his Department has with the British embassy in Paris and the staff there dealing with agricultural matters;

(2) what contacts his Department has with the British embassy in The Hague and the staff there dealing with agricultural matters.

Mr. Jack: Our agricultural attachés in all EU countries provide an important service in monitoring and reporting on developments in agriculture, food and fisheries matters. They also play a vital role in conveying the views of the United Kingdom Government to the Governments in their host countries. My Department is, therefore, in frequent contact with attachés on a wide range of agricultural and related issues.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Jack: During the last five years all special advisers to the Minister have been subject to positive vetting.

Lindane

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research he has conducted into the pesticide lindane in relation to breast cancer.

Mrs. Browning: The Ministry has not conducted specific research on lindane in relation to breast cancer. However, the independent advisory committee on pesticides has reviewed a very substantial body of evidence on the toxicology of lindane in the course of a recent review of its non-agricultural uses. The committee concluded that the approved non-agricultural uses represent no unacceptable risk to human health. The committee is currently reviewing the agricultural uses of lindane. The relevant evidence will be studied in the course of this review. The Department of Health committee on carcinogenicity will be looking into the relationship between organochlorine pesticides, which include lindane, and breast cancer in March 1995. However, most of the data which will be considered relates to another organochlorine, DDT.

Animal Transportation

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *290*, (1) what were the whereabouts of the official Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food veterinary surgeon during the period in which the animals were left in unattended lorries in France on the night of 1 December;

(2) if the veterinary surgeon employed by the shipping company was in a position to feed and water the animals in the livestock lorries that were left without drivers in France on the night of 1 December.

Mrs. Browning: It was intended that a veterinary officer should fly with the drivers to meet the vessel at Cherbourg in order to monitor the arrangements at disembarkation. However, the flight did not take place so the officer remained in this country. The veterinary surgeon employed by the company was not in a position to feed and water the calves in the livestock lorries which were delayed in Calais as this could not be done without unloading the calves from the lorries.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how long the animals flown from Coventry airport to France, back to Coventry airport, and subsequently back to France again on the night of 6 December and morning of 7 December remained in the aircraft; what provision there was for them to be fed, watered and rested during the journey; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that all the animals flown from Coventry airport, to France, back to Coventry airport, and subsequently back to France again on the night of 6 December and morning of 7 December were fed and watered within 15 hours of the start of their journey and that all aspects of the journey plan for these animals were complied with.

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* I am informed that the calves journeyed from premises in Somerset to Coventry airport, where they were loaded under official supervision for a flight to Rennes. Local turbulence prevented the plane from touching down at Rennes, so it returned to Coventry airport, where the calves were unloaded under official supervision. The calves were then sent back to their home premises where they were immediately given suitable liquid food and subsequently inspected by a local veterinary inspector. He was satisfied with their condition but administered prophylactic treatment. The entire journey, including the aborted landing and return to the premises of origin, took 15½ hours.

Private Finance Initiative

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the actions being taken by his Ministry to meet the aims of the private finance initiative.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have identified two areas where I believe there is scope for attracting private finance.

My officials, assisted by those of Property Holdings, are developing schemes for a new office building at Crewe and either a redevelopment of our present offices at Northallerton or a new building there. If these are successful the schemes will be taken forward under the private finance initiative with the private sector funding the projects and bearing any land acquisition, design, construction and ownership risks. On completion the Ministry will take leases on the new buildings based on partial or full occupancy.

Officials are also examining, with Property Holdings, the scope for using private finance to refurbish our increasingly aged Whitehall buildings. Expenditure is likely to be some years off because of the complexity of the scheme. Suitable temporary accommodation will need to be found for some of the staff whilst work is in progress. We would expect the provision of temporary accommodation to be part of the private finance package. Detailed costings are not available but the whole scheme is likely to be in the tens of millions of pounds range.

My Ministry will continue to require authorities responsible for flood defence and coast protection schemes to obtain private sector contributions towards the cost of capital works needed to facilitate current or future developments, and will strongly encourage authorities to do so where defences provide a particular direct benefit to a business.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he intends to publish his response to the consultation exercise on BST before the December meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers.

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 9 December 1994]:* A list of those who responded has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. A full set of responses has been available in the Library of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food since September 1994. The Government will not be issuing a formal response but all the replies have been carefully considered, along with the other representations received, and as indicated in the consultation letter, a copy of which is also in the House Library, will be borne in mind in the current discussions in Brussels.

Milk

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimates have been made as to the volume in litres of black market milk trading; what factors he believes are responsible for the current black market in milk; and if he will forecast what the consequences will be of the market in black milk with particular reference to its effect on the price and demand for milk.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* The Intervention Board is currently investigating information that it has received concerning allegations about illegal trading in milk. The extent of these alleged irregularities has not yet been established, so it is impossible to say how much milk is involved or the effect this matter may be having on the market for milk. Anyone involved in illegal trading in milk runs the risk of a heavy fine, payment of super-levy on undeclared sales of milk and, possibly, imprisonment.

Rabies

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will commission an independent and authoritative full economic audit of current policy and practice to prevent the spread of rabies to the United Kingdom following the report of the Agriculture Select Committee.

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* The Government are carefully considering the Agriculture Select Committee's report and will publish its response in due course.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average amount of all social security and related benefits paid to those on *(a)* the lowest decile and *(b)* the second lowest decile of earnings; and what percentage of total earnings this represents for each year since 1979.

Mr. Burt: The available information is in the table.

The average amounts of social security and related benefits shown are for those in each of the lowest two deciles of earnings. The average benefit income is then presented as a percentage of average earnings for each decile.

Average amount of benefit income in the lowest two deciles of earnings and these amounts as a percentage of average earnings in the lowest two deciles.

	Average amount of benefit income in:		*Average amount of benefit income as a percentage of average earnings in:*	
	Lowest decile of earnings £ per week	*Second lowest decile of earnings £ per week*	*Lowest decile of earnings Per cent.*	*Second lowest decile of earnings Per cent.*
1979	46	13	101	12
1981	49	15	121	15
1987	46	17	99	16
1988–9	38	13	74	11
1990–1	44	17	89	14
1991–2	49	21	108	18

Notes:

1. The analysis is on a benefit unit basis: a benefit unit being a single adult or a couple together with any dependent children. All benefit units reporting some earnings have been ranked by their level of gross earnings; the lowest and second lowest deciles of earnings have been selected from these rankings. Earnings and benefit income are the averages of the amounts for the requested deciles. Earnings are gross of income tax and national insurance contributions. For employees, earnings relate to the usual gross amount. Earnings include income of the self-employed which relates to profit or loss over the latest 12-month period for which information is available.

2. Benefit income includes all income-related, and non-income-related benefits plus the value of free school meals, free welfare milk and free school milk.

3. The source of the data is the households below average income datasets for 1979, 1981, 1987, 1988–89, 1990–91 and 1991–92, where for example 1991–92 is the combined calendar years of 1991 and 1992. Data for the intervening years are not available.

4. All benefit income figures are rounded to the nearest pound and are expressed in April 1994 prices.

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures estimating the cost of reintroducing earnings uprating for the retirement pension and other linked benefits beginning in April 1997 on the basis of the assumptions used in "Options for Equality in State Pension Age", giving annual figures in current prices over a 10-year period.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The table gives the estimated additional cost of uprating retirement pension and other linked benefits in line with earnings, from 1997. The consultation document "Options for Equality in State Pension Age" used an assumption of an increase in earnings 1.5 per cent. greater than prices. The same assumption has been applied to derive this estimate.

Year	*Extra costs (£ billion at April 1994 prices)*
1997–98	0.5
1998–99	1.1
1999–00	1.6
2000–01	2.2
2001–02	2.8
2002–03	3.4
2003–04	4.0
2004–05	4.7
2005–06	5.3
2006–07	6.1

Source:
Government Actuary's Department.

Funeral Expenses

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the *(a)* mean and *(b)* median payment for funeral expenses from the social fund for the latest period for which figures are available; how many applicants were successful in that period; how many of the grants made were between £875 and £1,000; and how many were over £1,000.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table. It is for the current financial year to 30 November.

Since 1988–89, the average funeral payment award has been rising by 6 per cent. per annum more than the rate of inflation and the total cost has risen from £18 million to over £60 million in 1993–94.

Number of funeral payment awards April-November 1994	44,428
Number of awards made between £875 and £1,000[1]	8,718
Number of awards over £1,000	19,791
Average award size	£919
Median award size[1]	£967

Source:
Benefits Agency's policy, budget and management information system.

Note:

[1] These figures are estimates based on data which provide the number of awards by cash bands of £100. The available data on cash band do not take account of payments that are returned in the accounting period in which the awards were made.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will define the category of remote relatives being those who may no longer claim funeral expenses in terms of his announcement of changes to the social fund rules announced on 30 November;

(2) how many of the applicants receiving grants for funeral expenses from the social fund during the latest period for which figures are available he estimates would not have been eligible to claim if the limitation excluding remote relatives announced by him on 30 November had been in force.

Mr. Roger Evans: From April 1995, a funeral payment may not be awarded to a claimant where another close relative had equal or closer contact with the deceased, and either that relative is not in receipt of a qualifying benefit[1] or has capital exceeding the disregard for a social fund funeral payment.

A precise estimate of the impact of this change is not available. However we estimate that about 1,500[2] relatives and acquaintances will be affected.

[1] Funeral payment qualifying benefits are income support, family credit, disability working allowance, housing benefit and council tax benefit.

[2] Less than 2 per cent. of all awards using 1993–94 figures.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many social fund grants were awarded for between *(a)* £10 and £100, *(b)* £200 and £400, *(c)* £400 and £600, *(d)* £600 and £800 and *(e)* thereafter up to the sum of £2,000 for funeral expenses, by region in each of the last three years.

Mr. Roger Evans *[holding answer 6 December 1994]:* The information that is readily available is set out in the tables. It is by Benefits Agency territory.

Funeral payment awards by cashband[1]

Year	*0 to £200*	*£201 to £400*	*£401 to £600*	*£601 to £800*	*£800 to £1,000*	*over £1,000*
Southern Territory						
1991–92	1,604	1,430	1,724	4,173	5,777	2,712
1992–93	1,537	1,252	1,317	3,239	6,208	5,742
1993–94	1,504	1,165	1,142	2,113	6,033	10,246
Wales and Central Territory						
1991–92	1,960	1,894	2,915	7,598	6,604	2,140
1992–93	1,795	1,706	2,199	6,074	9,183	4,399
1993–94	1,834	1,584	1,800	4,664	10,490	8,598
Scotland and Northern Territory						
1991–92	1,403	1,429	2,082	5,320	5,118	1,751
1992–93	1,156	1,239	1,583	4,134	6,283	4,235
1993–94	1,185	1,183	1,386	3,190	6,929	7,150

Note:

[1] The available data on awards by cash band do not take account of payments that are returned in the accounting period in which the awards were made.

Source:

Benefits Agency's policy budget and management information system.

Income Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether the restrictions to income support assistance with mortgage interest payments from *(a)* April 1995 and *(b)* October 1995 will apply equally to households claiming (i) a disability premium, (ii) a severe disability premium, (iii) a carer's premium, (iv) a disabled child premium, (v) disability living allowance, (vi) the higher rate care component of disability living allowance, (vii) a lone parent premium, (viii) a pensioner premium or (ix) people who are terminally ill;

(2) whether the restrictions on income support assistance with mortgage interest payments from *(a)* April 1995 and *(b)* October 1995 will apply equally to households where the claimant or partner is over 60 years of age;

(3) whether the restrictions in income support with mortgage interest payments from *(a)* April 1995 and *(b)* October 1995 will apply equally to households in which the claim has resulted from marital breakdown or the death of a spouse.

Mr. Roger Evans: The reduction in the capital limit to £100,000 from April 1995 will apply equally to all income support claimants except where a loan has been taken out to adapt a dwelling for the special needs of a disabled person. As now, any loan taken out for this purpose will not count toward the capital limit. A disabled person, for this purpose, is defined in the Income Support (General) Regulations 1987, S.I 1987 No. 1967, schedule 3 paragraph 7B. This definition will remain unchanged in April 1995.

The October 1995 changes will be subject to wide consultation and the position of particular groups will be considered during the consultation process. The position of pensioners will be protected.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he estimates to be the full year cost of changes announced in the Budget and uprating statements of the cold weather payments and the home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Roger Evans: Cold weather payments will rise to £8.50 from 1 November 1995. The full year cost of this change will depend on the number of cold weather payments made, but if the same number of payments are made as in 1993–94, costs will increase by £3.15 million between 1994–95 and 1995–96.

The Department of Environment have agreed additional resources of £30 million in each of the next three years for the home energy efficiency scheme—a 43 per cent. increase in funding compared with expenditure in 1994–95.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the total annual cost for *(a)* cold weather payments and *(b)* the home energy efficiency scheme for 1994–95 and 1995–96; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: On the assumption of the same number of cold weather payments made in 1993–94, expenditure is estimated at £14.7 million in 1994–95, and £17.85 million in 1995–96.

The total annual cost of the home energy efficiency scheme including 2.55 per cent. management costs will be £75.2 million in 1994–95, almost double the amount available in 1993–94. In 1995–96, it will be £106.2 million, an increase of 43 per cent. on the previous year.

Children

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many children live in households receiving *(a)* income support or *(b)* family credit in the areas covered by Benefits Agency offices serving predominantly (i) Southampton, (ii) Portsmouth, (iii) Hampshire, (iv) Dorset (v) East Sussex, (vi) West Sussex, (vii) Kent, (viii) Berkshire and (ix) Surrey.

Mr. Roger Evans: The best estimated information available is set out in the table, but some figures, particularly those for family credit, are estimated from a small number of sample cases and should therefore be treated with caution.

Number of children[1] in households receiving Income Support and Family Credit paid by Benefits Agency offices predominantly serving[2] the areas shown

Area	*Income support[3] thousands*	*Family Credit[4] thousands*
Southampton	17	5
Portsmouth	16	4
Hampshire	73	23
Dorset	25	8
East Sussex	34	10
West Sussex	27	7
Kent	81	20
Berkshire	33	9
Surrey	22	6

Notes:

[1] Income support figures include children under 16 and dependants aged under 19 still living in the parental home. Family credit figures include children under 16 and aged 16 to 18 if still in full-time education.

[2] A Benefits Agency office has been regarded as predominantly serving an area where more than half of its case load resides in the area.

[3] Source: "Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry" February 1994, 5 per cent. sample of income support awards.

[4] Source: 5 per cent. sample of family credit awards at 30 April 1994.

[5] All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Mortgage Interest

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures broken down by claimant group for the number of recipients of income support assistance with mortgage interest payments who receive help for *(a)* less than two months, *(b)* over two months, *(c)* over six months and *(d)* over nine months, giving the most recent available figures.

Mr. Roger Evans: Details are only available for the number of claimants who were receiving mortgage interest payments at the point in time when the survey was carried out. These are set out in the table:

Income support claimants with mortgage interest payments

	Number of mortgage interest claimants by duration of current IS claim			
	Less than 2 months 000	*2–6 months 000*	*6–9 months 000*	*9 months or more 000*
Pensioner	2	5	3	87
Sick/Disabled	2	6	5	64
Lone parent	5	11	9	96
Unemployed	20	47	23	126
Other	3	7	3	27
All cases	31	76	42	399

Source:

"Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry" February 1994.

(1) Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand and may not sum.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the total annual savings accruing to his Department in each of the next five years from the proposed changes to the availability of income support for mortgage interest payments; and what assumptions he has made in making those calculations with regard to the number of people who will not be eligible under the new rules for such payments and the average level of income support no longer payable.

Mr. Roger Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Thursday 8 December at column *363.*

Back-to-work Bonus

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether the proposed back-to-work bonus will be transferable from one spouse to another.

Mr. Roger Evans: The back-to-work bonus will normally be attributed and paid to the person who has made the claim for benefit under which entitlement to the bonus is accrued. In certain circumstances, for example where couples separate, it may be appropriate to transfer bonus amounts between partners. We are looking at the detailed mechanisms for achieving this.

Agency Heads

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 5 December, *Official Report,* column 2, what considerations led to his decision not to give the details of the terms of employment of heads of agencies.

Mr. Hague: The total remuneration for each agency chief executive appears in their agency accounts. Their entitlement to a performance bonus is largely dependent upon the achievement of a range of specific targets published in the individual business plans. However, the personal pay arrangements for individual members of staff remain confidential.

Income-related Benefits

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the effect on the numbers of claimants of *(a)* income support, *(b)* housing benefit, *(c)* family credit, *(d)* community charge or council tax benefit and *(e)* all income-related benefits of the freeze in the limits for capital or savings since 1988.

Mr. Roger Evans: The upper capital limit was raised in April 1990 from £6,000 to £8,000 in income support and family credit and to £16,000 in housing benefit and community charge benefit. Had the lower capital limit of £3,000 been increased in line with the retail prices index to 1994–95 prices, it is estimated that a further 10,000 claimants would become entitled to income support. The effect on the numbers of those claiming other income-related benefits is negligible.

Note:

Estimate based on data drawn from the 1990-91–92 family expenditure surveys, uprated to 1994–95 prices and benefit levels, making adjustments for numbers with capital reported on the 1993 statistical inquiry.

Numbers of claimants are rounded to the nearest 5,000.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the average housing benefit paid to private sector tenants in *(a)* Southampton *(b)* Portsmouth and *(c)* Hampshire; and, in each case, what is the total number of claimants.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table:

	Private sector Housing Benefit recipients	*Private sector average weekly Housing Benefit £*
Southampton	9,350	51.81
Portsmouth	8,530	50.29
Hampshire	40,510	49.92

Source:

Housing Benefit Management Information System 100 per cent. count taken at the end of August 1994.

Notes:

(1) Figures are for benefit units which may be a single person or a couple;

(2) The caseload and average for Hampshire include Southampton and Portsmouth;

(3) Private sector includes housing associations.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the effect of the abolition of the adult dependency increase paid with unemployment benefit on the number of claimants of income-based jobseeker's allowance in the first 182 days of a claim.

Mr. Roger Evans: It is estimated that, at any one time, 5,000 people would be entitled to income-based jobseeker's allowance as a result of there being no adult dependency increase in the contributory element.

Notes:

(1) Assumes 2.4 million unemployed; 500,000 unemployment benefit cases.

(2) Estimates rounded to the nearest 5,000.

(3) Based on 1993 and 1994 unemployment benefit statistics and the policy simulation model using 1990–91–92 family expenditure survey data.

(4) Assumes contributory entitlement lasts six months.

(5) Estimates do not include tax or behavioural implications.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cost to public funds of the child maintenance review pack published by the Child Support Agency; and if he will make a statement as to the amount of money earmarked for the Child Support Agency in each of the last two years and, within that budget, how much was earmarked for literature, supporting documents, papers, forms, letters of explanation and other material.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Ann Chant to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 13 December 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the cost of Child Support Agency publications.

The following data show the costs for 1993–94.

Financial Year 1993–94
Operating costs: £109 million
Publications: £2.5 million
Financial Year 1994–95
Estimated budget: £185 million
Publications: £3 million

Six hundred and forty thousand Child Support Maintenance Review packs have been ordered since April 1993 at a cost of £328,000 over both financial years.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Fraud

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what financial threshold the decision is taken on the prosecution of an individual or organisation for social security fraud.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Benefits Agency uses no financial threshold when deciding whether to initiate criminal proceedings. Each case is considered individually and the amount of benefit overpaid is only one of a number of factors taken into account.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the level of social security fraud.

Mr. Arbuthnot: In the year ending March 1994 Benefits Agency fraud investigators identified 312,000 irregularities and saved an estimated £654 million. Although the full extent of social security fraud is not known, we are examining ways of producing a reliable estimate of the sum which might be involved.

Incapacity Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the members of the panel on assessment of incapacity who did not agree to publication of their names were or are employed by *(a)* the Benefits Agency medical service, *(b)* the Department of Social Security and *(c)* the Department of Health; how many had medical qualifications; when he decided that the names of members of the panel on assessment of incapacity should not be published without their agreement; what were his reasons for so deciding; if he sought the agreement of organisations responding to the consultation document on assessment of incapacity to the publication of their names in annex 2 to the report "The Medical Assessment for Incapacity Benefit"; and if he will seek the consent of members of the sub-group on mental health and incapacity, who agreed to publication of their names in the report "The Medical Assessment of Incapacity Benefit", to the disclosure of their membership of the sub-group.

Mr. Hague: Of the 10 panel members who did not want their names published, one is employed by the

Benefits Agency medical service, one by the Department of Social Security and one by the Department of Health. Of the 10, six have medical qualifications. The panel members undertook their work as individuals and it was considered appropriate that the wishes of those who did not want their names to be made public should be respected.

The organisations listed in annex 2 of the report were responding to a public consultation and it was appropriate for their interest to be acknowledged.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Hague: In accordance with current guidance, all special advisers are required to have positive vetting. This Department has complied with this during the last five years.

Public Appointments

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many public appointments *(a)* he is responsible for making and *(b)* require his approval, including those not listed in "Public Bodies", and if he will divide this figure into (i) appointments to executive bodies, (ii) appointments to advisory bodies and (iii) other appointments.

Mr. Hague: The information is in the table.

	Number of appointments the Secretary of State is responsible for making	*Number of appointments that require approval from the Secretary of State*
Executive bodies	11	2
Advisory bodies	[1]876	0
Other bodies	19	0

[1] This figure includes 798 members of local war pension committees.

Means Testing (Limits)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update the information given in his answer of 27 October, *Official Report,* columns 794–98, by substituting 1995–96 values for current values in columns 4 and 5 of the table.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table:

Col. 1	*Col. 2 Date of introduction*	*Col. 3 Date from which current rate applicable*	*Col. 4 1995 value if increased in line with prices since date at col. 3 £*	*Col. 5 1995 value if increased in line with average earnings since date at col. 3 £*
(a) £1,000 widow's payment.	April 1988	April 1988	1,417.90	1,583.00
(b) £3,000 and £8,000 capital limits for income support and family credit:				
£3,000	April 1988	April 1988	4,179.80	4,748.90
£8,000	April 1988	April 1990	10,119.45	10,600.50
(c) £3,000 and £16,000 capital limits, for housing benefits:				
£3,000	April 1988	April 1988	4,179.80	4,748.90
£16,000	April 1988	April 1990	20,238.95	21,200.95
(d) £2 per day earnings limit for unemployment benefit.	July 1948	March 1982	3.85	5.00
(e) £12 earnings limit under the normal idle day rule.	December 1989	December 1989	16.10	17.35
(f) £5 and £15 earnings disregards for income support:				
£5.00	April 1988	April 1988	6.95	7.95
£15.00	April 1988	April 1988	20.85	23.80
(g) £5, £10 and £25 earnings disregards for housing and council tax benefits:				
£5	April 1988	April 1988	6.95	7.95
£10	April 1988	April 1988	13.95	15.85
£25	April 1988	October 1990	31.60	33.15
(h) £10 war pension disregard for income-related benefits.	April 1988	April 1990	12.65	13.75
(i) £10 disregard of charitable or voluntary payments	April 1988	April 1990	12.65	13.25
(j) £20 disregard of income from a boarder, (plus half of charge in excess of £20).	April 1988	April 1990	25.25	26.45
(k) £200 disregard of a training bonus.	September 1988	September 1988	283.55	316.70
(l) £15 maintenance disregard for income-related benefits other than income support.	April 1992	April 1992	17.10	16.85
(m) £10 disregard of student loans.	September 1990	September 1990	12.65	13.25
(n) £35 occupational pension limit for unemployment benefit.	April 1981	April 1981	74.20	98.70
(o) £200 savings limit for the lower rate of voluntary unemployment deduction.	November 1980	April 1988	278.70	316.70

Col. 1	*Col. 2 Date of introduction*	*Col. 3 Date from which current rate applicable*	*Col. 4 1995 value if increased in line with prices since date at col. 3 £*	*Col. 5 1995 value if increased in line with average earnings since date at col. 3 £*
(p) £27 (£8 if living in a hostel) protected earnings and the £1 margin over protected earnings, where income support is paid after a trade dispute is recoverable.	April 1988	April 1988	37.55	42.70
(q) £52.50 rate of statutory sick pay.	April 1990	April 1990	65.35	69.60
(r) £100 maternity payment from the Social Fund.	April 1987	April 1990	126.50	132.50
(s) £500 and £1,000 capital limits for maternity and funeral payments from the Social Fund:				
£500	April 1990	April 1990	632.50	662.50
£1,000	April 1990	April 1990	1,264.95	1,325.10
(t) £75 limit on additional expenses included in a funeral payment from the Social Fund.	April 1987	April 1987	107.85	127.95
(u) 25 pence age addition to retirement pension.	September 1971	September 1971	1.60	2.70
(v) £10 Christmas bonus.	December 1972	December 1972	67.15	98.45
(w) £2,500 exempt payments limit for recovery of benefits from compensation payments.	September 1990	September 1990	3,110.80	3,312.65
(x) £30,000 vaccine damage payment.	March 1979	April 1991	33,661.30	36,269.90

Notes:

(1) The figures have been rounded to two decimal places.

(2) In each step of the calculation the amount has been rounded to the nearest 5p.

(3) The retail prices index—all items—and the retail prices index—all items except housing ROSSI—as published by the Central Statistical Office have been used for the prices uprating—ROSSI in relation to amounts which apply to income-related benefits.

(4) Average earnings index—whole economy unadjusted—as published by the Employment Department has been used to calculate the earnings uprating.

Benefit Uprating

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list details of the April 1995 benefit uprating, including those benefit rates, disregards and capital and income limits which will not be increased.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) on 8 December at column *376*.

The table refers to benefit rates, disregards and capital and income limits which are not covered by the table of main benefit rates which has been placed in the Library.

Benefit Description	*April 1994 £ per week*	*April 1995 £ per week*
Child Dependency Increase: increase in earnings limit pertaining to second or subsequent children	16.00	16.00
Christmas Bonus	10.00	10.00
Compensation recovery small payments limit	2,500	2,500
Council Tax Benefit, Disability Working Allowance, Family Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support: disregard from grant for students' books and equipment	273.00 per year	276.00 per year
Housing Benefit:		
Disregard from students' eligible rent:		
London	24.80	25.00
Elsewhere	17.20	17.35
Child's earning disregard	5.00	5.00
Where disabled child premium is payable	15.00	15.00
Overriding Income Disregard	10.00	10.00
Family Credit: free living accommodation treated as earnings	12.00	12.00
Incapacity Benefit—the additional rate frozen at April 1994 levels (the earnings-related additional pension currently paid with Invalidity Benefit) no fixed rate	no fixed rate	
Industrial Death Benefit, Widows Pension Initial Rate	57.65	57.65
Income Support Mortgage: limit on outstanding capital with which Income Support will help with interest repayments	125,000	100,000
Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis and Miscellaneous Diseases Scheme Death Benefit (lump sum)	300.00	300.00
Social Fund:		
Funeral Payment	No limit	Maximum of 875.00
Additional Expenses	75.00	75.00
War Pensions:		
Education Allowance	Maximum of 120.00 per year	Maximum of 120.00 per year

Benefit Description	*April 1994* *£ per week*	*April 1995* *£ per week*
Parents and other Dependants Pensions:		
One parent	Maximum of 75.00 per year	Maximum of 75.00 per year
Two parents	100.00 per year	100.00 per year
Other adult	54.00 per year	54.00 per year
One juvenile	26.00 per year	26.00 per year
More than one juvenile (aggregate)	75.00 per year	75.00 per year

Single Pensioners

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the numbers and percentage of single pensioners whose total income is below *(a)* £80 per week, *(b)* £75 per week and *(c)* £70 per week.

Mr. Arbuthnot *[holding answer 9 December 1994]:* The information is in the tables.

Table 1. Estimated number and percentage of single pensioners with net before housing costs income under £80, £75, £70 (1992).

	£80	£75	£70
Numbers	1,700,000	1,400,000	1,100,000
Percentages	39	31	26

Table 2. Estimated number and percentage of single pensioners with net after housing costs income under £80, £75, £70 (1992).

	£80	£75	£70
Numbers	2,900,000	2,700,000	2,500,000
Percentages	65	61	57

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 14 December 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings in each of the last three years was:

	1991–92 *£000*	*1992–93* *£000*	*1993–94* *£000*
(a) Lord Chancellor's Department	6,047	6,286	6,325
(b) Public Record Office	546	654	465
Public Trust Office	105	100	90
HM Land Registry	1,583	1,693	1,437

Legal Aid

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary Lord Chancellor's Department how many legal aid applications were made in 1992–93 and 1993–94.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of applications received was as follows:

	1992–93	*1993–94*
Civil legal aid	472,903	413,738
ABWOR	60,356	32,056
Criminal legal aid[1]	699,576	635,839
Duty solicitor scheme	838,321	895,691

Applications in respect of legal advice and assistance[2]—green form—are dealt with by solicitors. It is therefore not known how many applications were actually received, but in 1992–93 and 1993–94 the number of people who received help under the scheme was 1,434,661 and 1,640,593 respectively.

[1] Information is only available on a calendar year basis, i.e. for 1992 and 1993.

[2] The provision of legal advice and assistance is subject to an assessment of financial means by the solicitor.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Dorrell: During the last Session of Parliament only two questions received the answer that the information requested was not held centrally.

European Year of Older People

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what contribution his Department has made in 1994 to follow up the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in 1993.

Mr. Dorrell: My Department did not itself launch any special initiatives for the European Year of Older People and Solidarity Between Generations in 1993, or in the following year.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Remand Prisoners

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what is the estimated number of remand prisoners who have been awaiting trial *(a)* for more than three months, *(b)* for more than six months *(c)* for more than 12 months and *(d)* for more than 18 months at the latest available date.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Jack Straw, dated 14 December 1994:

> The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what is the estimated number of remand prisoners who have been awaiting trial *(a)* for more than three months, *(b)* for more than six months, *(c)* for more than 12 months and *(d)* for more than 18 months, at the latest available date.
>
> The latest available provisional data is for 30 September 1994 and is shown in the attached table.

Inmates recorded as being untried held in custody on 30 September 1994 by time on remand[1]

	Number
For over 3 months up to and including 6 months	1,920
For over 6 months up to and including 12 months	1,270
For over 12 months up to and including 18 months	300
For over 18 months	220

[1] Not all of these defendants will have been in continuous prison custody since their first remand. This period excludes any time spent in non-Prison Service Establishments (eg police cells) before reception on remand into a Prison Service establishment; it excludes inmates who are awaiting trial and those being tried.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum applications have been awaiting decision for more than *(a)* six years, *(b)* five years, *(c)* four years, *(d)* three years and *(e)* two years.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: As at 30 November 1994—the latest date for which this information is available—the estimated number of asylum applications outstanding was 54,025. Information on the number of these cases waiting longer than two, three, four, five or six years is not available.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps have been taken to examine the length of detention periods of asylum seekers in relation to the EU human rights convention, article 5.4.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Powers of detention under the Immigration Act 1971 are used only where there is no alternative and where there are good grounds for believing that a person will not comply with the conditions of temporary admission.

Anyone refused asylum may appeal under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 and may apply for bail to the independent appellate authorities at any time while an appeal is pending. Bail may also be sought from the appellate authorities by any passenger who has been detained for longer than seven days pending further examination. These statutory provisions are supplemented by the general power of the courts to grant a writ of habeas corpus and to grant bail in any case before them.

Decisions to detain under the Immigration Act 1971 are authorised at Chief Immigration Officer level at least and are reviewed by an Immigration Service inspector within 24 hours. The need for detention is then reviewed locally at least every seven days and after one month at increasingly senior levels.

Gloucestershire Police Authority

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to be able to reply to the request, made on 16 September 1994, by Gloucestershire police authority for a special grant in respect of the Cromwell street murder investigation.

Mr. Maclean: A reply will be sent within the next two weeks.

European Year of Older People

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what contribution his Department has made in 1994 to follow up the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in 1993.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: My Department has continued its funding of the retired and senior volunteer programme and the retired executives action clearing house. It also funds other organisations which encourage volunteering by people of all ages, including older people.

Marriages of Convenience

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to consider new guidelines for immigration officers to avoid a couple remaining separated for an alleged marriage of convenience.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: None.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what training immigration officers receive to enable them to decide if a marriage is one of convenience.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Immigration and Nationality Department staff responsible for considering applications for leave to remain in the United Kingdom on the basis of marriage receive full training on all aspects of the immigration rules and their application before taking up their duties.

Criminal Justice and Public Order Act

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that the enforcement of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 will be kept under review.

Mr. Maclean: In accordance with standard practice, the application of the main provisions of the Act will be monitored and evaluated.

Inspector of Constabulary

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary with a statement of the duties which he expects of the inspector of constabulary.

Mr. Howard: As promised in the Government's White Paper on police reform, Cm 2281, I have provided the Chief Inspector of Constabulary with a clear statement of the duties and responsibilities which I expect the inspectorate should fulfil.

The statement emphasises the key role of the inspectorate as an independent watchdog monitoring police performance and ensuring that standards are maintained. I have made it clear that I will also be looking to the inspectorate to report to me on the progress being made by police authorities and forces in establishing local strategies for building effective partnerships between the police and the local community.

I have placed copies of the statement in the Library. I am also arranging for it to be circulated to all chief officers of police and to clerks of police authorities.

Research

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what sum was spent by his Department on research in each of the last 10 years; what percentage this was of the total annual budget; what is the research budget for the forthcoming year; what percentage this is of his total budget; and what additional new research is to be undertaken.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* The sums spent on research and development by the Department for the last 10 years were reported in the statistical supplement to the "1994 Forward Look of Government-funded Science Engineering and Technology". The expenditure on research and development and the total percentage that this expenditure was of total departmental expenditure is as follows:

Year	*R and D expenditure £ millions*	*Percentage total expenditure*
1985–86	23.7	0.6
1986–87	13.3	0.3
1987–88	14.2	0.3
1988–89	14.1	0.3
1989–90	15.2	0.3
1990–91	25.0	0.4
1991–92	17.3	0.3
1992–93	20.1	0.4
1993–94	[1]19.8	0.3
1994–95	[1]19.1	0.3
1995–96	[2]20.4	0.3

[1] Estimated

[2] Planned

The Home Office publishes an annual report—"The Research Programme"—which lists all research currently in progress and planned. A new edition will be published this month and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* All of them.

PRIME MINISTER

Intelligence Services Act 1994

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Prime Minister what steps have been taken to appoint an intelligence and security committee, commissioner and tribunal, under the terms of the Intelligence Services Act 1994.

The Prime Minister: Following consultation with the Leader of the Opposition, and in accordance with section 10 of the Intelligence Services Act, I have appointed the intelligence and security committee as follows:

The right hon. Tom King CH MP (Chairman)
The right hon. Alan Beith MP
The right hon. Dr John Gilbert MP
The right hon. Sir Archie Hamilton MP
The right hon. Lord Howe of Aberavon QC
Mr Barry Jones MP
Mr Michael Mates MP
Mr Allan Rogers MP
Sir Giles Shaw MP

In accordance with section 8 of the Intelligence Services Act 1994, I have appointed Lord Justice Stuart-Smith as the Intelligence Services Commissioner for a period of three years. Sir Simon Dennis Brown has been appointed president of the intelligence services tribunal, John Colin McInnes vice-president of the tribunal and Sir Richard Kennedy Harvey Gaskell a member of the tribunal, by royal warrant, each for a period of five years. All appointments take effect from 15 December 1994.

TREASURY

Christmas Expenditure

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much public money will be spent on entertaining, Christmas decorations and other festive activities this Christmas season by his Department and Government agencies answerable to his Department; and of this sum how much will be spent in Ministers' private offices and official residences, including No. 11 Downing street and Dorney Wood.

Mr. Nelson: About £400 will be spent by the Treasury this year on purchasing and decorating four Christmas trees, the tree at the entrance to No. 11 Downing street accounting for approximately £100 of this sum. The only other Christmas-related expenditure borne by the Treasury is a party for representatives of the press to be hosted by the Chancellor at No. 11. This is estimated to cost in the region of £1,150.

European Communities (Finance) Bill

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has anything to add to his statement of 28 November concerning treaty obligations of Her Majesty's Government on the European Communities (Finance) Bill, *Official Report*, column *953*.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The agreement reached at Edinburgh was a political commitment in which the United Kingdom Government gave our word to our EU partners. We expect our partners to keep their word; and they expect us to keep ours. If we were to break our word, the international reputation of the United Kingdom would be severely damaged. The own resources decision will constitute a treaty obligation when the Government notify adoption of it.

Economic and Finance Ministers Council

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the most recent Council meeting of the Economic and Finance Ministers of the European Union.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I represented the United Kingdom at the Economic and Finance Council of the European Union in Brussels on 5 December.

The Council broadly endorsed the Netherlands' convergence programme for 1995 to 1998 and the Commission's assessment of it.

The Council adopted a slightly amended version of the ECOFIN report to the Essen European Council on the employment aspects of the White Paper follow-up, subject to a Belgian reserve. I thoroughly welcomed the report with its analysis of the causes of structural unemployment and in particular the problems caused by high levels of social protection in some areas.

The Council endorsed the "Main Recommendations" of the Christophersen Group report on the trans-European networks aspects of the White Paper follow-up, omitting any reference to possible new Community financial instruments in the future.

The Council adopted the ECOFIN report to the Essen European Council on implementation of the broad economic guidelines requested by the Brussels European Council in December 1993, and carried out the multilateral surveillance required by article 103(3) of the treaty.

The Council agreed in principle to an 85 million ECU loan to the Ukraine subject to the signature of an IMF stand-by arrangement and to the rapid implementation of the EU/G7 action plan for the closure of Chernobyl. The Council noted the exceptional nature of the loan and agreed to a review of EU lending priorities. The Council reached political agreement on Commission proposals to provide macro-financial assistance to Algeria and Slovakia.

The Council agreed with the recommendations of the European Monetary Institute in its opinion that decisions on the transition to the third stage of economic and monetary union will be taken in full accordance with the relevant articles of the treaty and the protocol on the convergence criteria.

The Council heard a presidency progress report on improving the fight against fraud in the Community. The Commission emphasised the need for greater efforts in this area, and circulated a communication showing the areas where it would put emphasis in the coming year. I stressed that the fight against fraud was a top priority for ECOFIN and that strong conclusions would be needed at the forthcoming European Council. I underlined the need for rapid progress to be made on the Commission's programme, particularly on the third pillar legislation, and said that the recent report of the Court of Auditors on the 1993 budget had revealed unacceptable levels of fraud, waste and mismanagement, of great concern to the public.

The Council agreed to an adjustment of the financial perspective to take into account the enlargement of the union.

The Council heard progress reports on taxation of savings, the second VAT simplification directive, the carbon-energy tax and biofuels, but adopted no conclusions.

No formal votes were taken at the Council meeting.

Official Residences (Expenditure)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many bottles of *(a)* whisky, *(b)* other spirits and *(c)* wine were bought from public funds for use at No. 11 Downing street and his other official residences in 1993–94; how much they cost; how many bottles were consumed in December 1993; and how many he estimates will be consumed at No. 11 Downing street and the other residences in December 1994.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I pay for all drinks consumed on private occasions. Information of this sort about drinks provided for official occasions could be provided only at disproportionate cost to public funds. The hon. Member is wasting an absurd amount of official time and public money by asking a series of parliamentary questions on topics of this kind.

VAT

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a regional breakdown of the projected revenue received from VAT on domestic fuel in *(a)* the 1994–95 financial year and *(b)* the 1995–96 financial year.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The latest assessment of regional expenditure is contained in the 1993 family expenditure survey. Any projections to 1994–95 or 1995–96 would be purely speculative.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the amount per week a married couple on average male earnings with two children is estimated to have paid in VAT, at today's prices, in the year 1978–79; and what he estimates a similar family will pay in 1994–95.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* A couple with two children on average earnings paid VAT of £7.05 per week in 1978–79, in 1994–95 prices, and an estimated £21.43 in 1994–95. Since 1978–79, the real take-home pay of such a family has risen by over £80 a week.

Credit Unions

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many credit unions were operating in England and in the United Kingdom for *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1990 and *(c)* in each year since 1990.

Mr. Nelson: Credit unions in Northern Ireland are registered separately from those in Great Britain, and are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. For credit unions in England and Great Britain, the information requested is as follows:

	Number of credit unions at end of year	
	England	*Great Britain*
1980	43	57
1990	217	275
1991	255	327
1992	299	383
1993	330	427

Inland Revenue Stamp Office

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to provide continuing counter facilities for the Inland Revenue stamp office in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No. The Cardiff stamp office public counter is little used and no stamp office facilities will be available in Cardiff after that office closes on 30 December 1994. Former Cardiff customers should be able to get their documents stamped and returned by post from another stamp office within the stamp office guide time of five working days.

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the increase in interest rates on 7 December was at his request or on the recommendation of the Governor of the Bank of England.

Mr. Nelson: As is clear from the published minutes, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is responsible for all interest rate decisions. The Governor's advice at the 7 December meeting will be published on 11 January 1995.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated borrowing requirement to the end of the current financial year; what is the forecast distribution in terms of interest-bearing assets by length to maturity; and what is the additional cost to the Exchequer of securing the additional debt each year to the last maturity date in *(a)* nominal terms and *(b)* real terms, assuming nil inflation.

Mr. Aitken: The public sector borrowing requirement for 1994–95 is forecast to be £34.3 billion. The outturn for the first seven months of the financial year was £19.2 billion, implying borrowing of £15.1 billion between November and March.

The distribution of debt in terms of interest-bearing assets by length to maturity will depend on market conditions. The cost of securing the additional debt will depend on the form of the debt and on market interest rates.

VAT (Airlines)

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken to resolve the issue of the hidden VAT which is incurred by airlines as a consequence of the Civil Aviation Authority's VAT status as a public body.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am pleased to announce that, from 1 April 1995, the Civil Aviation Authority will be granted taxable status in respect of its supply of en route air navigation services.

This change will enable the CAA to recover the VAT paid in its en-route operating costs and capital expenditure, which is estimated as being in the order of around £30 million per annum. Over £20 million of this, representing VAT on en-route operating costs, will be passed directly to the airlines in the form of lower charges. The remainder, formerly incurred on the CAA's capital spending, can be used to fund the CAA's investment programme.

This change removes a source of potential discrimination against United Kingdom airlines, and will be widely welcomed by the airline industry.

Income Tax

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people were removed from the income tax net in *(a)* 1990–91, *(b)* 1991–92 and *(c)* 1992–93.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* Information on numbers of taxpayers is published in table 2.1 of Inland Revenue Statistics 1994, a copy of which is in the Library.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list those ports and airports which do not have permanently staffed Customs checks and operate a system whereby entrants telephone Customs if they have anything to declare; and how many calls were received by Customs on its telephone in each month of 1993 and 1994;

(2) if he will list those ports and airports in which Customs checks are not permanently staffed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 8 December 1994]:* There are no Custom-free ports or airports. Over recent years customs enforcement strategy has progressively moved away from a static presence at all ports and airports towards more flexible checks operated by fast response teams targeted at both areas and time of highest risk. At major ports and airports these anti-smuggling teams are based on site; the smaller places being covered by mobile anti-smuggling teams based elsewhere. It would not be in the public interest to identify all these smaller ports and airports.

As a part of the overall Customs strategy, which encompasses both anti-smuggling and fiscal controls, there are some locations where entrants can telephone Customs if they have anything to declare for fiscal purposes. A list of such locations is shown in the table and where the information is available, the number of calls received by Customs for each of 1993 and 1994 is also shown.

Humberside international airport

Telephone introduced in April 1993, three calls received to date but no record of months.

Leeds Bradford airport

No record kept of the number of calls received but estimated by local management at round six per month.

Bristol airport The total calls received were as follows:

Plymouth The total calls received were as follows:

	1993	*1994*
January	6	1
February	6	0
March	6	5
April	6	4
May	12	2
June	9	0
July	9	2
August	6	2
September	7	2
October	5	9
November	3	3
December	2	0

Belfast city airport	No record of any calls received in either year
Blackpool airport	
Bournemouth (Hurn) airport	
Cambridge airport	
Cardiff Wales airport	
Dundee airport	
Southampton international airport	

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Treasury Solicitors

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Attorney-General in what ways the Law Society professional code of conduct applies to Treasury solicitors.

The Attorney-General: The Treasury Solicitor's Department employs solicitors and barristers. As individuals they are all answerable to the profession to which they belong. When acting in the name of the department, the relevant professional standards apply to them.

Marshall v. Southampton and South West Area Health Authority

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what advice was given to Government Departments about the effect of Marshall *v.* Southampton and South West area health authority (No. 1);

(2) if advice was given to all Government Departments about the effect of Marshall *v.* Southampton and South West area health authority (No. 1).

The Attorney-General: By convention, the Law Officers do not normally disclose whether advice has been given on a particular issue or the substance of any advice that they may have given.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Advisory Bodies

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the functions and objectives of *(a)* the Coal Task Force, *(b)* the Engineering Technology Advisory Committee, *(c)* the Industrial Development Advisory Board, *(d)* the Information Technology Advisory Board and *(e)* the Innovation Advisory Board.

Mr. Heseltine: The information requested is as follows:

(a) Coal Task Force

The task force has now been superseded by the Advisory Committee on Coal Research.

(b) Engineering Technology Advisory Committee

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given on 6 December, *Official Report*, column *126*.

(c) Industrial Development Advisory Board

IDAB is appointed under section 10 of the Industrial Development Act 1982 to advise me as Secretary of State on the granting of selective financial assistance under sections 7 and 8 of the Act.

(d) Information Technology Advisory Board

Responsibility for ITAB was a matter for the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, however I understand that the Board was wound up in July of this year.

(e) Innovation Advisory Board

The Board was wound up in September 1993.

Arms Exports

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date the Cymbeline artillery locating system was given an export licence for export to Iraq.

Mr. Heseltine: It has been the policy of successive Administrations not to disclose details about export licences that have been issued. However, the Government reserve the right to release the information, in exceptional circumstances, where it is in the public interest. This is one of those exceptional cases.

Since 1985, export licences have been issued for the export of Cymbeline radars and spares to Iraq on: 28 June 1985, 18 and 20 June 1986, 1 September 1986, 8 January 1987, 11 August 1987, 16 May 1988, 22 November 1988, 19 January 1989 and 7 July 1989. Two of the export licences were revalidated on 2 March 1990. Existing licences were withdrawn by, and returned to, the DTI following the imposition of sanctions on Iraq in August 1990.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will indicate the amount of public subsidy to the export of armaments in the last five years for which figures are available and the projected figure for the next twelve months.

Mr. Needham: Sales of defence equipment sold on credit terms of two years or more and insured by ECGD are eligible for support under the Department's fixed rate export finance scheme.

In the four years up to 1992–93 a net public expenditure cost was incurred under the scheme as a whole but in the last financial year there were net receipts. The breakdown of these figures between defence and civil business is not collected and is not readily obtainable.

Sir David Steel: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy that the increase in export credits will not be used to facilitate arms deals with countries with poor human rights records.

Mr. Needham: The export licensing system, which is the responsibility of the DTI's export licensing unit takes account of issues such as the human rights record of overseas Governments. The insurance cover provided by the Export Credits Guarantee Department is conditional on export licences being obtained where required.

Junk Mail

Sir David Steel: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to prevent the sending of junk mail.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Persons who do not wish to receive unsolicited mail can register with the mailing preference service. This will normally filter out 90 per cent. of such mail. I have no plans to impose any further restrictions.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the ways in which the Government's policy of ensuring that energy services are provided to customers in a commercial environment in which consumers pay the full cost of the energy sources they consume, as outlined in the White Paper on the prospects for coal, apply in regard to nuclear energy.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The White Paper "The Prospect for Coal" Cm 2235, explained that transitional arrangements in the form of the nuclear non-fossil fuel option and the fossil fuel levy were put in place at the time of electricity privatisation to enable the full costs of nuclear generation in England and Wales to be met. These arrangements are being assessed by the nuclear review.

Government Chemist

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the statutory powers and duties of *(a)* the Government Chemist and *(b)* the Laboratory of the Government Chemist.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Government Chemist is named as referee analyst under the following pieces of legislation:

Food Safety Act 1990 and Food Safety (Sampling and Qualifications) Regulations 1990
Agriculture Act 1970
Medicines Act 1968 and Medicines (Animal Feeding Stuffs) (Enforcement) Regulations 1985
Farm and Garden Chemicals Act 1967
Agriculture (Poisonous Substances) Act 1952
Rag Flock and Other Filling Materials Act 1951
Poultry Meat (Water Content) (Scotland) Regulations 1983
Poultry Meat (Water Content) Regulations 1984
Natural Mineral Waters Regulations 1985
Materials and Articles in Contact with Food Regulations 1987
The Plastic Materials and Articles in Contact with Food Regulations 1992.

In addition, the Government Chemist is named as authorised analyst under the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979. Under the Poisons Act 1972 there is provision for the appointment of the Government Chemist to carry out a function personal to him.

Where required the work to carry out analyses under these pieces of legislation is generally undertaken by the Laboratory of the Government Chemist.

The Laboratory of the Government Chemist is included as a point of reference in the following legislation:

Notification of New Substances Regulations 1982
Merchant Shipping (Life-Saving Appliances) Regulations 1986
Merchant Shipping (Life Saving Appliances for Passenger Ships of Classes III to Via) Regulations 1992
Food Safety (Sampling and Qualifications) Regulations 1990
The Public Supply Contracts Regulations 1991

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what conditions will be placed on the sale or transfer of the Laboratory of the Government Chemist to ensure its continuing independence and impartiality.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Secretary of State will impose appropriate conditions; these are under consideration.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what powers he has to enforce the carrying out of the statutory role of *(a)* the Government Chemist and *(b)* the Laboratory of the Government Chemist; and how these powers will be affected by sale or transfer of the laboratory.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Responsibility for making and terminating the appointment of the Government Chemist, who is currently also the chief executive of the Laboratory of the Government Chemist, falls to my Department. It is not intended that this will change on privatisation.

At present the Department has powers over the carrying out of the statutory role of the Government Chemist and of the staff under his direction through their terms and conditions of employment as civil servants. Upon privatisation, it is expected that the Government Chemist will continue to be appointed by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry within the privatised laboratory and that the terms of the appointment will require that appointee to carry out the statutory functions.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of contracts placed with the Laboratory of the Government Chemist in the financial year 1993–94 by *(a)* his Department, *(b)* other individual Government Departments and *(c)* individual executive agencies.

Mr. Ian Taylor: In 1993–94 the Laboratory of the Government Chemist received income from the following:

		£ million
(a)	Department of Trade and Industry	7.4
(b)	Her majesty's Customs and Excise	1.7
	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	1.3
	Ministry of Defence	1.1
	Department of Health	0.65
	Department of Environment[1]	0.45
	Department of Transport	0.15
(c)	Intervention Board	0.6
	Social Security Benefits Agency	0.2

[1] This includes income from organisations that were part of DoE at the outset of the financial year but changed their status during it.

In addition, a further £0.6 million approximately was received from other central Government customers, including departments and individual executive agencies, consisting predominantly of amounts below £0.1 million.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much the Laboratory of the Government Chemist will spend on non-contract strategic research in the financial year 1993–94.

Mr. Ian Taylor: In 1993–94 the Laboratory of the Government Chemist spent approximately £250,000 on its own strategic research relating to selected areas of analytical science to enhance its technical capabilities. A similar outturn for 1994–95 is expected.

Dr. Moonie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements will be made for the pensions of current and former staff of the Laboratory of the Government Chemist following sale or transfer of the laboratory.

Mr. Ian Taylor: On privatisation, the new company will be required to provide broadly comparable pension arrangements. The Government Actuary will provide an independent analysis of comparability between existing pension arrangements and those proposed after privatisation. The pension arrangements of former LGC staff will not be affected.

Energy Advisory Panel

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the current members of the energy advisory panel; if he will give details of their background and expertise; and on what dates the panel has met since March 1993.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The current members of the energy advisory panel, with their relevant background, are as follows:

Chairman

Sir Martin Holdgate

Member of Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution; formerly Director General of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Formerly Chief Scientist, Department of the Environment. Recent Chairman of the Renewable Energy Advisory Group.

Members

Lady Mary Archer

Chairman of the National Energy Foundation. A specialist on solar energy and formerly a member of the REAG.

Ron Campbell

Formerly Managing Director of Babcock Energy and Director of the Nuclear Power Group, both leading suppliers to the electricity supply industry. Now a consultant. Member of the Department's former Advisory Council on Energy Research and Development and of NII's Advisory Council on the Safety of Nuclear Installations.

Tony Cooper

General Secretary of EMA, Engineers' and Managers' Association. Electrical Power Engineer's Association. The EMA has strong links with the nuclear and electricity supply industries.

Nigel Evans

Managing Director, Caminus Energy Ltd. An energy economist, specialising in the electricity industry. Consultant to the Coal Review. Formerly a member of ACORD.

David Green MBE

Director of the Combined Heat and Power Association. He was a founder of Neighbourhood Energy Action.

Dieter Helm

Oxford Economic Research Associates. Energy economist.

Peter Ibbotson

Director, Store Format Group, Sainsbury plc. His responsibilities include energy efficiency.

Professor Alexander Kemp

Department of Economics, University of Aberdeen. A specialist on the economics of oil production.

Sam Laidlaw

Managing Director of Amerada Hess (UK) Ltd. Former President of the United Kingdom Offshore Operators' Association.

Mike Parker

Formerly Director of Economics, British Coal. Now a consultant.

Paul Rich

Managing Director, Allied Steel and Wire Ltd. Represents large energy users.

Lynda Rouse

Currently Managing Director, Corporate Finance, Barclays de Zoete Wedd Ltd. Lead adviser on the privatisation of the Scottish electricity supply industry.

Ann Scully

Vice-Chairman, National Consumers Council, and Chairman Domestic Coal Consumer's Council.

Anthony White

Head of Corporate Strategy, National Grid Company.

Professor Alan Williams

Department of Fuel and Energy, Leeds University. An expert on combustion. Recently Chaired the Watt Committee study of methane emissions. Was a special adviser to the Coal Inquiry by the Trade and Industry Select Committee.

Since the membership of the energy advisory panel was announced on 27 October 1993, it has met on seven occasions: on 23 November 1993; and on 10 February, 25 March, 28 June, 30 September, 25 October, and 8 December 1994.

Electricity Trading Report

Mr. Trend: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the Director General of Electricity Supply's report, "Trading Outside the Pool".

Mr. Eggar: I welcome the director general's report and accept his conclusions. I note that further reforms in pool trading are anticipated. I look forward to further reforms in the way the uplift element of the pool price is handled and share the director general's wish to see progress in permitting local trades between generators and second tier suppliers - that is, trades on the customer side of a grid supply point rather than trades across the grid itself.

The director general has stated that he would be prepared to reconsider the issue of "Trading Outside the Pool" at some future date if circumstances warranted. I consider this a sensible and pragmatic conclusion.

Patent Office Agency

Mr. Trend: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, if he will make a statement on the outcome of the review of the Patent Office Agency.

Mr. Heseltine: I am pleased to announce that the review is now complete. A summary of the consultants' report, edited to omit commercially sensitive information, has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. It is customary to review the status and performance of all agencies, as a matter of course, three years after their establishment. I am satisfied that the Patent Office has performed well during this period. It is meeting the legitimate expectations of users and improvements in quality of service were recognised by the award of a charter mark in 1993. Since relocation to Newport, Gwent, in 1991, the office has also reduced its cost base by about £7 million per annum, it has become a trading fund, and it has introduced a range of commercial disciplines. These will all contribute to securing its long-term future.

I have considered whether the Patent Office should be privatised and believe that this should remain an option for the longer term. I have also looked at the scope for large-scale contractorisation. But the nature and extent of the Patent Office's statutory functions would require special arrangements in this case to safeguard their proper exercise, and so render this option less attractive. I have therefore decided to confirm the status of the Patent Office as an executive agency. I will be setting new targets to take effect from 1 April 1995 which will require the Patent Office to continue its drive to improve efficiency and quality of service and these will encourage the Patent Office to contract out activities wherever this is compatible with its statutory role and good value for money. The aim is for the Patent Office to continue to provide a first rate service to its users. The office is a valuable asset in terms of its information resource and analytical expertise, and I will also support its endeavours to work with private sector partners to seek out new business opportunities both in the United Kingdom and overseas. Experience of the development of such partnerships as well as all options for ownership and delivery of service will be re-examined in any future review.

Postal Services

Mr. Trend: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of responses to the Government Green Paper, "The Future of Postal Services".

Mr. Eggar: By the end of the consultation period on 30 September, there had been some 13,400 responses to the Green Paper. A further 2,000 responses were received after 30 September.

Responses fell into two categories. The first category came from individual members of the public and local organisations and tended to be short responses on the principle of privatisation. The second category—some 50 responses in all—came from organisations with more specific interests in the future of postal services, including representatives of users, competitors and postal employees.

Of the first category, over half of responses were pre-printed postcards or short standard form letters issued by organisations opposed to the Government's proposals. Among the significant majority of letters there was confusion as to the detail of what the Government were proposing and little acknowledgement of the safeguards proposed in the Green Paper.

The second category of more detailed responses was more difficult to summarise. Many of them took the form of lengthy documents analysing the options and other points of detail, with a wide variety of views being expressed. There was, however, an overall majority in this category in favour of privatisation of the Royal Mail and Parcelforce.

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* All special advisers are currently required to have positive vetting.

Consultancy Assistance Scheme

Mr. Pendry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the companies in the north-west which benefited from the marketing initiative under the consultancy assistance scheme of the now defunct enterprise initiative.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* The take-up of the consultancy initiative by north-west companies, and their satisfaction with the scheme, were amongst the highest in the country. Since it started in January 1988, over 19,000 north-west companies have benefitted from the consultancy initiative. More than 3,500 companies chose the marketing option, although their names cannot be revealed for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

Ian Greer Associates

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions departmental officials met representatives of Ian Greer Associates in the last month to discuss matters relating to their client's interests.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* This information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

ENVIRONMENT

European Charter of Self-government

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Government will sign the European charter of self-government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Government have no plans to sign the European charter of local self-government. Local government is not suitable for regulation by international convention.

Hares

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the population of hares in the United Kingdom in the period from 1979 to date.

Mr. Atkins: The Government-funded national hare survey, carried out during the winters of 1991–92 and 1992–93 estimated the British population to be somewhere between 680,000 and 954,000. There are no figures available for Northern Ireland.

Negative Equity

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many home buyers who took out a mortgage in *(a)* 1988, *(b)* 1989, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1991 are now experiencing negative equity in each region.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: An estimate of the number of home buyers who took out a mortgage in each of the years 1988 to 1991, still affected by negative equity, by region, based on Department of the Environment house price data is as follows:

(thousands)

Region	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
South East	73.5	105.0	94.9	65.8
Greater London	18.2	24.8	24.4	11.3
South West	20.7	36.6	33.5	18.3
East Anglia	10.1	18.7	11.7	6.6
East Midlands	—	3.6	3.1	3.5
West Midlands	—	0.8	3.8	1.5
Wales	—	—	—	2.9
Yorks and Humberside	—	—	—	6.3
North West	—	—	—	—
North	—	—	—	—
Scotland	—	—	—	—
Northern Ireland	—	—	—	—
United Kingdom	122.5	189.5	171.4	116.3

Greenhouse Gases

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect of levying value added tax on standing charges for fuel on the United Kingdom's emissions of greenhouse gases.

Mr. Atkins: The introduction of VAT on domestic fuel and power at the standard rate was expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 1.5 millions tonnes of carbon per annum. The effect on emissions of levying VAT on standing charges has not been separately assessed.

Water

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to promote competition in the water industry.

Mr. Atkins: We are keen to encourage competition wherever it is appropriate and the Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992 introduced a number of measures to facilitate it in the case of water.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present amount of accumulated debt of each of the district authorities in England.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I have placed the information requested about the amount of accumulated debt of each of the district councils in England in the Library of the House.

"Going for Green" Committee

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the "Going for Green" committee since its inception.

Mr. Atkins: The Government panel on sustainable development has met four times since it was established in January 1994. It intends to produce its first report early in 1995. Administrative support for the panel is provided by staff seconded to the Cabinet Office. Panel members receive expenses only.

Energy Efficiency Scheme

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the budget of the home energy efficiency scheme is spent promoting the scheme to those eligible for funding under the scheme.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Some £500,000—about 0.7 per cent. of the total budget of the home energy efficiency scheme—is being spent in the current financial year on promotion. Current demand for the scheme indicates that knowledge of its existence is widespread, and that this level of promotion is both appropriate and consistent with the need to ensure that the available funds are used, as far as possible, to pay grants.

Housing

Mr. Hinchcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the impact of the proposed reduction in housing association investment on the number of homes available for rent.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Housing associations can provide homes for rent through the Housing Corporation's approved development programme in two ways: new homes for rent funded by the rental programme; and lettings freed up by the corporation's home ownership initiatives which are targeted at existing public sector tenants. The Housing Corporation estimates that through these programmes it will be able to provide over 46,000 new rented lettings in 1995–96. This compares with the estimate of 43,500 new rented lettings in 1995–96 published in December 1993.

Radioactive Waste

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects the radioactive waste management advisory committee to publish its 20 year review;

(2) when he expects the radioactive waste management advisory committee and advisory committee on the safety of muclear installations to publish their joint report on site selection and safety criteria for the deep disposal of radioactive waste.

Mr. Atkins: The reports, which I have not yet received, will be published in due course.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the forthcoming finance, management and policy review of the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Curry: As part of the Government's programme of regular five-yearly finance, management and policy reviews of non-departmental public bodies my Department will conduct a thorough review of the Housing Corporation beginning on 3 January 1995. The first stage of the review will take the form of a prior options study. This will assess the extent to which the corporation's functions are necessary for the achievement of the Government's policies, and whether there is scope for privatising, contracting out, or transferring all or part of its functions to another body. The study will take into account Government's continuing support for a programme of new lettings at subsidised rents delivered through housing associations.

The progress made by the corporation since the previous review in 1990 will be examined and the results of that examination and of the prior options study will inform a detailed review of the corporation's policy and financial management systems.

To minimise the uncertainty the prior options study will cause, I expect that study to be completed within four months. The time required for the more detailed review cannot be foreseen, but I would expect it to last no longer than eight months.

In carrying out the study my Department will consult widely with housing organisations and others with an interest in the corporation's work.

Research

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sum was spent by his Department on research in each of the last 10 years; what percentage this was of the total annual budget; what is the research budget for the forthcoming year; what percentage this is of his total budget; and what additional new research is to be undertaken.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* Expenditure by the Department of the Environment on research and development in each of the last 10 years in £ millions and as a percentage of the total annual budget, is presented below:

Years	*Research spend*	*Percentage of total annual budget*
1985–86	39.6	0.198
1986–87	52.4	0.248
1987–88	54.2	0.244
1988–89	54.3	0.240
1989–90	61.9	0.260
1990–91	69.9	0.243
1991–92	89.0	0.239
1992–93	91.6	0.222
1993–94	90.5	0.230
1994–95	93.9	0.239

The expenditure on research and development in the coming year has still to be finalised and will be reported in the statistical supplement to the "1995 Forward Look of Government-Funded Science, Engineering and Technology". The changes in the content of my departmental research in the coming years will be described in the main part of the forward look

Dog Fouling

Sir Graham Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will introduce national poop scoop legislation for dog fouling;

(2) what estimate he has made of the level of dog fouling in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about it as a major source of filth and disease in urban areas;

(3) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the existing system of byelaws in improving the environment concerning dog fouling.

Mr. Atkins: The Government accept the conclusion of the advisory group on litter that the present complex system of byelaw control for dog fouling in England and Wales is unsatisfactory We therefore propose to simplify the system so that local authorities can introduce poop scoop measures in designated areas, without reference to central Government. We also propose that there should be a fixed penalty scheme for dog fouling offences to help local authorities enforce the measures. We believe that these measures will go a long way to addressing the group's wish to see a national poop scoop offence created across England and Wales.

My Department has made no estimate of dog fouling in the United Kingdom. I understand that the pet advisory committee has estimated that approximately 1,200 tonnes of faeces are produced each day by dogs in the United Kingdom. In 1993 a survey by the Tidy Britain Group found that about one in six public places in the United Kingdom had dog fouling present. Within this sample, one in three off-street areas such as parks, playgrounds and car parks were fouled.

DEFENCE

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total expenditure on energy for each property owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Soames: The only property leased by my Department for use by Ministers is a flat in Admiralty house, Whitehall, which is occupied by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. Energy costs for this property are not metered separately; they fall to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which is responsible for the utilities costs of the whole building. The amounts attributable to the flat cannot therefore be separately identified.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Soames: Statistics on energy expenditure are not maintained centrally for all the offices and buildings occupied by my Department's staff or for the agencies, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. For headquarters office accommodation, however, the costs were as follows:

	1991–92 £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
Electricity	3,418,910	3,923,836	4,121,307
Gas	314,140	254,627	280,189
Water	590,975	543,146	424,877
Oil	642,733	703,405	530,000

European Fighter Aircraft

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what controls on future export sales form part of the European fighter aircraft international partnership agreement; and how these controls are to be exercised by the partner nations in the project.

Mr. Freeman: The arrangements for the sale of Eurofighter 2000 to third parties are set out in the general memorandum of understanding signed by the four partner nations and are reflected in the development contracts. In the development phase, industry must inform the partner nations before licence rights or sales to third parties can be granted, and the participating nations can require industry to refrain from granting such rights or impose conditions on the sale.

Expenditure

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide figures for defence expenditure from 1978–79 to 1997–98 using the basis used for the calculation in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" 1995–96.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
1978–79	21,760
1979–80	23,092
1980–81	23,755
1981–82	24,224
1982–83	25,834
1983–84	26,549
1984–85	28,040
1985–86	27,822
1986–87	27,224
1987–88	26,567
1988–89	25,295
1989–90	25,559
1990–91	25,292
1991–92	26,188
1992–93	23,611
1993–94	22,757
1994–95	22,071
1995–96	20,627
1996–97	20,310
1997–98	20,219

(1) All figures are in £ million and are converted to constant 1993–94 prices using the GDP deflators published in the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1995–96. Outturn information is given from 1978–79 to 1993–94. The 1994-295 total is the estimated outturn and figures for 1995–96 to 1997–98 are the latest plans published in the FSBR 1995–96.

(2) Figures are adjusted for technical changes in the treatment of Armed Forces and civilian pensions described in the 1992 Autumn Statement Cm 2096, and other classification changes.

(3) Figures before 1992–93 include expenditure relating to the security and intelligence services. Comparisons with later years' figures cannot be made on a fully consistent basis.

(4) Totals include expenditure on the Falklands and Gulf conflicts but exclude Gulf burden—sharing contributions received in 1990–91 and 1991–92.

Military Training

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to share military training between Salisbury plain and Otterburn.

Mr. Soames: Because the Salisbury plain training area cannot accommodate all the training demands placed on it and has to be managed at a level which will not cause unacceptable environmental damage,it is intended that the Otterburn training area will, in future, be used for live firing of both MLRS and AS90. Although a proportion of AS90 live firing and tactical movement and MLRS manoeuvre training will continue at Salisbury plain, no MLRS live firing will be carried out there in the foreseeable future.

Public Relations

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State of Defence if he will set out his Department's expenditure on public relations in 1989–90, 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94, and planned expenditure in 1994–95.

Mr. Soames: The earliest year for which figures are readily available is 1991–92. Figures which relate to expenditure on films, exhibitions, publications, equipment and headquarters staff and operating costs are:

Year	*£*
1991–92	5,490,000
1992–93	5,520,000
1993–94	5,450,000

The estimated expenditure figure for 1994—95 is £7,305,000 which includes expenditure on WWII commemorations.

Expenditure on public relations outside my Department's HQ is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Sexual Harassment

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he has taken to prevent sexual harassment in the armed forces.

Mr. Soames: It is made clear throughout the armed forces that ill-treatment of any sort is not tolerated. Any complaints of harassment are investigated and, if proven, appropriate action is taken. In April 1994, the Army issued guidelines on dealing with and preventing sexual harassment. The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force are in the process of drawing up similar guidelines.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how the EC code of practice on measures to combat sexual harassment has been brought to the attention of service personnel.

Mr. Soames: A single code of practice for civilian staff, covering all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, is being prepared to update existing procedures. This new code takes account of the EC code of practice and when it has been finalised, its provisions will be incorporated into the services' guidelines on dealing with harassment.

Committee on Women

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library all minutes and working party reports of the committee on women in NATO forces from 1976 to the present time.

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Benefits and Remuneration

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library details of the entire benefits and remuneration package enjoyed by men and women in the armed forces from 1976 to the present time.

Mr. Soames: Full details of the entitlements to, and levels of, allowance since 1976 are not held centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. The key documents relating to the remuneration of members of the armed forces for the period requested are, however, already in the Library of the House. They include:

Reports of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body

Royal Navy Orders in Council made under Section 3 of the Naval and Marine Pay and Pensions Act 1865

The Army Pay Warrant

The Army Pensions Warrant

Queen's Orders for the RAF Pay, Allowances and Pensions made under Section 2 of the Air Force Constitution Act 1917

The Queen's Regulations for the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force

Equality

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what working party reports on equality in the armed forces were prepared between 1976 and the present time; and what were the dates upon which they reported.

Mr. Soames: In the time available it has not been possible to establish whether any such reports were prepared, other than that referred to in my answer to the hon. Member of 30 November, *Official Report*, column *784*. It is not my Department's practice to release internal planning documents of this kind.

Nerve Agent Pre-treatment Tablets

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what advice he has received regarding the standard prescribed dosage for nerve agent pre-treatment set tablets.

Mr. Soames: The nerve agent pre-treatment set standard dose of one 30 mg tablet taken eight-hourly was based on scientific and medical advice following studies to establish the efficacy and safety of the constituent drug Pyridostigmine bromide as a nerve agent pre-treatment. Those studies showed effective protection at this dosage with only occasional minor side effects, which cease when the tablets are stopped.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if civilians serving with the Merchant Navy and based in Plymouth were prescribed a course of nerve agent pre-treatment set tablets prior to and during Operation Granby; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: All personnel deployed to the Gulf theatre of operations, including those MOD civilians working in support of the Navy, were issued with NAPS tablets for their personal administration against the risk of chemical nerve agent attack. All personnel were briefed not to exceed the stated dose and were advised when to commence taking NAPS tablets.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the standard prescribed dosage of nerve agent pre-treatment set tablets was exceeded *(a)* during biological and chemical defence training in preparation for Operation Granby and *(b)* during Operation Granby.

Mr. Soames: During biological and chemical warfare training, personnel are instructed on the purpose and proper administration of nerve agent pre-treatment set tablets and are advised that the stated dose should not be exceeded. The standard dosage of one 30mg NAPS tablet to be taken every eight hours is shown clearly on the packet, which also advises that the standard dose should not be exceeded.

The actual taking of NAPS tablets does not form part of chemical and biological training, and we have no evidence to suggest that personnel exceeded the stated dosage during Operation Granby.

Tornado

Dr. David Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the Tornado F3 aircraft serviced by Airworks Ltd at RAF St. Athan are no longer capable of operational duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Of the Tornado F3 aircraft that entered the fatigue modification programme with Airwork, 16 require repair. All of these will be recovered to a fully operational state and returned to the RAF.

Married Quarters

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure was made by his Department on developing proposals for the creation of the housing trust for the disposal of married quarters.

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) of 8 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *303*, how much money the contract won buy the investment bank, Nat West Markets, for the development of further proposals for the transfer of the married quarters estate is worth.

Mr. Soames: The price of this contract is commercially confidential.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many units the married housing quarters estate owned by his Department consists of; and what proportion of the estate is currently empty.

Mr. Soames: As at 30 September, the married quarter housing estate owned by my Department consisted of 73,595 properties, of which 11,729 were vacant. Included in these figures were 2,744 properties in the process of sale, of which 2,014 were vacant. The majority of the other empty properties were undergoing or awaiting major maintenance, held for future deployments, or formed part of the management margin needed to ensure that accommodation is available for entitled service families.

Desert Storm Syndrome

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the recent United States Senate Committee for Veteran Affairs' report on Desert Storm syndrome; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: My Department is aware of a report dated 8 November 1994, written by the majority staff of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, entitled "Is Military Research Hazardous to Veterans' Health? Lessons Spanning Half a Century". As with all material relating to the alleged Desert Storm syndrome, my Department will be reviewing the scientific and medical basis for the report and evaluating the relevance of it, if any, to our own investigations into the claimed Gulf war-related illnesses among UK armed forces personnel.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Rents

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the full-year effect on social security expenditure of the proposal to cover only 50 per cent. of rent above the average for similar properties in an area for new claimants and those moving home after October 1995.

Mr. Roger Evans: Much will depend on the definition of the average and other factors, including the behaviourial effects of the proposals. However, the estimated savings to housing benefit from this proposal from October 1995 to October 1996 are around £40 million. The projected cost of housing benefit expenditure over this period will be published in the social security departmental report in the normal way.

Pensions

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women aged over 65 years who qualified for a state pension based on their own contributions did not qualify for the full rate of state pension; and what proportion those figures represent of the total of (i) men, (ii) women and (iii) men and women in receipt of state pension.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information is in the table.

Column 1 Total number of men in receipt of state pension	*Column 2* Total number of women in receipt of state pension	*Column 3* Column 1 + column 2	*Column 4* Number of men aged 65 and over in receipt of basic retirement pension (based on own contributions) at less than standard rate	*Column 5* Number of women aged 65 and over in receipt of basic retirement pension (based on own contributions) at less than standard rate	*Column 6* Column 4 as a percentage of column 1	*Column 7* Column 5 as a percentage of column 2	*Column 8* Column 4 as a percentage of column 3	*Column 9* Column 5 as a percentage of column 3
3,310,060	6,285,590	9,595,650	172,310	334,890	5.21	5.33	1.80	3.49

Notes:

1. Figures are for 31 March 1994, the latest date in respect of which information is available, for persons resident in Great Britain.

2. "State retirement pension" means a contributory retirement pension, a non-contributory retirement pension or graduated retirement benefit.

3. Figure at column 2 includes women aged 60–64.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average state earnings-related pensions scheme pension for *(a)* women aged 60 to 64 years and *(b)* men aged 65 to 69 years in the latest available year.

Mr. Arbuthnot: At 31 March 1994, the latest date in respect of which information is available, the average rate of additional pension payable as a component of retirement pension was:

£9.53 for women aged 60 to 64 years

£14.12 for men aged 65 to 69 years

Notes:

1. Figures do not include—

(a) women aged 60 to 64 and men aged 65 to 69 receiving additional pension as a component of invalidity pension,

(b) women aged 60 to 64 receiving additional pension as a component of widow's benefit,

(c) women aged 60 to 64 and men aged 65 to 69 whose entitlement to additional pension is fully extinguished by a contracted-out deduction arising from membership of a contracted-out occupational pension scheme or an approved personal pension scheme,

(d) persons with no entitlement to additional pension.

2. Figures are for persons resident in Great Britain.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* men aged 65 years and *(b)* women aged 60 years received a state earnings-related pension at the latest available date.

Mr. Arbuthnot: At 31 March 1994, the latest date in respect of which information is available, 71.8 per cent. of men aged 65 and 35.2 per cent. of women aged 60 were in receipt of additional pension payable as a component of state retirement pension.

Notes:

1. Figures do not include—

(a) women aged 60 and men aged 65 receiving additional pension as a component of invalidity pension,

(b) women aged 60 receiving additional pension as a component of widows benefit,

(c) women aged 60 and men aged 65 whose entitlement to additional pension is fully extinguished by a contracted-out deduction arising from membership of a contracted-out occupational pension scheme or an approved personal pension scheme.

2. Figures are for persons resident in Great Britain.

3. Population figures used are Government Actuary's Department 1992 based estimates.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men aged 65 years and over and *(b)* women aged 60 years and over were in receipt of state pension in the latest available date.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 25 October, *Official Report*, column *428* to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy).

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men aged 65 to 69 years and *(b)* women aged 60 to 64 years were receiving an occupational pension at the latest available date.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The most recent estimates available[1] show that in 1992 there were 1 million men aged 65 to 69 years and 0.4 million women aged 60 to 64 years in receipt of an occupational pension.

[1] Estimates are derived from the 1992 Family Expenditure Survey; and "Occupational Pension Schemes 1991—Ninth survey by the Government Actuary".

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women aged over 60 years are currently not eligible for state pension as a result of an insufficient national insurance contribution record.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information requested is not available.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women eligible for the state pension in the latest available year received the full state pension; and what percentage of women this represents of *(a)* the female population, *(b)* the female population aged over 60 years and *(c)* the female population in receipt of state pension.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information is in the table.

Column 1 *Total number of women receiving standard rate Category A, B, B(L) or A/B(L) retirement pension*	*Column 2* *Figure at column 1 as a percentage of the total female population*	*Column 3* *Figure at column 1 as a percentage of the total female population aged 60 and over*	*Column 4* *Figure at column 1 as a percentage of total number of women in receipt of state pension*
5,328,920	18.4 per cent.	78.8 per cent.	87.0 per cent.

Notes:

Columns 1 and 4:

—figures are for 31 March 1994, the latest date in respect of which information is available, for persons resident in Great Britain.

—"State retirement pension" means a contributory retirement pension, a non-contributory retirement pension or graduated retirement benefit.

—Category A retirement pension is based on the woman's own national insurance contributions.

—Category B retirement pension is payable to a widow and is based on her late husband's national insurance contributions.

—Category B(L) retirement pension is paid to a married woman and is based on her husband's national insurance contributions.

—Category A/B(L) retirement pension is payable to a married woman and is based on both her own and her husband's national insurance contributions.

Columns 2 and 3—population figures are Government Actuary's Department 1992 based estimates.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women who retired at age 60 years during the latest year for which figures are available received pensions based *(a)* wholly and *(b)* partly on the husband's national insurance contribution records; and what proportion, by percentage, these figures represent of: (i) total female population aged over 60 years and (ii) total female population in receipt of state pension.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information is in the table.

Column 1 *Number of married women aged 60 in receipt of Category B(L) retirement pension*	*Column 2* *Number of widows aged 60 in receipt of Category B retirement pension*	*Column 3* *Number of married women aged 60 in receipt of Category A/B(L) retirement pension*	*Column 4* *Total female population aged 60 years and over*	*Column 5* *Total female population in receipt of state pension*	*Column 6* *Column 1 as per cent. of column 4*	*Column 7* *Column 2 as per cent. of column 4*	*Column 8* *Column 3 as per cent. of column 4*	*Column 9* *Column 1 as per cent. of column 5*	*Column 10* *Column 2 as per cent. of column 5*	*Column 11* *Column 3 as per cent. of column 4*
19,690	4,440	13,870	6,764,000	6,285,590	0.29 per cent.	0.07 per cent.	0.21 per cent.	0.31 per cent.	0.07 per cent.	0.22 per cent.

Notes:

1. Category B(L) and Category B pensions are based wholly on the husband's national insurance contributions.
2. Category A/B(L) pensions are based partly on the husband's national insurance contributions.
3. Figures are not available in respect of widows whose pensions are based partly on the late husband's national insurance contributions.
4. Figures at columns 1 to 3 and 5 are for 31 March 1994, the latest date in respect of which information is available, for persons resident in Great Britain.
5. Population figures used are Government Actuary's Department 1992 based estimates.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were members of an occupational pension scheme at the latest available date.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The most recent figures available[1] show that in 1991 there were 6.8 million male and 3.9 million female active occupational scheme members[2].

[1] Occupational pension schemes 1991. Ninth survey by the Government Actuary.

[2] A member of an occupational pension scheme who is at present accruing benefits under that scheme in respect of current service.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the effect on Government revenues in a full year of the real increase in non-dependent deductions from housing benefit.

Mr. Roger Evans: The estimated savings from the real increase in non-dependant deductions in housing benefit from April 1995 are £35 million in a full year.

Source:

The 1990–91–92 family expenditure surveys uprated to 1994–95 prices and benefit levels. Figures rounded to the nearest £5 million.

Family Credit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give reasons for waiting until October 1996 to pilot his proposed scheme for extending family credit to childless couples and individuals.

Mr. Roger Evans: The timing of introduction of the proposed pilot scheme is dictated by the need to develop and consult on the evaluation methodology and the criteria for selecting pilot areas; to draw up detailed rules for the new benefit and develop supporting IT systems; and to allow time for the introduction of jobseeker's allowance in April 1996. An earlier introduction would be operationally difficult and would risk confusion between the effects of the new benefit and those of the jobseeker's allowance itself.

National Insurance

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons are eligible for a national insurance card.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Everyone who is registered for national insurance on the national insurance recording system is eligible to receive a national insurance number card. It is estimated that, at 5 December, there were 62,058,200 people registered on the system.

European Year of Older People

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what contribution his Department has made in 1994 to follow up European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in 1993.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The year 1994 is viewed both in the United Kingdom and within the Community as a year of evaluation and consolidation of the achievements of the European year. We maintain close links with the voluntary sector and have provided the sum of £20,000 towards the setting up of a small secretariat to take this work forward.

Income Support

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions he held with the insurance companies prior to his announcement of changes to the provision of income support for mortgage interest.

Mr. Roger Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Southhampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham), on 7 December, *Official Report*, column *363*.

VAT on Fuel

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were the reasons for the recall of recently printed pension books relating to VAT compensation.

Mr. Roger Evans: As a result of the decision not to increase the level of VAT on domestic fuel to 17.5 per cent., the rate of retirement pension, and certain other benefits, from April 1995 has been revised. Some books containing payments at the incorrect rate had already been issued and these will be replaced.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) on what date he intends to publish the Government's proposed Bill on discrimination against disabled people;

(2) if he will be publishing the Government's proposed Bill on discrimination against disabled people before the Christmas recess.

Mr. Hague: The Bill will be published shortly once the detailed contents have been finalised.

Child Support

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the practicalities of introducing a lower rate of assessable income for child maintenance in retrospective cases, as recommended by the Social Security Select Committee, fifth report of Session 1993–94, HC 470; and when he will report his findings to the House.

Mr. Lilley: I have today written to the Chairman of the Committee, providing the exemplifications it requested; and I have placed a copy of the letter in the Library.

Contributions Agency

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to evaluate the introduction of the Contributions Agency, in line with the next steps principles.

Mr. Arbuthnot: I am pleased to announce that an evaluation report on the Contributions Agency has been published today. It shows clearly that the introduction of the agency has proved successful and is a sound base on which to build. The report sets out the many improvements that have resulted from agency status, both in the agency's specific areas of responsibility and in their positive impact on the work of this Department as a whole.

Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

Inquiries about the report should be addressed to: Ms C. Thompson, Department of Social Security, Room 0903, The Adelphi building, 1-11 John Adam street, London WC2N 6HT.

Social Fund

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many social fund applications for *(a)* grants and *(b)* loans have been turned down in each local office in the Benefits Agency southern territory in each year since 1990–91;

(2) how many social fund applications for *(a)* grants and *(b)* loans were turned down even though the applicant fulfilled qualifying criteria due to local budgeting restriction in each local office in the Benefits Agency southern territory in each year since 1990–91.

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of the social fund is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. John Denham, dated 13 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions asking how many Social Fund grant and loan applications were refused, and how many were refused due to local budgeting restrictions, for each local office in the Benefits Agency's Southern Territory since 1990/91.

Information for 1990/91 is not available in the format requested; this is because the Southern Territory has only existed from April 1991 when the Benefits Agency was formed. However, I have provided details of the number of loan and grant applications refused in each of the Districts in the Southern Territory for the years 1991/92, 1992/93 and 1993/94 at Annex A; a copy has been placed in the Library. The number refused on the grounds of insufficient priority for the same period has been provided at Annex B and a copy has also been placed in the Library.

The new Social Fund Computer System (SFCS), introduced in 1993/94, collects additional statistics which were not held on the previous system. Many statistical items are collected differently and are not directly comparable with earlier years. The previous system recorded reasons for refusal per application whereas SFCS records reasons for refusal per item requested. In cases where a partial award is made, a reason for refusal will also be appropriate. As SCFS was introduced into Districts on a rollout basis throughout 1993/94, the figures for that year will be a combination of the information held on the two systems.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Benefit Upratings

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his oral statement of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns *205-8*, what would be the value of all non-uprated benefits and allowances had they been uprated *(a)* by price increase and *(b)* by earnings since the dates they were *(i)* announced and *(ii)* first paid.

Mr. Hague *[holding answer Monday 5 December 1994]:* The information is in the table.

Column 1 Benefits/Allowances	*Column 2* Date introduction announced	*Column 3* Date introduced	*Column 4* Rate at announcement £	*Column 5* Rate when introduced £	*Column 6* Current rate £
Christmas bonus	November 1972	December 1972	10.00	10.00	10.00
Income Support—amounts for meals where these cannot be purchased within the accommodation: daily rates					
breakfast	November 1987	April 1988	1.10	1.10	1.10
midday/evening meal	November 1987	April 1988	1.55	1.55	1.55
Ilford Park Polish Home—personal expenses for:					
claimant	November 1987	April 1988	11.50	11.50	17.35
partner	November 1987	April 1988	11.50	11.50	17.35
dependent children aged 18	November 1987	April 1988	10.30	10.30	15.55
Maternity Allowance—higher rate	March 1994	June 1994	52.50	52.50	52.50
Retirements Pension—age 80 addition	March 1971	September 1971	0.25	0.25	0.25
Social Fund—Maternity Payment	December 1985	April 1987	approx. 75.00	85.00	100.00

Column 1 *Benefits/Allowances*	*Column 2* *Date introduction announced*	*Column 3* *Date introduced*	*Column 4* *Rate at announcement* £	*Column 5* *Rate when introduced* £	*Column 6* *Current rate* £
Statutory Maternity Pay—lower rate	April 1986	April 1987	31.60	32.85	52.50
Statutory Sick Pay—standard rate	November 1981	April 1983	37.00	40.25	52.50
War Pensions—education allowance (see note 6)	not applicable	September 1939	not applicable	35.00	120.00
Widows Payment	December 1985	April 1988	1,000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00

Column 1 *Benefit/Allowance*	*Column 7* *Value of rate at column 4 if uprated by earnings since date at column 2* £	*Column 8* *Value of rate at column 4 if uprated by prices since date at column 2* £	*Column 9* *Value of rate at column 5 if uprated by earnings since date at column 3* £	*Column 10* *Value of rate at column 5 if uprated by prices since date at column 3* £
Christmas bonus	107.20	64.45	107.20	64.45
Income Support—amounts for meals where these cannot be purchased within the accommodation: daily rates				
breakfast	1.95	1.60	1.65	1.55
midday/evening meal	2.55	2.30	2.45	2.15
Ilford Park Polish Home—personal expenses for:				
claimant	19.65	16.50	18.20	16.10
partner	19.65	16.50	18.20	16.10
dependant children aged 18	17.55	14.85	16.25	14.35
Maternity Allowance—higher rate	56.10	54.65	54.55	53.65
Retirement Pension—age 80 addition	3.55	1.60	3.55	1.60
Social Fund—Maternity Payment	141.10	114.35	145.10	125.50
Statutory Maternity Pay—lower rate	59.45	48.15	56.00	48.50
Statutory Sick Pay—standard rate	93.65	69.95	94.00	71.60
War Pensions—education allowance (see note 6)	not applicable	not applicable	see note 5	899.05
Widows Payment	1,881.30	1,525.15	1,583.00	1,417.90

Notes:

1. Figures have been rounded to two decimal places.
2. In each step of the calculation the benefit has been rounded to the nearest 5p.
3. The Retail Prices Index (all items) and the Retail Prices Index (all items except housing ROSSI) as published by the Central Statistical Office have been used for prices uprating (ROSSI for income-related benefits).
4. Average Earnings Index (Whole Economy Unadjusted) as published by the Employment Department has been used to calculate the earnings uprating.
5. Average Earnings Index began in January 1963: it is not possible to provide earnings upratings in respect of periods commencing before that date.
6. Education allowance was inherited from the WW1 scheme (under which it was available on a discretionary basis) at the onset of WW2.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the changes to his proposals, following his annual review of national insurance contributions, consequent upon the decision not to proceed with the second phase of value added tax on domestic fuel.

Mr. Lilley *[pursuant to his reply, 12 December, Official Report, column 541-542]:* I regret that the rate of the Class 3 contribution shown in the table was incorrect.

The correct information is in the table.

Contribution rates and limits for 1995–96

CLASS 1

Lower Earnings Limit (LEL)[1]	£58 a week
Upper Earnings Limit (UEL)	£440 a week

Employee contributions[2]

Initial rate	2 per cent. (on earnings up to the LEL)
Main rate	10 per cent. (on earnings between the LEL and UEL)

Employer contributions[2]

Weekly earnings	*Contribution rate*
£58-£104.99	3 per cent.
£105-£149.99	5 per cent.
£150-£204.99	7 per cent.
£205 and over	10.2 per cent.

CLASS 2

Self employed rate[1]	£5.75 a week
Limit of net earnings for exception from Class 2 liability[1]	£3,260 a year

CLASS 3

Voluntary contributions rate[1]	£5.65 a week

CLASS 4

Lower Profits Limit	£6,640
Upper Profits Limit	£22,880
Contribution rate	7.3 per cent.

Notes

[1] Revised in light of the decision not to proceed with the second phase of VAT.

[2] Not contracted-out rates shown. A contracted-out rebate of 3 per cent. for employers and 1.8 per cent. for employees applies to earnings between the lower earnings limit and the upper earnings limit.

HEALTH

Hospitals

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table which breaks down the data in table 16 of the Department of Health statistical bulletin 12/94, "NHS Hospital Activity Statistics: England 1983 to 1993–94", by regional health authority; and if she will also show the results in terms of number of each type of operation per 100,000 population in each age group in each region.

Mr. Sackville: Tables giving the available information will be placed in the Library. Information on finished consultant episodes broken down by region and by age is not available centrally.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table which breaks down the data in table 18 of the Department of Health statistical bulletin 12/94, "NHS Hospital Activity Statistics: England 1983 to 1993–94", by regional health authority; and if she will also show the results in terms of number discharged dead per 100,000 population in each age group in each region.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table. Information on the numbers discharged dead, broken down by age group in each region, is not available centrally.

Percentage discharged dead, by region, ordinary admissions, acute sector NHS Hospitals, England

	1988–89	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*
Northern	3.1	3.4	3.0	3.3	2.8
Yorkshire	2.4	2.3	2.2	2.5	2.2
Trent	3.3	3.6	3.7	3.5	3.1
East Anglian	2.6	2.8	2.7	3.2	2.6
North West Thames	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.9	2.5
North East Thames	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.3	3.5
South East Thames	2.7	3.0	3.1	3.0	2.8
South West Thames	3.0	3.1	3.1	2.8	2.8
Wessex	3.3	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.8
Oxford	3.0	3.2	2.9	2.9	2.8
South Western	3.2	3.0	2.8	3.0	2.8
West Midlands	2.8	2.9	3.8	3.5	2.9
Mersey	2.9	2.9	2.7	3.1	2.5
North Western	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.5
SHAs	2.2	2.1	2.2	1.9	1.8

Source:
Hospital Episode Statistics

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by name the start-up costs for each national health service trust hospital, by region.

Mr. Sackville: The information will be place in the Library.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total sum paid in the most recent year for which figures are available in *(a)* fees and salaries and *(b)* expenses to members of (i) NHS trust boards located in and (ii) health commissions serving Hampshire; and how many people serve on these bodies.

Mr. Malone: There are currently nine trusts in Hampshire. They each have a chairman and five non-executive directors with the exception of the Hampshire Ambulance and Andover District Community Trusts which each have a chairman and four non-executive directors. There are three district health authorities which each have a chairman and five non-executive members.

In 1993–94 the remuneration of chairmen and non-executive directors of the six trusts then established totalled £230,000. Members expenses and the remuneration of district health authority executive and non-executive members is not available centrally.

Secure Hospital Accommodation

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from the judiciary about the availability of secure hospital accommodation for mentally affected defendants; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: There have been occasions where judges have expressed concern about the availability of hospital places for defendants requiring admission under the Mental Health Act 1983. These have been resolved through local action.

The difficulties have centred mainly on the availability of medium secure psychiatric places. Up to 1979, following the 1975 Glancy report, no medium secure places had been developed. There are now more than 700 purpose-built medium secure places in national health service hospitals in England and a further 600 places in interim NHS units and the private sector. We have allocated more than £45 million from central funds over the period 1991–95 to increase the number of NHS places to nearly 1,200 by the end of 1996.

Winter Warmth Campaign

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many inquiries have been made to the winter warmth campaign information line since its launch.

Mr. Bowis: A total of 94,403.

European Year of Older People

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contributions her Department has made in 1994 to follow up the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in 1993.

Mr. Bowis: The Department funded an evaluation seminar and will shortly be publishing a report on the Year. This will include the results of an evaluation by an independent consultant whose recommendations we shall consider carefully.

We have provided £20,000 towards a new voluntary sector team—the United Kingdom European resource unit—to take forward the work of the year.

Hospice Expenditure

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of hospice expenditure in England and Wales is publicly provided.

Mr. Sackville: The information for England is not available centrally. Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Toxocariasis

Sir Graham Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases for toxocariasis there are each year; and what assessment she has made of the main available source of the disease.

Mr. Sackville: The main source of toxocara infection is dog faeces. The Public Health Laboratory Service's communicable disease surveillance centre receives an average of about 50 laboratory reports of toxocariasis per year—not all caused by toxocara infection in dogs—the vast majority of these positives being reported because there has been some eye infection or disease. It is, however, acknowledged that there is probably a degree of under-reporting of this condition because the infection is self-limiting, and the infection may be either asymptomatic or very mild. The centre believes that it is not unreasonable to accept that there are between 100 and 200 new cases of toxocaral eye infection or disease—not necessarily causing severe damage to eyes—each year in the United Kingdom. Toxocariasis is not a notifiable disease.

Sir Graham Bright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has about the proportion of infants carrying antibodies to the parasitic worm, toxicara; and what action she plans to take to reduce the problem.

Mr. Sackville: It is estimated that between 2 and 3 per cent. of the general population possess antibodies to toxocara species, suggesting that about 1 million people in the United Kingdom have been infected at some time. No antibody surveys have been undertaken specifically among children aged less than 12 months. However a survey in Bedford, conducted among children aged three to seven years in 1981, found that 14.6 per cent. possessed antibody. These data suggest that the majority of infections are acquired in childhood.

Toxocariasis is an avoidable illness which can easily be prevented by dog owners worming their dogs regularly and by cleaning up their dog's faeces. Basic hygiene procedures, such as wearing gloves when gardening and washing hands after gardening or, with children, when they have been playing in the garden or parks should be followed. The Department of Health provides a grant to the charity Community Hygiene Concern which produces information for the public on toxocariasis and also supports the work of the Department of the Environment to encourage responsible dog ownership.

Complementary Medicine

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those health authorities that purchase complementary medicine.

Mr. Sackville: Lists of services purchased by health authorities are not available centrally.

Powick Hospital, Worcestershire

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were treated at Powick hospital, Worcestershire, with lysergic acid diethymide during the period 1964 to 1975; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the Worcester and District health authority.

Excimer Laser Keratectomy

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has as to the incidence of side-effects on complications following excimer laser keratectomy.

Mr. Sackville: The College of Ophthalmologists has established a sub-committee to look at all aspects of laser treatment, including such side-effects of excimer laser treatment as haziness of the cornea, irritation of the eye, glare, subsequent long sight or persistent short sight.

The long-term side effects associated with laser treatment are not yet known.

Schizophrenia

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what approaches were made by the inquiry into the care of Michael Buchanan to, *(a)* local members of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship and *(b)* other local organisations about the issues raised by this case.

Mr. Bowis: The independent inquiry was established by the North West London Mental Health National Health Service Trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact the trust for information about the conduct of the inquiry.

Supervision Register

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional services are available to someone placed on a supervision register.

Mr. Bowis: Supervision registers are designed to help local services identify those patients who should receive the greatest priority for care and treatment. Whether an individual placed on a register requires additional services is a matter for clinical or professional judgment in each case.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision exists for advising individuals *(a)* of their inclusion on a supervision register and *(b)* that information from the supervision register has been given to a third party.

Mr. Bowis: The guidelines on the introduction of registers make clear that patients who are placed on the supervision register should be informed orally and in writing at the time. They should be told why they are on the register, how the information on the register will be used and to whom that information may be disclosed.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what organisations have made representations regarding supervision registers for the mentally ill; and if she will list those which are in favour and those against.

Mr. Bowis: The Department consulted a number of organisations and individuals in the statutory and voluntary sector on the draft guidelines on the introduction of supervision registers and received a number of very helpful comments. Those who were consulted officially are shown in the table. Of those consulted only two organisations were against registers in principle, namely MIND and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities.

Organisations and individuals consulted over the draft guidelines on the introduction of supervision registers

Afro-Caribbean Mental Health Association
National Schizophrenia Fellowship
MIND
MINDLINK
Mental Health Foundation
Manic Depression Fellowship
SANE
Survivors Speak Out
United Kingdom Advocacy Network
Richmond Fellowship
Good Practices in Mental Health
Mental Health Act Commission
Royal College of General Practitioners
Royal College of Psychiatrists
Community Psychiatric Nurses Association
Royal College of Nurses
British Psychological Society
College of Occupational Therapists
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of County Councils
Association of District Councils
Association of Directors of Social Services
London Boroughs Association
British Association of Social Workers
Special Hospitals SHSA
Association of Chief Officers of Probation
Data Protection Registrar
National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts
Institute of Health Services Management

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring is being carried out on the operation of supervision registers for the mentally ill.

Mr. Bowis: It is the responsibility of health authorities to ensure that mental health service providers with which they contract establish and maintain supervision registers. Progress on the implementation of supervision registers is being monitored closely by the National Health Service Executive.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what external advice she has received on the legality of supervision registers for the mentally ill.

Mr. Bowis: None. We are satisfied as to their legality.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost of setting up the supervision registers; and what the sources of funding have been.

Mr. Bowis: Supervision registers are an integral part of the care programme approach which was introduced in April 1991. The additional administrative costs involved in the introduction of supervision registers should be minimal and will be met from existing resources.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances the contents of a supervision register can be passed to the police.

Mr. Bowis: Supervision registers are health records. As with other health records, information should be disclosed to a third party such as the police without the patient's consent only if that disclosure can be justified in the public interest.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provisions exist for the review of or appeal against placement on a supervision register for the mentally ill.

Mr. Bowis: Patients who are placed on a supervision register can request a review to consider their withdrawal from the register. If the patient remains dissatisfied with the outcome of that review the normal channels of complaint and the right to a clinical second opinion apply.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people she expects to be placed on supervision registers for the mentally ill.

Mr. Bowis: Before the deadline for full implementation of registers it was estimated that between 5,000 and 10,000 people nationally were likely to be placed on registers. Early indications are that the estimate was correct.

Children (Nutrition)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether she has discussed with the Secretary of State for Social Security measures to combat malnutrition in children of poor families;

(2) what recent representations she has received about the diet of children of low-income families; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what plans she has to assist children of poor families suffering from malnutrition.

Mr. Sackville: A small number of the responses to the 1993 consultation on the nutrition task force's draft action programme referred to the potential difficulties of eating healthily on a low income. I refer the hon. Member to the replies I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) on 27 June, *Official Report* column *413–4* and 19 July at column *143–5* for more recent representations about diet and nutrition of children in different socio-economic circumstances.

Malnutrition is a term which covers a wide variety of single or combined deficiencies of nutrients and/or energy. Although there is some evidence that iron intakes are low in children there is no evidence that this is particularly a problem in low-income families. There is no other evidence of public health problems from inadequate nutrient intakes.

The welfare food scheme continues to provide a nutritional safeguard for children aged under five in families on income support.

The nutrition task force has set up a project team to consider ways of assisting people on a low income to choose a healthy diet. In establishing the team, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security was consulted.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about the effects of IVF treatment on the health of mothers and children; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Since 1994, Ministers have received four letters on the subject.

The summary of "The Report of the Medical Research Council Working Party on Children Conceived by IVF" by Pat Doyle and Valerie Beral, was published in the British Medical Journal, BMJ 1990, 300: 1229–33. The study showed that the numbers of malformations found were consistent with the range of expected values in national data on congenital malformations.

From 1988 the interim licensing authority for human in-vitro fertilisation and embryology, and from 1 August 1991 the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority have kept registers of IVF treatment, including records of developmental defects in babies conceived as a result of treatment. These have not shown untoward rates of abnormality.

Benzodiazepines

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what quantity of benzodiazepines was prescribed via community pharmacists in England and Wales in each year since 1987; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: The available data for England are contained in the table. Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Benzodiazepines dispensing by community pharmacists. England 1987 to 1993

Year	*Prescriptions (thousands)*
1987	20,565
1988	18,682
1989	17,274
1990	16,507
1991	15,662
1992	14,775
1993	14,143

Notes:

1. The data are from the Prescription Costs Analysis system and cover all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors.

2. 1987 to 1990 data are based on fees. Data from 1991 are based on items.

3. The data on the Prescribing Analyses and Cost PCA system are for England only and cover all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors.

Cots and Mattresses

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when her Department first became aware of the possible link between chemicals in cot and baby mattresses and sudden infant death syndrome; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Department first became aware of the hypothesis that certain chemicals in cot and baby mattresses may be connected with sudden infant death syndrome in January 1989.

At that time a working group, chaired by Professor Turner, was asked to consider this hypothesis in detail, data from the scientific literature, and submissions and evidence from interested parties. It concluded that the hypothesis relating SIDS with microbial infestation and gas generation from antimony of phosphorus based additives present in cot furnishings was unfounded.

Dr. Kenneth Calman, the Chief Medical Officer, has set up an expert group to steer further work by the Department on cot deaths.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total expenditure on energy for each property owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Sir John Wheeler: It is not possible to allocate the precise share of energy costs between the offices and the accommodation provided for official use by Ministers from the energy costs for these buildings.

Sight Tests

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the estimated savings made in 1992–93 as a result of the introduction of a charge for sight tests.

Mr. Moss: A total of £2.3 million.

Hospices

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of hospice expenditure in Northern Ireland is publicly funded.

Mr. Moss: Approximately 37 per cent. of the expenditure of voluntary hospices in Northern Ireland was met by funding from statutory sources in the financial year 1993–94.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Northern Ireland hospice may expect to receive an increased level of support from public funds.

Mr. Moss: This is a matter for negotiation between the Northern Ireland hospice and the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland as part of the contracting arrangements for the purchase and provision of palliative care services.

Blind and Partially Sighted People

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were registered *(a)* blind and *(b)* partially sighted at (i) 31 March 1986 and (ii) 31 March 1991.

Mr. Moss: Information is not collected centrally in the format requested. On 31 December 1985, 3,437 blind and 1,285 partially sighted people were known to health and social service boards while 2,974 blind and 1,087 partially sighted people were in contact with the boards during the year ended 31 March 1991.

Water Disconnections

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many water disconnections have taken place in each of the last three years.

Mr. Moss: The table shows the number of disconnections for non-payment of accounts in each of the last three financial years. The figures relate to commercial, industrial and agricultural premises.

Year	*Number*
1991–92	385
1992–93	211
1993–94	146

Disconnections to domestic properties occur only in circumstances such as dereliction and reconstruction.

Water Meters

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent on the installation of water meters in each of the last three years; and how many homes have been metered in those years.

Mr. Moss: The table shows the amount spent on the installation of water meters in each of the last three financial years.

Year	*Amount £*
1991–92	150,685
1992–93	174,503
1993–94	103,471

Water supplied to a property used solely for domestic purposes is not metered.

Overhead Cables

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the policy of the Department of the Environment planning service in relation to overhead electricity and telephone cables; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moss: The Department's policy is set out in policy PSU11 of the planning strategy for rural Northern Ireland, which was published in September 1993. Copies are available in the Library.

Respiratory Illnesses

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many hospital admissions there were for each month in 1991, 1992 and 1993 for *(a)* acute respiratory complaints and *(b)* bronchitis by local health authority and trust.

Mr. Moss: The information is set out in the tables attached, which take into account that there were no fully established trusts in Northern Ireland prior to April 1993.

Hospital admissions for acute respiratory infections by board: 1991

	Board of treatment				
Month	*Eastern*	*Northern*	*Southern*	*Western*	*Total*
January	433	261	234	189	1,117
February	383	233	226	175	1,017
March	392	247	264	187	1,090

Hospital admissions for acute respiratory infections by board: 1991

Month	Board of treatment Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
April	403	227	227	156	1,013
May	432	206	201	165	1,004
June	382	213	175	146	916
July	340	170	150	116	776
August	353	160	127	120	760
September	433	190	198	193	1,014
October	476	236	242	223	1,177
November	441	213	219	190	1,063
December	557	279	284	249	1,369
Total	5,025	2,635	2,547	2,109	12,316

Hospital admissions for acute respiratory infections by board: 1992

Month	Board of treatment Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
January	533	317	235	232	1,317
February	501	285	197	206	1,189
March	428	200	45	189	862
April	418	184	37	124	763
May	375	208	48	127	758
June	382	196	82	160	820
July	288	166	135	133	722
August	279	148	143	90	660
September	339	196	207	131	873
October	304	199	188	141	832
November	328	213	225	126	892
December	342	212	182	80	816
Total	4,517	2,524	1,724	1,739	10,504

Hospital admissions for acute respiratory infections by board: 1993

Month	Board of treatment Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western	Total
January	413	227	192	190	1,022
February	375	278	152	251	1,056
March	467	310	128	251	1,156
April	495	246	162	192	1,095
May	423	245	156	211	1,035
June	470	236	203	187	1,096
July	393	186	193	163	935
August	399	189	147	168	903
September	524	248	140	224	1,136
October	692	314	170	233	1,409
November	816	381	301	344	1,842
December	621	329	289	258	1,497
Total	6,088	3,189	2,233	2,672	14,182

Hospital admissions for acute respiratory infections by trust: 1993

Month	Trust Royal Group	Belfast City	Green Park	Ulster North Down and Ards	Craigavon area	Total
April	82	134	21	173	80	490
May	54	109	35	158	86	442
June	88	106	37	148	98	477
July	79	93	29	121	89	411
August	95	83	26	109	75	388
September	192	77	25	155	54	503
October	196	169	35	177	82	659
November	274	186	42	170	132	804
December	184	135	34	145	145	643
Total	1,244	1,092	284	1,356	841	4,817

Hospital admissions for bronchitis: 1991

Month	Board of treatment Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western	Northern Ireland Total
January	72	32	48	40	192
February	149	39	98	88	374
March	136	23	86	76	321
April	55	7	30	28	120
May	25	8	20	11	64
June	31	2	14	6	53
July	17	1	9	5	32
August	15	4	0	7	26
September	30	12	13	26	81
October	32	3	16	23	74
November	65	6	11	28	110
December	125	34	70	56	285
Total	752	171	415	394	1,732

Hospital admissions for bronchitis 1992

		Board of Treatment			*Northern Ireland*
Month	*Eastern*	*Northern*	*Southern*	*Western*	*Total*
January	86	48	73	51	258
February	53	26	30	32	141
March	30	14	5	16	65
April	28	4	0	16	48
May	14	5	1	24	44
June	19	7	1	13	40
July	9	5	3	8	25
August	9	4	9	4	26
September	10	2	7	8	27
October	14	0	3	7	24
November	17	2	6	10	35
December	21	9	14	15	59
Total	310	126	152	204	792

Hospital admissions for bronchitis 1993

		Board of treatment			*Northern Ireland*
Month	*Eastern*	*Northern*	*Southern*	*Western*	*Total*
January	58	11	24	24	117
February	138	49	35	64	286
March	71	42	34	97	244
April	35	7	12	25	79
May	14	5	5	23	47
June	21	4	4	28	57
July	6	3	1	10	20
August	9	4	0	9	22
September	12	2	7	19	40
October	25	3	5	9	42
November	42	12	7	26	87
December	101	23	47	32	203
Total	532	165	181	366	1244

Hospital admissions for bronchitis 1993

			Trust		
Month	*Royal Group*	*Belfast City*	*Green Park*	*Ulster North Down and Ards*	*Craigavon area*
April	7	3	2	16	5
May	1	5	1	4	0
June	3	4	0	3	0
July	1	4	0	1	0
August	3	1	0	3	0
September	2	6	0	0	0
October	8	8	1	2	2
November	9	6	0	10	0
December	60	4	14	18	19
Total	94	41	18	57	26

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Sir Patrick Mayhew *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* All special advisers are currently required to have positive vetting. My special adviser was positively vetted for security purposes prior to his appointment. The level of security clearance is regularly reviewed in accordance with standing instructions.

Regional Development

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those public projects which received European regional development funding and were subsequently privatised over the last 10 years, indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 24 November 1994]:* The following amounts have been paid from the European Regional Development Fund in the last 10 years to the public projects listed which were subject to privatisation.

Level of ERDF funding for each body from 1984–95 financial year to date (Northern Ireland)

	British Telecom £	*NI Electricity* £	*NI Airports* £	*Short Brothers* £	*Totals* £
1984–85	1,941,686	742,725		—	2,684,411
1985–86	2,005,928	—	377,511	—	2,383,439
1986–87	—	1,257,328	3,125,733	—	4,383,061
1987–88	—	—	528,000	—	528,000
1988–89	858,929	10,043,700	1,929,480	—	12,832,109
1989–90	2,021,395	1,754,420	199,720	—	3,975,535
1990–91	2,370,997	5,299,114	6,216,000	—	13,886,111
1991–92	2,254,944	400,183	1,280,916	—	3,936,043
1992–93	—	2,211,388	76,960	362,335	2,650,683
1993–94	—	2,828,095	2,257,451	176,200	5,261,746
1994–95 to date	150	348,184	822,344	35,347	1,206,025
Totals	11,454,029	24,885,137	16,814,115	573,882	53,727,163

TRANSPORT

Bulgarian Ships

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will investigate the circumstances surrounding the arrival in Glasgow of replacement crews for the Bulgarian ships currently in Lerwick harbour, the Afala, Aktinia, Kaprela, Ofelia and Rotalia.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I have been asked to reply.

Under the immigration rules, people seeking entry to join a vessel as members of its crew are eligible for admission if they are under contract to join a ship due to leave British waters. If the immigration officer is so satisfied, he will give leave to enter. I see no need for any further investigation in this case.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he will take to ensure that Bulgarian ship owners observe immigration rules in respect of seafarers currently employed on board the Aktinia, Kaprela, Ofelia and Rotalia in Lerwick harbour.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I have been asked to reply.

Under the Immigration Act 1971, where a person arrives at a place in the United Kingdom as a member of the crew of a ship under an engagement requiring him to leave on that ship as a member of the crew, he may normally enter the United Kingdom without leave and remain until the departure of the ship. Checks will be made to ensure that crew members leave with their vessels, if they fail to do so action will be taken, as appropriate, to trace and remove them from the United Kingdom under powers in the 1971 Act.

Gospel Oak to Barking Line

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the Gospel Oak to Barking line will be fully resignalled between South Tottenham and Woodgrange Park; when the works will be completed; and whether this will take place before or after the proposed flotation of Railtrack.

Mr. Norris: No plan currently exists for full resignalling between South Tottenham and Woodgrange Park. The timing of works undertaken after its flotation will remain a matter for Railtrack.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how the revised signalling arrangements between South Tottenham and Woodgrange Park on the Gospel Oak to Barking line will operate to satisfy the requirements of the railway inspectorate division of the Health and Safety Executive, if the Gospel Oak to Barking line is not resignalled between South Tottenham and Woodgrange Park as part of the Liverpool Street resignalling project; and what is the minimum safe interval required between trains operating under the proposed arrangements.

Mr. Norris: All signalling arrangements employed have to satisfy the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive. I am advised that the required interval between trains is the time it takes for a train to pass along the line between the signal boxes at South Tottenham and Woodgrange Park. This is normally 17 minutes for a stopping passenger train and a little less for a non-stop train. These signalling arrangements are wholly in line with signalling regulations.

Rail Businesses

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 5 December, *Official Report*, column *38*, if he will list the rail businesses, apart from Railtrack, which the Government intend to sell in 1995–96 and 1996–97.

Mr. Watts: The answer is as follows:

Trainload Freight Companies (TLFs)
Freightliner (containerised freight carrier)
Rail express systems (Res)
Rolling Stock Leasing Companies (ROSCOs)
BR Infrastructure Services (BRIS)
— Track Renewal Units
— Infrastructure Maintenance Units
BR Telecommunications (BRT)
various businesses in BR Central Services

Highways Agency

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what extra costs or savings on the capital or revenue account have been generated by the withdrawal of the original Highways Agency proposal to concentrate on a single site; and if he will explain how these changes have arisen.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 14 December 1994:

I have been asked to write to you in response to your Parliamentary Question about the Highways Agency restructuring proposals and in particular the extra costs or savings generated by the withdrawal of the proposal to concentrate on a single site.

My Board's decision on the restructuring of the Highways Agency were announced on 23 November following consultation on the original proposals put forward last July. The changes confirmed following the consultation process have resulted in a decision which provides better utilisation of our existing expertise without sacrificing the advantages of a reduced number of offices in terms of lower management and overhead costs and lower accommodation costs. The overall saving in staff redundancy and relocation costs due to the changes is estimated at £8.8 million. The changes also involve greater utilisation of existing offices, which it is estimated will reduce refurbishment costs by £1.2 million and property disposal costs by £2.7 million.

There has never been a proposal to concentrate the entire Highways Agency on a single site. One of the options estimated earlier in the planning process would have centralised most of our operations on a single site but with two other offices. This option was rejected at an early stage because the associated loss of staff expertise would have been too great.

Grant Office of the North East

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff he currently has in the grant office of the north east on road transport policy.

Mr. Watts: A total of 22.

Goods Vehicle Operator Centres

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance is given to traffic area offices regarding *(a)* advertising in the press and *(b)* consultation with the public regarding applications to use premises for goods vehicle operator centres; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Traffic area office staff dealing with licence applications are made aware of the statutory requirements for advertising applications for a goods vehicle operator's licence within a statutory period in an appropriate local newspaper, and the statutory provisions for making objections and representations; they are also provided with guidance on how to deal with any non-statutory matters that might arise. Inquiry procedure rules must be followed for those applications which are to be determined by the licensing authority at public inquiry.

London Underground

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the nature of the points problem in the Aldgate area of London Underground on the morning of 9 December; and how many times there have been points or signalling problems in the Aldgate area leading to train delays in the past 12 months.

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for London Underground. I understand that the points at Aldgate failed to return to their normal position after being switched to reverse. The failure was rectified within 11 minutes and the service restored. Over the past 12 months, there have been 29 points or signal failures in the Aldgate area.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the duration of the trips referred to in his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *616*, which were undertaken by Ministers in his Department and on which they were accompanied by their spouses and paid for at public expense.

Dr. Mawhinney: The duration of the trip referred to in my answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *616*, was two days.

EMPLOYMENT

Workstart

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to publish the findings from his Department's evaluation of the current Workstart pilot schemes.

Miss Widdecombe: The reports of the evaluation of the Workstart pilots have been published today and I have arranged for a copy of each to be placed in the Library.

North Norfolk Employment Schemes

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he intends to publish the findings of his Department's evaluation of the North Norfolk Action and Workstart pilots.

Miss Widdecombe: The evaluation of North Norfolk Action and Workstart are now complete. The reports showed that there was much of value in both pilots. The Budget speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor contained two new measures of relevance to the pilots: the 1-2-1 pilot, based on an element of the North Norfolk Action pilot will be extended nationally from April 1995; and a further 5,000 Workstart places will be available from that date. Copies of the reports are available in the Library.

Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Aspinwall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made on the internal review of the operation of the industrial tribunals announced by the then Under-Secretary of State on 29 April 1994, *Official Report*, columns *379–80*.

Mr. Oppenheim: Following the completion of the internal review of industrial tribunals, the Government are today publishing a Green Paper, "Resolving Employment Rights Disputes: Options for Reform".

Since their inception in 1964, the role of industrial tribunals has steadily developed as their jurisdiction has expanded. The Government believe that industrial tribunals have proved to be a fair and effective means for adjudicating employment rights disputes. They are firmly committed to ensuring that they continue to provide an

> "easily accessible, informal, speedy and inexpensive"

means of redress in accordance with the criteria laid down in 1968 and accepted by all Governments since then.

The industrial tribunal system has been subjected to growing pressures in recent years. Employment legislation has grown both in extent and complexity, the numbers of tribunal applications have doubled since 1989 and are expected to continue rising and hearing delays have increased unacceptably. The Department's internal review was commissioned to find ways of helping the tribunals to cope and to achieve greater efficiency and reduced delays.

The Green Paper sets out a range of proposals designed to increase the proportion of disputes settled voluntarily by the parties themselves or with third party assistance, to simplify and improve tribunal procedures and to improve the organisation and management of the administrative support.

The Government invite views on those proposals. Improvements which can be achieved through administrative action by the Department are already going ahead; decisions on whether and how to proceed with those requiring legislation will be taken in the light of the consultations. However, the Government have decided that tribunals should have discretion whether to obtain a view from an independent expert when deciding claims for equal pay for work of equal value.

It is the Government's intention that any efficiency savings should be applied to improving standards of service to the public.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last session of Parliament were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Miss Widdecombe: Six. This represents less than 1 per cent. of all questions answered in the same period.

Jobcentres

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide figures for the use of jobcentres by employer organisations for each month in the financial year 1993–94.

Miss Widdecombe: Monthly information on the numbers of vacancies notified to jobcentres by employers and the number of people placed with employers by jobcentres is available from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Advertising

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the final cost of each advertising campaign listed in his answer to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *861*.

Miss Widdecombe: The final cost of each advertising campaign listed in the answer to the hon. Member for Truro of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *861*, is shown in the following table:

	1993–94	
Campaign	*Budgeted spend* £	*Final cost* £
Make It Your Business	2,000,000	2,012,000
1993 NTA	564,000	662,000
Career Development Loans	1,870,000	1,826,000
Careers Service	150,000	42,000
New Horizons for Women	300,000	47,000
Just the Job/New Measures	1,800,000	1,777,000
Employer Campaign	1,300,000	1,150,000
Disability	1,300,000	1,238,000

European Year of Older People

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what contribution his Department has made in 1994 to follow up the European Year of Older People and Solidarity between Generations in 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: In 1994, the Employment Department has supported the initiatives stemming from the European year of older people and solidarity between generations through the continuation of the campaign to promote the interests of older workers.

In March a booklet was released, aimed at employers, to reinforce the message that age has no bearing on the ability to do a good job. It was distributed to 16,500 employers whose work force exceeded 75 employees. The press coverage was widespread and continues to generate interest from employers, researchers and individuals. Over 5,000 requests have been received to date.

The Department has been involved with workshops and seminars run by bodies involve with, and who campaign for older workers. I attended seminars at the Policy Studies Institute, the Department's regional office in Bristol and a Carnegie Third Age symposium, the theme of all three being to persuade to employers to take a positive attitude towards older workers.

Recently, I visited People of Previous Experience, a European conference held in Bradford, and the Mature Workers Register in Bournemouth, two initiatives engaged in finding jobs for older workers in their local areas.

This year, research commissioned by the Department was published, which consisted of a comprehensive review of employment policies and practices toward older workers in 22 countries. These comprise all EU member states, plus 11 other countries worldwide. Further research has been commissioned, comprising a more detailed overview of policies and practices in France, Germany, Spain and Sweden.

It is planned to release a booklet for individuals which will contain advice and information about job seeking specifically aimed at older workers.

Plans are also under way to hold a series of regional seminars which will disseminate good practice in the employment of older workers among locally invited employers.

Jobseekers

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect of the provision in the Jobseekers Bill regarding penalties in respect of leaving employment after three months on the willingness of jobseekers to remain in employment.

Miss Widdecombe: Unemployed people should be encouraged to try work that may be unfamiliar to them. The employment on trial rule therefore exempts certain claimants from sanction if they take a job and then give it up within a specified period. We regard it as important that this incentive should apply at the point at which claimants are expected to consider work outside their usual occupations. For this reason, in jobseeker's allowance the rule will apply after three months' unemployment, which is the maximum permitted period during which search for jobs can be restricted to the claimant's usual occupation.

Training

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total value of grants received from the European Commission for training schemes and advice to companies and individuals in the last financial year.

Miss Widdecombe: Much of the largest source of European Community grants for training schemes and advice on training is the European Social Fund. In the last financial year, 1993–94, ESF grants totalling £528 million were received by training providers and others in Great Britain.

Women

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what Government structures exist to review the implementation of the UN's Nairobi forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women; and what such review has taken place and been published.

Miss Widdecombe: The Cabinet sub-committee for women's issues is responsible for reviewing and developing Government policy on issues of special concern to women, and for overseeing its implementation. The Employment Department has responsibility within Whitehall for co-ordination of policy on women's issues, including the Nairobi forward-looking strategies.

In preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women to be held in Peking in September 1995, UN member states report on progress in the key areas of the Nairobi forward looking strategies. The UK's national report was published at the beginning of October. The report has been widely distributed and copies are available in the Library

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which Whitehall Departments have women's units; and what is their location, responsibilities and staffing levels.

Miss Widdecombe: Government policy is to integrate consideration of women's issues into policy development, rather than have specific "women's units". A large number of policy officials therefore have responsibility to ensure that women's concerns are properly taken into account. In addition, many departments have equal opportunities units within their personnel sections, which promote equality of opportunity regardless of sex, race and disability. It is not possible to disaggregate the exact numbers of such staff devoted to equal opportunities for women.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what Government structures exist to review the implementation of the UN convention on the elimination of discrimination against women; and what such review has *(a)* taken place and *(b)* been published.

Miss Widdecombe: The Cabinet sub-committee for women's issues is responsible for reviewing and developing Government policy on issues of special concern to women, and for overseeing its implementation. The Employment Department has responsibility within Whitehall for co-ordination of policy on women's issues, including the convention for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Since ratifying the convention in 1986, the Government have submitted two progress reports to the United Nations, in 1987 and 1991. Both these reports were published. A third report is currently being prepared, and will become freely available in March 1995.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current membership of the women's issues working group; and how many times the group has met over the past year.

Miss Widdecombe: The group's current membership is set out in the following table. The group has met twice since January 1994.

Women's Issues Working Group Membership, December 1994

The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP
Secretary of State for Employment
Miss Ann Widdecombe, MP
Minister of State for Employment
Ms Kamlesh Bahl
Chairwoman, Equal Opportunities Commission
Mrs. Kay Coleman OBE
Chief Executive, Harveys & Co (Clothing) Ltd.
Baroness Denton of Wakefield CBE
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Ms Sheila Forbes
Director of Human Resources, Reed Elsevier (UK) Ltd.
Dr. Ann Hogg
Chairman of Council, Girls' Public Day School Trust
Lady Howe
Chairman, Business in the Community's Women's Economic Development Team, Chairman, Broadcasting Standards Council
Mr. Graham Millar
Managing Director, Nestlé Foods Division
Mrs. Cecilia Motley
Former Director, Action Resource Centre
The Hon. Mrs Lindy Price CBE
Chairman, Powys Health Care NHS Trust
Mrs. Sue Rørstad MBE
Chairman and Managing Director, Poppies (UK) Ltd
Mrs. Margaret Seymour
Managing Director, Seymour Swimming Pool Engineers
Ms Sue Slipman, OBE
Director, National Council for One Parent Families
Mrs. Joan Smyth
Chair and Chief Executive, Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland.

Sex Equality Branch

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the powers and responsibilities of the sex equality branch; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The branch is responsible for the Employment Department's objective to counter sex discrimination in the labour market and to promote women's interests in the workplace and beyond.

Construction Industry

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the figures for employment in the construction industry for each year since and including 1989, broken down into employees and self-employed.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information is given in the following table:

Employment in the construction industry: Great Britain, spring of each year, not seasonally adjusted

Year	*Employees*	*Self-employed*	*(Thousands)* *Total*
1989	1,210	895	2,105
1990	1,237	889	2,126
1991	1,154	812	1,966
1992	1,067	739	1,806
1993	988	727	1,715
1994	991	775	1,766

Source:
Labour Force Survey

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the impact of the proposed reduction in housing association investment on employment prospects in the construction industry.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has made no such assessment.

Health and Safety Executive

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspections were carried out by the Health and Safety Executive in each of the last five years in each category of premises inspected.

Mr. Oppenheim: Information about the number of planned inspections carried out by the Health and Safety Executive in each of the last five years is published in the Health and Safety Commission annual reports for 1991–92, annex 5 and 1993–94, annex 2, copies of which are available in the Library. A breakdown for each category of premises inspected is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women together with the overall total, were in full-time employment (i) in each standard region and (ii) in Great Britain in December in each of the last 10 years; and in each case and for each year what proportion this figure represented as a percentage of the total population.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information can be obtained from the NOMIS database, which is available in the Library. However, the full-time, part-time regional breakdown should not be used prior to June 1991 as the information is invalid.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide available information on the proportion of people who *(a)* leave the register within three months, *(b)* leave the register to enter a job within three months and *(c)* leave the register to become economically inactive within three months and have been unemployed for (i) six months, (ii) one year and (iii) two years.

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* It is estimated that about half of all people who become claimant unemployed leave the count within three months and two thirds within six months. Information is not routinely available on the destinations of those leaving claimant unemployment but past surveys indicate that the majority of people go into jobs. Information on those who leave the count within three months of reaching certain duration thresholds is given in the following table:

People leaving claimant unemployment by duration (GB)

Duration of unemployment	*Percentage who left unemployment within a further 3 months*
Six months	36.5
One year	35.2
Two years	24.5

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which of the special advisers serving in his Department during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* All special advisers are currently required to have positive vetting.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

"North America Now"

21. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made by his Department with the "North America Now" campaign to boost British trade and investment with North America.

Mr. Baldry: Since its launch in March 1993, the "North America Now" campaign has produced a full programme of activities in north America and in the United Kingdom, which are helping British business to reinforce and improve its competitiveness in the world's wealthiest trading bloc.

The value of the United Kingdom's exports to north America in 1993 was 24.5 per cent. higher than in 1992.

Chemical Weapons Convention

22. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to be one of the first 65 countries to ratify the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. David Davis: The United Kingdom is committed to the effective implementation of the chemical weapons convention and will ratify the convention once the necessary implementing legislation is in place. The legislation will be introduced as soon as parliamentary time and other Government legislative priorities permit.

Syria

23. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he had before agreeing to the change in the status of Syria with respect to the EC.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The views of interested parties were taken into account before the decision was taken by the European Union to lift the arms embargo on Syria.

Kenya

24. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Her Majesty's Government's discussions with President Moi on his recent visit to London.

Mr. Baldry: President Moi visited London to address the CBI conference: Kenya—the future for investments and business. During the visit, he had full discussions on a range of subjects of bilateral and regional importance with my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the noble Baroness Chalker. This provided an opportunity to encourage President Moi to continue the process of economic and political reform, on which Kenya has made significant progress over the past three years.

European Political Union

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet his counterparts in the European Union to discuss greater political union.

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I have regular discussions on a wide range of EU issues with our European counterparts at meetings of the General Affairs Council. The next meeting of the Council is scheduled for 19 and 20 December.

China

26. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last raised human rights abuses in China with the Chinese Government.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary most recently raised human rights with the Chinese authorities when he met the Chinese Foreign Minister on 29 September in New York.

Israel

27. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's relations with Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our relations with Israel are excellent.

UN Secretary-General

28. **Sir Michael Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the Secretary-General of the United Nations; and if he will indicate the main topics which were discussed.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary had a brief meeting with the UN Secretary-General in the margins of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe summit on 5 December. More substantive discussions were held during the Secretary-General's visit to London on 25 October. A number of regional issues were discussed at both meetings.

Bosnia

29. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British policy in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our policy, which we share with the other members of the contact group, remains to bring about a peaceful settlement in Bosnia by negotiation. We fully support the UN's efforts to achieve a ceasefire around Bihac and the rest of Bosnia. This would provide a platform for a resumption of political negotiations on the basis of the contract group plan.

35. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the future role of NATO in Bosnia.

Mr. David Davis: I have received no formal representations on the future role of NATO in Bosnia. The United Kingdom fully supports NATO's continuing assistance to the efforts of the UN to provide humanitarian relief and to contain the conflict in Bosnia. These efforts cannot, however, be a substitute for an agreement by the parties on a negotiated settlement which we believe offers the only durable solution to the crisis.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is NATO's role in the war in Bosnia.

Mr. David Davis: NATO's role in the Bosnian conflict is to enforce the UN arms and trade embargoes and to support UN peacekeeping operations, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. It provides naval assets to the joint Western European Union—NATO Operation Sharp Guard. It also provides aircraft to enforce the no-fly zone in Bosnian airspace and, at UN request, to assist and protect UNPROFOR in the performance of its mandate.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what considerations led to the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina on 7 April 1992. This decision was taken following consideration of the report of the arbitration commission of the conference on Yugoslavia.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the historical, ethnic and cultural grounds for the nature of the United Kingdom's diplomatic relations with *(a)* Estonia and *(b)* the Bosnian Serbs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have rebuilt the close relations we enjoyed with Estonia before 1940 based on our strong support for her independence and democratic and economic development. The United Kingdom does not have diplomatic relations with the Bosnian Serbs.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries which protested when the Bosnian Muslims launched attacks from Sarajevo and Bihac against the Bosnian Serbs.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not aware of any such protests.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the ethnic composition of Bosnia-Herzegovina before recent hostilities began.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: According to the 1991 census, the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina was:

	Per cent.
Muslims	43.7
Serbs	31.3
Croats	17.3
Others	7.7

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries have recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina as a state; at what dates; and what arguments were put forward for doing so.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Bosnia-Herzegovina has been recognised by: Bulgaria, date of recognition 15.1.92; Turkey, 6.2.92; Iran, 8.3.92; Libya, 16.3.92; all EU member states, 7.4.92; USA, 7.4.92; Croatia, 7.4.92; Egypt, 16.4.92; Saudi Arabia, 17.4.92 and Russia, 28.4.92.

We recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina following consideration of the report of the arbitration commission of the conference on Yugoslavia.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether NATO encouraged the Bosnian Muslims to mount an offensive against the Serbs from Sarajevo.

Mr. David Davis: No. NATO acts in the former Yugoslavia under an impartial UN mandate in support of the UN's peacekeeping, humanitarian and sanctions operations.

Burundi

30. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect the continuing instability in Rwanda will have on the situation in Burundi; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We agree that the continuing instability in Rwanda will make attempts to find a lasting solution to the problems in Burundi more difficult. The fragile, and relative calm that exists at the moment is threatened by the activities of armed Rwandan bands, retaliatory military measures and the presence of many Rwandan refugees in Burundi. The international community remains very concerned and focused in these events and the UN is fully engaged in Bujumbura.

Middle East

31. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent developments in the middle east.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome continued progress in the middle east peace process, including the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and Jordan, and the resumption of talks between Israel and the Palestinians on elections and Israeli redeployment in the west bank. We look forward to progress on the Syrian track, leading to a comprehensive settlement.

Japan

32. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British relations, including trade relations, with Japan.

Mr. Goodlad: United Kingdom relations with Japan are generally excellent. Our exports rose 19 per cent. last year to £2.65 billion, and have so far risen a further 14 per cent. this year. The "Action Japan Campaign" helps British business take advantage of the opportunities in 10 key sectors.

Hong Kong

33. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current position of discussions with China about Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: The 31st plenary session of the Sino-British joint liaison group began in London today. It should build on the useful achievements of the plenary sessions held in June and September, and offer more evidence of enhanced co-operation.

Intergovernmental Conference

34. **Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Foreign Ministers of the other European Union countries about the preparations for the 1996 intergovernmental conference.

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I have had and continue to have regular discussions with our counterparts in the European Union on preparations for the 1996 intergovernmental conference.

Malaysia

36. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met representatives of the Government of Malaysia; and what was the agenda.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary met the Malaysian Foreign Minister in April. There was no fixed agenda. They both attended the European Union—Association of South-East Asian Nations ministerial meeting in Karlsruhe in September, although there was no formal bilateral meeting on that occasion.

Entry Clearance Guidelines

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guidance he has issued to entry clearance officers at British posts overseas about the appropriate gross incomes of women sponsors working full time in west Yorkshire sufficient to maintain their spouses and dependent children without recourse to public funds.

Mr. Baldry: Entry clearance officers are not given guidance on the gross income necessary to meet the maintenance requirements of the immigration rules: each case is considered on its individual merits having regard to the total financial resources available and likely to become available to the parties. These vary considerably from case to case. Entry clearance officers are further guided by rulings from the adjudicators, the tribunal and the higher courts.

Gibraltar

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's intentions for the future constitution and development of Gibraltar and its people's status within the European Union.

Mr. David Davis: Gibraltar is part of the European Union by virtue of the United Kingdom's membership. The British Government see no reason for this to change.

Indonesia

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received regarding human rights violations in East Timor and other part of Indonesia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have received many representations from non-governmental organisations and individual correspondents. We make our human rights concerns clear to the Indonesian Government, bilaterally and with our European Union partners.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to make representations to the Government of Indonesia about their actions in East Timor and human rights in Papua.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In our contacts with the Indonesian authorities, we and our European Union partners regularly raise our concerns about the situation in East Timor and, more generally, the human rights situation in Indonesia, including, whenever appropriate, the province of Irian Jaya.

Africa (Conflict Resolution)

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he plans to take to follow up his initiative on preventative diplomacy and conflict resolutions in Africa, announced in his recent speech to the United Nations General Assembly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: We wish to gain African support for measures which will strengthen their own capacity for preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution. We have been working with African countries, the Organisation of African Unity, and with European partners to identify practical steps—including the establishment of UN peacekeeping skills centres at African staff colleges, and the creation of UN logistics centres in Africa. We plan to report on progress to the UN early in 1995.

Partnership for Peace

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in developing the NATO partnership for peace proposal; and what practical military co-operation has flowed from it so far.

Mr. Hurd: Partnership for peace is developing very well. Twenty-three countries, including Russia, have become partners. Many have already negotiated individual programmes of activities with NATO. Three PFP military exercises have taken place so far, with United Kingdom forces participating each time. The extensive range of practical co-operative activities scheduled for 1995 is concrete evidence of the lasting success of this important initiative.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current British financial contribution to the United Nation's operation in Rwanda excluding explicit humanitarian assistance; and what services it supports.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom's assessed contribution to the United Nations assistance mission for Rwanda is 6.373 per cent. of the budget total. We anticipate that in the current financial year, Britain's contribution will amount to £5.05 million. This contribution supports the full range of services associated with the mission outlined in UN document A/48/837, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

Market Testing

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which programmes and projects of his Department are planned for market testing; and if he will make a statement in respect of progress in each element of the programme, together with the number of current jobs involved and their location.

Mr. Baldry: The FCO's "Competing for Quality" programme, which reviews the scope for abolition and contracting out as well as market testing, for 1994–95 is as follows:

Function	*Number of staff*
Security Guards—Hanslope Park	47
Queen's Messengers	32
Administration of Calculation of Salaries/ Pensions	11
Overseas Security Officers	34

Reviews of all these activities are under way. All posts are located in London or Hanslope Park, except the overseas security officers who serve at a number of different overseas posts.

In addition, a market test of reprographics, delayed from the 1993–94 programme is under-way involving 32 staff.

Homosexuals

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his Department's policy towards those members of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who have now admitted their homosexuality but who were originally recruited when homosexuality was a bar to recruitment to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Each case is taken on its merits. No officers who have admitted their homosexuality subsequent to their recruitment have been required to leave the Department.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if his Department operates a policy of non-discrimination against homosexuals in recruitment to all sections of his Department.

Mr. Baldry: Yes.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what questions pertinent to the homosexuality of potential recruits to his Department are still being asked during recruitment interviews; and to what purpose.

Mr. Baldry: No questions about a candidate's sexual orientation are asked at selection interviews as such. After a candidate has been recommended for a position in the diplomatic service, however, questions about sexual orientation are asked during the security vetting procedures. The purpose of these questions is to minimise an officer's vulnerability to blackmail, and so that a homosexual officer can be given suitable advice before bidding for postings for certain overseas countries where homosexual practices are illegal or socially unacceptable.

Mr. Jonathan Moyle

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 30 November to the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), *Official Report*, columns *709–10*, if he will list the number and general nature of his communications or correspondence with the Chilean authorities since 9 November 1991; and whether documentation or other evidence relevant to the death of Mr. Jonathan Moyle in his Department's possession or in the possession of agencies responsible to his Department has been passed to the Scott inquiry.

Mr. Baldry: We have had numerous exchanges with the Chilean authorities since Mr. Jonathan Moyle's death. More recently the case was raised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State during his visit to Chile in January 1993. The hon. Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory), the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, raised it with the Chilean Defence Minister designate in January this year. We await the Supreme court's response to a formal request sent to it through diplomatic channels for information required by the coroner for Exeter and East Devon, Mr. Van Oppen.

Documents relevant to the death of Mr. Moyle were passed to Lord Justice Scott. On 31 March 1993, Lord Justice Scott announced that he did not believe that an investigation into Mr. Moyle's death would further his inquiry.

Romania

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on British relations, including trade relations, with Romania.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Britain's relations with Romania are developing positively. We continue to support the consolidation of political and economic reform in Romania, including through the use of the know-how fund and the activities of the British Council. The frequency of high-level contacts has increased, and in November this year President Iliescu paid a successful visit to the United Kingdom. Britain's trade with Romania has increased significantly, now standing at over £225 million. The United Kingdom is the eight largest investor in Romania. My right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, recently led the largest trade mission yet mounted to Romania.

EU Fraud

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to help combat fraud in the European Union, particularly in the spending of the common agricultural policy and structural and cohesion budgets.

Mr. David Davis: Steps are being taken in all areas of Community budget to eradicate fraud and irregularity.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister secured important commitments in this respect at the Essen European Council on 9 and 10 December. The Council called on the Community's institutions and member states to make full use of the new powers given to them in the Maastricht treaty, and urged them to ensure special reports submitted by the European Court of Auditors are pursued thoroughly.

The Council will actively pursue agreement in the first half of 1995 to a proposal for intergovernmental co-operation against criminal aspects of fraud and will seek rapid progress toward concluding a regulation on the protection of the Community's financial interests. Each member state also undertook to report back on measures they take at a national level to counter fraud, waste and mismanagement. These reports will be submitted to the European Council in December 1995.

Embassy, Moscow

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total estimated cost of the new embassy in Moscow; when it is expected to be ready; what is the capital valuation of the present embassy; how many rooms the present embassy has; and what is its proposed use once the new embassy is in operation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The total estimated construction cost of the new embassy in Moscow is £50 million at current prices and rates of exchange, providing offices for about 80 United Kingdom and 80 local staff plus 31 flats for United Kingdom staff. Subject to all the necessary planning approvals, it is expected to be ready in 1999.

The present embassy is leased at a peppercorn rent from the Russian authorities, in reciprocity for the lease of part of the accommodation occupied by the Russian embassy in London, also at a peppercorn rent. We do not know the valuation put on our buildings in Moscow by the Russian authorities. The present embassy provides office accommodation for 170 staff.

The Russian authorities require us to remove our offices from the present site. They have agreed that the present embassy buildings may be retained for residential use. Some of the space will be used to make a limited extension to the Ambassador's flat. Most will be converted into staff accommodation, to save on the very high rents which are charged in Moscow by both public and private landlords.

Croatia

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the Serb population of Croatia before recent hostilities began; and how many Slovenians are in Slovenia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: According to the 1991 census, the population of Croatia was 4.76 million, of which about 12 per cent. were Serbs. Slovenia has approximately 1.8 million citizens, of whom about 90 per cent. are ethnically Slovenian.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Serbs left Croatia as a result of ethnic cleansing in 1992.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Accurate figures for the number of people who left Croatia in 1992 are not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Germany recognised Croatia as a state; and for what reason.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Germany recognised Croatia on 23 December 1991. It is not for us to comment on the reasons for policy decisions taken by other states.

Nato

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans NATO has for extending membership to countries on the Russian border; and if he will make a statement about its role following the extension of membership.

Mr. David Davis: The NATO summit in January confirmed that the alliance expected and would welcome expansion of its membership to include democratic states to its east, as part of an evolutionary process, and taking into account political and security developments in the whole of Europe. At their meeting in Brussels on 1 December, NATO Foreign Ministers endorsed this approach, and set in hand work on a study into the modalities and principles of enlargement. The initial results of this study will be made available to all partners, including Russia, by next December's North Atlantic Council in Brussels. NATO Foreign Ministers also agreed that it would be premature to discuss at this stage the time frame for enlargement on which countries would be invited to join the alliance.

NATO's role after expansion will continue to be to provide for the collective defence of its member states, to play a leading part in enhancing stability and security in Europe, and to undertake peacekeeping and other missions under the UN or the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe auspices.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the annual cost of NATO membership to the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Davis: For the financial year 1993–94, the total cost of NATO membership to the United Kingdom was £168,676,935. This comprised £69,129,000 for the military budget, £82,495,000 for the infrastructure budget and £17,052,935 for the civil budget.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the continued validity of NATO.

Mr. David Davis: NATO continues to play an essential role in reinforcing stability and security in Europe. Through the North Atlantic Co-operation Council, it is expanding co-operation in a wide range of issues with the countries of central and eastern Europe. This process has been augmented by the partnership for peace launched at the NATO summit last January, which is developing into an important feature of European security, linking NATO and its partners, and providing the basis for joint action with the alliance in dealing with common security problems.

The alliance also continues to adapt its own structures to meet the challenges of the changed security environment, and to allow it to contribute effectively to its new missions, including peacekeeping.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

Sir Terrace Higgins: To ask the Lord President of the Council, when he expects to place in the Library the revised memorandum of guidance for officials appearing before Select Committees.

Mr. Newton: Copies of the revised memorandum of guidance with a new, more accurate title of "Departmental Evidence and Response to Select Committees" are now being issued to Government Departments. I have today sent copies to the hon. Member and to Chairmen of Select Committees. I have also placed copies in the Library.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Block Grants

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the income that each university received under the block grant system and the amount received under the new dual support system.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Details of universities' recurrent income for spending on teaching and research and in support thereof for the years up to and including 1992–93, excluding for the former polytechnics and colleges, are published in the Universities' Statistical Record's "University Statistics" series, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Research Councils

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will produce figures of research overheads paid to universities by the research councils since the dual support funding system was put in place.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Payments made to universities by the research councils for research overheads since August 1992, when the councils became liable to meet these costs under new arrangements for the dual support system, are as follows:

Financial year	*SERC £ millions*	*AFRC £ millions*	*NERC £ millions*	*MRC £ millions*	*ESRC £ millions*
1991–93	16.98	2.84	1.42	5.54	4.17
1993–94	46.75	5.37	5.47	17.52	6.56

Civil Service White Paper

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether he will list the persons and organisations which have replied to the White Paper, "The Civil Service-Continuity and Change"; and if he will place the replies in the Library.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Those who sent responses on the White paper, "The Civil Service—Continuity and Change," and who have not requested that their comments remain confidential are listed. I am placing copies of their responses in the Library.

Those who sent comments in response to the White Paper, "The Civil Service–Continuity and Change"

	Organisation
Anonymous	Civil Servant
G. A. Holley	Department for Education
G.E. Malone	Civil Servant
R. Sellars	Civil Servant
Anonymous	Civil Servant
D. Faulkner	St. John's College, Oxford
P. Walton	Government Office for the North West
F. Smith	Civil Servant
P. W. Moran	Moran Webb
R. D. Cramond	Ex-Civil Servant
A. R. Baker	Civil Servant
I. Miller	Civil Servant
Miss S. Mason	Department of Transport
B. Sawbridge	Her Majesty's Treasury
P. Wood	Department of Transport
Dr. D. R. Langslow	English Nature
D. R. Fisher	Ministry of Defence
R. A. Allan	Department of Transport
B. Wadsworth	Department of Transport
D. Simpson	Public Record Office
D. J. Goddard	Forestry Commission
R. Gray	The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
B. Clayden	Association of Metropolitan Authorities
C. W. Dymont	Law Commission
Ms R. Doveton	The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Professor C. Hood	The University of Manchester
H. M. G. Stevens	Ex-Civil Servant
J. N. Ellis	Council of Civil Service Unions
Ms E. Symons Ms J Thurston	The Association of First Division Civil Servants and Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists
R. Hardy	Executive Interim Management
G. A. Johnson	Lancashire County Council
Dr. P. Barberis	The Manchester Metropolitan University
J. N. Caton	Chertsey and Walton Constituency, Conservative Political Centre
J. Sheldon	The National Union of Civil and Public Servants
C. Darracott	Charter 88
J. Stevens	Institute of Personnel and Development
Professor N. Lewis	The University of Sheffield
A. G. Thornton	FDA, Welsh Office Branch
H. Ouseley	Commission for Racial Equality
I. B. Beesley	Price Waterhouse
J. M. Wynn	Price Waterhouse
B. Reamsbottom	The Civil and Public Services Association
M. W. Sayers	Law Commission
M. Devereau	Government Information Service
D. Casey	The Sports Council

SCOTLAND

Hip Replacements

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were on waiting lists for hip replacement surgery in each year from 1983 to 1993 in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Reliable information on waiting lists relating to specific operations was not available centrally until last year. The information requested for 31 March 1994 and 30 June 1994 is shown in the table:

Date	*Number on waiting list*
31 March 1994	1,314
30 June 1994	1,323

Note:

The information relates to patients on NHS waiting list in Scotland.

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hip replacement operations have been carried out in each year from 1983 to 1993.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is shown in the table:

Year ended	*Total hip replacement operations*
31 December 1983	2,755
31 December 1984	2,877
31 December 1985	3,118
31 December 1986	3,236
31 December 1987	3,485
31 December 1988	3,798
31 December 1989	3,567
31 December 1990	3,718
31 December 1991	3,747
31 December 1992	3,850
31 March 1994[1]	3,916

[1] Provisional.

Note:

The information relates to operations carried out by the NHS in Scotland.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has completed his consideration of the application by Scottish Nuclear to construct a dry store for waste nuclear fuel at Torness power station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Following a public inquiry, I accepted the Reporter's recommendation that my decision on the application should be deferred until an appraisal of the implications of a multistore strategy compared with the potential benefits of a single store strategy had been carried out. This appraisal is being carried out in the context of the radioactive waste management review announced by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 19 May.

Electricity Charges

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was *(a)* the price charged in pence per kilowatt hour to standard tariff domestic consumers, *(b)* the percentage change from the previous year's average household electricity bills and *(c)* the average annual household electricity bill in respect of each electricity company for each year since 1990.

Mr. Stewart: On the assumption that an average household consumes 3,300 KWh of electricity each year, the information requested is as follows:

(a) Price of electricity to domestic consumers (p/KWh)[1] [2]

Company	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
ScottishPower	7.17	7.81	8.09	8.30
Scottish Hydro-Electric	7.18	7.82	8.27	8.37

(b) Percentage change from the previous year's average[2] *annual household electricity bills in current price terms*

Company	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
ScottishPower	+8.5	+8.9	+3.7	+2.6
Scottish Hydro-Electric	+8.8	+8.9	+5.8	+1.2

Percentage change from the previous year's average annual household electricity bills in real (1990) price terms[3].

Company	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
ScottishPower	+2.16	+2.11	–0.83	–0.83
Scottish Hydro-Electric	+2.16	+2.11	+1.65	–2.44

(c) Average annual household's electricity bill in current price terms

(£ per year)

Company	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
ScottishPower	237	258	267	274
Scottish Hydro-Electric	237	258	273	276

Average annual household's electricity bill in real (1990) price terms.

(£ per year)[3]

Company	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
ScottishPower	237	242	240	238
Scottish Hydro-Electric	237	242	246	240

Notes:

[1] These are current prices based on standard domestic tariffs; standing charges have been taken into account.

[2] No account has been taken of any rebates paid by electricity companies in recent years nor of discounts for direct debit payments.

[3] Real prices are the cash figures adjusted to 1990 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP (market prices) deflator.

A1

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to award the contract for dualling the A1 road between Meadowmill and Amisfield; what are the expected dates for the start of work and completion; and if he will make a further statement on his plans for dualling the A1 from Amisfield to Dunbar and for further improvements between Dunbar and the English border.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Tenders for the dualling of the A1 from the Bankton roundabout to east of Haddington are currently due to be submitted on 23 December. Subject to the receipt of a satisfactory tender, a contract will be awarded early next year to allow a work start in the early spring. The construction of the new road is expected to take up to two years. Draft proposals for the extension of the dualling to Dunbar have now been published. A number of comments and objections have been received and are currently being considered. South of Dunbar, improvement schemes shall be brought forward for construction as resources and other priorities allow. The statutory procedures for three schemes are now very near completion and they will be well placed for consideration next year.

Rough Sleepers

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take to ensure that no one has to sleep rough in Scotland; and whether he plans to make resources available in Scotland which are comparable to those set aside by the Department of the Environment for the rough sleepers initiative in central London.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities, which have the primary statutory responsibility for dealing with homelessness, should give top priority to helping roofless people. In 1991–94 we have made available around £29 million extra capital allocations earmarked for homelessness projects, many of which will help people, particularly young homeless people, who would otherwise have been roofless. We are also providing grants amounting to over £300,000 in 1994–95 for voluntary bodies who support homeless and roofless people.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce the 1995–96 grant-aided expenditure figures each Scottish local authority.

Mr. Lang: The grant-aid expenditure figure in respect of each local authority for 1995–96 is set out in the table. Each authority's allocation of the GAE total has been determined having regard to the client group methodology which is agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in the distribution committee of the working party on local government finance. The table excludes figures for urban programme GAE which is not allocated to individual authorities. The addition of this amount—£63.4 million—brings the GAE total to the previously announced sum of £5,318.2 million.

Regions and Islands	*GAE 1995–96 £000s*
Borders	97,770
Central	232,150
Dumfries and Galloway	138,129
Fife	296,358
Grampian	430,557
Highland	211,295
Lothian	611,991
Strathclyde	2,076,639
Tayside	348,940
Orkney	29,203
Shetland	30,256
Western Isles	44,574
Total	4,547,862
Districts	
Berwick	2,228
Ettrick and Lauderdale	3,980
Roxburgh	4,206
Tweeddale	1,809
Clackmannan	7,032
Falkirk	18,516
Stirling	12,194
Annandale and Eskdale	4,075
Nithsdale	6,671
Stewarty	2,875
Wigtown	3,571
Dunfermline	17,284
Kirkcaldy	21,343
North East Fife	10,329
Aberdeen	28,532
Banff and Buchan	11,981
Gordon	10,771
Kincardine and Deeside	7,314
Moray	11,788
Badenoch and Strathspey	1,625
Caithness	3,109
Inverness	7,675
Lochaber	2,542
Nairn	1,298
Ross and Cromarty	6,501
Skye and Lochalsh	1,716
Sutherland	1,944
East Lothian	11,802
Edinburgh	59,137
Midlothian	10,576
West Lothian	20,481
Argyll and Bute	10,297
Bearsden and Milngavie	5,248
Clydebank	5,170
Clydesdale	8,211
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	8,134
Cumnock and Doon Valley	5,771
Cunninghame	18,583
Dumbarton	10,019
East Kilbride	12,339
Eastwood	7,436
Glasgow	120,932
Hamilton	14,794
Inverclyde	11,408
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	10,558
Kyle and Carrick	15,626
Monklands	13,990
Motherwell	19,167
Renfrew	27,736
Strathkelvin	11,001
Angus	13,003
Dundee	24,287
Perth and Kinross	18,293
Total	706,908
All Scotland total	5,254,770

New Town Development Corporations

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has given to new town development corporations on the treatment of staff in the wind-up of the Scottish new towns and the transfer or engagement of such staff by the new authorities to be set up under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 November 1994]:* Since the White Paper, "The Scottish New Towns—The Way Ahead", CM 711, was published in July 1989, the Government have been consistent in their view that every effort should be made to retain the expertise of new town staff for the wider benefit of Scotland. In accordance with the guidance on winding-up the development corporations are pursuing staffing in discussion with organisations taking over their functions. With effect from 1 April 1995, some staff may transfer to East Kilbride and Kirkcaldy district councils; other may transfer before dissolution of the Corporations. The other new towns are consulting existing local authorities about staff transferring with the functions they currently perform. Guidance on the staffing of the new local authorities is currently being considered by the local government staff commission (Scotland).

Clyde Tunnellers

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department will carry out an inquiry into the failure to monitor regularly the health of tunnellers who worked on the Clyde tunnel between 1959 and 1964.

Mr. Oppenheim: I have been asked to reply.

The records available show that medical surveillance was carried out in accordance with the then new Work in Compressed Air Special Regulations 1958, and the doctors performing the work were experienced in medical surveillance of the workers involved in the operations.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Jack: The refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years are as follows:

	Work undertaken	*£*
1991–92		
London–Woburn Place	Redecorate and install new carpets, IT cabling and security measures	220,000
Tolworth—Government Offices	Convert canteen block into offices and a smaller, refurbished restaurant	1,310,000

	Work undertaken	*£*
1992–93		
Guildford—Government Offices	Modernise kitchens and restaurant, and replace aged building services in one block	520,000
Lowestoft—Fisheries Laboratory	Redecorate and refit the reception area, and replace windows in one block	120,000
Penrith—Agricola House	Modernise offices, including new fittings, redecoration and removal of asbestos	170,000
Trowbridge—Offices	Modernise offices including new windows, new fittings and redecoration	60,000
Weybridge—Central Veterinary Laboratory	Modernise some laboratories, offices, the reception area, canteen and kitchen	360,000
1993–94		
Bristol—Government Offices	Redecorate including new fittings	150,000
Guildford-Government Offices	Redecorate and install new windows and new fittings in one block	120,000
Worcester—Government Offices	Redecorate and install new fittings	260,000

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: It is impractical to separate the energy costs of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service agency from the energy costs of the MAFF main estate, as in many cases they share the same buildings. However, the total costs of energy used by *(a)* the MAFF main estate and the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service and *(b)* MAFF's other agencies over the last three years are as follows.

	(a) £	*(b)* £
1991–92	2,507,731	1,261,640
1992–93	2,541,730	1,493,300
1993–94	2,638,715	1,537,000

In the main, the increases are due to the introduction of information technology equipment, the modernisation of laboratories and other specialist buildings, and an increase in the work load of agencies and regional offices and a rise in tariffs over the period. The Ministry is stepping up measures to encourage staff to be more energy conscious, and is increasing investment in energy efficiency measures where these are cost effective.

Milk

Mr. Olner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the total quantity of milk produced by the United Kingdom dairy industry in each of the last four years for which information is available;

(2) what is the total quantity of milk consumed in the United Kingdom in each of the last four years for which information is available.

Mr. Jack: Details of milk production, and its utilisation in the years 1990 to 1993, are shown in the table.

Milk production and utilisation in the United Kingdom

	1990	*1991*	*1992*[1]	*(Million litres)* 1993
Production (output for human consumption)	14,548	14,016	14,011	14,095
Liquid consumption, comprising: Sales through Milk Marketing Board schemes for liquid consumption	6,780	6,745	6,722	6,778
Imports of liquid milk	36	51	143	97
Other sales[2]	355	403	488	553

[1] 366 days.

[2] Includes milk consumed in farm households, sales of liquid milk outside Milk Marketing Board schemes, exports, and milk used for farmhouse manufacture of butter, cheese and cream.

Slaughter Industry

Mr. Olner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what subsidies or other support are available from the European Union to support the development or modernisation of the United Kingdom slaughter industry.

Mr. Jack: Assistance for capital investments is available under the processing and marketing grant, which is an EU scheme with national back-up. In the slaughtering sector, this is limited by EU exclusions intended to avoid increasing overcapacity, but associated activities such as boning and cutting may be eligible for support.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mrs. Browning: A further report on BSE in Great Britain is available today. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

The report provides information about the effect of the ruminant ban on the course of the epidemic, the continuing decline in the incidence of the disease, the measures taken to control the disease, and to protect animal and human health, and the on-going research programme.

The number of cases of BSE being reported at present is 41 per cent. fewer than at the same time last year and for the first time there is a downturn in the incidence of BSE in five-year-old animals. Both changes are attributed to the ban of feeding ruminant protein to ruminant animals, which was introduced in 1988.

Salmon Advisory Committees

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of the reports and submissions produced by the Salmon advisory committee in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jack: The Salmon advisory committee examines and reports on those matters relating to the conservation and development of salmon fisheries in Great Britain which are referred to it by fisheries Ministers. Since it was established in 1986, it has issued six reports, all of which have been published. Of these the following were produced within the last three years:

> "Factors Affecting Emigrating Smolts and Returning Adults" - published 1993.
>
> "Run Timing of Salmon" - published 1994.

The secretariat for the committee is provided by officials from the Department's salmon, whaling and inland fisheries division, which also supplies the secretary. An assistant secretary is provided by the Scottish Office. The committee reports direct to fisheries Ministers.

Information on the number of meetings held during the last three financial years and on the Committee's budgeted and actual expenditure is given in the table below.

	1992–93 £	*1993–94* £	*1994–95* £
Committee meetings	4	3	[1]3
Sub-group meetings	5	19	[1]18
Budgeted expenditure [2]	33,000	34,000	29,000
Actual expenditure [2]	19,338	12,411	[3]20,000

[1] Number of meetings planned.

[2] Does not include secretariat costs which are met from MAFF and SOAFD running costs.

[3] Estimate.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Pergau Dam

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the selection process for contractors on the Pergau dam project; and which firms were selected.

Mr. Baldry: Tendering arrangements are the responsibility of the overseas government. In the case of the Pergau project, the client, Tenaga Nasional Berhad, with the agreement of the Malaysian Government undertook negotiations direct with the Balfour Beatty/Cementation International consortium.

Thomas Cook

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify the components of payments to Thomas Cook as travel agency consultant in 1992–93 mentioned in the document deposited in the Library referred to in his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *1182*.

Mr. Baldry: All payments made to Thomas Cook under the terms of this contract were reimbursements of travel expenditure incurred on behalf of ODA. ODA made no payments to Thomas Cook as travel agency consultant.

KPMG

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify the objectives of the contract awarded to KPMG by the Overseas Development Administration in 1992–93 to provide an offshore financial services consultancy referred to in the information placed in the Library to supplement his answer of 2 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *1182;* and if he will state the country of territories to which this assistance was given.

Mr. Baldry: These consultancy services were provided to the Government of St. Kitts and Nevis. The terms of reference, which include the contract objectives, have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Bilateral Aid (World Bank)

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been *(a)* the total external finance and *(b)* the proportion of total external finance from the World bank group for each country receiving official British bilateral aid for each of the past five years.

Mr. Baldry: Due to incomplete coverage in available statistical information, it may not be possible to provide a comprehensive breakdown in the format requested. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as our inquiries are complete.

Somalia

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on civilian conditions in Somalia.

Mr. Baldry: Conditions vary according to the security situation. Food is generally available throughout the country, but in areas where unrest continues social services are limited and food supplies may be interrupted.

WALES

Out-of-town Planning Applications

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many out-of-town planning applications have been referred to him in the first nine months of 1994; and what percentage of these have been rejected.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Between January and September 1994, 12 out-of-town centre retail applications came before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State as references under the Town and Country Planning (Shopping Development) (England and Wales) (No. 2) Direction 1993, or as departures from the development plan or as a result of call-in requests. It was decided not to intervene in 10 cases; two are still under consideration. In addition nine such proposals came forward on appeal of which one has been dismissed, two were withdrawn by the appellants and six have yet to be determined.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the ground that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Redwood: The information available on the Polis system, shows that 61 parliamentary questions were not answered on the ground that the information sought was not held centrally.

Dentists

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many full-time salaried dentists the Gwynedd family health service authority are authorised to employ; how many are in post; and how many he expects will be in post on 1 January 1995.

Mr. Richards: The Gwynedd family health services authority has permission to employ the full-time equivalent of four salaried dentists. Currently, one salaried dentist is employed for three days per week.

Recruitment of suitable personnel to fill the approved posts is the responsibility of the authority. The Welsh Office is funding the advertising costs of the recruitment campaign.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many NHS patients have been deregistered by dentists in the last year in each of the health districts in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: The information supplied by family health services authorities, shows that the numbers of patients deregistered by their dentists during the period 4 December 1993 to 2 December 1994 are as follows:

	Adults	*Children*	*Total*
Clwyd	6,737	49	6,786
Dyfed	2,754	2	2,756
Gwent	2,817	0	2,817
Gwynedd	2,597	0	2,597
Mid Glamorgan	567	0	567
Powys	0	0	0
South Glamorgan	1,820	25	1,845
West Glamorgan	44	0	44
Total	17,336	76	17,412

This information is supplied for management purposes only and is not statistically validated.

The latest statistics available from the Dental Practice Board indicate that the number of patients registered with a dentist in Wales at 30 September 1994 was only 0.75 per cent. less than that for 30 September 1993.

Air Pollution

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will enlarge the number of urban air quality monitoring stations in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government's air quality monitoring network in Wales covers all the main air pollutants: nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, particulates and ozone. An expansion of the urban monitoring network is being considered for the United Kingdom as a whole, and the needs of Wales will be carefully considered as part of this.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the role of the Environment Agency in improving local conditions concerning air pollution by large scale industrial establishments with special reference to chimney stacks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Large scale industrial establishments with the potential to cause air pollution generally require authorisation by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution under the integrated pollution control provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This function will be transferred to the new Environment Agency.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the locations of the urban air quality monitoring stations in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government fund the following types of air quality monitoring:

Enhanced urban air monitoring network

Two sites at Cardiff and one at Swansea

Smoke and sulphur dioxide network

Nine sites at Cardiff, Newport, Pontypool, Neyland, Port Talbot, Cwmgwrach, Glynneath, Welshpool and Wrexham.

Nitrogen dioxide survey

Twenty five Welsh local authorities are monitoring nitrogen dioxide at one hundred sites, some of which are rural, as part of a United Kingdom survey.

Lead in air monitoring

One site in Cardiff

In addition, many Welsh local authorities regularly undertake independent air quality monitoring in their areas funded from their own resources.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidance he gives to planning authorities in Wales concerning new developments which may affect air quality; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Planning policy guidance note 1, "General Policy and Principles", sets out the general principles that the planning system must take account of in order to protect the environment. Minerals planning guidance note 2, "Applications, Permissions and Conditions", contains advice on the control of dust, smoke and fumes when considering planning applications for mineral workings. In addition, processes with potential to cause air pollution are covered by the provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and detailed guidance has been issued to the regulatory authorities on the standards to be applied to protect air quality.

Traffic Pollution

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to eradicate pollution by traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government's approach was set out in "This Common Inheritance: The Third Year Report", Cm. published in May. A range of measures is being taken including tighter emission standards and changes to fuel composition which should lead to a progressive decline in traffic pollution. A crackdown on offending vehicles was announced in October, and further measures are under consideration.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current total of cases of BSE recorded in each county in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The cumulative total of confirmed BSE cases from November 1986 to week ending 2 December 1994 in each county in Wales is as follows:

County	*Total*
Clwyd	2,147
Gwynedd	591
Powys	1,915
Dyfed	6,930
South Glamorgan	384
West Glamorgan	100
Mid Glamorgan	215
Gwent	954

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many BSE cases were recorded in each of the last five years in each county in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of confirmed BSE cases in each of the last five years in each county in Wales is as follows:

County	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994 (to 712)*
Clwyd	181	381	571	607	320
Gwynedd	30	81	174	177	92
Powys	132	252	514	587	343
Dyfed	583	1,257	2,000	1,827	933
South Glamorgan	22	58	114	107	43
West Glamorgan	8	10	34	30	14
Mid Glamorgan	37	41	43	46	33
Gwent	90	154	265	246	111

Public Appointments

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are employed by *(a)* advisory bodies and *(b)* tribunals to whose boards he appointed in (i) 1979 and (ii) 1993.

Mr. Redwood: Information on the number of staff employed by advisory bodies and tribunals for 1979 is not available. The information for 1993 is as follows:

Advisory bodies	[1]*Employees*
Welsh Language Board[2]	6
Sea Fisheries Committees[3]	—
North Western and North Wales	10
South Wales[4]	13
Tribunals[5]	

Notes:

[1] Ten Welsh Office staff were seconded to the Local Government Boundary Commission (six secondees) and the Local Government Reorganisation Advisory Committee on Staffing Matters (four secondees).

[2] Became an executive body on 21 December 1993 following Royal Assent to the Welsh Language Act.

[3] Sea fisheries committees are funded by local authorities.

[4] Secretary of State for Wales appoints 17 of the 56 members of sea fisheries committees.

[5] Five Welsh Office staff were seconded to the rent assessment panel. The Secretary of State for Wales appoints 30 of the 51 members of rent assessment panels.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people have been prosecuted for non-payment of *(a)* poll tax and *(b)* council tax; what are the amounts of money uncollected; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information about the number of people prosecuted is not collected centrally. It is estimated that £36,700,000 community charge and £10,800,000 council tax due to 31 March 1994 in Wales was uncollected at 30 September 1994.

British Rail Land

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet the chair of Railtrack to discuss the mechanics to ensure the release of land owned by British Rail and required for important public sector infrastructure projects and to avoid unnecessary delays to such projects.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Decisions on releasing railway land are for the commercial judgment of the British Rail Property Board or Railtrack plc. I have no powers to intervene.

Schools (Finance)

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total figure for the financial balances held by all *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Richards: Details of the financial balances held by county schools are contained in outturn statements published by local education authorities under section 42 of he Education Reform Act 1988. I am, however, unable to provide this information at present as some authorities have yet to submit their 1993–94 statement to the Welsh Office. I will write to the hon. Gentleman when the information is available.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of sufferers from Alzheimer's disease, and the proportion of these residing without any family carer, for *(a)* each health authority and *(b)* Wales as a whole.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is not held centrally.

Respiratory Illness

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospital admissions there were for each month in 1991, 1992 and 1993 for *(a)* acute respiratory complaints and *(b)* bronchitis by local health authority and trust.

Mr. Richards: Information on admissions is not collected centrally. The available figures relate to the numbers of finished consultant episodes. In view of the volume of data requested, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females, together with the overall total, were in full-time employment in each travel-to-work area in Wales and for Wales as a whole in December in each of the last 10 years; and in each case and for each year what proportion this figure represents as a percentage of the total population.

Mr. Redwood: Information on the number of male and female employees in full-time employment by travel-to-work area is available only from the 1981, 1984, 1987, 1989 and 1991 censuses of employment. Information on the total population of travel-to-work areas is only available from the 1981 census of population and, on an approximate basis, from the 1991 census of population. Information on male and female full-time employment and the population of Wales is available for each of the last 10 years. All these data are available form the Nomis databases which can be accessed on-line by the staff of the Library of the House.

Credit Unions

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many credit unions were operating in each district council authority area in Wales and in Wales as a whole in 1980, 1990 and in each year since.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information for each district council area is not available; information for each county council area is as follows:

	1980	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Clwyd	—	—	—	1	3
Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—	—
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	—
Mid-Glamorgan	—	—	4	5	5
Powys	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	—	—	1	3	4
West Glamorgan	1	1	1	2	2
Wales	1	1	6	11	14

Council of Ministers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last attended a meeting of the European Council of Ministers in an official capacity as a United Kingdom Cabinet Minister.

Mr. Redwood: I have not attended a meeting of the Council of the European Union as a United Kingdom Cabinet Minister.

University of Wales Hospital NHS Trust

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority regarding the appointment of a chief executive designate for the University of Wales Hospital NHS Trust.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 15 December 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Six.

Immigration Appeals Authority

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the total cost in 1993–94 to the immigration appeals authority of hearing application for bail by persons detained under Immigration Act powers.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The costings for the immigration appellate authorities are based on the total work load; they make no distinction between different types of hearing. The information requested is not therefore available.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has from Camelot with regard to the printing of lottery tickets and other items in connection with the national lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: This is an operational matter for Camelot group plc. I have therefore asked Peter Davis, the Director General of the National Lottery, who is responsible for regulating the operation of the lottery, to write to the hon. Member, placing copies of his responses in the Library of the House.

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Mr. Dorrell: Between April 1992, when my Department was established and the end of the 1993–94 financial year, £519,000 was spent refurbishing a building on the government estate for use as part of my Department's headquarters. In the same period, the Historic Royal Palaces agency spent £432,203 on refurbishment of staff accommodation. The Royal Parks agency spent £1.47 million on refurbishment projects in the same period, which included conversion of an old police house into its headquarters offices, and various works on parks lodges and visitor centres throughout its parks in London.

Satellite Television

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, if he will make a statement about the BBC's plans to launch two commercial satellite television services in Europe.

Mr. Dorrell: I welcome the BBC's plans to launch these two services, in partnership with Pearson plc. These plans are fully in line with the proposal in our White Paper on the future of the BBC, that the BBC should exploit international commercial opportunities, in co-operation with private sector partners.

Following consultation with the Independent Television Commission, I have today laid before Parliament an order under section 13(2) of the Broadcasting Act 1990, providing that the services may legally be provided without a licence from the ITC.

I have also placed in the House Library copies of an approval under clause 3(u) of the BBC's royal charter, approving the setting up of the two companies involved in the provision of the services. The approval includes conditions requiring the BBC to operate the ventures on a clear arm's-length accounting basis from its public services, and on the basis that the services are for reception in mainland Europe, not in the United Kingdom. The approval also ensures that programmes on the two services will be subject to broadly the same regulatory regime as other commercial non-domestic satellite services, and will comply with the relevant ITC codes. The BBC is required to report on its compliance with the terms of the approval in its annual report which will be laid before both Houses.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Internet

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Lord President of the Council, if he will make a statement about the plans of his Department to make information available on the Internet and the documents which he intends to be made available on the Internet over the next year which will be accessible via the World Wide Web server "open. gov.uk" or any specific departmental server.

Mr. Tony Newton: The Privy Council Office has no plans to use the Internet.

ENVIRONMENT

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities in England whose area is represented in whole or in part by a Liberal Democrat hon. Member of Parliament that bid *(a)* successfully and *(b)* unsuccessfully for funds from the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Curry: The relevant local authority districts are:

Successful Single Regeneration Budget Bids
Rochdale
Southwark
Liverpool
Alnwick/Berwick upon Tweed/Castle Morpeth
Cheltenham
Carrick
North Devon

Unsuccessful Single Regeneration Budget Bids
Southwark
Liverpool
Alnwick/Berwick upon Tweed/Castle Morpeth
Cheltenham
Christchurch/East Dorset
Yeovil
North Devon
North Cornwall
Truro

Homelessness

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many organisations are currently receiving grants under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985; how many of these grants are due to *(a)* expire or *(b)* be reduced for March 1995; and what proposals he has to assist these organisations to secure replacement funding.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: One hundred and fifty six voluntary sector projects are receiving grant in 1994–95 under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 to assist single people in housing need. Organisations are aware that grant is normally given for up to three years on a tapering basis while they seek other sources of funding. For 1995–96, I will consider applications from the 106 projects which are part way through their cycle of funding and, on their individual merits, bids from the 50 schemes which are approaching the end of their funding.

In addition, as part of the rough sleepers initiative in central London, 28 organisations are currently funded under section 73 powers.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment when he intends to publish formally the material included in the supplement to the homelessness code of guidance for local authorities issued earlier this year; and what plans there are for further revisions of the code.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretaries of State, in conjunction with my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Health and for Wales, is publishing today a revised third edition of the homelessness code of guidance for local authorities. This new publication consolidates the body of the third edition of the code, issued in 1991, with an amendment about assessing people from outside the United Kingdom, and supplementary guidance on applications from asylum seekers. That amendment and supplement were issued jointly by my Department and the Welsh Office in typescript form in February of this year. No other changes have been made to the code, and we have no present plans to make further revisions.

Housing (Service Personnel)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities in England about the demand for housing from applicants leaving the armed forces.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Advice to local authorities on dealing with applications for housing from people leaving the armed forces is contained in circular 14/93 "Housing for People Leaving the Armed Forces" issued on 16 November 1993. Since then, my Department has received one letter from a local authority about housing for ex-service personnel.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* allocations of council housing and *(b)* nominations to housing association homes have been made in the course of each of the past five years by local authorities in England to applicants whose applications arose from them leaving the armed forces.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: This information is not collected centrally.

Community Care

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the future contribution by local authority housing in meeting the Government's community care objectives;

(2) what plans he has to allow local authority housing departments to be more involved with the provision of community care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Advice to local housing authorities on their role in community care is contained in my Department's circular 10/92 "Housing and Community Care", issued jointly with the Department of Health. The two Departments work closely together to ensure that housing is fully integrated into community care.

Local authorities should take account of the need for housing and its availability in preparing their local housing strategies and community care plans. I expect authorities' housing strategy statements to set out how they approach their responsibilities under community care and the way in which they co-operate with other agencies in the planning and delivery of services.

M25 Link Road

Mr. Keen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that the public inquiry into the M25 link road between junctions 12 and 15 should precede the public inquiry into Heathrow terminal 5.

Sir Paul Beresford: No, the timing of the Heathrow terminal 5—T5—inquiry is not dependent on the timing of the inquiry into the M25 link roads. I have already announced that the T5 inquiry will open in May 1995.

European Commission Grants

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total value of grants from the European Commission given for bricks and mortar projects in the last financial year.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Secretary of State for the Environment was responsible for administering the majority of European regional development fund programmes which operated in England between 1989 and 1993. My officials are liaising with colleagues in other Departments, who had similar responsibilities for other European Community programmes and grant regimes during this period, in order to provide my hon. Friend with a full answer. I shall write to him with this information as soon as possible.

In the meantime, I can provide figures for the programmes administered by this Department. I have interpreted "bricks and mortar" projects as those which included building and construction costs as part of their total eligible expenditure. Our records show that, from 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994, claims from the European regional development fund totalling £119,490,056.48 were paid for projects of this type. This figure includes claims for a number of projects approved under the structural funds regime which operated before 1989.

Disabled People

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to include disabled households in council tax band A in the disability reduction scheme; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assistance is available to a person who is substantially disabled and lives in a property included in band A of the council tax system and applies for a tax reduction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We have no plans to change the reduction for disabilities scheme. The scheme ensures that disabled people do not pay more council tax as a result of their special needs than would otherwise be the case. Households in band A are already paying the lowest possible level of tax. Disabled people on a low income may be entitled to council tax benefit.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the duration of the trips referred to in his answer of 28 October, *Official Report*, column *863*, which were undertaken by Ministers in his Department and on which they were accompanied by their spouses and paid for at public expense.

Mr. Gummer: Four days.

Rent-to-mortgage Scheme

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cost of publicity and administration of the rent-to-mortgage scheme.

Mr. Robert B Jones: Paid publicity by the Department on the rent-to-mortgage scheme cost £315,000. A further £99,000 was spent on printing and distributing leaflets. The Department has no estimate of the administrative costs of the scheme.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses have been received by his Department from residents of Hampshire since the Local Government Commission published its preferred options for reorganisation; and how many supported the proposed changes and how many rejected them.

Mr. Curry: As at 5 pm on 14 December, we had received 1,821 letters form members of the public, of which 178 support the Local Government Commission's final recommendations for Hampshire. In addition, Hampshire county council encouraged residents to forward pre-printed leaflets expressing their views. Some 10,202 leaflets have been returned, with 607 expressing support for the recommendations.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the changes in financial arrangements, both revenue and capital, for local authorities made since 1979 and their implications.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: As one would expect, over so long a period there have been many changes in financial arrangements, some of which are now of historical interest only. The present legislative regime is contained principally in the Local Government Finance Acts 1988 and 1992 as regards recurrent expenditure and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 as regards capital.

Correspondence

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many "Dear Accounting Officer" letters his Department has written to his non-departmental public bodies in each year since 1984.

Sir Paul Beresford: "Dear Accounting Officer" letters are issued by the Treasury. Since 1984, they have issued 174. Where appropriate my Department has drawn these to the attention of the non-departmental public bodies which it sponsors.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to make an announcement about the distribution of housing resources for 1995–96.

Mr. Curry: I am today announcing decisions about the distribution of resources for housing in 1995–96.

Councils will receive housing investment programme allocations totalling over £1.27 billion for 1995–96. Under the competitive HIP process, we have again been able to direct resources to those councils who are best able to make use of them.

Within the HIP programme £994 million is for general purpose allocations, or housing "annual capital guidelines". As last year these have been allocated 40 per cent on the basis of a statistical assessment of local housing needs and 60 per cent. on a discretionary basis related to performance.

As part of the assessment of their performance, each local authority is required to submit a housing strategy statement, setting out a comprehensive framework for the housing programmes for at least the next three years, covering not only the plans of the local authority but the contribution to be made by the private housing sector. The strategy is prepared in consultation with all those interested in the local housing scene, including the Housing Corporation, housing associations, tenant's groups and the private sector. Once again, there is a continuing improvement in the performance of the great majority of local authorities, with most of them now producing good quality housing strategies.

In addition to these annual capital guidelines, £278 million has been allocated for private sector renewal and housing defects in the form of "specified capital grant". Once again, 40 per cent. of these resources have been distributed on a statistical assessment of local needs, and 60 per cent. on a discretionary basis.

I am depositing tables in the Library of the House showing each authority's annual capital guideline and specified capital grant allocation for 1995–96. Together, these comprise the HIP allocations. In addition, £314 million for continuing estate action commitments is being provided with the single regeneration budget next year. In addition, I am depositing a list of the authorities whose performance is assessed as being well above the average for their region.

The Housing Corporation's approved development programme provides for gross capital expenditure of nearly £1.2 billion in 1995–96. Some £870 million of this is available for homes for rent and some £280 million will be available for sale and incentive schemes which make effective use of the stock to house families in serious housing need much more quickly than would otherwise be the case. In addition some £35 million is available for housing association schemes which are part of city challenge and the rough sleepers initiative.

The Housing Corporation estimates that this programme should allow housing associations to provide some 52,000 new lettings in 1995–96. Over the three years to 1997–98, lettings from the Housing Corporation's approved development programme of some 135,000, together with output of some 45,000 from other sources such as housing association schemes supported by local authorities and cash incentive schemes, should mean that an estimated 180,000 new lettings will be produced over this period.

One of the key aims of the 1995–96 approved development programme is to make the most efficient use of the existing housing stock. Resources for short-life housing—mini housing association grant—have been increased to their highest level ever; do it yourself shared ownership will continue to be targeted principally at local authority and housing association tenants while resources for the tenants' incentive scheme increase steadily over the three years to 1997–98. Both DIYSO and TIS are efficient and cost-effective means to enable people to move into home ownership and vacate dwellings for others in housing need. A further key aim of the 1995–96 ADP is to focus increasingly on regeneration, both urban and rural. Some 40 per cent. of the resources for new approvals will be for regeneration purposes and will include rehabilitation schemes, schemes in city challenge and renewal areas, and short-life housing schemes. The Housing Corporation has also been asked to direct some 6 per cent. of the main rental and conventional sale programmes towards rural housing schemes.

The tables I am depositing in the Library of the House also contain details of the Housing Corporation's approved development programme for 1995–96.

Almshouses

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to amend the home energy efficiency scheme to allow residents of almshouses to qualify as householders.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Some people who live in almshouses are at present ineligible for HEES grants because they cannot be tenants and, therefore, fall outside the definition of householder in the regulations. Following representations, I propose to amend the regulations to enable people in this position to qualify for HEES grants provided they meet the other eligibility requirements. I also propose to extend HEES eligibility to protected occupiers and statutory tenants under the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976, assured agricultural occupiers and cottars. The necessary statutory instrument to amend the regulations will be laid before the House as soon as possible.

Going for Green Committee

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, and the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Going for Green Committee, since its inception.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Going for Green Committee, which is an advisory body, has held three meetings since it was established on 1 August 1994. It has a running costs budget for 1994–95 of £150,000, of which some £53,000 has been spent to date, and its secretariat consists of two full-time civil servants on secondment from the Department. The committee is not required to produce reports but is required to plan a public campaign for 1995–96 on individual responsibilities towards the environment. It has commissioned research to help guide its work.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tenants of private landlords are receiving housing benefit in each local authority in England; and what percentage this represents in each case of the total number of tenants of private landlords in that area.

Mr. Roger Evans: I have been asked to reply.

The available housing benefit information has been placed in the Library. The percentages requested cannot be given as information on the number of tenants of private landlords in each local authority area is not available. However, the percentage of tenants of private landlords who receive housing benefit in England is 49 per cent.

Source:

Housing Benefit management information statistics May 1994 and housing and construction statistics June 1994.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowance

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the allowance per animal in real terms for the hill livestock compensatory allowance in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement as to his proposals for future levels of the allowance.

Mr. Ancram: The information is available in tables 5.2 and 5.3 of the statistical tables which formed the basis of the recently completed annual review of economic conditions in the hills and uplands. Full details of these statistical tables are available in the Library.

Future levels of the allowance will continue to be decided following the annual review which takes place each autumn.

Electricity Charges

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the price charged for electricity in pence per kilowatt hour to standard tariff domestic consumers for each year since 1990; what was the percentage change in average household electricity bills for each year since 1990; and what was the average annual household electricity bill for each year since 1990.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

	Standard domestic tariff [1](pence per kwh)	*Average household electricity bills £*	*Change in average household electricity bills Per cent.*
1990	6.84	305.76	—
1991	7.41	312.52	+2.21
1992	7.71	341.12	+9.15
1993	7.87	376.48	+10.37
1994	7.75	n/a	n/a

[1] Tariff effective from 1 April.

Company Directors

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated number of company directors in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Some 32,500.

Agricultural Wages Board

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the future of the Agricultural Wages Board for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The future of the Agricultural Wages Board for Northern Ireland is still under consideration.

Terrorism

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* republicans and *(b)* loyalists have been charged with terrorist offences in each of the last 12 months.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is as follows:

Month	*Loyalist*	*Republican*
December 1993	11	8
January 1994	19	8
February	19	24
March	30	17
April	21	4
May	31	7
June	29	27
July	11	12
August	15	15
September	15	1
October	14	4
November	8	6
Total	223	133

If the same individual is charged on more than one occasion, he/she will be added to the statistics each time.

Public Expenditure Survey

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to arrange for the annual public expenditure survey to be formally announced in the House and then subject to a subsequent debate in Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: My right hon. and learned Friend sets out the allocations to individual programmes within the Northern Ireland programme in a written answer. There are no plans at present to change this practice.

Mr. Dermott Nesbitt

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the respondents to the fair employment actions commenced by Mr. Dermott Nesbitt.

Mr. Ancram: The respondents in the first of two applications to the fair employment tribunal made by Mr. Dermot Nesbitt are the Queen's university of Belfast and Professor T.F. Barrett and in the second is the Queen's university of Belfast. This information is in the registers which are available for inspection by members of the public without charge at the Office of the Industrial Tribunals and the fair employment tribunal, Long Bridge house, 20-24 Waring street, Belfast BT1 2EB.

Single Programme Monitoring Committee

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the members of the Northern Ireland single programme monitoring committee, indicating the interests each represents.

Sir John Wheeler: In addition to Government and European Commission officials, the Northern Ireland single programme monitoring committee also includes outside members drawn from various key sectors. These are Mr. Sean Curran, industry sector, Professor Wallace Ewart, training sector; Mr. Desmond Mitchell, district councils; Mr. Norman Shaw, agriculture sector, and a member to be drawn from the voluntary sector.

Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress is being made in implementing the report of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights on legislative procedures for Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Government's response to the commission's report was published in July 1993. The Government continue to consider carefully all proposals for legislation for Northern Ireland so as to choose the most appropriate legislative route and allow sufficient time for consultation. It remains the Government's policy to promote the return of responsibility, including responsibility for legislation, to a locally accountable body which would command widespread support in the community and take account of the wider relationships.

Water

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to identify sensitive areas as required by the urban waste water treatment directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moss: I have today placed in the Library of the House a map of the two areas in Northern Ireland, namely Upper and Lower Lough Erne and Lough Neagh, which, on the advice of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, have been identified as sensitive areas on the basis of their eutrophic status. I have also placed in the Library a list of the sewage treatment works in these areas at which the installation of phospherous removal plants will be required by the end of 1998 in accordance with the directive. These decisions will make a significant contribution to safeguarding Northern Ireland's fresh waters.

The map and list will also be available for inspection at the headquarters offices of the environment service and water executive of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to identify high natural dispersion areas—less-sensitive ares—as required by the urban waste water treatment directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moss: I have today placed in the Library of the House a map showing three areas in Northern Ireland identified as high natural dispersion areas. The map shows the location of these areas, at Portrush, County Antrim; Bangor, County Down; and Kilkeel, County Down. On the basis of the information available, the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland considers that the provision of primary treatment for the named discharges into these areas will be sufficient and that no further environmental benefit will accrue from the provision of additional levels of treatment. I have accepted this advice.

Comprehensive studies will now be carried out at each location. The Department must be satisfied that the study demonstrates that the proposed discharge of primary treated effluent will not adversely affect the environment. The comprehensive studies will have to take into account the proximity of bathing waters identified under the EC bathing water directive.

These decisions will ensure that sewage will continue to receive proper treatment and the quality of Northern Ireland's coastal waters and estuaries will improve in accordance with the directive's timetable.

The map will also be available for inspection at the headquarters offices of the environment service and water executive of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland.

"Policing in the Community"

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what responses he has received to the consultation document "Policing in the Community"; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The consultation paper "Policing in the Community" was published on 29 March, and widely distributed. More than half the bodies which received copies responded. Ministers and officials held constructive meetings with representatives of some 30 organisations, including the representatives of members of constitutional political parties.

The process of consultation on policing issues was warmly welcomed. The consultation paper was necessarily cast in general terms, and some respondents called for more detail on major proposals. There was a clear agreement on the need for some reform and an evident wish for the continuation of a tripartite structure, with attention addressed to the respective roles and responsibilities of the Secretary of State, the Chief Constable and of the Police Authority. The operational independence of the Chief Constable was valued, and the integrity and efficiency of the RUC was widely recognised.

Respondents stressed the importance of responsive, effective, impartial and fair policing in the development of a peaceful and harmonious society. The need for a balanced and careful approach to this end in a changing society was widely recognised.

These responses and the widening of the debate since the cessation of violence by the IRA and the loyalist paramilitaries have reinforced the need for reform, approached in a careful and measured way. In particular, I consider it important to strengthen the statutory protection for the impartiality, integrity and freedom from partisan influence of the police, and to create stronger and more effective statutory accountability mechanisms. These will encourage dialogue between the police and the community, as well as give the Chief Constable greater freedom to manage and deploy efficiently the considerable resources devoted to policing.

Accordingly, work is in hand to develop ideas, with the benefit of continued consultation, for legislation which will meet these objectives, clarify and strengthen the respective roles of the Secretary of State, the Police Authority and the Chief Constable, and help to enhance the provision of an efficient, effective and responsive police service, enjoying the wholehearted support and partnership of the entire society it exists to serve. I look forward over the coming months to further valuable and wide-ranging dialogue.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females were in full-time employment in the latest month for which figures are available and for the same month in each of the last 10 years indicating, in each case and for each year, the proportion of this figure as a percentage of the total population.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

	Full-time employees Male	*Self employed*	*Total male population[3] full-time and self employed per cent.*
September 1984	245,600	51,700	39.1
September 1987	239,500	58,900	38.6
September 1989	244,300	59,900	39.1

	Full-time employees Male	*Self employed*	*Total male population[3] full-time and self employed per cent.*
September 1991	244,300	63,500	39.4
September 1993	238,300	62,400	37.8
September 1994	239,200	n/a	n/a

	Full-time employees[1] Females	*Self employed[2]*	*Total female population[3] full-time and self employed per cent.*
September 1984	147,300	9,100	19.8
September 1987	149,300	11,500	20.1
September 1989	154,000	12,200	20.6
September 1991	158,300	13,400	20.9
September 1993	157,400	12,100	20.3
September 1994	157,100	n/a	n/a

Notes to Tables:

[1] Prior to December 1992, a full-time/part-time breakdown of employees in employment is only available from the Northern Ireland census of employment which from 1979 was conducted only every two or three years.

[2] Self-employment figures are at June of each year and are not available on a full-time/part-time basis. Self-employment estimates for Northern Ireland in respect of June 1994 are not yet available.

[3] General register office mid-year population estimates are not yet available for 1994.

EMPLOYMENT

Legal Minimum Wage

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries have a legal minimum wage; and what has been the rate of job creation of each for the periods *(a)* 1970 to 1980, *(b)* 1989 to 1990 and *(c)* 1990 to the present day.

Mr. Oppenheim: The following table gives Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries which have some minimum laws at a national level, and their rate of employment growth and average unemployment for the periods concerned. It should be noted that some of the countries quoted have very low levels of minimum wages, well below national average wage levels; and in some cases the minimum levels vary between administrative areas and different industries.

	Type and coverage	*Rate of employment growth (percentage)*			*Average unemployment rate (percentage)*		
		1970-80	*1980–90*	*1990–93*	*1970–80*	*1980–90*	*1990–93*
Belgium	Legally binding central agreement; lower rates for 16–20 year-olds	2.1	1.8	N/A	4.5	10.9	9.4
France	SMW—single adult rate	4.8	3.4	–1.7	4.0	9.0	10.0
Greece	Statutory central agreement	7.1	10.9	N/A	2.4	6.7	7.4
Luxembourg	SMW	12.7	19.8	N/A	0.6	1.4	1.1
Netherlands	SMW; reduced rates for 15–22 year-olds	6.0	N/A	N/A	3.8	9.6	7.1
Portugal	SMW	N/A	17.3	–5.6	4.9	7.1	4.6
Spain	SMW—single adult rate	–7.4	7.3	–5.9	5.3	17.4	18.1
United States	SMW—single adult rate; state minimum wages; low levels	24.8	18.4	1.2	6.2	7.0	6.5
Canada	SMW—set provincially; low levels	34.6	17.4	–1.4	6.7	9.2	10.2
Australia	Federal/state minimum wages; low levels	15.3	25.4	–2.6	4.1	7.4	9.5
New Zealand	SMW	16.8	N/A	1.1	0.7	4.8	9.4
Japan	System of minimum rates; low levels	8.7	12.9	3.3	1.7	2.5	2.2

Notes:

SMW = statutory minimum wage; final column gives average unemployment rate for 1990 to 1993 except for Belgium and Netherlands 1990 to 1992—and Greece and Luxembourg—1990–1991.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the proportions of full-time adult manual workers, full-time adult non-manual workers and all full-time adult workers with earnings, including overtime, less than £208.53 per week in (i) Great Britain, (ii) west midlands region, (iii) West Midlands metropolitan County, (iv) Hereford and Worcester, (v) Shropshire, (vi) Staffordshire and (vii) Warwickshire for 1994; and if he will break down the figures into those for *(a)* male and *(b)* female workers;

(2) if he will publish a table giving proportions of full-time adult manual workers, full-time adult non-manual workers and all adult workers with earnings, excluding overtime, less than £208.53 per week in (i) Great Britain, (ii) west midlands region, (iii) West Midlands metropolitan county, (iv) Hereford and Worcester, (v) Shropshire, (vi) Staffordshire and (vii)

Warwickshire for 1994; and if he will break down the figures into those for *(a)* male and *(b)* female workers.

Mr. Oppenheim: Information available from the new earnings survey showing the proportions of employees with earnings below the amount requested at April 1994, is given in the following tables:

Full-time employees on adult rates—pay unaffected by absence: April 1994.

Proportion with gross weekly earnings including overtime below £208.53.

	Per cent.
Manual men	
West Midlands Region	27.0
West Midlands MC	23.8
Hereford and Worcester	34.4
Shropshire	31.0
Staffordshire	31.9
Warwickshire	20.6
Great Britain	26.0
Non-manual men	
West Midlands Region	12.8
West Midlands MC	11.4
Hereford and Worcester	12.8
Shropshire	15.5
Staffordshire	17.6
Warwickshire	10.8
Great Britain	11.5
All men	
West Midlands Region	20.0
West Midlands MC	17.5
Hereford and Worcester	24.2
Shropshire	24.1
Staffordshire	25.2
Warwickshire	15.4
Great Britain	18.0
Manual Women	
West Midlands Region	75.0
West Midlands MC	71.8
Hereford and Worcester	79.0
Shropshire	81.2
Staffordshire	76.2
Warwickshire	76.9
Great Britain	73.4
Non-manual women	
West Midlands Region	43.4
West Midlands MC	41.8
Hereford and Worcester	40.7
Shropshire	52.4
Staffordshire	46.7
Warwickshire	43.2
Great Britain	34.7
All women	
West Midlands Region	50.4
West Midlands MC	47.6
Hereford and Worcester	49.9
Shropshire	59.1
Staffordshire	54.5
Warwickshire	51.4
Great Britain	41.5
Manual adults	
West Midlands Region	36.0
West Midlands MC	32.1
Hereford and Worcester	43.3
Shropshire	40.1
Staffordshire	41.4
Warwickshire	32.8
Great Britain	34.7
Non-manual adults	
West Midlands Region	26.8
West Midlands MC	25.2
Hereford and Worcester	25.8
Shropshire	33.0
Staffordshire	31.2
Warwickshire	24.9
Great Britain	22.2
All adults	
West Midlands Region	30.6
West Midlands MC	27.9
Hereford and Worcester	33.3
Shropshire	36.2
Staffordshire	35.7
Warwickshire	28.0
Great Britain	26.5

Full-time employees on adult rates - pay unaffected by absence: April 1994.

Proportion with gross weekly earnings excluding overtime below £208.53.

	Per cent.
Manual men	
West Midlands Region	41.6
West Midlands MC	36.6
Hereford and Worcester	49.9
Shropshire	51.7
Staffordshire	48.5
Warwickshire	34.4
Great Britain	39.5
Non-manual men	
West Midlands Region	15.4
West Midlands MC	13.5
Hereford and Worcester	15.4
Shropshire	19.8
Staffordshire	20.7
Warwickshire	13.3
Great Britain	13.6
All men	
West Midlands Region	28.6
West Midlands MC	24.9
Hereford and Worcester	33.6
Shropshire	37.5
Staffordshire	35.6
Warwickshire	23.2
Great Britain	25.2
Manual women	
West Midlands Region	81.9
West Midlands MC	79.2
Hereford and Worcester	92.4
Shropshire	87.5
Staffordshire	80.7
Warwickshire	79.5
Great Britain	79.9
Non-manual women	
West Midlands Region	45.6
West Midlands MC	44.0
Hereford and Worcester	42.5
Shropshire	56.2
Staffordshire	48.3
Warwickshire	44.9
Great Britain	36.8

	Per cent.
All women	
West Midlands Region	53.6
West Midlands MC	50.9
Hereford and Worcester	54.5
Shropshire	63.5
Staffordshire	56.9
Warwickshire	53.3
Great Britain	44.4
Manual adults	
West Midlands Region	49.2
West Midlands MC	44.0
Hereford and Worcester	58.4
Shropshire	58.2
Staffordshire	55.4
Warwickshire	44.2
Great Britain	46.9
Non-manual adults	
West Midlands Region	29.2
West Midlands MC	27.4
Hereford and Worcester	28.1
Shropshire	37.1
Staffordshire	33.6
Warwickshire	27.0
Great Britain	24.2
All adults	
West Midlands Region	37.3
West Midlands MC	33.8
Hereford and Worcester	41.0
Shropshire	46.5
Staffordshire	43.2
Warwickshire	33.7
Great Britain	32.1

Source:
New Earnings Survey

Civil Servants

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many civil servants have been transferred to training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies on a three-year secondment; how many were at grade *(a)* senior information officer, *(b)* higher information officer, *(c)* higher executive officer and *(d)* senior executive officer; how many in each grade returned to the civil service upon completion of their secondment; how many of those in each grade have since left the civil service on early retirement, voluntary redundancy or similar schemes; and how many of those remaining in the civil service by grade are below the age of 58 years.

Miss Widdecombe: Approximately 4,000 staff volunteered to second to training and enterprise councils and local companies on three-year secondments, including some 21 SIOs, 144 HIOs, 855 HEOs and 178 SEOs. About 10 SIOs, 77 HIOs, 526 HEOs and 128 SEOs returned to the Department. Some five SIOs, 43 HIOs, 71 HEOs and 12 SEOs left on early retirement schemes. Most of those remaining are below 58 years of age.

Pesticide Monitoring

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people within the Health and Safety Executive are employed in connection with its pesticide monitoring function; and at what locations.

Mr. Oppenheim: No Health and Safety Executive staff are employed specifically to monitor pesticides. HSE inspectors based in a national network of 20 area offices undertake a programme of preventative inspection, including premises where pesticides are used, and investigate reported incidents. Trends are monitored and summaries of investigated incidents are published annually.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what flexibility he allows in the 21-hour per week rule for those engaging in education or training while claiming benefit.

Mr. Roger Evans: I have been asked to reply.

The 21-hour rule is itself a special concession to the normal availability for work conditions, which enables income support claimants who are unemployed to spend their time usefully in part-time study whilst continuing their search for work. They must continue, however, to make a sustained effort each week to find a job and be prepared to leave the course immediately a suitable vacancy becomes available.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Foreign Prisoners

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female foreign inmates were held in prisons in England and Wales on 8 December.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 15 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female foreign inmates were held in prisons in England and Wales on 8 December.

The latest available provisional information is for 30 September 1994. On that date there were 3,850 non-British citizens (3,535 males and 315 females) in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. This includes 620 male and 30 female nationals from the Irish Republic. A further 440 persons had no nationality recorded.

Immigrant Detainees

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were being held in either prisons or immigration detention centres in England and Wales on 8 December.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: On 9 December 1994, there were 48,512 males and 1,927 females held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. A further 110 males were held in police cells. Information on immigration offenders relates to those detained on 12 December and shows that there were 382 males and 49 females detained in immigration service accommodation. A further 32 males and four females were held in police cells for immigration offences on that date.

Pepper

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what research he has *(a)* undertaken and *(b)* commissioned into pepper foam and pepper spray;

(2) what assessment he has made of the dangers of the public use of pepper foam and pepper spray.

Mr. Maclean: The Home Office police scientific development branch has reviewed all the available information about the effects of incapacitant products containing oleoresin capsicum. My right hon. and learned Friend has commissioned research into the possible carcinogenic effects of oleoresin capsicum's main incapacitating ingredient, capsaicin. He expects to receive the final results of the research very shortly.

Immigration Officers (Airports)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those United Kingdom airports receiving schedules flights from abroad open to the public for normal ticket purchase which are not covered by immigration service staff on arrival in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The airports are as listed in my reply to a question from the hon. Member on 29 November 1994, column *553*.

Sexual Offences

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce legislation to enable the prosecution in United Kingdom courts of British nationals and residents for sexual offences against children abroad.

Mr. Maclean: The Government consider that it should be the responsibility of the country where the alleged offence has occurred to enforce its own law.

Unlike some countries which claim a wide extra-territorial criminal jurisdiction over their citizens, the United Kingdom is willing to extradite its nationals to stand trial in the places where they are alleged to have offended, subject to the usual safeguards. We are also willing to provide legal assistance to other countries under the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990. We are currently considering ways in which it may be possible to improve liaison between our police and foreign enforcement agencies.

Criminal Damage and Violence

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance is given to police authorities on whether incidents of criminal damage or violence should be recorded as crimes.

Mr. Maclean: When recording offences, police consult Home Office rules for classification and counting of crimes which are standard for all the police forces in England and Wales. The classification of crimes is determined by precise statutory definitions. It includes all offences of criminal damage, as well as offences of violence against the person, sexual offences and robbery, as defined in Appendix 3 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1993", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Domestic Violence

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the co-ordinated Government strategy aimed at reducing the incidence of domestic violence; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Coventry, South East (Mr. Cunningham) on 1 December, *Official Report*, column *841*.

Working groups have been set up at both official and ministerial level to enhance inter-departmental co-operation in tackling all facets of domestic violence.

Immigration Policy

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his oral answer of 24 November, *Official Report*, column *716*, when the Government will allow qualified majority voting provided for in article K, otherwise than in subsection (9) on matters that affect immigration policy.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: There is no provision for qualified majority voting in article K, except under article K3.2(b) in relation to measures implementing joint action. No joint action requiring implementing measures has been adopted on matters of immigration policy. When such joint action is proposed, we shall consider on their merits both the substance of the proposal and whether it would be appropriate to adopt the implementing measures by a qualified majority.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Howard: Twenty-two.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost in 1993–94 to the Prison Service of holding persons detained under Immigration Act powers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Robert Ainsworth, dated 15 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the total cost in 1993–94 to the Prison Service of holding persons detained under Immigration Act powers.

Most detainees are held in local prisons and remand centres, in which the average annual cost per place in 1993–94 was £21,373. We do not collect details of the costs for different types of prisoners.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons detained under Immigration Act powers were held in Prison Service established in 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison

Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Robert Ainsworth, dated 15 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent question asking how many persons detained under Immigration Act powers were held in Prison Service establishments in 1993.

Provisional information shows that in 1993 1,840 persons were received into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales under Immigration Act powers.

On average 430 such persons were held in Prison Service establishments during the year.

Erlestoke Prison

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what occasions he has intervened with the governor of Erlestoke prison to suspend day release arrangements in the case of prisoners.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewes to Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours, dated 15 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about temporary release arrangements for prisoners from Erlestoke Prison.

The Home Secretary has not intervened with the governor of Erlestoke prison to suspend day release arrangements in the case of any prisoners.

Telephone Tapping

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to facilitate the use of the British Telecom caller identification initiative to preventing telephone tapping and to use similar technology at telephone exchanges to detect third party connections.

Mr. Howard: None. I understand that the BT caller display facility could not support such applications.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to review the Official Secrets Acts to ensure that an individual disclosing possible unethical or illegal actions, including telephone wire tapping, would be allowed a public interest defence.

Mr. Howard: We have no such plans.

Police Resources (Wales)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide details of the calculation used by his Department in determining appropriate provision for the Dyfed-Powys police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The calculation used by the Home Office determined allocations of police grant for 1995–96. Details of that calculation are provided in the draft "Police Grant Report (England and Wales 1995–96", a copy of which was placed in the Library by my right hon. and learned Friend on 1 December.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that Welsh police forces are able to maintain funding levels comparable with those of similar English forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 1 December, *Official Report*, columns *544–45*, his provisional police grant allocations to police authorities in England and Wales for 1995–96. The provisional standard spending assessment allocations to Welsh police authorities are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the cost of pension provision to the budget of the Dyfed-Powys police for each year from 1987 to date; if he will give an estimate of the commensurate figures for 1995–96 and 1996–97; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Net pension payments by the Dyfed-Powys police authority, as derived from the annual police revenue grant claim forms submitted by the authority, for the period 1987–88 to 1993–94 were as follows.

Year	*£*
1987–88	3,008,079
1988–89	2,693,674
1989–90	3,528,776
1990–91	3,509,717
1991–92	4,222,518
1992–93	4,025,892
1993–94	5,253,417

Figures for 1994–95 are not yet available. It will be for Dyfed-Powys police authority, in setting their budget requirements for 1995–96 and 1996–97, to decide the appropriate provision to be set aside to meet pension costs.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the officer establishment for the Dyfed-Powys police; how many officers are in post; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The approved establishment for Dyfed-Powys police is 972 officers. At the end of September, the actual strength was 971. As from 1 April next year, formal approval of establishments will end, and complement levels will be entirely for local decision.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the cost of the DNA provisions of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to the Dyfed-Powys police in a full accounting year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The new power we have given the police to take non-intimate samples without consent from anyone charged or reported for caution for a recordable offence is permissive. The police are not required to take samples in every case. Costs will therefore depend upon what use Dyfed-Powys police make of this new power. That will be a decision for the chief constable, who must decide on the most effective use of the resources available to him.

Samuel Clayton Hill

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will refer the case of Samuel Clayton Hill for review by the Court of Appeal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: My right hon. and learned Friend expects to take a decision about this case shortly.

"Maltese Double Cross"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice has been sought by the Dumfries and Galloway police from the Metropolitan police in relation to the film "Maltese Double Cross".

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the Metropolitan police have provided assistance to and maintained regular contact with the Dumfries and Galloway constabulary throughout the investigation into the Lockerbie bombing.

Policing, Humberside

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has decided the future policing arrangements for Humberside.

Mr. Howard: I announced on 25 October, *Official Report*, columns *512–13*, that I would consult the forces, police authorities and local authorities in the area on the future policing arrangements for Humberside and also ask Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary to report on the viability of a police force based on the boundaries of the four unitary authorities which will replace the county of Humberside.

The majority of those who responded favoured the retention of a separate Humberside police force. Her Majesty's chief inspector of constabulary considers that a force based on the boundaries of the four unitary authorities would be viable and efficient.

I have therefore decided that the Humberside force will be retained on those revised boundaries, with the area around Goole in the present district of Boothferry transferring to North Yorkshire.

The necessary provisions to give effect to this decision will be included in the order for the reorganisation of local government in the area.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information has been recently provided to him by Nuclear Electric regarding operational risks at the Dungeness B and Heysham nuclear plants.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Nuclear Electric plc has recently informed my Department and the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate of the discovery of cracks in steam pipe welds during the statutory outage of reactor 21 of Dungeness B. The station will be brought back into operation only after a satisfactory safety case has been made by the operator to the NII.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with British Nuclear Fuels plc since April on the legal requirements relating to the level of insurance against nuclear accidents.

Mr. Charles Wardle: DTI officials are in regular contact with British Nuclear Fuel plc on a range of matters.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to end the 30 years restriction on claiming of compensation under the existing nuclear insurance arrangements by anyone developing adverse medical problems attributable to contamination from a nuclear accident.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. The 32-year time limit for claims in the United Kingdom legislation is longer than is required by international conventions.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements exist under the nuclear insurance provisions to provide for compensation to pay for environmental restoration in the event of a nuclear accident involving the significant release of radioactivity; and what plans he has to extend them.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Under United Kingdom law, the cost of environment restoration would be recoverable, where there is damage to property, in accordance with normal civil law principles as to the assessment of damages.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to reassess the level of insurance arrangements covering third party liability for compensation in the event of an accident at a nuclear facility.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The level of insurance for third party liability required to be held by nuclear operators is kept under review. The limit was most recently increased on 1 April this year to meet the internationally agreed target limit for parties to the Paris convention.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has held since April with the insurance industry as to the adequacy of the present upper limits of insurance cover in connection with liability for nuclear accidents.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The limits are kept under review. DTI officials have contact with the insurance industry from time to time.

Public Telephones (Unauthorised Displays)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 8 December, *Official Report*, columns *295-96*, what is his policy on the continued allowing of unauthorised displays at public telephones, what representations he has received from telephone companies in regard to their inability to disconnect lines advertised in unauthorised displays at public telephones; and what legislation other than telecommunication legislation could be amended to allow the disconnection of lines advertised in unauthorised displays at public telephones.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I share my hon. Friend's concern at the nature of some of the displays of unauthorised material to be found in public telephone boxes. Although I have not received any formal representations from telephone companies on this matter, my Department has discussed it with other interested Departments and Oftel. However, I am not convinced that disconnecting the lines displayed in unauthorised advertisements is an appropriate remedy.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many days since it was started the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield has operated at full capacity; and what quantities of *(a)* plutonium, *(b)* depleted uranium and *(c)* each category of radioactive waste arising have been separated in the THORP to date.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Operations at the THORP plant are a management matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc. The Commissioning programme for the plant is being implemented subject to the appropriate regulatory requirements.

Correspondence

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many "Dear Accounting Officer" letters his Department has issued to his non-departmental public bodies in each year since 1984.

Mr. Heseltine: "Dear Accounting Officer" letters are issued by the Treasury. Where appropriate, my Department draws the contents of "Dear Accounting Officer" letters to the attention of the non-departmental public bodies which we sponsor. We do not keep records of the precise numbers which are brought to the attention of individual non-departmental public bodies.

Libya

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the loss to British engineering firms of exports to Libya as a result of UN sanctions.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The British Government neither promote nor discourage trade with Libya. We are unable to assess any actual loss of trade to British engineering firms. I can tell the hon. Member however, the legitimate exports of general industrial machinery and equipment constitutes the bulk of our exports to Libya. Figures for United Kingdom trade with Libya over the past five years are given in the table.

UK Trade with Libya—1989–93
(£ Thousands)

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Imports	104,545	151,605	121,219	162,899	156,542
Exports	239,191	244,849	255,718	228,273	274,051

Source:
UK Overseas Trade—business monitor MA20.

Theatre Tickets

Mr. Trend: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he proposes to take to prevent consumers from being misled when they buy tickets for the theatre and other forms of entertainment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Following public consultation, my noble Friend Earl Ferrers has today made the Price Indications (Resale of Tickets) Regulations 1994. Under the regulations, those who resell tickets will have to disclose specified information about a ticket before making a sale. This will include any original price printed on the ticket and known information about the rights which it confers, such as the location and quality of the seat or space. The regulations will come into force on 20 February 1995.

A compliance cost assessment, which was prepared by my Department, concluded that this significant improvement in consumer protection will impose little, if any, additional costs on traders. Copies of the compliance cost assessment have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Trade Fairs

Mr. Trend: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will announce the results of the evaluation of his Department's trade fairs support scheme.

Mr. Needham: The evaluation of the trade fairs support scheme was undertaken for the DTI by KPMG Management Consulting. They surveyed a cross-section of exhibitors from 15 sectors of industry representing two thirds of all supported firms, trade associations, chamber of commerce, exhibition organisers and other interested parties. KPMG's report to the Department and the Department's response are being published today. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

The TFSS is designed to encourage UK exporters to move into new markets. Last year, the Department spent £14 million on the scheme in support of some 6,500 to 7,000 firms at around 300 events. The scheme is based on grants which are delivered to exhibitors through "sponsors" such as trade associations or chambers of commerce. Eligible applicants receive 50 per cent. grants towards the main costs of exhibiting. Outside western Europe, a travel grant is also paid for up to two people to man the stand.

I welcome the evaluator's report, which shows that there is a clear justification for retaining the scheme.

The Department agrees with KPMG's conclusion that the rule under which companies are only eligible for support for three trade fairs in any market, the so-called "three times rule", should be retained. The survey provided strong evidence that the three times rule increases value for money by removing from eligibility regular exhibitors at a single event, ensuring that for a given budget more firms benefit from the TFSS support.

In response to suggestions that some companies might find support more helpful in this form, the Department will however be prepared to offer firms who opt for it a variant on the three times rule, under which support is offered at half the normal rates, over twice as many events.

The report recommends that international events, currently known as "flagship" events, should no longer attract support for more than three participation as they do at present, but should cease to be subject to individual country quota. The Department accepts this recommendation in principle and will consult sponsors on which events will constitute a new "international" category.

The present scheme restricted government assistance for overseas trade fairs by requiring that a minimum number of participating firms be eligible for support. The report recommends that minimum numbers for these events should not be based solely on those eligible for grant. The Department accepts that the benefits of attendance depend on the numbers in the group, not on whether they are all supported.

The Department has not accepted KPMG's recommendation that priority be given to emerging markets with above average exports prospects, or which have significant entry barriers, by allowing five, not three, supported participation. The Department, however, accepts the need to improve the scheme's coverage of such markets. We consider the annual priorities exercise, which selects the trade fairs which are to be supported, a more appropriate way of improving the scheme's coverage of emerging markets. In addition, the Department will increase assistance to sponsors in the selection and promotion of fairs by providing greater information on new markets and fairs with above average exports prospects.

The Department does not accept, as a general rule, the recommendation that individual company participation be grant-aided where there is no group participation arranged. However, the Department will consider claims for treatment as a special case from unrepresented or self sponsored small industries.

KPMG's research indicated that the sponsor system was in principle the most appropriate way of delivering trade fairs support. Their report however suggested ways of improving sponsor performance. The Department has proposed revised criteria for sponsorship and will step up its monitoring of sponsor performance and produce a code of practice for sponsors. The Department is not in general in favour of introducing competition between sponsors, but sees advantages in opportunities for greater co-operation between sponsors and the private sector.

The changes I have announced will take effect from the 1996–97 programme. All in all this was a positive evaluation of the Government's support for overseas trade fairs.

Compliance Cost Assessments

Mr. Trend: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the compliance cost assessments published during the past year.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Since April 1993, the Government have required Departments to prepare and publish compliance cost assessments with all proposed legislation presented to Parliament to assess their impact on business costs. This includes a special test of the impact on small businesses. CCAs are central to the Government's deregulation initiative and are a vital part of the decision making process. They are used to help Parliamentary consideration of regulatory proposals and to give business the opportunity to respond to proposals.

A Command Paper listing those CCAs published between November 1993 to June 1994 has been presented to Parliament today by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. Copies of the CCAs listed are available in the House Library. Further Command Papers listing CCAs published in the preceding six-month period will be published at six-monthly intervals.

Accreditation Services

Mr. Trend: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the outcome of his review of the status of the national measurement accreditation service and the National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My Department published a consultation document in April on the future provision of accreditation services in the United Kingdom. In the light of the response to this consultation, which favoured a merger of NACCB and NAMAS, the Government propose that a new company limited by guarantee be established during 1995 to take on the current functions and staff of NACCB and NAMAS. This will involve the transfer of around 60 posts out of DTI.

The company will carry out, under a memorandum of understanding with DTI which will recognise its national status, the assessments currently carried out by the two organisations covering laboratories, test houses and certification bodies. It will also cover environmental verifiers and inspection bodies and, as appropriate in future, others in related fields. The new body will make recommendations to the DTI which will grant accreditation. As a consequence accredited organisations will continue to be entitled to use marks incorporating the royal crown.

I expect a single, integrated private sector organisation to achieve efficiency savings leading to lower costs for industry. The organisation will also be in a strong position to promote United Kingdom interests in the rapidly developing international markets for certification and testing services in both the voluntary and regulatory spheres. With this in mind, the Government have decided that the body should be open to applications from non-United Kingdom organisations seeking accreditation.

British Telecom

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what plans he has to introduce regulations requiring British Telecom to meet minimum technical quality standards for voice, fax and data transmission in remote or rural areas;

(2) what plans he has to introduce regulations requiring British Telecom to meet minimum technical quality standards for voice, fax and data transmission.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I do not believe that it would be justified at present to introduce regulations on minimum technical quality, either generally or specifically in relation to remote or rural areas. BT's investment programme in digital exchanges is already raising transmission standards, and increasing competition in the telecommunications market means consumers are offered a wider range of service levels and tariff packages.

SCOTLAND

Clyde Tunnellers

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he will take to ensure that former tunnellers who worked on the Clyde tunnel between 1959 and 1964, and who subsequently contracted bone necrosis as a result of this work, will be able to pursue compensation claims.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend need take no action in this matter. Current legislation allows claims to be raised within three years of the date on which the injuries were sustained. This period can be extended where the claimant did not realise at the time how serious the injuries were or where he was unaware that the injuries were attributable to an act or omission of his employer. Furthermore, where the pursuer is not entitled to such an extension, the court has discretion to admit a claim if it seems equitable to do so.

Fatal Road Accidents

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve the provision of information to the victims' relatives concerning the investigation of fatal road accidents in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Procurators fiscal are authorised to provide the next of kin with information about the circumstances of the death. Where a fatal accident inquiry is to be held, procurators fiscal will discuss the evidence with solicitors for interested parties and will provide them with copies of autopsy reports and, if appropriate, with statements of witnesses. A working party is reviewing the guidelines on the provision of information to the next of kin.

Hospices

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of hospice expenditure is publicly funded.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the hospice funding initiative, which began on 1 April 1990 and ends on 31 March 1995, 13 hospices in Scotland which meet the eligibility criteria receive 50 per cent. of their current running costs from public funds, by grant and/or in kind. From the start of the 1995–96 financial year, the initiative will be replaced by a system of contracts between hospices and health boards.

Forestry

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 24 November, *Official Report,* column *337,* if he will place in the Library a list of the co-ordinates of the exact boundaries of each tract of land disposed of by the Forestry Commission in 1993, as noted on the title deed map for each sale.

Sir Hector Monro: The Forestry Commission does not hold this information centrally and it could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Regional Development Funding

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those public projects which received European regional development funding and were subsequently privatised over the last 10 years, indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 24 November 1994]:* As the information the hon. Member requires is rather lengthy, I shall arrange for copies of the lists to be placed in the Library of the House.

Rent Acts Convictions

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since the creation of the offence *(a)* the number of prosecutions for unlawful eviction and harassment of occupiers and *(b)* the number of convictions sustained under (i) section 30 of the Rent Act 1965 and (ii) section 22 of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* The available information is set out in the table.

Number of Persons proceeded against and charges proved where the main charge is section 22 of the rent (Scotland) Act 1984, 1989–92

	Persons proceeded against	*Persons with charge proved*
1989	9	7
1990	11	9
1991	6	3
1992	8	6

Health Care International

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost to public funds of making the site in Clydebank ready for use by the Health Care International hospital.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* The Scottish Development Agency—Scottish Enterprise incurred expenditure of around £10 million under its land renewal powers on the site now occupied by the company at Clydebank. This work was required to deal with the effects of industrial dereliction, including particularly the presence of asbestos. The expenditure was not specific to the HCI project and would have been required in any case to render the site safe and capable of development for any future use.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will tell the Scottish Affairs Committee how much regional selective assistance was made available to Health Care International in Clydebank and the terms under which it was made available.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* Yes. The company received an offer of £22 million in regional selective assistance. The grant was to be paid in instalments related to capital expenditure on construction of the hospital and—in respect of later instalments—in respect of numbers of direct jobs created.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether he will make available to the Scottish Affairs Committee the detailed information on which he made his decision to give public support to Health Care International in 1987;

(2) what considerations led to his decision to classify 1987 information about the market for the treatment of overseas patients in Clydebank as being currently commercially confidential, as indicated in his answer of 3 November, *Official Report,* column *1315,* and his subsequent letter.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* The documents relating to the appraisal of the company's application for regional selective assistance and the detailed market evaluation studies undertaken in connection with the project contain commercially confidential information which, if disclosed, could harm the competitive position of Health Care International (Scotland) Ltd. or of any other organisation which takes over the operation of the Clydebank facility.

Local Authority Officials (Early Retirement)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has from local authorities about the number of applications for early retirement for senior local authority officials for any convenient period in 1994.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* This information is not held centrally.

Air Ambulances

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how much has been spent on a communications system in the Scottish ambulance service control room in Aberdeen; what contact can be made with air ambulances once they are airborne with the communications system; and if he will make a statement about the expenditure.

(2) what assessment he has made of the reason that the new emergency communications computer in the Scottish ambulance service control room in Aberdeen is not compatible with the radios on air ambulances in the north of Scotland; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what plans he has to upgrade the emergency communications computer in the Scottish ambulances service control room in Aberdeen to enable adequate communication with the air ambulances in the north of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* The general manager of the Scottish ambulance service has advised that £8 million has been spent on providing a new radio system for the Scottish ambulance service in the north of Scotland, this includes the ambulance controls in Aberdeen and Inverness.

The new system, which has recently become fully operational, is meeting fully its designed performance in providing for effective communication between road ambulance and ambulance control. Communication with aircraft was not part of its specification, nor is it suitable for his purpose.

Air ambulances are tasked and controlled from a dedicated air desk at Aberdeen ambulance control. These aircraft are fitted with radios that enable them to talk to air traffic control and to their company base location. However, communication with any aircraft flying at low level in hilly or mountainous terrain poses particular problems. The Scottish ambulance service has successfully introduced the practice of using a message pager to pass urgent messages to an air ambulance when flying in such areas. Means of achieving fully two-way radio communication for helicopters supporting the emergency service throughout the United Kingdom are being investigated.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what restrictions have been placed on air ambulance operations in the north of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* The general manager of the Scottish ambulance service has advised that no restrictions have been placed on the use of the air ambulance service in the north of Scotland or elsewhere in Scotland. Air ambulances are deployed where the circumstances make it appropriate to do so. The decision is taken by the air ambulance control desk based on the medical advice at the time.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost his Department.

Mr. Goodlad: None.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the duration of the trips referred to in his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, column *1205*, which were undertaken by Ministers in his Department and on which they were accompanied by their spouses and paid for at public expense.

Mr. Baldry: The list gives details of the duration of the trips referred to in my answer of 2 November.

Date	*Place*	*Minister*
15–21 November 1993	Pakistan	Mr. Lennox-Boyd
3–7 January 1994	Lebanon, Israel, OTs, Jordan, Malta	Secretary of State
3–8 January 1994	Kenya, Tanzania	Lady Chalker
24–28 February 1994	Portugal, Spain, Greece	Secretary of State
4–11 April 1994	Brazil, Falklands	Secretary of State
18–19 April 1994	Luxembourg, Paris	Secretary of State
8–10 July 1994	Naples, Economic Summit	Secretary of State
27 July 1994 to 19 August 1994	Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, India	Mr. Goodlad
2–5 September 1994	Ecuador	Mr. Heathcoat-Amory
11–20 September 1994	Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Japan	Secretary of State
26–29 September 1994	New York/Canada UNGA 48	Secretary of State
2–10 October 1994	Dependent Territories, Canada	Mr. Baldry
17–21 October 1994	Russia, Estonia, Finland	Secretary of State

Energy Charter Treaty

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will sign the energy charter treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom will sign the energy charter treaty when it is opened for signature in Lisbon on 17 December. The Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy will sign on behalf of the Government. We welcome this very important agreement, which represents the result of lengthy and complex negotiations between 50 countries, including the European Union, the G7, all the states of the former Soviet Union, Western, Eastern and Central Europe, and Australia. We believe that the treaty will make a valuable contribution to the economic reform processes in the economies in transition, as well as improve the conditions for foreign investors in those countries. Details of the treaty were communicated to both Houses in explanatory memoranda on 20 December 1993 and 6 October 1994.

The text of the treaty will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses 21 sitting days before the United Kingdom deposits an instrument of ratification with the depositary of the energy charter treaty, the Government of the Portuguese Republic.

Telephone Tapping

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to clarify the Intelligence Services Act 1994, with regard to telephone wire tapping.

Mr. Hurd: None.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what circumstances the term wireless telegraphy in the Intelligence Services Act 1994 is taken to include telephone wire tapping.

Mr. Hurd: None. The Interception of Communications Act 1985 deals with the interception of telephones and is unaffected by the Intelligence Services Act.

Turkish Kurds

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Turkish Government against the prison sentences imposed on eight Kurdish Members of Parliament recently jailed by the Turkish authorities in Istanbul.

Mr. David Davis: Our views were reflected in a statement issued by the German presidency of the EU on 9 December, on behalf of all EU member countries, expressing concern at the harsh prison sentences imposed on these elected members of the Turkish Parliament, and seeking an explanation from the Turkish Government. We await the outcome of the appeal against the sentences we understand will be made.

Burundi

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the role of the international community in strengthening democratic government in Burundi following the recent visit of the Minister for Overseas Development to Burundi.

Mr. Baldry: My noble Friend the Baroness Chalker of Wallasey visited Burundi in August. She made clear our strong support for the efforts of the UN, in particular the UN Secretary-General's special representative, as well as the Organisation for African Unity, in their attempts to promote national reconciliation and stabilise the situation. We continue to do so. We welcome the recent agreement on power sharing and urge all parties in Burundi to continue to look for a lasting solution to the country's problems.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Attorney-General how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

The Attorney-General: Twenty-four, 17 of which were grouped for answer on 21 April 1994, *Official Report* columns *632–33*.

Brendan Smyth

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Attorney-General if his office contacted officials in the Irish Attorney–General's office about the then outstanding warrants for Father Brendan Smyth in September, October and November 1993.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to my written replies to the hon. Member for Thurrock of 21 November 1994, *Official Report*, columns *37–38*, and 28 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *512*.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 5 December, *Official Report*, columns *17–18*, if he concurs with the statement contained in the Irish Attorney–General's report of 1 December to the Taoiseach in respect of the Brendan Smyth extradition case on the timings of contacts between the United Kingdom authorities and the Irish Attorney–General regarding the matter and the conclusions drawn on whether the matter was considered urgent; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to my written replies to him of 21 November 1994, *Official Report*, columns *37–38* and 28 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *512*.

In cases such as this, documentation is supplied to the Irish authorities from which they are able to assess the urgency and importance of the case. In so far as the matter is the subject of specific time constraints, it is the practice to draw attention to them.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what percentage of members of the House are now in ministerial office or employed as parliamentary private secretaries; and what was the figure in 1978.

The Prime Minister: Nineteen per cent. of Members of this House are parliamentary private secretaries or hold ministerial office, which is broadly similar to 1978. The information is a matter of public record.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will list the number of Ministers in the Government by rank currently and in 1978; and if he will explain the reasons for the differences;

(2) how many Ministers there are currently in the Cabinet; how many there were in 1978; and what are the reasons for the difference.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is a matter of public record. The reasons for any differences will depend on the reasons for allocations of ministerial portfolios in 1978 by the then Prime Minister, now Lord Callaghan of Cardiff.

Parliamentary Private Functions

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister when he expects to provide a full reply to the question from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton concerning parliamentary private functions.

The Prime Minister: I have done so.

Economic Community

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government consider themselves bound by the undertakings given at the time of the 1975 referendum on EEC membership.

The Prime Minister: It is not clear which undertakings the hon. Member has in mind.

Ministerial Travel (Spouses)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions in the past year his spouse has travelled abroad to accompany him at public expense on public duties; what has been the total cost of this to public funds; on how many occasions such travel has been undertaken at own cost; and what was the destination and the duration of these foreign trips.

The Prime Minister: During the past year, my wife has accompanied me on overseas visits on two occasions, as follows:

Date	*Visit*
13–15 February 1994	Russian Federation
18–22 September 1994	Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, South Africa

On both occasions, costs attributed to my wife were minimal because she travelled on charter aircraft and stayed as "Guest of Government" or at residences.

There have been no occasions when such travel was undertaken at own cost.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will seek discussions with the Prime Ministers of Malta and Sweden about the implications of clothing found in the wreckage of Pan Am 103.

The Prime Minister: The investigation of clothing found in the wreckage of Pan Am flight 103 is the responsibility of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and Dumfries and Galloway constabulary, acting where necessary in co-operation with the authorities of other countries concerned, which have included Malta and Sweden.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what documentary evidence is in the possession of Her Majesty's Government in respect of baggage loaded on to Pan Am 103 at Frankfurt in December 1988.

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Member is aware, it would not be appropriate to reveal details of the evidence against the two persons accused of the Lockerbie bombing while criminal charges are pending.

Security Vetting

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement about the procedures for security vetting within government.

The Prime Minister: As I announced to the House on 23 March, *Official Report,* columns *259–60,* to ensure that security measures and procedures reflect current threats, the Government have recently completed a fundamental review of their arrangements for the management of protective security in Departments and agencies. In the area of personnel security, the review concluded that the vetting process served a worthwhile purpose, not only in disclosing circumstances which might lead to breaches of security but as a deterrent to those who might otherwise seek to undermine that security. The review recommended, however, that there should be a streamlining of the procedures that made up the vetting process. That work has now been completed.

The new framework should ensure that personnel security objectives are properly defined and that responsibility for achieving them is clearly established. There will be a greater emphasis on ensuring that personnel security resources are targeted on, and proportionate to, the threat and add necessarily and cost-effectively to the protection of government assests. Between 1 January and 31 March 1995, the existing arrangements will be replaced by a new personnel security regime which will consist of two levels of vetting, a security check and developed vetting. A security check will be similar to the current PV(S)—positive vetting (secret)—clearance, but will in addition include a check on the financial status of the individual. Developed vetting will replace the present PV(TS)—positive vetting (top secret)—and EPV—extended positive vetting—levels of vetting. The current system of counter terrorist checks will remain unchanged, but will be subject to review.

As at present, all candidates for security vetting will be asked to complete a security questionnaire which will explain the purpose of the procedure and invite them to provide the personal details required for the necessary checks to be carried out. Vetting will then be carried out on the basis of the statement of policy set out below.

Statement of HM Government's vetting policy

In the interests of national security, safeguarding Parliamentary democracy and maintaining the proper security of the Government's essential activities, it is the policy of HMG that no one should be employed in connection with work the nature of which is vital to the interests of the state who:

is, or has been involved in, or associated with any of the following activities:

—espionage,

—terrorism,

—sabotage,

—actions intended to overthrow or undermine Parliamentary democracy by political, industrial or violent means; or

is, or has recently been:

—a member of any organisation which has advocated such activities; or

—associated with any organisation, or any of its members in such a way as to raise reasonable doubts about his or reliability; or

is susceptible to pressure or improper influence, for example because of current or past conduct; or

has shown dishonesty or lack of integrity which throws doubt upon their reliability; or

has demonstrated behaviour, or is subject to circumstances which may otherwise indicate unreliability.

In accordance with the above policy, Government departments and agencies will carry out a Security Check (SC) on all individuals who require long term, frequent and uncontrolled access to SECRET information or assets. A Security Check may also be applied to staff who are in a position directly or indirectly to bring about the same degree of damage as such individuals or who need access to protectively marked material originating from other countries or international organisations. In some circumstances, where it would not be possible for an individual to make reasonable progress in their career without clearance to SECRET level, it may be applied to candidates for employment whose duties do not, initially, involve such regular access.

An SC clearance will normally consist of:

a check against the National Collection of Criminal Records and relevant departmental and police records;

in accordance with the Security Service Act 1989, where it is necessary to protect national security, or to safeguard the economic well-being of the United Kingdom from threats posed by persons outside the British Islands, a check against Security Service records; and

credit reference checks and where appropriate, a review of personal finances.

In some circumstances further enquiries, including an interview with the subject, may be carried out.

Individuals employed on government work who have long term, frequent and uncontrolled access to TOP SECRET information or assets, will be submitted to the level of vetting clearance known as Developed Vetting (DV). This level of clearance may also be applied to people who are in a position directly or indirectly to cause the same degree of damage as such individuals and in order to satisfy the requirements for access to protectively marked material originating from other countries and international organisations. In addition to a Security Check, a DV will involve:

an interview with the person being vetted; and

references from people who are familiar with the person's character in both the home and work environment. These may be followed up by interviews. Enquiries will not necessarily be confined to to past and present employers and nominated character referees.

It is also the Government's policy that departments and agencies will carry out Counter Terrorist Checks (CTC) in the interest of national security before anyone can be:

authorised to take up posts which involve proximity to public figures at particular risk of attack by terrorist organisations, or which give access to information or material assessed to be of value to terrorists:

granted unescorted access to certain military, civil and industrial establishments assessed to be at particular risk of attack by a terrorist organisation.

The purpose of such checks is to prevent those who may have connections with terrorist organisations, or who may be vulnerable to pressure from such organisations, from gaining access to certain posts, and in some circumstances, premises, where there is a risk that they could exploit that position to further the aims of a terrorist organisation. A CTC will include a check against Security Service records. Criminal record information may also be taken into account.

Departments and agencies generally assure themselves, through the verification of identity, and written references from previous employers, that potential recruits are reliable and trustworthy. Such Basic Checks (BC) are already standard procedure for many departments and agencies. Where access needs to be granted to Government information or assets at CONFIDENTIAL level, departments, agencies and contractors engaged on government work are required to complete such checks. In some cases, at the CONFIDENTIAL level, where relevant, the Basic Check may be augmented with some of the checks normally carried out for security clearances.

"Maltese Double Cross"

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he has had from President Clinton about the showing of the film "Maltese Double Cross" in the White house, Washington, on the morning of Sunday 4 December; and whether he has offered to the White house all evidence pertaining to the Pan Am 103 destruction over Lockerbie in the possession of Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* I have received no such representations. The investigation into the Lockerbie bombing has been carried out in conjunction with the United States authorities, with whom all evidence has been shared.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of Alan Fancovitch's film, "Maltese Double Cross", in relation to sanctions against Libya and loss of United Kingdom-Libya trade.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* The content of the film is being considered by the Crown Office and Dumfries and Galloway constabulary.

TRANSPORT

International Civil Aviation Organisation

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how often his Department evaluates the performance of the United Kingdom's permanent representation on the International Civil Aviation Organisation in Montreal.

Mr. Norris: Evaluation is continuous, since the Department is in constant touch with the United Kingdom representative to the ICAO over the representation of the United Kingdom's interests on a variety of aviation subjects. The Department also formally evaluates the performance of the United Kingdom representative to the ICAO council using standard annual reporting procedures.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new steps his Department is planning to ensure the more effective representation of United Kingdom interests at the International Civil Aviation Organisation in Montreal.

Mr. Norris: The United Kingdom's permanent staff at ICAO have been successful in representing the United Kingdom's interests in the work of the ICAO council and the Air Navigation Commission, and their work is highly regarded among the international aviation community. In recent months, our United Kingdom representatives have played a major part in influencing ICAO action in the fields of future global air traffic management systems and the oversight of aviation safety.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how often senior staff in his Department meet colleagues in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to discuss the work of the Britain's representation at the International Civil Aviation Organisation in Montreal.

Mr. Norris: Staff at all levels meet whenever necessary to discuss aviation issues of common interest which might be, or are being, pursued at ICAO. In particular, the DOT is represented at meetings held twice yearly by the FCO to discuss the United Kingdom's policy interests in the UN specialised agencies, for which ICAO is one.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next plans to visit the International Civil Aviation Organisation in Montreal to evaluate the effectiveness of Britain's presence there.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend has no such plans. Senior officials from my Department are in close touch with our representation at ICAO, and have recently visited it; they report as necessary to me and my ministerial colleagues on issues that arise.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many *(a)* United Kingdom and *(b)* Canadian staff are employed in the British office supporting United Kingdom membership of the International Civil Aviation Organisation in Montreal.

Mr. Norris: There are four staff in the British office at ICAO in Montreal. Two, the United Kingdom representative and his deputy, the air navigation commissioner, are outposted in Montreal from the Department of Transport in the United Kingdom. The remaining two are locally recruited support staff, one a United Kingdom and the other a Canadian national.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the annual cost to his Department of the United Kingdom's representation on the International Civil Aviation Organisation in Montreal;

(2) what is the annual cost to his Department of the United Kingdom's representatives' office to the International Civil Aviation Organisation in Montreal.

Mr. Norris: The outturn cost for 1993–94 of the United Kingdom office, including staff pay costs, was some £270,000. All these costs were borne by the United Kingdom Department of Transport; none accrued to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Network SouthEast

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current subsidy per head for commuters on Network SouthEast.

Mr. Watts: The information is not available in the form requested. However, Government support for Network SouthEast in 1993–94, the last year of its operation, amounted to some 36p for every pound the passenger paid.

A(M) Roads

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the criteria used for the designation of trunk roads as A(M): if he will list all trunk roads currently classified as A(M); and what plans he has to upgrade the A38 Exeter-Plymouth trunk road as A38(M).

Mr. Watts: The decisions to build or improve sections of trunk road to motorway standards, thereby attracting motorway style signs and legal requirements, are taken in consideration of the traffic needs of the particular route and the increased safety which results from higher geometric standards. The way in which a motorway standard length would fit into the wider trunk road network is also relevant.

Trunk roads currently classified as A(M) are:

A1(M)—several sections
A66(M)—Darlington
A194(M)—near Newcastle upon Tyne
A3(M)—near Portsmouth
A40(M)—London area
A102(M)—London area
A423(M)—Maidenhead

A study of the future needs of the A38 between Exeter and Plymouth is under way which includes consideration of motorway status, but serious problems could arise in upgrading the road to motorway.

Road Programme Director

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the present road programme director to leave his service; what severance terms and conditions have been agreed; and what assurances the director has given about subsequent employment by companies with a present or planned commercial interest in road design, build or management contracts.

Mr. Watts: I expect the present road programme director to leave the Highways Agency in summer 1995. The severance terms will be those provided for in the principal civil service pension scheme for staff who leave on early retirement. Any proposals from the current road programme director regarding subsequent employment will be subject to the terms of the business appointment rules as they apply to officials at grade 3 level in the civil service.

New Drivers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has regarding the percentage of drivers involved in fatal accidents who *(a)* have passed their driving test in the previous year and *(b)* are under 21 years of age.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has regarding the percentage of accidents on motorways involving drivers who *(a)* have passed their driving test in the previous year and *(b)* are under 21 years of age.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is not available.

Roads Expenditure

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will announce the allocation of capital resources for expenditure on local roads and transport in England for 1995–96.

Dr. Mawhinney: This year, a total of £960 million is to be allocated to local highway authorities and passenger transport authorities in England for capital expenditure on their local transport infrastructure in 1995–96. This consists of £278 million in transport supplementary grant and £682 million in annual capital guideline, supplementary credit approval, grant under section 56 of the Transport Act 1968 and grant under section 13 of the Industrial Development Act 1982. With the help of capital reserves and developer contributions, I therefore expect authorities to be able to spend over £1,000 million in total.

In this year's settlement, I am funding 37 packages of measures proposed by local authorities outside London to encourage public transport, cycling and walking and to offer attractive alternatives to car use. I am also providing funding for a number of measures in London, including the London bus priority network and the London cycle network.

I am setting aside resources for 10 new major public transport schemes which are expected to begin construction in 1995–96. They include the Croydon tramlink and Midland metro light rail schemes subject to satisfactory terms being agreed.

I am also accepting 28 new road schemes for funding for the first time. These include bypasses and relief roads designed to take traffic away from congested areas, and schemes designed to provide access to the national road network from key industrial areas.

Table 1 sets out the national totals for different types of expenditure. Table 2 shows the total amounts of grant, credit approval and gross approved expenditure for each of the 108 local highway authorities, and the six passenger transport authorities. The Department's regional offices are notifying them today of their allocations. Table 3 contains the package allocations, and table 4 lists the new major road and public transport schemes accepted this year. Table 5 contains comparable information for London.

Road safety remains a high priority. Within the overall total, the level of funding for local safety schemes has been maintained at the record level of £50 million allocated in each of the past two years.

Some £117 million is being allocated for assessment, strengthening and maintenance of local authority bridges, and £141 million is for the structural maintenance of principal roads.

Table 1

	£ million
Grant eligible	
Existing commitments	428.713
New major TSG road schemes	22.702
New major public transport schemes	16.750
Maintenance of principal roads	141.039
Bridges	117.000
IDA grant	4.000
Non-grant aided	
Local safety schemes	50.000
Packages	64.000
Block SCA for minor works	64.167
ERDF SCA	22.000
Scheme specific SCA	29.629
Total	960.000

Key:

TSG—Transport supplementary grant

IDA—Industrial Development Act

SCA—Supplementary credit approval

ERDF—European regional development fund

Local authority capital expenditure 1995–96

	Government grant (TSG) £ million	*Total borrowing approval £ million*	*Gross approved spending £ million*
London boroughs			
City of London	0.248	2.623	2.871
Barking and Dagenham	0.314	1.160	1.474
Barnet	0.133	3.062	3.296
Bexley	5.213	6.181	11.681
Brent	0.618	2.517	3.135
Bromley	0.503	2.012	2.515
Camden	1.342	2.390	3.732
Croydon	0.584	1.903	2.664
Ealing	0.000	1.498	1.759
Enfield	1.847	2.694	4.541
Greenwich	2.457	3.386	5.861
Hackney	0.207	1.261	1.854
Hammersmith and Fulham	0.743	3.533	4.395
Haringey	0.000	1.768	2.370
Harrow	0.812	4.399	8.319
Havering	0.227	0.768	0.995
Hillingdon	1.140	3.273	5.357
Hounslow	1.563	2.822	4.574
Islington	1.127	2.662	3.863
Kensington and Chelsea	0.000	1.139	1.314
Kingston upon Thames	1.924	5.957	8.272
Lambeth	0.532	1.597	2.362
Lewisham	0.880	2.223	3.475
Merton	0.000	1.052	1.198
Newham	1.815	5.010	7.772
Redbridge	0.383	0.837	1.220
Richmond upon Thames	0.308	2.730	3.038
Southwark	0.705	2.464	4.278
Sutton	0.234	1.431	1.854
Tower Hamlets	0.000	1.707	2.609
Waltham Forest	0.169	1.470	2.090
Wandsworth	0.535	2.040	2.575
Westminster	0.979	3.110	4.824

Note:

Gross approved expenditure exceeds the sum of grant and borrowing approval if an authority holds unused grant from previous years.

Local authority capital expenditure 1995–96

	Government grant (TSG) £ million	*Total borrowing approval £ million*	*Gross approved spending £ million*
Metropolitan Districts			
Bolton	1,827	2.770	5.130
Bury	0.556	1.162	1.718
Manchster	5.564	7.940	13.504
Oldham	1.783	2.630	4.566
Rochdale	1.283	2.034	3.317
Salford	4.205	5.145	9.350
Stockport	1.235	1.876	3.336
Tameside	0.395	1.180	1.812
Trafford	0.000	3.666	6.995
Wigan	0.503	0.994	1.553
Knowsley	4.632	9.788	18.365
Liverpool	0.325	3.746	5.445
St. Helens	1.025	1.617	2.652
Sefton	0.563	2.149	2.812
Wirral	1.202	2.871	4.430
Barnsley	4.122	5.133	9.596
Doncaster	2.629	3.897	7.069
Rotherham	0.564	1.607	2.638
Sheffield	1.311	9.852	16.329
Gateshead	0.000	1.336	1.908
Newcastle upon Tyne	3.688	4.618	8.752
North Tyneside	0.415	1.102	1.601
South Tyneside	0.358	0.807	1.165
Sunderland	1.449	2.116	3.629
Birmingham	12.298	20.112	34.979
Coventry	2.016	7.300	13.350
Dudley	1.753	3.960	5.713
Sandwell	1.831	3.760	6.028
Solihull	0.898	1.789	2.732
Walsall	0.919	2.779	4.166
Wolverhampton	5.596	8.974	10.059
Bradford	1.675	4.302	6.253
Calderdale	1.156	3.132	4.288
Kirklees	1.845	3.329	5.174
Leeds	5.373	12.593	18.716
Wakefield	4.452	5.666	10.242

Note:

Gross approved expenditure exceeds the sum of grant and borrowing approval if an authority holds unused grant from previous years.

Local authority capital expenditure 1995–96

	Government grant (TSG) £ million	*Total borrowing approval £ million*	*Gross approved spending £ million*
Counties			
Avon	2.169	8.687	12.224
Bedfordshire	5.606	7.629	13.235
Berkshire	0.967	5.823	9.880
Buckinghamshire	2.143	3.965	6.108
Cambridgeshire	2.270	6.436	9.080
Cheshire	12.435	13.749	26.212
Cleveland	0.179	4.791	7.531
Cornwall	4.105	6.928	11.135
Cumbria	1.336	2.755	4.129
Derbyshire	3.575	5.449	9.024
Devon	2.468	7.856	11.764
Dorset	1.701	3.911	5.612
Durham	1.006	3.880	6.230
East Sussex	4.526	7.285	12.224
Essex	2.661	8.402	11.063
Gloucestershire	2.697	4.321	7.693
Hampshire	9.681	14.222	23.903
Hereford and Worcester	1.893	3.135	5.028
Hertfordshire	5.626	8.340	13.966
Humberside	3.470	7.316	11.798
Isle of Wight	0.370	3.609	3.979
Kent	34.803	44.879	86.623
Lancashire	4.921	11.518	17.529
Leicestershire[1]	3.665	8.179	12.069
Lincolnshire	1.920	5.261	7.181
Norfolk	5.663	9.059	15.371
Northamptonshire	3.775	5.526	9.494
Northumberland	3.875	4.730	8.605
North Yorkshire	5.468	7.564	13.215
Nottinghamshire	4.682	8.433	13.115
Oxfordshire	1.007	4.509	6.314
Shropshire	1.462	4.023	5.542
Somerset	4.371	6.856	12.521
Staffordshire	6.668	9.204	15.872
Suffolk	4.141	9.329	13.470
Surrey	11.380	16.121	28.513
Warwickshire	1.352	3.084	4.444
West Sussex	0.816	2.846	4.254
Wiltshire	0.747	3.295	5.048

Note:

Gross approved expenditure exceeds the sum of grant and borrowing approval if an authority holds unused grant from previous years.

[1] Includes £746,000 public transport grant (s56).

Local authority capital expenditure 1995–96

	Government grant (s56) £ million	*Total borrowing approval £ million*
Passenger Transport Authorities		
Greater Manchester	0.000	4.000
Merseyside	0.000	8.626
South Yorkshire	4.919	51.610
Tyne and Wear	0.000	2.370
West Midlands	0.000	8.870
West Yorkshire	0.000	0.100

Package minor works allocations 1995–96

	£ millions
Current packages	
West Midlands—all boroughs inc. Centro	14.520
Leeds	3.800
Bournemouth and Poole	0.550
Brighton and Hove	0.850
Canterbury	0.250
Exeter	0.650
Hull	1.100
Ispwich	1.450
Oxford	1.350
Shrewsbury	0.850
Staines	0.400
Swindon	0.500
Winchester	0.750
New packages—funded for the first time in 1995–96	
Bradford	1.600
Calderdale	1.400
Kirklees	0.950
Greater Manchester—inc. PTA	8.000
Merseyside—inc. Merseytravel	10.250
Wakefield	0.750
Ashford	0.250
Avon	2.350

Package minor works allocations 1995–96

	£ millions
Bedford/Kempston	0.300
Cambridge	1.650
Dartmoor	0.110
Central Leicestershire	1.900
Macclesfield	0.200
New Forest	0.120
North Staffordshire	0.750
Norwich	0.400
Greater Nottingham	1.600
Plymouth	1.000
Preston and South Ribble	0.500
Reading	0.400
Southampton	0.250
Teesside	1.100
Warwick, Leamington and Kenilworth	0.350
York	0.600
Grand total	63.800

New major transport supplementary grant schemes (excluding London)

Authority	*Scheme*
Buckinghamshire	A413 Wendover Bypass
Hampshire	A325 Woolmar Road Link
Kent	B2006 Staplehurst Road Link, Sittingbourne
Oxfordshire	A421/B4031 Tingewick to A43 Improvement
West Sussex	A2300 Burgess Hill—A23 Link
Devon	A381 Salcombe Dip to Inverteign Drive, Teignmouth
Gloucestershire	A430 Gloucester South West Bypass
Somerset	A37 Improvements, Yeovil to Dorset Boundary—phase 1
Sandwell	A4034 Churchbridge Improvement, Sandwell
Hereford and Worcestershire	A422 Worchester Western Bypass and Link Roads
Staffordshire	A50 Victoria Place Link, Stoke on Trent
Oldham	A62/A627 Oldham Way Improvements
Cheshire	A534 Wheelock Bypass
Cumbria	A595 Dalton in Furness to Askam in Furness
Lancashire	A6 South Ribble/M65 Interface Improvements
Sefton	Aintree Park Lane Improvement
Northumberland	A189 North Seaton Duplication Stage 1
Leeds	Leeds City Centre Loop Phase 1
Wakefield	A655 Normanton Bypass
North Yorkshire	B1228 Peasholme Green Bridge
Lincolnshire	A57/B1003 Ropewalk to Carholme Road, Lincoln
Northamptonshire	A605 Warmington Bypass and Improvements at Tansor
Nottinghamshire	A608 Improvement, M1 to A611, Annesley
Cambridgeshire	A15 Werrington to Glinton Phase 2
Norfolk	A149 Ormesby Bypass
Other schemes, non TSG (excluding London)	
Cleveland	A179 Improvement, Hartlepool
Sheffield	Inner Ring Road, Northern Section, Stage1
Suffolk	A604 Haverhill Bypass Stage 2

New major public transport schemes (excluding London)

Authority	*Scheme*
Avon	Filton Abbeywood Station
Calderdale	Halifax-Huddersfield Railway Line
Merseyside PTA	Conway Park Railway Station
West Midlands PTA	Midland Metro, Line 1
Other public transport measures (excluding London)	
East Sussex	London Road/Brighton Station Bus Priority
Hampshire	ENTRANCE—EC project
Avon	Avonmouth/Ashton Vale Park and Ride
Norfolk	Norwich Park and Ride—Cringleford

New major road and public transport schemes in London accepted this year

Local authority	*Scheme*
All London authorities	The London Cycle Network
Barking and Dagenham	Choats Manor Way Link Road
Bexley	Bexleyheath Town Centre Traffic Management
Haringey	Spouter's Corner improvement
Brent	New stations, West London rail line
Hammersmith and Fulham	
Kensington and Chelsea	
Wandsworth	

Clyde Port Authority

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the financial implications of the bid by Regis and Regis for the Clyde port authority.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* There are no financial implications for the Government arising from these bids.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money was paid to Clydeport Holdings by the Clyde port authority after the payment of the levy to his Department following the sale of the port authority.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* The sale proceeds were £26.0 million; the levy £11.6 million. The Clyde port authority retained the remainder, £14.4 million. After the relevant expenses and liabilities had been met, all sums held by the authority were by virtue of section 7(2) of the Ports Act 1991 transferred to the successor company, Clydeport Holdings, upon the dissolution of the authority.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if Clydeport Holdings will have to pay a clawback on the proceeds of the Braehead site; and how much it will be.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* Yes. The amount has yet to be settled.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what grounds he paid the costs of the Clyde port authority's expenses for promoting a privatisation Bill; and what were those costs.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* Some £528,593 was allowed after careful consideration of the authority's claim under section 13 of the Ports Act 1991.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from residents in the Coventry and the Warwickshire areas regarding aircraft noise.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* From January 1992 to date, the Department has received 23 representations from residents in the Coventry and Warwickshire areas regarding aircraft noise. These include 13 representations direct from members of the public, a further five representations forwarded by hon. Members on behalf of their constituents, and three from hon. Members themselves.

HEALTH

Hospital Beds (Closures)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital beds have closed in London since the Tomlinson report was published.

Mr. Malone: The Tomlinson report used data for 1990–91. Provisional examination of the 1993–94 bed data for London suggests that the reduction in the number of available acute sector beds, excluding day beds, over the period 1990–91 to 1993–94 has been 1,896.

Pensioners

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list *(a)* in rank order and *(b)* by county (1) the total number of people of pension age and above in each constituency;

(2) the percentage of the population of pension age and above in each constituency.

Mr. Sackville: The available information requested has been taken from the 1991 census of population for England and Wales and will placed in the Library.

Breast Cancer

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the rate of breast cancer in Israel following the banning of the use of lindane; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: In the 1970s, Israel had a high level of breast cancer compared to other countries. This fell during the period 1976 to 1986. Researchers and scientists in Israel suggested that a cause might be the withdrawal of louse powder containing lindane, used on cattle: they noted that before 1986 the Israeli population had been exposed to very high levels of lindane in milk. Levels reported in milk in Israel were up to 1,200 times higher than the highest residues observed in the United Kingdom as reported in the 1993 annual report of the working party on pesticide residues, copies of which are available in the Library.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research projects she has commissioned which are investigating the links between exposure to lindane and the incidence of breast cancer; and if she will list them.

Mr. Sackville: None. The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The MRC is an independent body deciding what research to support on its own expert judgement. The Department of Health expert committee on carcinogenicity has been asked to advise on any relationship between organochlorines, including lindane, and breast cancer when it next meets in March 1995, and will consider the latest available research.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has made to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food concerning the banning of lindane.

Mr. Sackville: The approval and review of pesticides is the joint responsibility of six Government Departments, including the Department of Health. Ministers are advised by a body of independent experts, the Advisory Committee on Pesticides. This committee last reviewed the non-agricultural uses of lindane in 1992. It found a very substantial body of evidence indicating that lindane presents no unacceptable risk to human health when used in accordance with statutory directions. Furthermore, there was no epidemiological evidence to suggest that lindane causes an increased risk of cancer, even among those who work with the compound. It therefore advised that approvals should continue.

The Advisory Committee on Pesticides is currently reviewing lindane's agricultural uses and its review should be completed by spring 1995. Additionally, the Department of Health expert committee on carcinogenicity will consider the latest available research on any relationship between organochlorines, including lindane, and breast cancer, when it next meets in March 1995.

Blood

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to ensure that a change to fewer and larger blood collection sessions will not lead to a substantial drop in the number of donors;

(2) what plans she has to ensure that the closure of five regional blood transfusion centres will not lead to a shortage of blood supplies throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: It is the responsibility of the National Blood Authority to ensure that an adequate supply of blood is available to meet the needs of hospitals. The authority has made it clear that, under its proposals, whatever services hospitals receive now they will receive in future. With regard to blood collection, the authority's proposals envisage an increase in the number of collection team bases to provide more effective coverage of the country.

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) where she proposes to site the new blood stockholding units; and what facilities they would provide;

(2) what is her estimate of *(a)* the number of jobs which will be lost by the closure of five regional blood transfusion centres and *(b)* the cost in redundancy payments to those made redundant;

(3) what criteria were used to decide which five of the present 15 regional blood transfusion centres should be closed.

Mr. Sackville: These are matters for the National Blood Authority to consider in the light of its thorough and widespread consultation. The results of the consultation will be carefully considered before decisions are made.

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria are used to estimate the annual budget required by the National Blood Authority.

Mr. Sackville: As part of the business planning process, the National Blood Authority estimates the running costs of the Blood Transfusion Service, the Bio Products Laboratory and the International Blood Group Reference Laboratory, and takes account of income from blood handling charges, and sale of manufactured blood products.

Community Care

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how she will seek to ensure that community psychiatric nurses and other members of community teams focus on the needs of people with severe mental illness and long-term problems following the recommendation by the Audit Commission.

Mr. Bowis: By issuing good practice guidance and by focusing the mental illness specific grant on the severely mentally ill.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider how bridging finance could be made available for the reprovision of community care in place of some hospital care following the recommendations of the Audit Commission.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. member to the reply I gave the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on 12 December, *Official Report*, column *470*.

Replacement Funding

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many organisations are receiving grants under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968; how many of these grants are due to *(a)* expire or *(b)* be reduced from March 1995; and what proposals she has to assist these organisations to secure replacement funding.

Mr. Bowis: There are some 382 voluntary organisations due to receive 523 grants from the Department under our section 64 general scheme during 1994–95; 238 of these are due to expire on 31 March 1995. Many will be core grants, eligible for consideration for renewal. The general presumption is that all core grants will be subject to a degree of tapering, particularly in their later years.

Mentally Ill People

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consult the Home Office and the Department of the Environment to develop solutions to the problems of housing for mentally ill people, including mentally ill offenders, following the recommendations of the Audit Commission.

Mr. Bowis: Officials meet regularly with colleagues from other Departments to discuss a wide range of issues concerning mentally ill people, including housing.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many accident and emergency departments it is currently proposed to close.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. It is the responsibility of each health authority to ensure that there is an accident and emergency service available to all people in its area.

Low Birth Weights

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the percentage of babies born in each *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority who weighed less than 2.5 kg at birth in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The latest year for which information is available is 1992 and was published in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys annual monitor DH3 93/1 "Infant and Perinatal Mortality 1992: RHAs and DHAs"; comparable data for 1993 will be published on 21 December 1994 in the annual monitor DH3 94/2 for 1993. Copies of the monitor will be available in the Library.

Hospital Developments

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances health authorities or trusts are told that they will not be allowed to go ahead with agreed schemes of new hospital development without there first being a guarantee of parts of the capital cost being funded from the private sector; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: When health authorities and national health service trusts seek approval from the NHS executive for new capital schemes, they now are required to explore the option of private finance.

NHS Research and Development

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she accepts the recommendations of the report of the NHS research and development task force chaired by Professor Anthony Culyer; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since Professor Culyer's report "Supporting Research and Development in the NHS" was published on 14 September, we have had valuable discussions about it with the academic and research communities and beyond. The broad thrust of the report has been welcomed.

I have now decided to introduce a new system of funding and supporting research, based largely on the report's proposals, to come into effect from 1996–97. The key points are:

—The introduction of a "single funding stream" for NHS research and development, service support for Research and Development and research facilities.

—The intention to raise Research and Development funds by a levy on purchasers of health care.

—Changes in the advisory structure for Research and Development, including revised terms of reference and membership for the Central NHS Research and Development Committee (CRDC). The CRDC will have a new role advising the NHS to invest its Research and Development funds.

—The creation of a new national forum to bring together the major health-related research funders to provide advice for the NHS and the Government.

I am also announcing today that an extra £8 million will be available in 1995–96 for research commissioned by the NHS.

The intention is to set a framework for funding and supporting research in the NHS for the long term and to provide a clear focus for future discussions about the detail of implementation.

These decisions follow my recent announcement of a £40 million increase for 1995–96 in the earmarked funds dedicated to meeting the NHS costs of medical and dental education and research. Together, they underline the Government's strong commitment to the NHS research base and using it to develop further a knowledge-based service.

A note giving further details of the new funding system has been placed in the Library.

Sir Irvine Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure that the national health service continues to support undergraduate medical education following the recommendations made by the NHS research and development task force chaired by Professor Culyer.

Mr. Malone: I have asked Dr. Graham Winyard, national health service executive health care director, to chair an advisory group to make recommendations by March 1995 on future arrangements for allocating funds and contracting for NHS service support and facilities for teaching medical undergraduates. The aim is for the new arrangements to take effect, after appropriate consultation, in April 1996.

Membership of the advisory group will be drawn from a range of interests in the NHS and in education. A copy of the terms of reference will be placed in the Library.

Capital Funding

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list *(a)* NHS trusts and *(b)* directly managed units which have received funding from (i) the Department of Health and (ii) the private sector for capital projects in each of the last four years, showing in each case the amount of funding involved.

Mr. Sackville: I shall let the hon. Member have such information as is available as soon as possible.

Dental Services

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much is spent on dental treatment of the molars as a proportion relative to the remaining 20 teeth.

Mr. Malone: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes she plans to the chairmanship for the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Following consultation with my colleagues in the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and the Department of Health and Social Services, Northern Ireland, I am pleased to announce that from 16 December the chairman of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority will be Ruth Deech, who is principal of St. Anne's college, Oxford.

Professor Sir Colin Campbell steps down after four years as chairman of the authority.

I would like to place on record the Government's appreciation of Sir Colin's unstinting commitment to the demanding work of the authority and to the aims of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990. Under his leadership the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority has become an internationally respected regulatory body which enjoys the confidence of the public, Parliament, the professions and the research community.

Management Costs

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the estimated annual savings in NHS management costs arising from the Health Authorities Bill arising from *(a)* the abolition of the regional health authorities, *(b)* the elimination of overlapping functions between regional health authorities and the Department of Health, *(c)* reductions in the number of health authorities and *(d)* merger between the family health service authorities and the district health authorities.

Mr. Malone: We estimate that, when the Health Authorities Bill is fully implemented, it will lead to annual savings in national health service management costs of approaching £150 million. Of this, over £100 million per year will arise from the abolition of regional health authorities and the remainder from the replacement of family health services authorities and district health authorities with unified health authorities, including savings from the reduction in the number of DHAs in preparation for the creation of HAs.

Savings from the elimination of overlapping functions between RHAs and the NHS executive have not been separately identified but, as well as forming part of the savings at regional level, will contribute to the savings of some £50 million to be made in the running costs of the Department of Health by 1997–98.

All these savings will be put into patient care.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what *(a)* surpluses and *(b)* deficits were recorded by each district health authority in each of the last three years.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 12 December 1994]*: The information will be placed in the Library.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Biwater Group Ltd.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for aid and trade provision finance have been made by the Biwater Group Ltd. since 1983; to which country these applications pertained; what were the costs of the contracts and amount of aid and trade provision sought; and which of the applications were *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused, giving details of the dates, countries and contracts involved and the amount requested or granted.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Sir M. Lennox-Boyd) on 17 February, *Official Report*, column *937*, and to his reply to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 14 February, *Official Report*, column *568*. In addition to the projects listed, the Biwater Group Ltd. currently has one ATP project under offer and subject to negotiation and one under consideration; given their status, both these projects are commercial in confidence. Information on unsuccessful applications is not maintained centrally in either ODA or DTI and such information could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

Population Control

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funds have been made available in the current financial year to the United Nations Population Fund; and for what purpose.

Mr. Baldry: Our contribution for the 1994–95 financial year to the United Nations Population Fund's core programme was £8.5 million. This included an exceptional grant of £1.5 million to assist with follow-up work to the international conference on population and development.

Additional sums have been made available for specified purposes from bilateral programmes.

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funds have been made available to the International Planned Parenthood Federation in the current financial year; and for what purpose.

Mr. Baldry: Our contribution for the 1994–95 financial year to the International Planned Parenthood Federation's core programme was £7.5 million with an extra £0.45 million for its sexual health programme. Additional funds have been available for specified purposes from bilateral programmes.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money Her Majesty's Government pledged at the Cairo Conference on population and development to a programme to promote reproductive health and an improved quality of life and if it is his policy that this will be money additional to the existing budget and no taken from other projects that fall into the category of social development.

Mr. Baldry: At Cairo, we said we expect to commit £100 million for population and reproductive health programmes in 1994 and 1995. Funds to meet the spending against these commitments will be made available from within the overall aid programme in the relevant years. These commitments will not be at the expense of other on-going projects in the social field.

Crown Agents

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has to change the external financing limit for the current year for the Crown Agents.

Mr. Baldry: The external financing limit for the Crown Agents as set out in the statistical supplement to the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" 1994–95—Cm 2519—has been increased from zero to £3.5 million. This is due to a classification change and has no consequence for public expenditure.

TREASURY

Utility Company Securities

14. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the effect on the valuation of utility company securities in *(a)* the national balance sheet and *(b)* the corporate sector balance sheet if a windfall profits tax was introduced on utility company pre-tax profits at a rate of (i) 10 per cent. and (ii) 20 per cent.

Mr. Nelson: Although it is not possible to estimate the precise impact, such a tax would hit significantly the value of utility companies, reduce investment and limit the scope for price reductions.

Motor Fuel

15. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for how many years he intends to increase duty on motor fuel.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The commitment remains to increase duty on road fuels in future Budgets by on average at least 5 per cent. in real terms.

VAT (Fuel)

16. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on how VAT on domestic fuel will impact on households at differing income levels.

21. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on how VAT on domestic fuel will impact on households at differing income levels.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer to the oral answer that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) earlier today.

Incomes

17. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on income distribution.

Sir George Young: Real incomes have risen on average for all economic status groups since 1979—risen 50 per cent. for pensioners, risen for the unemployed, risen for those in full-time work and in part-time work and risen for the self employed. Sound finance and sustained growth are the only way to raise living standards for all, rich and poor alike.

Taxation (Retired People)

19. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of his recent tax proposals on retired people who have savings over £3,000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The increase in the personal income tax allowance for the aged announced in the Budget is worth over £2 a week for most basic rate paying pensioners. This is on top of a rise in pensioners' real income after tax averaging about 50 per cent. between 1979 and 1992.

Living Standards

20. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on living standards.

Sir George Young: I refer to the oral answer that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) earlier today.

22. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he intends to reduce the basic rate of VAT during the life of the current Parliament.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: As my right hon. and learned Friend made clear in his Budget, he has no plans to reduce the standard rate of VAT.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) at what financial threshold the decision is taken in respect of the prosecution of an individual or organisation for value added tax avoidance;

(2) what is his estimate of the level of value added tax avoidance.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* Tax avoidance is not an offence. There are no comprehensive, reliable estimates for the total of VAT avoided.

Child Benefit

23. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when, in the past five years, he or his predecessors have announced increases in the level of child benefit.

Mr. Aitken: The information is in the table.

Date of Announcement	*Effective Date*	*Announced by*
24 October 1990	8 April 1991	Secretary of State for Social Security
19 March 1991	7 October 1991	Chancellor of the Exchequer
21 October 1991	6 April 1992	Secretary of State for Social Security
12 November 1992	12 April 1993	Secretary of State for Social Security
1 December 1993	11 April 1994	Secretary of State for Social Security
30 November 1994	10 April 1995	Secretary of State for Social Security

Budget Representations

24. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received following his Budget statement.

Sir George Young: Since my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget statement on 29 November, we have received a number of representations from organisations and individuals, on a wide range of Budget-related issues.

Single Currency

25. **Mr. Gill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to renegotiate the timetable for a single currency at the forthcoming intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. The United Kingdom protocol to the treaty of European Union, negotiated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister at Maastricht, provides that the United Kingdom is not obliged to join a single currency. Any notification of United Kingdom intention to do so would require a prior Act of Parliament.

Macro-economic Policy

26. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he plans for macro-economic policy.

Mr. Aitken: Macro-economic policy will continue to be set to achieve permanently low inflation and sound public finances. Chapter 2 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" 1995–96 sets out the framework of the Government's macro-economic policy.

Interest Rates

27. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect interest rate changes since October 1990 have had on industry's interest rate bill.

Mr. Nelson: It is estimated that interest rate changes from October 1990 to date, when fully passed on, will have lowered companies' interest bills by at least £10.5 billion a year.

29. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about interest rates levied by the main clearing banks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: My ministerial colleagues and I continue to receive letters from clearing banks' personal and business customers about interest rates, but their number is diminishing, with rates now at levels well below those of a few years ago.

Balanced Budget

28. **Mr. Liddington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to achieve a balanced budget.

Mr. Aitken: In the Budget, the public sector borrowing requirement was projected to fall rapidly over the next few years, and to be in small surplus by 1998–99.

Executive Pay

30. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has in respect of excessive executive pay rises.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to curb excessive executive pay rises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The Government believe that companies should exercise restraint in setting remuneration packages for their executives and that they should reflect performance. The Government do not consider that its proper role is to set levels to pay for executives of private companies. The salaries and other remuneration of any private company are a matter for the company and its shareholders.

Investment

Dr. Howells: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the effect his Budget will have on investment levels in the United Kingdom economy.

Sir George Young: I refer to the oral answer that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller).

Public Bodies (Underwriting Activities)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answer from the Secretary of State for Wales to the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) of 12 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns

515–16, which Government agencies and non-departmental public bodies other than the Welsh Development Agency have taken part in the underwriting of *(a)* Government privatisation share issues and *(b)* private share issues; and if he will list the share issues and in which year each underwriting activity occurred.

Sir George Young: The information requested is not held centrally.

Vehicles

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the total loss of revenue to the Treasury if the number of vehicles using Britain's roads were to be reduced by 1 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Assuming that a 1 per cent. reduction in the number of vehicles on the roads was accompanied by a 1 per cent. reduction in the use of road fuels, then the loss of revenue would be around £200 million. This takes account of reduced receipts of vehicle excise duty, road fuel duties and consequential VAT. It takes no account of any increased receipts that might arise from increased spending on other items.

Tax Exemption Certificates

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many 714 tax exemption certificates were issued in each of the last five years;

(2) what estimate he has as to the loss of revenue resulting from the non-payment of national insurance contributions arising from both employer and employee contributions exempted under 714 tax exemption certificates;

(3) what estimate he has of the loss of revenue arising to the Exchequer from abuse of the SC60 self-employed taxation system;

(4) what estimates have been made of the loss of revenue resulting from work being done under 714 tax exemption certificates relative to the position that would obtain if those same employees worked within PAYE.

Sir George Young: The numbers of certificates issued or renewed were as follows:

	Numbers
1989–90	273,357
1990–91	224,830
1991–92	240,459
1992–93	213,010
1993–94	203,735

It is not possible to make any meaningful estimate of revenue loss resulting from the particular tax treatment of self-employment workers in the construction industry.

Gift Aid

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of donations to charity were made through gift aid for each year since its introduction.

Sir George Young: Information is not available on total donations to charities. The numbers and amounts of donations made under the gift aid scheme are shown.

	Number of donations	*Amount of donations (£ million)*
1990–91[1]	10,270	32.2
1991–92	55,160	163.3
1992–93	81,150	218.3
1993–94	123,850	245.6

[1] From 1 October 1990.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the increase in the value of sterling against the ecu since its lowest point in 1993; and what is the forecast effect of such a change on imports and exports of manufactures after one, two and three years in terms of volume.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* Figures for the sterling ecu exchange rate are available on the Central Statistical Office, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library. Export and import volumes are affected by a number of factors, including world trade, growth in United Kingdom export markets, export profit margins, domestic demand and competitiveness. A forecast of the growth in non-oil trade volumes taking into account all relevant factors was published in chapter 3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to receive a report from the retail prices index advisory committee.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have today received two reports from the Retail Prices Index Advisory Committee. It makes recommendations on the treatment in the RPI of owner-occupiers' housing costs and cars. The full reports are being published this afternoon as Cm 2717 and Cm 1716 respectively and copies are available in the Vote Office.

In due course, I will announce my response to the recommendations. The committee has now completed its consideration of the topics in its current terms of reference.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Advisory Committee

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of the reports and submissions produced by the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee in each of the last three years.

Mrs. Browning: The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee has held three meetings each year since 1992. The secretariat is provided by this Department and the Department of Health. The budget for the SEAC is shared between MAFF and DH but the DH provision is not separately identified within an overall committee budget. Overall expenditure by the two Departments in the past three years was:

1992—£9,271
1993—£6,995
1994—£7,089

The committee regularly provides advice to Ministers, and where appropriate, this is put in the public domain, as in the reply given to the hon. Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) on 30 June 1994, *Official Report*, columns *657–58*. SEAC produced an interim report in 1992 which has been placed in the House Library, on research into transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. A further report is in preparation.

Consumers Committees

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of the reports and submissions produced by each of the consumers committees in *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994.

Mr. Jack: The consumers committees for Great Britain and for England and Wales met as one body five times during 1992, six times during 1993 and twice during 1994. The Scottish committee last met in 1975. Secretarial and advisory duties are part of the responsibilities of three officials in this Department.

Figures of expenditure are as follows:

Financial year	*Budget* £	*Actual expenditure* £
1992–93	7,000	5,682
1993–94	6,435	4,940
1994–95	6,000	1,826 —expenditure to 12 December 1994

In accordance with the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958, the views of the committees on the effects on consumers of agricultural marketing schemes are made known to Ministers in writing from time to time.

Badgers

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of the reports and submissions produced by the Consultative Panel on Badgers and Tuberculosis in each of the last three years.

Mrs. Browning: The Consultative Panel on Badgers and Tuberculosis met once in 1991 and twice in both 1992 and 1993. The Ministry provides secretarial support to the panel and consistently draws on the panel's advice in determining its policies on badgers and bovine tuberculosis. The budget for each of the last three financial years was £4,728, £5,000 and £10,000 respectively with actual expenditure of £2,777, £2,558 and £6,720. The increase for 1993–94 reflected one off costs for a scientific seminar in November 1993 to review research with leading experts from the United Kingdom and Ireland. There have been no reports or submissions published by the panel during the last three years.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what monitoring there is of active badger setts along the route of the new A30 in east Devon; how many licences have been issued to disturb badger setts in this area; to whom they were issued; when they were issued; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: I have been asked to reply.

English Nature is the appropriate licensing authority and issued one licence in August this year to environmental consultants who have surveyed 14 badger setts, including outlier holes, along the new A30 in east Devon. Monitoring of all setts is continuing throughout the coming winter to determine their current status of occupation. Under the Data Protection Act 1984, identification of individual licence holders is confidential.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the functions and objectives of *(a)* the Sugar Beet Research and Education Committee, *(b)* the Consultative Panel on Badgers and Tuberculosis and *(c)* the Salmon Advisory Committee.

Mr. Jack: The functions and objectives of the three bodies are described in their terms of reference. These are:

(a) *The Sugar Beet Research and Education Committee*

"The Committee is appointed by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales to advise on an annual programme of research and education in matters affecting the growing of home-grown sugar beet."

(b) *The Consultative Panel on Badgers and Tuberculosis*

"i) To keep under review the evidence relating to bovine tuberculosis in badgers, including its distribution, its prevalence and its relationship to bovine tuberculosis in cattle;

ii) to advise on operations to be undertaken by the Ministry in order to limit the transmission of tuberculosis from badgers to cattle;

iii) to recommend research appropriate to the problem of badgers and bovine tuberculosis."

(c) *The Salmon Advisory Committee*

"To examine and report on those matters relating to the conservation and development of salmon fisheries in Great Britain which are referred to it by Fisheries Ministers."

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of the reports and submissions produced by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides in each of the last three years.

Mrs. Browning: The Advisory Committee on Pesticides met on six occasions during 1994 and 1993 and five times in 1992. Details of the secretarial and advisory arrangements along with details of matters discussed and recommendations made by the committee are published each year in the Advisory Committee on Pesticides annual report. Copies of the report are held in the House Library. The committee has an annual budget of £40,000. Expenditure for the last three years was £32,889—1993–94, £26,022—1992–93, and £30,606—1991–92.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the Sugar Beet Research and Education Committee in each of the last three years.

Mr. Jack: The committee met four times in the financial year 1991–92, four times in 1992–93, and five times in 1993–94 excluding open days and special sub-groups. Secretarial support to the committee is provided by MAFF, and the committee's advice is given to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales.

Expenditure on committee members' attendance fees, and on travelling expenses for the Committee and its secretariat was as follows:

	1991–92 £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
Budgeted	9,075	9,710	13,000
Actual	7,649	10,213	[1]7,861

[1] Subject to audit.

The Sugar Beet Research and Education Committee advises Ministers on the annual research and education programmes required by section 68 of the Food Act 1984. Details of the programmes are set out in the annual Sugar Beet (Research and Education) Orders—S.I. 1992/405, S.I. 1993/397 and S.I. 1994/407.

Agricultural Support

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the overall cost to the Exchequer of support to United Kingdom agriculture in each of the years 1964, 1970, 1980, 1990 and 1994 in actual and 1994 prices: if he will show each figure as a percentage of gross domestic product; and what was the percentage of net disposable income spent on food in each of these years.

Mr. Jack: The available information on total expenditure on agriculture in the United Kingdom and household expenditure on food is given in the table.

Year	*Total expenditure on agriculture in the United Kingdom £ million[1] Current Prices*	*Expenditure on agriculture as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product £ million[1] 1993 Prices*	*Household expenditure on food as a percentage of Personal Disposable Income Per cent.*	*Per cent.*
1964	264	2,736	0.77	20.5
1970	259	1,998	0.49	18.2
1980	1,012	2,083	0.43	14.8
1990	1,910	2,178	0.34	11.0
1993	3,015	3,015	0.47	10.0

[1] Financial years.

Sugar Beet

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much per tonne is given to European farmers for growing sugar beet; and what is the value on the world market of sugar per tonne.

Mr. Jack: In the 1994–95 marketing year, European growers should receive, from those to whom they sell, at least the Community-established minimum prices of 38.69 ecu/tonne—£36.89/tonne[1]—and 23.89 ecu/tonne—£2.78/tonne[1]—respectively, for sugar beet contributing to A and B quota sugar.

Currently, quota sugar is being sold on the world market, with the aid of export refunds, at around 340 ecu/tonne—£324.22/tonne[1]. The cost of the refunds is largely offset by production levies on growers and processors.

Although the facility for intervention exists within the regime, no sugar is currently intervened, processors are paid storage aids on the tonnage they hold, the costs of the scheme being covered by a levy at point of first sale.

[1]1 ecu = £0.953575

Coastal Protection

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people within his Department are employed in connection with its coastal protection function; and at what locations.

Mr. Jack: Currently, 61 people are employed in the Ministry's flood and coastal defence division, dealing with food defence matters as well as coast protection. They are based in London, Cambridge, Lincoln, Taunton, Tunbridge Wells and York.

Political Affiliation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he seeks information on the political affiliation of candidates for appointment to paid or unpaid posts for which he is responsible *(a)* from within his Department or *(b)* from outside sources.

Mr. Jack: The Minister does not seek information on the political affiliation of candidates for either paid or unpaid posts.

Agricultural Council

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what was the outcome of the Agricultural Council held in Brussels from 12 to 14 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting of the council, which lasted from 12 to 15 December. The council's major achievement was agreement on ground rules for implementing the general agreement on tariffs and trade Uruguay round agreement on agriculture. This package, including the framework agreement on bananas, will now pass to the Foreign Affairs Council on 19 and 20 December for formal adoption along with all other GATT implementation texts. This is a very important agreement for Britain in itself. In addition, I am glad to report that I achieved a range of measures designed to meet specific British interests, notably in relation to cereals, bananas, and commitments of benefit to the processed food industry. I also made clear to the Commission that the eventual arrangements for rice, which are not yet in place, must not disadvantage United Kingdom millers of high quality rice.

The council also discussed a Commission proposal to revise the agrimonetary regime. In the absence of an opinion from the European Parliament, no formal decision could be taken. But it was established that a qualified majority of the council existed in favour of a presidency compromise proposal which the Commission was prepared to support. I voted against this revised proposal because, although it abolished the potentially expensive and inflationary switchover mechanism which I strongly welcome, it also introduced unduly complex and potentially costly replacement arrangements to protect farmers in strong-currency countries against currency-induced falls in incomes. Denmark also voted against. The Commission tabled a proposal to prolong the present regime until 31 January 1995 pending a European Parliament opinion on the substantive proposal.

The council held a further discussion of the Commission's proposal on the welfare of animals in transit but was unable to reach agreement. I shall continue to press for strong and effective Community measures. But meanwhile I am introducing improved national measures to help fill the gap resulting from the absence of agreement by the council.

I voted against a council decision to continue the moratorium on bovine somatotropin until 31 December 1999 as this was without scientific justification. The decision was, however, adopted by qualified majority.

The Agriculture Commissioner, René Steichen, tabled a report supporting the case, for which the United Kingdom has long argued, for allowing land entered into environmental set-aside or woodland to be counted, under certain conditions, against the farmer's compulsory market set-aside requirement. The council committed itself to taking an early decision on this matter.

The council adopted unanimously proposals providing for continuation of New Zealand butter access to the United Kingdom and for continuation of sheepmeat imports from various third countries under existing voluntary restraint agreements. In both cases, these regulations apply until 30 June 1995 when they will be superseded by the GATT Uruguay round provisions.

Directive amending the fresh meat hygiene directive and milk hygiene directive, were agreed by qualified majority. On meat hygiene, I abstained, whilst the Dutch and Portuguese delegations opposed. The outcome on milk hygiene was generally highly satisfactory; however, I abstained because there were no provisions to permit the continued double pasteurisation of skimmed milk.

Finally, I am particularly delighted to report that the council agreed unanimously a new directive on minced meat and meat preparations directive which protects traditional British products including the British banger.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the annual savings in a full year to social security expenditure from withdrawing income support assistance with mortgage interest payments from new mortgages after October 1995 for nine months assuming that *(a)* all income support claimants with new mortgages are affected, *(b)* all income support claimants except lone parents are affected, *(c)* all income support claimants except lone parents and pensioners are affected and *(d)* all income support claimants except pensioners are affected.

Mr. Roger Evans: Details are set out in the table.

IS claimants affected	*Savings October 1995 to October 1996 £ million*
(a) all IS claimants with mortgages	18
(b) all IS claimants with mortgages except lone parents	15
(c) all IS claimants except lone parents and pensioners	14
(d) all IS claimants except pensioners	17

Notes:

(1) Savings are based on information from the 1993 annual statistical inquiry, uprated to 1995–96 levels.

(2) Savings have been estimated for a 12-month period from October 1995 to October 1996.

(3) Assistance with mortgage payments is withdrawn for the first nine months of a new claim from October 1995 for cases with new mortgages.

(4) Savings estimates exclude any estimates of behavioural effects.

(5) Figures are rounded to the nearest £1 million but are not accurate to this degree of rounding.

Family Credit

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the proposed family credit ceilings in 1995–96 for *(a)* a married couple with one child under five years, *(b)* a married couple with two children under 11 years, *(c)* a married couple with two children aged over 11 years, *(d)* a married couple with three children under 11 years, *(e)* a married couple with three children aged over 11 years and *(f)* a married couple with two children under 11 years and two children over 11 years.

Mr. Roger Evans: At the new benefit levels proposed for April 1995, the family credit ceilings represented by the highest amount of net earnings and other relevant income a family can have and still qualify for family credit at the minimum payment of 50p will be as follows:

	£
Married couple with one child under 5 years	153.00
Married couple with two children under 11	169.29
Married couple with two children over 11, but under 16	190.71
Married couple with three children under 11	185.57
Married couple with three children over 11, but under 16	217.71
Married couple with two children under 11 and two children over 11, but under 16	223.29

Relevant income excludes child benefit, which is disregarded for Family Credit purposes. Therefore, in addition to the amounts above, a one-child family will have £10.40 child benefit a two-child family £18.85, a three-child family £27.30 and a four-child family £35.75. Relevant income also excludes the first £15 of any maintenance received.

Since October 1994, up to £40 a week per family in respect of formal child care charges incurred can be offset in the calculation of normal earnings for family credit. It applies where the care is for a child under 11 in the family of a lone parent, a couple where both are working, or where one is working and the other is incapacitated. This increases the potential ceilings still further.

Social Fund

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful applications were made to the social fund for (i) community care grants, (ii) budgeting loans and (iii) crisis loans for each quarter since 1988–89; and if he will give the reasons for the refusals.

Mr. Roger Evans: Quarterly information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Information on an annual basis is provided in the Secretary of State's annual reports on the social fund, copies of which are in the Library.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will reproduce the tables in annexes 6, 10 and 14 of the annual report on the social fund 1993–94, Cm 2598, on the basis of expenditure by application purpose in a form identical to that used in the annual report on the social fund 1992–93, Cm 2274.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is not available. The introduction of the social fund computer system means that the data used to produce the annual report on the social fund for 1993–94 is held in a different form from that used for previous annual reports.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing annexe 1 of each annual report on the social fund, broken down according to client group definitions in annexe 4 of the annual report on the social fund 1993–94, Cm 2598.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is not readily available for years prior to 1992–93. The available information is set out in the tables.

National social fund summary statistics by client group

1992–93

Pensioners

	MP	*FP*	*CCG*	*BL*	*CL*
Applications received (000)	0	15	106	61	9
Decisions (000)[1]	0	18	129	67	8
Awards (000)[1]	0	15	79	27	7
Awards as per cent. of decisions[1]	0	83	61	40	82
Refusals (000)	0	3	50	34	1
Gross Expenditure £ million	0	12	20	6	0
Recoveries £ million	0	0	0	5	0
Net Expenditure £ million	0	12	20	0	0
Average Award £[1]	0	786	254	211	61

Unemployed

	MP	*FP*	*CCG*	*BL*	*CL*
Applications received (000)	85	10	323	499	498
Decisions (000)[1]	91	11	371	554	480
Awards (000)[1]	82	10	66	298	402
Awards as per cent. of decisions[1]	90	91	18	54	84
Refusals (000)	9	1	305	238	76
Gross Expenditure £ million	8	8	14	61	23
Recoveries £ million	0	0	0	52	18
Net Expenditure £ million	8	8	14	9	5
Average Award £[1]	101	805	214	205	57

1992–93

Disabled

	MP	*FP*	*CCG*	*BL*	*CL*
Applications received (000)	6	3	113	111	27
Decisions (000)[1]	6	3	141	125	27
Awards (000)[1]	5	3	65	68	22

1992–93
Disabled

	MP	*FP*	*CCG*	*BL*	*CL*
Awards as per cent. of decisions[1]	90	92	46	54	83
Refusals (000)	1	0	76	50	4
Gross Expenditure £ million	1	3	18	15	1
Recoveries £ million	0	0	0	11	1
Net Expenditure £ million	1	3	18	3	0
Average Award £[1]	101	840	279	215	52

Others

	MP	*FP*	*CCG*	*BL*	*CL*
Applications received (000)	180	57	642	827	303
Decisions (000)[1]	169	46	546	760	284
Awards (000)[1]	140	34	112	443	240
Awards as per cent. of decisions[1]	83	74	20	58	84
Refusals (000)	28	12	434	284	42
Gross Expenditure £ million	14	26	38	100	19
Recoveries £ million	0	1	0	85	15
Net Expenditure £ million	14	25	38	15	4
Average Award £[1]	101	784	338	226	80

1993–94
Pensioners

	MP	*FP*	*CCG*	*BL*	*CL*
Decisions (000)[1]	<1	21	116	63	8
Awards (000)[1]	<1	19	71	25	6
Awards as per cent. of decisions[1]	97	90	61	39	80
Refusals (000)	0	2	45	31	1
Gross Expenditure £ million	0	16	19	5	0
Recoveries £ million	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Net Expenditure £ million	0	n/a	19	n/a	n/a
Average Award £[1]	101	859	261	219	60

Unemployed

	MP	*FP*	*CCG*	*BL*	*CL*
Decisions (000)[1]	86	14	374	553	508
Awards (000)[1]	82	13	63	310	413
Awards as per cent. of decisions[1]	95	96	17	56	81
Refusals (000)	4	1	311	222	90
Gross Expenditure £ million	8	12	13	66	23
Recoveries £ million	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Net Expenditure £ million	8	n/a	13	n/a	n/a
Average Award £[1]	101	894	207	212	56

1993–94
Disabled

	MP	*FP*	*CCG*	*BL*	*CL*
Decisions (000)[1]	9	5	192	176	45
Awards (000)[1]	9	5	83	96	36
Awards as per cent. of decisions[1]	96	96	43	54	79
Refusals (000)	0	0	110	69	9
Gross Expenditure £ million	1	5	24	21	2
Recoveries £ million	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Net Expenditure £ million	1	n/a	23	n/a	n/a
Average Award £[1]	101	915	280	222	56

Others

	MP	*FP*	*CCG*	*BL*	*CL*
Decisions (000)[1]	154	42	570	786	299
Awards (000)[1]	139	35	112	471	241

Others

	MP	*FP*	*CCG*	*BL*	*CL*
Awards as per cent. of decisions[1]	90	83	20	60	81
Refusals (000)	15	7	458	278	53
Gross Expenditure £ million	14	30	38	112	20
Recoveries £ million	0	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
Net Expenditure £ million	14	n/a	38	n/a	n/a
Average Award £[1]	101	866	335	237	81

[1] Included in the number of awards is the number of awards after review.

Key:

MP = Maternity Payment
FP = Funeral Payment
CCG = Community Care Grant
BL = Budgeting Loan
CL = Crisis Loan
n/a = Not available by client group.

— Excluded from the tables is information on cold weather payments as this cannot be broken down by the client groups requested.

— The tables for 1993–94 do not include the number of applications as they cannot be broken down by client group under the new computer system.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how his Department will determine average rents in an area following his changes to housing benefit.

Mr. Roger Evans: We are considering options and will be discussing these with, for example, the local authority associations and the Institute of Rent Officers.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what safeguards will exist to ensure that availability for work criteria are properly matched to the capability of the claimant in respect of people being transferred from disability living allowance to unemployment benefit.

Mr. Roger Evans: The Government have no proposals to transfer people from disability living allowance to unemployment benefit. However, regulation 7B of the Social Security (Unemployment, Sickness and Invalidity Benefit) Regulations 1983 currently provides that disabled people who are capable of some work may impose restrictions on their availability and receive Unemployment benefit where the restrictions are reasonable in view of their physical or mental condition.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make arrangements with the agency overseeing disability living allowance to ensure that offices holding claimant's files retain those files following an adverse decision on an application for disability living allowance for the period within which an appeal could be made.

Mr. Hague: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, dated 15 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the retention of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) files at the office where an adverse decision was made.

The main responsibility of Disability Benefits Centres (DBC) is the processing of initial claims to both DLA and Attendance Allowance, before the centralised units in Blackpool take over the case.

Since the introduction of DLA in April 1992 the Benefits Agency has looked carefully at the question of holding files at the office where the initial decision is made. Our research has shown that the three month period following the initial decision is the period of high activity and this also represents the prescribed time limit for applications for a review on any grounds.

A pilot exercise is currently being carried out at Newcastle DBC where the file is retained and almost all of the activity that arises in the three month period following the decision on a new claim is dealt with; some work done by specialist sections, such as Motability agreements, is retained at the DLA Unit in Blackpool. If the pilot at Newcastle successfully demonstrates efficiency and an improved customer service, consideration will be given to extending the practice to other DBCs.

This pilot exercise is part of the Benefits Agency's strategy to improve customer service and to work towards the introduction of a One Stop service.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

VAT (Fuel)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what further measures he is taking to protect those on low incomes from the effect of the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel in *(a)* in the current year and *(b)* from 1995 onwards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: The help that was given in the April 1994 uprating will remain in place as a permanent addition to benefit rates. In addition, VAT on domestic fuel has raised the indices on which the 1995 uprating will be based and benefit levels will be higher from next April as a result. Further, social fund cold weather payments, which increased from £6 to £7 in November 1994, will rise again to £8.50 in November 1995.

Funding of the home energy efficiency scheme will be raised to £100 million per annum, £30 million of which will be over and above that announced in 1993. The total extra help made available for home energy efficiency since the levy was introduced will amount to £65 million.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much will be saved under the proposed contributory jobseeker's allowance through the abolition of the adult dependent allowance in each financial year from 1 April 1996.

Mr. Roger Evans: It is estimated that, benefit expenditure will be reduced by £10 million in 1996–97 and by £20 million in 1997–98.

Notes:

1. Assumes 2.4 million unemployed; 500,000 unemployment benefit cases.
2. All estimates rounded to the nearest £10 million.
3. Estimates in cash prices.
4. Estimates are net of any effects in other benefits.
5. Based on 1993 annual statistical inquiry, 1993 and 1994 unemployment benefit statistics, and the policy simulation model using 1990–91–92 family expenditure survey data.
6. Assumes contributory entitlement lasts six months.
7. Transitional protection in operation in 1996–97.

Child Maintenance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what estimate has been made of the extent to which interim maintenance assessments are made under the Child Support Act 1991 which are lower than the maintenance an absent parent would pay after a full assessment;

(2) what procedures exist to ensure the accurate revision of incorrectly low interim maintenance assessments made under the Child Support Act 1991;

(3) whether the consent of the absent parent is required in order to rectify errors made in the calculation of interim maintenance assessments under the Child Support Act 1991;

(4) what arrangements exist for the compensation of families which have received an incorrectly low interim maintenance assessment under the Child Support Act due to error on the part of the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: Interim maintenance assessments are imposed where an absent parent has failed to provide sufficient information about his circumstances to enable a full maintenance assessment to be made. It is not possible to estimate whether an IMA is lower than a full maintenance assessment would otherwise be, since without information on the absent parent's circumstances it is not possible to determine the level of his eventual liability.

Interim maintenance assessments are set at 1.5 times the maintenance requirement—the amount calculated to represent the basic maintenance needs of the child—and, in the vast majority of cases, are higher than the amount the absent parent would be required to pay under the normal assessment.

In cases where IMAs have been incorrectly calculated, child support legislation currently requires that absent parents make a written application before an IMA can be cancelled and a correct IMA imposed. We propose to bring forward amendments to the regulations at the earliest opportunity, to ensure that defective IMAs can be reviewed or cancelled as appropriate at the instigation of a child support officer and without a written application from the absent parent.

The Child Support Agency has made its checks on IMAs more stringent to ensure that they are calculated correctly. These checks include a requirement that all IMA decisions are authorised at management level.

Claims for compensation are considered under the departmental general guidance. Each case is considered on its own merits.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Sittings of the House

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Lord President of the Council what proposals he has for implementing the report of the Select Committee of Sittings of the House—HC 22(1991–92).

Mr. Newton: Following discussions over a considerable period, initially with the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and more recently with the hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) and for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), agreement has been reached on a number of measures to achieve the objectives of the report. These are set out below, and where the proposals involve changes to the formal procedures of the House, the relevant motions appear on the Order Paper for 15 December, and are scheduled for debate on Monday 19 December.

1. The changes in practice and procedure will be implemented as an experiment for Session 1994–95 by sessional order—in the case of proposals marked*—rather than Standing Order amendments.

Bills

2. Voluntary timetables for Bills will be agreed through the usual channels. Guillotines will be used only when voluntary timetables cannot be agreed or break down.

3. Greater use will be made of Second Reading Committees by agreement.

*4. Law Commission Bills will be referred automatically to Second Reading Committees, but they may be de-referred on a Government motion. The Government will accede to any reasonable Opposition request for de-referral.

*5. The Committee stage of consolidation Bills may be dispensed with on a Government motion, and the question on Third Reading will be put forthwith.

Statutory instrument

*6. All affirmative statutory instruments will be referred automatically to a Standing Committee, but they may be de-referred on a Government motion. The Government will accede to any reasonable Opposition request for de-referral.

7. The arrangements for debates on "prayers" will be settled by agreement through the usual channels.

*8. Debates on de-referred affirmatives, any "prayers" taken on the Floor, and de-referred EC documents will be limited to 1½ hours even if started before 10pm.

9. Debates on "prayers" will continue to finish at 11.30 pm if started at or after 10 pm.

Sittings

10. The Government will use their best endeavours to avoid late sittings wherever possible.

11. The Government will use their best endeavours to avoid taking highly contentious business on Thursdays, especially on the Thursdays before "constituency Fridays"—see 16.

12. The Government will use their best endeavours to give early notification of dates of recesses.

13. The Government will use their best endeavours to give early notification of some major debates.

Wednesdays/Fridays

*14. The House will sit every Wednesday morning for private Members' debates on the Adjournment until 2.30 pm.

*15. In exchange, the following time for private Members will be discontinued:

—Private Members' motions on 10 Fridays and 2 Monday afternoons.

—Adjournment debates following the Consolidated Fund Bill.

—Debates on motions fixing dates of recesses—which will instead be decided forthwith.

—Adjournment debates on the last day before each recess.

*16. The former private Members' motions Fridays will become "constituency Fridays" on which the House will not sit.

*17. Subjects for debates on Wednesday mornings will be chosen by Speaker's ballot. One or two general debates will be held between 10 am and 1 pm, and three short debates between 1 pm and 2.30 pm.

Money and Ways and Means resolutions

*18. Money and Ways and Means resolutions taken immediately after the Second Reading of the Bill to which they relate will be decided forthwith.

*19. Debates on free-standing Money and Ways and Means resolutions will be limited to three quarters of an hour.

Short speeches

*20. The Speaker will have wider discretion to limit speeches by backbenchers to 10 minutes.

21. Front Benchers will strive to limit opening speeches to 30 minutes and their closing speeches to 20 minutes.

Miscellaneous

22. Second Adjournment debates will be discontinued.

23. The Procedure Committee will be asked to consider the arrangements for "set-piece" debates.

24. Where appropriate, the time allowed for debates will be regulated by business motions agreed through the usual channels and approved by the House in advance.

WALES

Air Quality

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what studies he has sponsored concerning air quality and lung disease triggered by *(a)* vehicle emissions and *(b)* chimneys of large scale industrial buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Research into air pollution and health is a priority for the Government, who are taking an active part in a wide range of relevant research. The Welsh office has not sponsored any separate studies of this kind.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times he has attended a cultural or theatrical event in Wales since his appointment as Secretary of State; and if he will list them.

Mr. Redwood: I have attended three such events since I have been Secretary of State for Wales. They are as follows:

a. July 1993: International eisteddfod

b. July 1994: International eisteddfod

c. March 1994: Animated opera exhibition

Hip Replacements

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were on waiting lists for hip replacement surgery in each year from 1983 to 1993 in Wales.

Mr. Richards: Information on the total number of patients on waiting lists for hip replacements is not held centrally. However, since the introduction of the patients charter in 1992, information has been collected on the numbers of patients waiting over 18 months, as shown in the following table.

	At 30 September 1992	*1993*	*1994*
Number of patients waiting over 18 months for hip replacement surgery	71	27	1

British Coal Enterprise

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his assessment of the number of jobs created by British Coal Enterprise in (i) Clwyd and (ii) the south Wales coalfield in each of the years since its inception; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is not held centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of the State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future of British Coal Enterprise in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The Government and British Coal are currently exploring options for the services provided by British Coal Enterprise. No final decisions have been taken about its future.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet leaders of the Coalfield Communities Campaign from Wales to discuss the future of British Coal Enterprise.

Mr. Redwood: I would be pleased to consider a request for a meeting.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has had concerning the future of British Coal Enterprise in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have met with representatives of British Coal Enterprise on a number of occasions this year but have received no other representations.

Railtrack (Land)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from local authorities and the Welsh Development Agency regarding land sought to be purchased from Railtrack; if he will discuss the projects with Railtrack; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Vale of Glamorgan borough council wrote about the release of land required for access to the Barry marine development. The council was informed that the matter was one for the British Railways Property Board.

Public Authorities (Rent)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to collect information regarding the headquarters rent paid by public authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. I expect all public bodies to achieve the best possible value for money in their accommodation.

Health Authorities Bill

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the reduction of public sector manpower in Wales arising from the provision of the Health Authorities Bill.

Mr. Redwood: I shall expect liaison committee in due course to submit detailed assessments of likely staffing requirements for my approval.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the estimated annual savings in NHS management costs from the Health Authorities Bill in Wales from *(a)* the merger of family health services authorities and district health authorities and *(b)* the geographical mergers of the health authorities.

Mr. Redwood: I have set a target of at least £3 million per year savings from the simultaneous DHA/FHSA and geographical mergers.

Correspondence

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many "Dear Accounting Officer" letters his Department has written to Welsh non-departmental public bodies in each year since 1984.

Mr. Redwood: "Dear Accounting Officer" letters are issued by the Treasury. Where appropriate, my Department draws the contents of "Dear Accounting Officer" letters to the attention of the non-departmental public bodies which it sponsors, and has done so in respect of the following number of letters in each year since 1984: 1984—22; 1985—18; 1986—17; 1987—10; 1988—9; 1989—9; 1990—3; 1991—8; 1992—20; 1993—10; 1994—7;

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *515*, to the hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), if he will list those companies in whose flotations or shares sales the Welsh Development Agency took part in share underwriting; if he will give the name of the merchant bank effecting the arrangements in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I will arrange for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Member and for a copy of his letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mental Health

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to strengthen the guidelines for the care of those sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983, transferred to out-patient psychiatric care and care in the community prior to the ending of the time period covered by the section order.

Mr. Redwood: Guidance already exists under the Mental Health Act Code of Practice, pursuant to section 118 of the Act, the most recent revision of which was published in 1993. Chapter 27 of the code details the responsibilities of those involved in the possible discharge from hospital of a patient who has previously been detained under the Act. In particular, section 117 of the Act places a statutory duty upon health and social service authorities to provide aftercare.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of 16 and 17-year-olds not in full-time education and without a job or training scheme *(a)* in spring 1994 and *(b)* on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Redwood: Reliable estimates are not available for spring 1994. The most recent information available is for autumn 1992 when the Welsh social survey estimated that approximately 4,500—with a confidence interval of 3,200 to 5,900—16 and 17-year-olds in Wales were not in full-time education and without a job or youth training scheme.

Share Issues

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), 12 December, *Official Report*, column *515*, on what dates the Welsh Office sought approval for the underwriting of share issues in *(a)* Government privatisation stocks and *(b)* private share flotations; and on what dates approval was given.

Mr. Redwood: The acquisition of shares by the Welsh Development Agency is covered by the agency's investment guidelines. No specific approvals have been sought.

EDUCATION

Student Expenditure

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the level of average per student expenditure on *(a)* maintenance awards, *(b)* student loans and *(c)* Higher Education Funding Council for England recruitment grant in 1993–94; and what are the projected levels for 1994–95 and 1995–96.

Mr. Boswell: The average net expenditure per student on maintenance grants paid as part of mandatory awards for students domiciled in England and Wales was £1,630—provisional—in the 1993–94 financial year, and is expected to be around £1,540 in 1994–95 and £1,410 in 1995–96. The net expenditure on student loans taken out by students similarly domiciled as an average of those taking out loans was £720—provisional—in 1993–94, and is expected to be around £970 in 1994–95 and £1,230 in 1995–96.

The average per student expenditure on recurrent grant and tuition fees for the higher education sector in England was £4,480 in 1993–94, and is expected to be around £4,490 in 1994–95 and £4,500 in 1995–96.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last session of Parliament were not answered on the ground that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Boswell: The POLIS database records 50 answers given to parliamentary questions by the Department during the last session as including a reference to the information's requested not being held centrally, was 50.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the original cost in 1990 of the property formerly owned by the National Curriculum Council which was sold at auction on 7 December at the NCC warehouse, Kettlestring lane, Clifton Moor, York, and the amount of money paid for this property at the auction.

Mr. Forth: Some 80 per cent. of the furniture and equipment of the former National Curriculum Council, including nearly all items of value and in good condition, was transferred to the Department, the Funding Agency for Schools and the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority. The residue, consisting of items for which the Department had no use, many of them in poor condition, was offered for auction on 7 December, and realised just over £12,000. The auctioneers estimated its value at purchase as £90,000 plus VAT.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which further education colleges have been found to be mismanaged by the Further Education Funding Council; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: On 17 November the Further Education Funding Council for England published reports on the governance and management of Derby tertiary college, Wilmorton and St Philip's Roman Catholic sixth form college, Birmingham. The funding council has recommended that my right hon. Friend should exercise her power under section 57 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to remove all the governors from both institutions and replace them with new governors. There is no evidence to suggest that the problems of mismanagement, identified as affecting these two colleges by the reports are widespread.

Primary Schools

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if she will make a statement on the funding for primary school provision;

(2) what additional financial assistance is given to areas of social deprivation to help with primary education; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what representations she has received on the future funding for nursery and primary school education; and if she will make a statement;

(4) what advice she gives to local education authorities on the formula for the funding for primary education; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations concerning the future funding of nursery and primary school education. An announcement on the further development of nursery education will be made once the work of the task force is complete.

Within the education standard spending assessment, some 20 per cent. of grant is distributed through the additional educational needs index, which reflects the higher cost of providing education in areas of relative deprivation.

At local level, the allocation of resources to individual schools will be determined by the local education authority's local management of schools funding formula, and the proportion of funding allocated to primary schools will depend substantially on the relative weightings assigned by the formula to pupils of different ages—which are a matter for the LEA to determine. LEA's formulae may make special provision for schools affected by social deprivation, provided that the factors used for this purpose are sufficiently objective and the formula as a whole complies with certain requirements as to the overall proportion of funding which must be distributed according to pupil numbers. Guidance to LEAs on these matters is contained in the Department's circular 2/94.

Reading Recovery Schemes

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions she *(a)* has had, or *(b)* plans to have, with those local education authorities which have failed to secure funding for existing reading recovery schemes through the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has no plans to discuss individual single regeneration budget bids with local education authorities. Unsuccessful bidders have been invited to contact their regional Government office, if they have queries.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to ensure the completion of training courses by existing reading recovery teacher trainees in local education authorities which have failed to secure funding for existing reading recovery schemes under the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is for local education authorities to take steps to ensure that teachers complete their reading recovery training course. Authorities are aware that funding for the three-year national pilot of reading recovery will end as planned in March 1995.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to ensure the spread of good practice in reading recovery schemes to local education authorities which have had no previous involvement in the scheme.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department is funding the reading recovery national network team at the institute of Education, university of London to provide information and advice on reading recovery to all LEAs.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment has been made by her Department of the long-term financial implications of reading recovery schemes for schools operating such schemes.

Mr. Robin Squire: The reading recovery national network team at the institute of education, university of

London, estimate that the cost of reading recovery to schools is £1,000 per child. An independent research project, sponsored by the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority, is also looking at the cost of reading recovery.

It is for schools and local education authorities themselves to consider, in the light of their own circumstances, whether long-term savings resulting from successful reading recovery schemes are sufficient to offset those costs.

School Inspections

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make arrangements for all reports produced by the Office for Standards in Education inspection teams under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 to be placed in the Library.

Mr. Forth: These are matters for Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, who heads the independent Office for Standards in Education. I have asked Mr. Woodhead to write to the hon. Member.

University Students

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students commenced university in the current year; what was the figure five years ago; and what is his estimate for next year.

Mr. Boswell: Full statistics for this year are not yet available, but new entrants to full-time undergraduate courses in Britain have been projected at some 308,000. This compares with 197,000 in the academic year 1989–90. It is for universities and colleges to decide on how many new entrants to admit next year, in the light of the number of students continuing from the present academic year and the current need to consolidate total student numbers. But the Government's plans allow for the proportion of young people entering full-time higher education in Britain to remain above 30 per cent., compared with 17 per cent. in 1989–90.

DEFENCE

Equipment (Contracts)

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many light dumpers his Department will be purchasing from A/S Hydrema of Denmark under contract No. EM and DIA/92; how many United Kingdom contractors tendered for this contract; what consideration was given to lease of the equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Twelve light dumpers will be purchased from A/S Hydrema under contract No. EM and DIA/92. One United Kingdom contractor was invited to tender for the contract but declined to bid. Leasing was not considered appropriate in this instance but will be considered for equipment and components on a case-by-case basis.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reasons his Department is proposing to re-paint certain RAF VC10s; to what extent contractors will be involved in the proposed (i) structural corrosion survey, (ii) major maintenance and (iii) rectification of corrosion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The paint finish on military aircraft serves two functions. The colour scheme and type of paint are selected to camouflage the aircraft. In addition, the surface finish protects the underlying structure from the damaging effects of the environment and, in particular, acts as an anti-corrosion treatment. As paint deteriorates with age, it is necessary to repaint aircraft routinely.

The repaint contractor will not be involved in either the structural corrosion survey, which will be undertaken by RAF technicians, or the major maintenance, which is completed by the RAF at RAF St. Athan with the assistance of a contractor's working party. Corrosion identified by RAF technicians will be rectified during major maintenance.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline current arrangements for repair and overhaul of marine diesel engines used by the Royal Navy, showing the extent of contractor involvement.

Mr. Freeman: Except for minor repair and maintenance work, the repair and overhaul of marine diesel engines used by the Royal Navy is undertaken by contractors, mostly appointed through competition.

Mr. Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the contract for the ocean survey vessel will be awarded on the same basis as the landing platform, helicopters; and what differences there will be in the criteria used.

Mr. Freeman: As with the award of the contract for the design and build of the landing platform helicopter, the outcome of the current competition for the ocean survey vessel will be based on best value for money for the defence budget.

Royal Logistics Corps, Hereford

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be able to make an announcement as to the future of the regional depot, Royal Logistics Corps, Hereford.

Mr. Soames: I am considering the proposals for the rationalisation of the Army's non-explosive storage facilities, including regional depot Hereford, and will be making an announcement in the near future.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Soames: Less than 1 per cent.

Western European Union

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *459*, what consideration Her Majesty's Government are giving to the possibility that the Western European Union should become a formal pillar of the EU on the same basis as the Foreign Affairs Council and the common foreign and security policy.

Mr. Soames: The Government's policy is to develop the Western European Union in the role defined for it in the declaration of WEU Ministers at Maastricht in 1991, and described in my reply to the hon. Member for South Shields.

Combat Reconnaissance Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British military aircraft are fitted with electronic combat reconnaissance equipment; what programme he has to extend the use of such equipment; and what assessment he has made of the capacity of British manufacturers to provide and fit such equipment.

Mr. Freeman: Some Tornado GR1 and Nimrod aircraft are equipped to undertake electronic combat reconnaissance tasks. We are currently considering a number of proposals to enhance existing equipment. We maintain regular contact with British industry to monitor developments in this area.

Salisbury Plain

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* civilians and *(b)* military personnel are currently employed (i) on Salisbury plain training area and (ii) at Otterburn; and whether he expects these numbers to rise.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

	Civilians	*Military*
Salisbury Plain	240	11
Otterburn	124	7

There are no plans to increase the numbers on Salisbury plain, although it is possible that up to 15 additional civilian staff will be required at Otterburn in the future.

Nuclear-powered Submarines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which docklands each of the strategic submarine nuclear, SSN, and strategic submarine ballistic nuclear SSBN, nuclear-powered submarines have been earmarked for storage afloat when they are withdrawn from operational service.

Mr. Freeman: The location of each nuclear-powered submarine that has left Royal Navy service is provided in the following table. All these submarines, except HMS Valiant and HMS Resolution, have completed the process of defuelling, de-equipping and lay-up preparations and are stored afloat in suitable berths. It is not our practice to reveal in advance details of decommissioning plans for nuclear-powered submarines currently in service.

HM Submarines	*Location*
Dreadnought	Roysth
Warspite	Devonport
Churchill	Rosyth
Conqueror	Devonport
Swiftsure	Rosyth
Courageous	Devonport
Revenge—SSBN	Rosyth
Valiant	Devonport
Resolution—SSBN	Rosyth

Departmental Dwellings

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many vacant dwellings are owned by his Department in Plymouth.

Mr. Soames: As at 30 September my Department owned 302 vacant dwellings in Plymouth in the following categories:

Service married quarters—281

Former married quarters in the process of sale—16

Civilian houses—5

A large number of the vacant service married quarters were undergoing or awaiting major maintenance, held for future deployments, or formed part of the management margin needed to ensure that accommodation is available for entitled service families.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* the number of dwellings owned by his Department and *(b)* the number of dwellings owned by his Department which are currently unoccupied for (i) Devon and (ii) Cornwall.

Mr. Soames: As at 30 September, my Department owned the following dwellings in Devon and Cornwall:

	Stock	*Vacant*
Devon		
Service married quarters	3,040	342
Former married quarters in the process of sale	16	16
Civilian houses	9	0
Former civilian houses in the process of sale	0	0
Cornwall		
Service married quarters	1,138	259
Former married quarters in the process of sale	2	2
Civilian houses	0	0
Former civilian houses in the process of sale	1	0

A large number of the vacant service married quarters were undergoing or awaiting major maintenance, held for future deployments, or formed part of the management margin needed to ensure that accommodation is available for entitled service families.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dwellings are currently owned by his Department.

Mr. Soames: As at 30 September my Department owned 74,686 dwellings in the following categories:

Service married quarters—70,851

Former married quarters in the process of sale—2,744

Civilian houses—581

Former civilian houses in the process of sale—510

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many former wives of service personnel have been evicted from Ministry of Defence properties in each year since 1989.

Mr. Soames: All former wives of service personnel are allowed to remain in their married quarter for at least 93 days and are not normally evicted unless alternative accommodation is available to them. Figures for evictions are not held in a uniform format by the services. The figures give the number of actual evictions in respect of the Army, but for the Navy and RAF represent the number of warrants issued for the repossession of a married quarter. In most cases no eviction results, because alternative accommodation becomes available.

	1989–90	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
Navy	13	19	12	33	28	[1]23
	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
RAF	23	8	47	19	44	[1]17
	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Army	6	9	12	14	5	[1]11

Note:

[1] To date.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of providing maintenance and security on the vacant dwellings owned by his Department for each year since 1990.

Mr. Soames: The cost of providing maintenance and security for surplus dwellings in the process of being sold was as follows:

Financial year
1993–94—£231,000
1994–95—to date—£124,000

Figures for previous years are not available. Security for empty dwellings which are not surplus to requirements is provided by the Ministry of Defence police and military patrols and costs are therefore not separately identifiable.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dwellings owned by his Department have been sold to *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations since 1992.

Mr. Soames: The following numbers of dwellings have been sold to local authorities and housing associations since 1992:

Financial year	*Local authorities*	*Housing associations*
1992–93	24	235
1993–94	27	97
1994–95—to date	Nil	237

In addition, 120 flats at Rowner were sold to Barratts (Builders) in 1993–94. These will form part of a scheme involving a housing association.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many vacant dwellings are owned by his Department in each parliamentary constituency in Devon and Cornwall.

Mr. Soames: As at 30 September, my Department owned the following vacant dwellings in each parliamentary constituency in Devon and Cornwall:

	Service married quarters	*Civilian houses*	*Former married quarters in the process of sale*	*Total*
North Devon	43	0	0	43
Exeter	7	0	0	7
Honiton	0	0	0	0
Plymouth Devonport	215	5	16	236
Plymouth Drake	8	0	0	8
Plymouth Sutton	58	0	0	58
Torridge and West Devon	11	0	0	11
Falmouth and Camborne	0	0	0	0
North Cornwall	158	0	2	160
St. Ives	88	0	0	88
South-east Cornwall	13	0	0	13

A large number of the vacant service married quarters were undergoing or awaiting major maintenance, held for future deployments, or formed part of the management margin needed to ensure that accommodation is available for entitled service families.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dwellings owned by his Department are currently unoccupied.

Mr. Soames: As at 30 September my Department owned 11,995 vacant dwellings in the following categories:

Service married quarters — 9,715
Former married quarters in the process of sale — 2,014
Civilian houses — 209
Former civilian houses in the process of sale — 57

The majority of the vacant service married quarters were undergoing or awaiting major maintenance, held for future deployments, or formed part of the management margin needed to ensure that accommodation is available for entitled service families. Of the vacant civilian houses, 68 were leased properties awaiting return to Dumbarton district council, 91 were houses recently taken over from the United States air force awaiting occupation by Ministry of Defence police staff and the remainder were mainly properties in secure areas which could not be sold for security or safeguarding reasons.

HMS Sirius

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what expenditure was made by his Department on the refit of HMS Sirius; and when this work was carried out.

Mr. Freeman: The last refit of HMS Sirius was undertaken between October 1989 and May 1991 at a total cost of about £25 million.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has for using HMS Sirius for missile target practice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Following her decommissioning in 1993, HMS Sirius was marketed extensively as an operational vessel to foreign navies. No such purchaser has, however, been found, and we are currently considering the best alternative route for her disposal, including her possible use as a target for weapon development. No decisions have, however, been taken.

Ships (Target Practice)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which ships his Department has used for target practice during the past five years.

Mr. Soames: Three decommissioned warships were used as targets and sunk in live firing exercises between 1990 and 1994. It is common practice for navies to test weapon effectiveness on surplus vessels which have had all reusable spares and equipment removed. Testing the effectiveness of a weapon against a realistic target is of particular value in the course of weapon development, which is an extremely expensive process. Such use of targets also provides valuable training.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 16 December 1994

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Speakers' Pensions

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Lord President of the Council since when former Speakers of the House have been disentitled to the parliamentary pension to which they have contributed throughout their parliamentary careers in the calculation of their pension based upon 50 per cent. of final salary; and if he will take steps to ensure that present and future ex-Speakers receive their pension as Speaker in addition to their parliamentary contributory pension.

Mr. Newton: Speakers, and Prime Ministers, were excluded from the parliamentary pension scheme from 1965, when the first pension scheme for Members was set up, until February 1991. Their contributions to the scheme were repaid to them, with interest, when they left office.

In its report No. 26, the Top Salaries Review Body recommended that Speakers and Prime Ministers should be able to join the parliamentary pension scheme but that the change should not be retrospective nor apply to past service. The Government have accepted the recommendation and, since February 1991, Speakers in office have the option to remain in the parliamentary pension scheme and to contribute, earning additional pension on their reduced parliamentary salary.

EMPLOYMENT

Ex-service Women

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 25 November, *Official Report*, column *427*, in how many cases state benefits have been recouped by the Employment Service from ex-service women who have received tribunal awards on the ground of unfair dismissal because of pregnancy.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Mr. A.J. Beith, dated 16 December 1994:

> The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about recoupment of state benefits, by the Employment Service, from ex-service women who have received tribunal awards on the grounds of unfair dismissal because of pregnancy.
>
> I regret that this information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Records are not kept on the status of clients whose benefit has been recouped because of a tribunal award.
>
> The Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions, which is published and held in the House of Commons Library, provides the number of decisions made in Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act cases, but does not detail recoupment separately.
>
> I am sorry I cannot be more helpful.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost his Department.

Miss Widdecombe: Executive search agencies have been used on two occasions over the last year. The total cost is expected to be less than £60,000.

Departmental Telephones

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by his Department for each of the last five years.

Miss Widdecombe: The Employment Department's charges for telephony for years 1989–94 are shown in the following table:

	1989–90 £	*1990–91* £	*1991–92* £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
ES	13,549,979	13,858,393	14,681,323	15,968,500	14,900,554
ED	n/a	n/a	4,964,782	4,132,756	3,834,924
HSE	624,215	700,116	597,922	622,095	636,312
ACAS	336,978	336,971	345,925	408,549	490,014

The figures for the Employment Department for 1989–90 and 1990–91 are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Details of the number of calls made per year are not held centrally.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the duration of the trips, referred to in his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *679* which were undertaken by Ministers in his Department and on which they were accompanied by their spouses and paid for at public expense.

Miss Widdecombe: My answer of the 26 October, *Official Report*, column *679*, referred to the attendance of my hon. Friend the then Minister of State and his spouse at a social affairs informal council in Athens to which both had been invited by the Greek presidency. They travelled to Athens on the afternoon of 9 March and returned to London the following day.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department (i) hold open meetings, (ii) conduct public consultation exercises, (iii) conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, (iv) publish a register of members' interests, (v) publish agendas for meetings and (vi) publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case *(a)* under a statutory requirement or *(b)* voluntary.

Mr. John M. Taylor: For the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department, the answers are as follows:

(i) none

(ii) The following advisory have carried out public consultation exercises:

the Legal Aid Advisory Committee
the Supreme Court Rule Committee
the County Court Rule Committee
the Family Proceedings Rule Committee
the Law Commission
the Advisory Committee on Legal Education and Conduct

The Judicial Studies Board has sent questionnaires on magisterial training to outside bodies and academic organisations with an interest in that area.

(iii) the Supreme Court Rule Committee, the County Court Rule Committee and the Family Proceedings Rule Committee regularly consult with individuals and organisations which have a professional or commercial interest in the amendment of rules of court.

The Law Commission do conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests but this is encompassed within (ii) above.

(iv) none

(v) none

(vi) none

There are no statutory requirement for these bodies in respect of any of the matters mentioned in the question.

DEFENCE

RAF Housing

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects 26 RAF houses in Lacey street and Crowlea road, Boulmer, Northumberland, to be sold; and in what way they are being offered for sale.

Mr. Soames: A survey report on the disposal of the 26 surplus married quarters in Lacey street and Crowlea road, Loughoughton, Northumberland, is at present being evaluated. We expect to be able to offer the properties for sale to service personnel through the services' discount scheme early in the new year.

Gruinard Island

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of protection, surveillance and monitoring at Gruinard island in each year since 1988.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 16 December 1994:

QUESTION 23, ORDER PAPER 8 DECEMBER 1994

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what was the cost of protection, surveillance and monitoring at Gruinard Island in each year since 1988.

2. Gruinard Island was successfully decontaminated in the Summer of 1986 as has been reported in Chemistry in Britain *24,* 690-1(1988). This work was carried out by CBDE Porton Down with the aid of an industrial contractor. An independent evaluation of the work was provided by the Independent Advisory Group on Gruinard Island, whose Chairman was selected by the President of the Royal Society.

3. The island was returned to its original owners in May 1990. During the period from 1988 to 1990 there were final payments amounting to about £6,000 to the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology who were completing a study of the biological consequences of the decontamination of Gruinard Island which had cost £53,000. There were also small residual costs associated with the winding up of the Independent Advisory Group and with the return of the island to its original owners; the exact magnitude of these costs is not readily available without disproportionate effort.

Anthrax

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when research at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment into protection against the use of anthrax ceased; and when the preparation and storage of *(a)* anthrax vaccine and *(b)* penicillin-resistant anthrax vaccine at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment ceased.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 16 December 1994:

QUESTION 25, ORDER PAPER 8 DECEMBER 1994

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking when research at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment into protection against the use of anthrax ceased; and when the preparation and storage of *(a)* anthrax vaccine and *(b)* penicillin-resistant anthrax vaccine at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out work to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical and biological weapons may be used against them.

3. Following the Gulf conflict, increased emphasis has been placed on biological defence which primarily consists of detection and medical countermeasures. The programme of work on medical countermeasures includes the continuing study of both vaccines and antibiotics against a range of potential biological warfare agents including anthrax. This work on protection against anthrax has not ceased and is continuing.

4. The work into vaccines against anthrax includes the study of possible improved vaccines and involves the preparation of research quantities for evaluation in animals. This research includes the examination of the effectiveness of anthrax vaccines against penicillin-resistant strains of anthrax. CBDE Porton Down has not produced anthrax vaccines in quantity for human use although we hold a small stock of vaccine for the immunization of staff working at CBDE with anthrax.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the differences between the first and second anthrax inoculations administered to British personnel during the Gulf war; and by whom they were manufactured.

Mr. Soames: Details relating to all vaccines giving protection against biological warfare agents are classified.

Naval Support

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the conclusion of the Defence Committee in its second report of Session 1994–95, HC 87, that the review of naval support has been conducted in an unsatisfactory manner.

Mr. Soames: The Select Committee's report on naval stores proposals is being considered by my Department. We will make a formal response in the normal manner.

Queen's Flight

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the proposed privatisation of the Queen's Flight, indicating how many companies are being invited to tender; what is their nationality; if the list includes the company chosen to operate Ministers' flights out of Northolt; and if the ground crew in the flight are to be given the opportunity to tender.

Mr. Soames: There are no plans to privatise the Queen's Flight. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 23 June, *Official Report*, column *250*, it was decided following an efficiency scrutiny that the Queen's Flight should move from RAF Benson to RAF Northolt to join the other communications aircraft of No. 32 Squadron. The two would then be amalgamated into one collocated squadron to be known as No. 32 (The Royal) Squadron. This process should be complete by 1 April 1995.

As it would not be practicable to employ two contractors to maintain the aircraft of the single collocated squadron, an extension of the existing engineering support contract was arranged. Arrangements will be made in the normal way to re-tender this task when the current contract expires.

Rosyth Naval Base

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration he gave to making an oral statement on the decision to close Rosyth naval base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's proposals in relation to Rosyth naval base were set out fully in the "Font Line First" publication issued on 14 July, a copy of which was placed in the library of the House, and in the consultative document issued on that day. Full consultation ensued, including with the hon. Member and with other interested parties.

The written answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth Sutton (Mr. Streeter) on 8 December, *Official Report*, column *305* was to confirm a previous proposal and an oral statement was therefore not appropriate.

Gulf War (Biological Agents)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the formulation of the biological agent treatment sets issued to British troops during the Gulf war; what are their known side effects; and if the troops were informed of their formulation purpose and side effects.

Mr. Soames: Specific details relating to medical countermeasures against biological warfare agents are classified, but biological agent treatment sets—BATS—issued to British troops during Operation Granby consisted of a licensed antibiotic. Each individual was issued with one set, together with printed instructions for its use. The antibiotic was to have been taken by mouth on the orders of the local commander when the presence of a biological warfare agent was confirmed. No biological warfare agents were detected in the Gulf and it was not therefore necessary for orders to take BATS to be issued.

Side effects to any antibiotic are uncommon but can include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and skin rash. All troops were informed of the general nature and purpose of BATS but, because they were only to be used to combat life-threatening biological warfare attack, an explanation of their potential side effects was judged to be necessary.

Memorandum of Understanding

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the memorandum of understanding recently signed with the United States of America.

Mr. Freeman: The United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defence and the US Secretary for Defense have signed a memorandum of understanding relating to the principles governing co-operation in research and development, production, procurement, and logistic support of defence equipment. A United State/United Kingdom defence co-operation MOU was first signed in 1975, renewed in 1985, and has now been renewed for a further 10 year period. The aim of the MOU is to promote the widest possible use of standard or interoperable equipment in the interests of national security and to make the most cost-effective and rational use of the respective industrial, economic and technological resources in both countries. The MOU has been of significant benefit to both countries, creating a "two-way street" which has resulted in a severalfold increase in bilateral defence equipment trade since the mid-1970s.

Single Parents (Armed Forces)

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made with his Department's review of the status of single parents in the armed forces.

Mr. Soames: My Department's review of the status of single parents serving in the armed forces is now complete. Its purpose has been to consider, against the background of changing social trends, whether the entitlement to service families' accommodation and other related allowances, which currently applies only to married personnel and to lone parents whose marriages have ended in bereavement, divorce or separation, should be extended to single parents. The armed forces rightly continue to attach great importance to the place of marriage and the family in the service community. We have concluded, however, that single parents should in future be eligible for the same entitlements as other lone parents. These new arrangements will take effect from 1 January 1995, and will place single parents who wish to remain in the service in a better position to meet fully their service commitments, at the same time as fulfilling their parental responsibilities.

Hercules Fleet

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be able to make an announcement on the future of the Royal Air Force's Hercules fleet.

Mr. Rifkind: The Government place a high priority on the maintenance of an effective tactical air transport capability and have examined a range of options on this question. Our plans fall into two distinct parts: first, we have an urgent operational requirement to replace and refurbish that part of the Hercules fleet which is nearing the end of its operationally useful life. For this immediate requirement, I have concluded that refurbishment would provide poor value for money.

The Government have accordingly decided to meet the urgent operational requirement of the RAF by purchasing 25 C-130J Hercules II aircraft from the Lockheed Aeronautical Systems, subject to the satisfactory conclusion of a contract. Lockheed has agreed to place contracts to the value of 100 per cent. of the order with United Kingdom companies. At least 10 per cent. of the value of these contracts will be for work directly on the C130J aircraft itself. As a result, some 36 United Kingdom companies will be participating in the production of C130J not only for the RAF's order but also for aircraft supplied to other nations.

Although the FLA is not available to meet this requirement, it is expected to be available to meet the need to replace the balance of the Hercules fleet and other possible air transport requirements. This would lead to a requirement for between 40 and 50 FLA. The United Kingdom will, therefore, rejoin the FLA programme at the end of the feasibility phase provided that it is managed on a commercial basis under the umbrella of the Airbus consortium. Resources will need to be available at the time and our requirements on price and performance must also be met. Commercial management should include United Kingdom firms being given the opportunity to compete in the programme fairly and on merit. A programme of work on FLA has been set in hand with our partners.

This decision will ensure that our urgent operational requirement is met in the most cost effective way, while bringing substantial benefit to United Kingdom industry which will stand to gain from both programmes.

PRIME MINISTER

Oleg Gordievsky

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish extracts from the notes of the Security Service debriefing of the Soviet defector Oleg Gordievsky to the extent that such extracts *(a)* do not threaten current national security, *(b)* add to public knowledge of the ways in which the Soviet state sought to obtain information from British people about the United Kingdom with a view to breaking its security and *(c)* reveal the main United Kingdom providers of such information.

The Prime Minister: No.

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Prime Minister how many train journeys for one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

The Prime Minister: I have made one such journey in the past 12 months.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Prime Minister what assessment he has made of whether the answers given to the hon. member for Workington on the cost per head of NHS spending in respect of Scotland, 7 December, *Official Report,* columns *278–79,* Northern Ireland, 5 December, *Official Report,* column *47,* and England and Wales, 1 December, *Official Report,* column *830,* are comparable calculations based on comparable data.

The Prime Minister: The answers given to the hon. Member reflect the different structure of the national health service in each of the countries concerned, and the latest year for which figures on expenditure are available.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister what criteria he uses in deciding whether it is appropriate for a spouse to accompany a Minister on Government duties abroad.

The Prime Minister: Public interest, as stated in paragraph 74 of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Council of Europe

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Prime Minister if he will announce the composition of the United kingdom delegation for the 1995 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The Prime Minister: The 1995 ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will be opened in Strasbourg on 30 January 1995. The delegation from the United Kingdom for the session will consist of 19 members of the Conservative party, 15 members of the Labour party and two members from the minority parties.

The appointments of representatives and substitutes have been made on the basis of nominations by the parties concerned, in accordance with the resolution of this House on 22 May 1992, *Official Report,* column *682,* and of the House of Lords on 18 June 1992, *Official Report* columns *290–92.*

The same delegation will be representing the United Kingdom Parliament at the Assembly of the Western European Union, which next meets in Paris in June 1995.

Representatives from the Government Benches will be:

My Noble Friend, the Lord Finsberg—who will continue to act as leader of both delegations.

My hon. Friends the Members for:
- Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith)
- Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson)
- Ashford (Sir K. Speed)
- Medway (Dame P. Fenner)
- Lewes (Mr. T. Rathbone)
- Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson)
- Ravensbourne (Sir J. Hunt)
- Reading, West (Sir A. Durant)
- My noble Friend Lord Newall

Representatives from the Labour Party will be:

The hon. Members for:
- Wentworth (Mr. Hardy)
- Tooting (Mr. Cox)
- Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson)
- Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)
- Don Valley (Mr. Redmond)
- Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland)
- The Noble Lord Kirkhill

The representative from the minority parties will be:

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston)

The following substitutes have been appointed to act as necessary on behalf of the delegates.

From the Government benches:

My hon. Friends, the hon. Members for:
- Sheffield, Hallam (Sir I. Patnick)
- Norfolk, North (Sir R. Howell)
- Brighton, Kemptown (Sir A. Bowden)
- Wellingborough (Sir P. Fry)
- Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill)
- Bridlington (Mr. Townsend)
- Newark (Mr. Alexander)
- and my noble Friends the Baroness Hooper and the Earl of Dundee

From the Labour Party

The hon. Members for:
- Glasgow, Pollok (Mr. Dunnachie)
- Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray)
- Newport, East (Mr. Hughes)
- Easington (Mr. Cummings)
- Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe)
- Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall)
- Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. T. Davis)
- The noble Baroness Gould of Potternewton

From the minority parties:

The Noble Lord Mackie of Benshie.

Civil Service

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the management of the home civil service.

The Prime Minister: The Government plan, in the light of the review of the Treasury's activities, that those central civil service management functions that remain after delegation to Departments should be transferred to the Minister with responsibility for the civil service with effect from 1 April 1995. The functions which it proposes to transfer include responsibility for senior civil service pay; policy on civil service recruitment, retirement and redundancy and the central management of the principal civil service pension scheme; and residual central responsibilities for civil service personnel management, industrial relations, conditions of service and allowances, and the collection of civil service manpower statistics. It is envisaged that the Treasury will undertake a last round of national pay negotiations in 1995 and carry through the remaining delegations to Departments up to 1 April 1996. The Treasury's pension benefit calculation work at Basingstoke will be taken over by the Paymaster agency.

These changes, and the delegation of most civil service management functions to Departments, will not affect the Treasury's role in relation to public expenditure, including that on public sector pay. The Government propose to lay before Parliament the necessary transfer of functions order under the Ministers of the Crown Act 1975.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure on energy for each property owned or leased by his Department for the use of Ministers in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Michael Howard: The expenditure on energy for the last three years for which figures are available are as follows:

	1991–92 *£ million*	*1992–93* *£ million*	*1993–94* *£ million*
The Home Office	1.66	1.78	1.74
Executive Agencies	29.20	31.10	31.80

The figures for 1991–92 exclude the Fire Service college and the United Kingdom Passport Agency as no information is available. Expenditure by these agencies 1992–93 and 1993–94 averaged £353,000 and £297,000 per annum respectively.

Money Laundering

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the cash and staff resources of *(a)* the financial intelligence unit and *(b)* the central authority for mutual assistance in criminal matters; how many reports of suspected money laundering have been made to each in each year since 1987; and how many (i) prosecutions, (ii) convictions and (iii) seizures of arms and drugs have been made in each year since 1987.

Mr. Maclean: The financial disclosures and money laundering section, formerly the financial intelligence unit, of the National Criminal Intelligence Service as 14 staff at a projected cost, including a common services element, of £460,000 in 1994–95. The United Kingdom Central Authority for Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters is a part of the Home Office. It has 13 staff in post: estimated staff costs for 1994–95 are £262,000. Figures for non-staff costs attributable to the central authority are not readily available.

All disclosures of suspicious financial transactions under the money laundering legislation are passed to the financial disclosures and money laundering section. Figures for numbers of disclosures are as follows:

Year	*Disclosures*
1987	544
1988	839
1989	1,595
1990	3,150
1991	4,410
1992	11,281
1993	12,750

The available information on prosecutions and convictions relates to the offence, in section 24 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986. of assisting another to retain the proceeds of drug trafficking. The figures are:

	Prosecutions	*Convictions*
1987	8	0
1988	18	7
1989	11	3
1990	10	5
1991	15	4
1992	11	8
1993	16	7

Statistics on firearms seizures are not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The most recent information on drugs seizures is contained in Home Office statistical bulletin 30/93: *Statistics of Drugs Seizures and Offenders Dealt with, United Kingdom, 1992*, a copy of which is in the Library. The figures, information for 1993 is not yet available, are:

	Number
1987	30,690
1988	38,235
1989	52,131
1990	60,859
1991	69,805
1992	72,065

Fly-posting and Litter Offences

Mr. Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there have been for *(a)* fly-posting and *(b)* litter offences for each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Information held centrally cannot separately identify offences of fly-posting from other summary offences under the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

Information for litter offences is given in the table below. 1994 data will not be available until the autumn 1995.

Number of defendants prosecuted for dropping litter[1]
1991–1993England and Wales

	1991	*1992*	*1993*
Prosecutions	1,673	1,639	1,170

[1] An offence under Section 1(3) of the Litter Act 1983 repealed by Section 87 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

North Wales Police Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will grant extra funds to the North Wales police authority to enable it to fund its national DNA database; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The costs and benefits to the police of the DNA database have been taken fully into account in our assessment of future police spending requirements. It will be for chief constables to decide what use to make of the DNA database service on the balances as they see it, of those costs and benefits.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much funding was spent by his Department on researching alternatives to animal experiments for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The readily available information is as follows:

Year	*£*
1984–85 to 1987–88	215,000
1988–89	60,000
1989–90	120,000
1990–91	115,500
1991–92	215,000
1992–93	253,000
1993–94	308,000
1994–95	273,000

Police Duties

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hours annually, on average, a police constable spends *(a)* on operational duties and *(b)* undergoing training in England and Wales as a whole and in each individual police force.

Mr. Maclean: I regret that information on time spent on operational duties is not available. In 1991–92, the latest year for which figures are available, police constables in England and Wales spent, on average, 14.8 days in training. The figures for individual forces are as follows:

Force	*Average training days*
Avon and Somerset	15
Bedfordshire	16
Cambridgeshire	15
Cheshire	11
City of London	21
Cleveland	16
Cumbria	18
Derbyshire	6
Devon and Cornwall	17
Dorset	17
Durham	12
Dyfed-Powys	15
Essex	20
Gloucestershire	20
Greater Manchester	17
Gwent	12
Hampshire	11
Hertfordshire	14
Humberside	22
Kent	24

Force	*Average training days*
Lancashire	15
Leicestershire	18
Lincolnshire	14
Merseyside	12
Metropolitan	13
Norfolk	18
Northamptonshire	16
Northumbria	8
North Wales	8
North Yorkshire	18
Nottinghamshire	16
South Wales	14
South Yorkshire	15
Staffordshire	19
Suffolk	12
Surrey	20
Sussex	19
Thames Valley	16
Warwickshire	12
West Mercia	18
West Midlands	15
West Yorkshire	12
Wiltshire	22

Note:

Training lasting for less than half a day is not recorded.

Security Service Tribunal

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the appointment of the members of the security service tribunal.

Mr. Howard: Her Majesty has been pleased to re-appoint Lord Justice Simon Brown, Sheriff John McInnes and Sir Richard Gaskell as, respectively, president, vice-president and member of the security service tribunal for five years with effect from 18 December.

Animal Transportation

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what requests his Department has made to the companies involved in exporting live animals from Millbay docks in Plymouth to contribute towards the policing costs.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 15 December 1994]:* None. This is a matter for the police authority.

The disorder is caused by those seeking to blockade and disrupt the docks not by exporters carrying out a lawful activity.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Independent Commissioner for the Holding Centres

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will amend the terms of reference for the independent commissioner for the holding centres to permit the commissioner to be present at interviews with terrorist suspects in the police offices.

Sir John Wheeler: Following discussions with the Royal Ulster Constabulary, I have today placed in the Library of the House revised terms of reference for the Independent Commissioner for the Holding Centres to permit him to be present at interviews with terrorist suspects in the police offices, subject to certain caveats agreed both by the Commissioner and the RUC.

This represents a very positive response to Sir Louis Blom-Cooper's comments in his first annual report which reflect his view that, to sustain its credibility, such a right must be vested in the post.

Credit Unions

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many credit unions were operating in Northern Ireland in 1980, 1990 and in each year since.

Mr. Ancram: In 1980 there were 94 credit unions operating in Northern Ireland. By 1990 this figure had increased to 124 and the number in subsequent years are shown below:

Year	*Number*
1991	132
1992	138
1993	150
1994 (to 9 December)	152

HEALTH

GP Fundholding

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the accounting supervision of fundholding general practitioner practices.

Mr. Malone: General practitioner fundholders are required to produce accounts in accordance with the general practitioners fundholders' manual of accounts. These accounts are independently certified by auditors appointed by the Audit Commission. A copy of the general practice fundholders' manual of accounts is available in the Library.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the number of sufferers from Alzheimer's disease, and the proportion of these residing without any family carer.

Mr. Bowis: It is estimated that some 5 per cent. of the population aged 65 and over suffer from dementia and over half of these suffer from Alzheimer's disease. We do not collect information about the proportion who reside without any family carer.

Blood

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the studies undertaken into the National Blood Authority which led to the conclusion that five regional transfusion centres should be closed.

Mr. Sackville: Part of the remit given to the National Blood Authority on its establishment was to provide a strategy to secure an adequate and cost-effective supply of blood and blood products to meet national needs. A review of the blood service was therefore undertaken by the authority.

Elderly People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what specific steps she is taking to improve the equity of medical care, following the report of the Royal College of Physicians, entitled "Ensuring Equity and Quality of Care for Elderly People"; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what specific steps she is taking to ensure a wider knowledge among hospital specialists of the special needs of elderly people with particular reference to those aspects where the development of multiple pathology and poly-pharmacy are relevant; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We welcomed the publication of the report as an incentive to improved accessibility and quality of service for elderly people. Aimed primarily at professionals and managers in the sector, it emphasises the need to meet both the acute health care needs of older patients and any special needs arising from the ageing process, with appropriate liaison between specialists. We have cited the report in our priorities and planning guidance for the NHS for 1995–96.

We have repeatedly stressed that the national health service must be open to people of all ages on the basis of clinical need. Since the publication of the Royal College of Physicians' report in May we have met with the British Geriatrics Society to discuss the issues it raises, and other matters relevant to the health of elderly people, and a further meeting is planned at official level. The chief medical officer proposes to host a seminar next spring for senior members of the medical profession to discuss the education and training of all doctors and medical students in the treatment and care of elderly people. In addition, the Department is represented on a Royal College of Physicians working group updating its 1984 publication "Medication for the elderly", which will provide useful guidance to the field in this area.

Respite Care

Mr. Dafydd Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which Department of State has primary responsibility for the development of respite care services.

Mr. Bowis: In England, policy on respite care provided as part of community care services, and that which is provided as part of services for children and their families under part III of the Children Act 1989, is the responsibility of my Department. It is the responsibility of local authorities and health authorities to plan, develop and arrange provision of respite care.

NHS Trusts (Termination Payments)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, columns *394–95*, how many of the sample of 18 termination payments failed to comply in every respect with departmental guidance as set out in TEL (94)2.

Mr. Malone: National health service trusts have powers under schedule 2 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 to make compensation to, or in respect, of any of the trust's employees who suffer loss of office. They have to exercise these powers within the usual disciplines of public spending. The guidance in TEL(94)3 is advisory.

Of the 18 payments sampled, the NHS executive is seeking further information on eight. Of the other 10 cases, where the payments relate to the termination settlements on which TEL(94)3 provides advice the amounts paid are consistent with that advice.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what use her Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within her Department and executive agencies administered by her Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost her Department.

Mr. Sackville: Neither the Department nor its executive agencies have used executive search agencies to fill vacancies during the past year.

NHS Supplies

Mr. Cran: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the study produced for her in 1993 by PE Consultants assessed the difference in projected savings and efficiency increases likely to arise from integrated facility management of the entire NHS supplies authority function as against separate market testing of some NHSSA functions with private sector contractors co-ordinated by the existing NHSSA management; and whether she will commission independent research to assess which supplies model will deliver best service and value for money to the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: No. The study concluded that some of the functions of the national health service supplies authority should be contracted out to make best use of private sector skills and experience; and some functions needed to be rationalised at lower cost to match the standard of commercial best practice elsewhere. The NHS supplies authority has been charged to deliver programmes of market testing and rationalisation in the areas of logistics, information management, purchasing, and customer services, while maintaining continuity of services to all NHS customers. It is also required to match commercial best practice standards by April 1997. Their progress towards these targets is reviewed each year, and progress to date has been encouraging. NHS supplies has also been invited to work in co-operation with the NHS trust federation to identify ways to improve NHS supplies organisation, operation and accountability. This joint work is at an early stage. The National Audit Office will also be reporting in the first half of 1995 on its study of NHS supplies progress since the earlier NAO study of 1991.

Lindane

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food regarding the use by farmers of substances containing lindane.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) on 15 December, *Official Report*, columns *777–78*.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many termination payments have been made by NHS trusts to chief executives and senior managers in 1991–92 and 1992–93; and what is the total amount for each trust in each year specified.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

Burnley Healthcare NHS Trust

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will re-consider her decision not to hold an independent inquiry into recent events at Burnley Healthcare NHS trust following the publication of the report into the dismissal of Mr. Ian Mahady;

(2) what consideration she has given to the report on Mr. Ian Mahady published by Burnley Healthcare NHS trust.

Mr. Malone: The inquiry report is a matter for the trust, which is responsible for its own management and employment arrangements.

NHS Administrative Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the administrative costs incurred by *(a)* NHS purchasers and *(b)* NHS providers in each region in each year since 1990–91.

Mr. Malone *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* The available information is shown in the table.

National Health Service administration costs 1990–91 to 1993–94 by region

Region	*1990–91 £000*	*1991–92 £000*	*1992–93 £000*	*1993–94 £000*
Northern	55,616	50,937	59,823	76,960
Yorkshire	68,132	92,103	81,582	93,049
Trent	63,721	59,074	73,182	94,392
East Anglian	35,794	29,092	33,480	33,480
North West Thames	69,479	54,863	72,817	100,782
North East Thames	77,782	80,638	74,529	105,158
South East Thames	79,057	53,584	61,593	65,095
South West Thames	58,615	46,714	56,592	66,940
Wessex	48,991	57,543	64,525	76,559
Oxford	38,008	50,786	58,273	76,138
South Western	52,174	36,372	41,372	51,171
West Midlands	91,970	66,079	82,139	88,757
Mersey	37,847	47,844	58,136	46,341
North Western	77,384	49,775	58,574	70,262

Source:

Annual accounts of Regional and District Health Authorities, Family Practitioner Committees and Family Health Services Authorities.

Notes:

1. The above figures represent the total revenue expenditure on the pay and accommodation costs of staff of all disciplines and their support staff employed at headquarters levels in Regional Health Authorities (RHAs), District Health Authorities (DHAs) and Family Practitioner Committees (FPCs)/Family Health Services Authorities (FHSAs). They exclude administrative support in hospital departments and at other local levels which is regarded as operational expenditure.

2. RHA and DHA costs are those reported in the accounts as "Authority administration and purchasing expenses". This includes capital charges after 1991–92. FPC/FHSA administration costs are those reported in the annual accounts as revenue administration costs and represent that part of total expenditure which is not medical, dental, ophthalmic or pharmaceutical.

3. Changes over the years in the roles and responsibilities of FPCs (which became Family Health Services Authorities in 1990), RHAs and DHAs (which started to transfer provider functions to NHS trusts in 1991–1992), together with changes in accounting policies (particularly the inclusion of capital charges in Health Authorities' administration and purchasing expenditure) mean that the figures are not comparable. Additionally, there were differences in management practices and geographical size between regions and the numbers of DHAs, FPCs and FHSAs within regions.

4. The figures for 1993–94 are provisional.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Jobseeker's Allowance

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what protection there will be, under the more stringent tests of availability for work under the arrangements for the new jobseeker's allowance, for claimants who have been deemed capable of work for the purpose of incapacity benefit but whose handicaps may genuinely restrict their availability for work.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

A decision in incapacity benefit that a person is capable of work will apply for all other benefits. In our proposals for the introduction of the jobseeker's allowance we recognise, as now, that some people with disabilities may have difficulties in making themselves available for the full range of employment opportunities. They will, therefore, be able to restrict their availability to the type or hours of work they are able to undertake within the limits of their physical or mental condition.

Cold Weather Payments

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cold weather payments were made and what were the total amounts set out by area for each year since 1983.

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of the cold weather payments scheme is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Michael Bichard to John Battle, dated 15 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about Cold Weather Payments.

Social Fund Cold Weather Payments were introduced in April 1988. For the years 1988/89 and 1989/90 the information you have requested is in the Statistical Holdings section of the Library.

From 1990/91 to 1993/94 the information is not held in the format you requested. It is, however, available in the Library broken down by Benefit Office for 1990/91 to 1992/93 and by District Office for 1993/94.

Prior to the introduction of the Social Fund, payments for cold weather were made at local management discretion under Regulation 26 of the Single Payments Regulations. Information by area is not held and the table below shows the total number of payments nationally in this period and the cost.

	Total number of cold weather payments	Cost
1983–84	NIL	—
1984–85	170,000	£1.7M
1985–86	450,000	£11.6M
1986–87	2,000,000	£10.2M
1987–88	99,000	£0.5M

I hope you find my reply helpful.

Mortgage Interest Payments

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the proposals for reducing the level of support for mortgage interest payments under income support require primary legislation.

Mr. Roger Evans: Secondary legislation only is required to amend the rules providing assistance with mortgage interest in income support.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what savings he expects in a full year as a result of the proposed withdrawal of mortgage interest payments by his Department *(a)* in the first two months on income support and *(b)* at 50 per cent. for a further four months.

Mr. Roger Evans: These two proposals to withdraw mortgage interest payments in the first two months on income support and pay at 50 per cent. for a further four months will be the subject to wide consultation. The financial effect will depend on the outcome of this consultation and the final detail of the scheme.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his oral statement of 30 November, *Official Report*, columns 1205–8, what savings he expects over three years in respect of housing benefit; and what multiplier he used in calculating it.

Mr. Roger Evans: The savings to housing benefit from the restriction on benefit for rents above the average, the increase in non-dependent deductions and the restriction on HB claimants temporarily absent from home are estimated to amount to around £360 million, rounded to the nearest £10 million, over the three financial years from April 1995.

There is no one multiplier used to calculate the savings over three years. Estimation of the build up of savings is specific to each of the policies considered, and depends on a number of factors including estimates of forecast caseload and average rents.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the major changes in housing benefit since it was introduced identifying: *(a)* the numbers of gainers and losers and *(b)* the costs and savings of each measure.

Mr. Roger Evans *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* The information requested is in the table.

Major change	*Date of change*	*Gainers*	*Losers*	*Cost £ million*	*Saving £ million*
Responsibility for the housing costs of boarders/hostel dwellers transferred from Income Support to Housing Benefit[1]	April–October 1989	110,000	—	489	—
Capital limit doubled to £16,000	April 1990	50,000	—	62	—
Disengagement of students from Housing Benefit[2]	September 1990	—	—	—	28
Housing Benefit subsidy reduced by 2 per cent.[3]	April 1991	—	—	—	46
Restrict access to Housing Benefit by persons from abroad and other persons[4]	April and August 1994	—	22,000	—	40

Notes:

Figures on gainers and losers are the estimated figures for the financial year in which each change occurred.

Estimated costs/savings are at 1994–95 prices, except for the "disengagement of students" which is at 1990–91 (because the Department no longer collects data on students' incomes and rent levels).

[1] Housing Benefit gainers/costs were offset by losers/savings in Income Support.

[2] No figures on gainers/losers are available. The changes to Housing Benefit were made as part of an overall package of measures for full-time students and included the introduction of student loans and Access Funds. The overall increase in expenditure on students was over £100 million at the point of change.

[3] No information is available on the number of persons affected by the change to local authority subsidy arrangements.

[4] Three tests were introduced in 1994—the immigration status test in April 1994, and the habitual residence and Rights of Residence Directives tests in August 1994.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will amend Housing Benefit Regulation 101(1) (b) to ensure that landlords will no longer bear the financial responsibility for fraudulent claims made by their tenants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: There are no plans to do so. Recovery of overpaid housing benefit can be sought from a landlord where payment of such benefit has been made direct. In such circumstances, the local authority will still exercise judgement when deciding whether to pursue recovery in this way. Guidance issued to local authorities by this Department provides for authorities to make clear to landlords when offering the opportunity of receiving housing benefit direct, that they may become liable for any overpayment which may occur.

Ministerial Travel (Spouses)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the duration of the trips, undertaken by Ministers in his Department on which they were accompanied by their spouses and paid for at public expense, which was referred to in his answer of 26 October, *Official Report*, column *706*.

Mr. Hague: The trip lasted three days.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department (i) hold open meetings, (ii) conduct public consultation exercises, (iii) conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, (iv) publish a register of members' interests (v) publish agendas for meetings and (vi) publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case *(a)* under a statutory requirement or *(b)* voluntary.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is as follows:

(i) None.

(ii) The Social Security Advisory Committee and the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council.

The Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board also frequently consults with medical experts and outside organisations representing disabled people.

All consultations are on a voluntary basis.

(iii) The Social Security Advisory Committee. Again, consultations are on a voluntary basis.

(iv) None.

(v) None.

(vi) None.

Flooding, Glasgow

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what help is available from the social fund to people on income support who have suffered loss and damage as a result of the recent flooding in the Glasgow area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: Disaster relief following flooding is essentially a matter for the relevant local authority. However, crisis loans can be made available through the social fund to help individuals in such circumstances. Community care grants are also available to help those who might otherwise be in danger of going into care; or to families who find themselves under exceptional pressure. Applications to the social fund are dealt with by specially trained social fund officers who look carefully at the individual circumstances surrounding each application and use discretion and flexibility when forming their decisions. I would expect the majority of any flood applications to the social fund to be dealt with under normal procedures.

Up until 14 December a total of 311 social fund awards had been made to people in the Glasgow area who have been affected by the severe flooding, at a cost of £20,102. The majority of awards were for community care grants. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security proposes to make a social fund in-year allocation of £120,000 to the district offices affected. This will enable reimbursement of the additional expenditure already made and make available an extra £80,000 in grants and £20,000 in loans.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

M11 Link Road

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Attorney-General what role the Treasury Solicitors had in relation to official action against protestors on the M11 link road route; and what was the cost.

The Attorney-General: The Treasury Solicitor, on behalf of the Department of Transport, has taken proceedings against certain persons to restrain them from trespassing upon land required for the M11 link road and from trespass to the contractors' plant and machinery. The proceedings are not concluded and have to date cost approximately £222,000.

TRANSPORT

Empty Property

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make use of his Department's empty residential property.

Mr. Watts: My Department acquires land and property, including residential property, as a consequence of the Secretary of State's duties as a highway authority. Our policy is to keep to a minimum the number of properties standing empty at any time by letting, normally at full market rent, until road construction starts. Properties on the line of the road are demolished and those properties identified as surplus are released back into the housing market at the earliest possible date.

As announced by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) on 30 November in response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), *Official Report*, columns *732–34*, during the current financial year my Department plans to reduce by more than half the number of residential properties standing empty on 1 April 1994.

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Dr. Mawhinney: Whenever it is appropriate I travel by train to official engagements.

Information on individual journeys and the times taken could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department (i) hold open meetings, (ii) conduct public consultation exercises, (iii) conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, (iv) publish a register of members' interests, (v) publish agendas for meetings and (vi) publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case *(a)* under a statutory requirement or *(b)* voluntary.

Mr. Norris: My Department currently has two active advisory non-departmental public bodies—the Disabled

Persons' Transport Advisory Committee and the Street Works Advisory Committee. The answer in respect of these is:

(i) none;

(ii) DPTAC has conducted public consultation exercises;

(iii) participation in the consultation exercises at (ii) has included bodies with outside commercial interests;

(iv) none;

(v) none;

(vi) none.

The Consultations referred to at (ii) and (iii) were voluntary.

M4

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to his oral answer on 21 November, *Official Report*, columns 325–26 in respect of the contractor's proposals for continuous day and night closures, what arrangements he has agreed for the closure of the M4 to facilitate the construction of a motorway service area at Reading.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Highways Agency has, with my agreement, approved the closure of the M4 in the Reading area for about four hours within a period of six hours between 11pm and 5am on the nights of 27–28 and 28–29 December. This is for reasons of public safety while beams for a new bridge are lifted into place. There will be a further need for closure in the spring when the existing bridge is to be demolished. I am pleased that we have been able to avoid any day-time closures and to limit night-time closures to short periods in the quiet week after Christmas.

EDUCATION

School Exclusions

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to introduce a national system to monitor exclusions from school.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 25 November, *Official Report*, column *395*.

Pupils

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was *(a)* the total number of pupils at each aged between two and 19 years and *(b)* the percentage of those educated in independent schools at each age for each year since 1989–90.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is shown in the table.

Number and percentage of pupils in independent schools—1990–1994 position in January each year

Age[1]	*1990* *Number of pupils 000's* *All schools*[2]		*Percentage of pupils in independent schools*	*1991* *Number of pupils 000's* *All schools*[2]		*Percentage of pupils in independent schools*	*1992* *Number of pupils 000's* *All schools*[2]		*Percentage of pupils in independent schools*	*1993* *Number of pupils 000's* *All schools*[2]		*Percentage of pupils in independent schools*	*1994 (Provisional)* *Number of pupils 000's* *All schools*[2]		*Percentage of pupils in independent schools*
		Independent schools[3]			*Independent schools*[3]			*Independent schools*[3]			*Independent schools*[3]			*Independent schools*[3]	
19+over	2.2	1.3	58	2.3	1.3	56	2.6	1.4	54	2.9	1.6	53	2.9	1.6	54
18	13.7	4.4	32	14.8	4.7	31	15.9	4.5	28	16.4	4.8	29	17.3	5.2	30
17	128.3	32.7	25	130.1	33.4	26	135.3	33.5	25	139.1	33.6	24	139.7	33.2	24
16	181.8	38.4	21	185.6	37.8	20	195.3	37.9	19	195.8	36.5	19	192.4	36.7	19
15	595.9	48.8	8	567.6	48.5	9	544.4	46.8	9	522.8	46.4	9	532.9	47.0	9
14	571.9	48.4	8	549.7	47.1	9	529.4	47.0	9	540.5	47.5	9	586.3	49.0	8
13	549.5	46.9	9	529.3	47.1	9	540.7	48.0	9	587.5	49.0	8	604.7	48.2	8
12	527.9	46.0	9	539.9	47.6	9	586.6	49.7	8	604.4	48.5	8	597.6	46.5	8
11	538.7	47.2	9	585.7	49.5	8	603.3	49.7	8	596.7	47.2	8	586.2	45.2	8
10	585.2	38.5	7	603.2	39.1	6	596.0	38.0	6	585.9	36.2	6	590.6	35.0	6
9	602.0	36.5	6	595.7	36.0	6	585.3	34.9	6	589.8	33.9	6	589.9	33.0	6
8	595.0	33.4	6	585.2	32.9	6	589.7	32.4	5	589.3	31.7	5	611.8	31.8	5
7	584.2	29.8	5	589.8	30.0	5	588.9	30.1	5	611.6	30.1	5	614.7	29.4	5
6	588.7	26.8	5	588.7	27.8	5	611.1	28.4	5	614.4	27.8	5	628.8	28.1	4
5	588.1	26.8	5	611.1	28.1	5	613.8	27.9	5	628.2	27.7	4	648.2	28.0	4
4	548.5	28.0	5	563.7	28.9	5	579.9	28.9	5	603.8	29.2	5	605.5	28.4	5
3	244.6	18.8	8	258.4	19.4	8	271.2	19.9	7	278.2	20.1	7	290.5	20.8	7
2	34.2	6.3	18	36.1	6.9	19	35.5	6.9	19	39.7	7.6	19	42.2	8.1	19

[1] Ages at previous 31st August each year.

[2] Includes pupils in maintained nursery, primary, secondary (excluding sixth form colleges) and special schools, non-maintained special schools and independent schools including City Technology Colleges and direct grant nursery schools.

[3] Includes City Technology Colleges and direct grant nursery schools.

Pupils

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils who obtained five or more A to C or five or more A to G grades at GCSE one or more years before reaching the 15-year-old age group were no longer at the same school at the time of the January pupil count in 1993–94; and what percentage this is of all pupils gaining those grades.

Mr. Robin Squire: During the preparation of the 1994 performance tables, the following information was provided by schools.

The number of 15-year-old pupils who obtained five or more A*-C grades at GCSE one or more years before reaching the 15-year-old age group, and who were no longer on the roll of the same school at the time of the January pupil count, was 203. This is 0.09 per cent. of all 15-year-old pupils gaining those grades. The corresponding figures for 15-year-old pupils achieving five or more A*-G grades was 252, 0.06 per cent. of all 15-year-old pupils gaining those grades.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by her Department *(a)* hold open meetings, *(b)* conduct public consultation exercises, *(c)* conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, *(d)* publish a register of members' interests, *(e)* publish agendas for meetings and *(f)* publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case (i) under a statutory requirement or (ii) voluntary.

Mr. Boswell: No advisory non-departmental public bodies are sponsored by this Department.

TREASURY

Pensioners

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people over the age of 65 years are liable for income tax at each of the lower, basic and higher rates, in the current financial year.

Sir George Young: Latest estimates for 1994–95 based on projections from the 1992–93 survey of personal incomes are given in the table. Only 30 per cent. of people aged 65 or over are liable to income tax.

	Number millions
Taxpayers aged 65 or over liable at	
Lower rate only	1.1
Basic rate but not higher rate	1.8
Higher rate	0.1
All	3.0

Energy Expenditure

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total expenditure on energy for offices and buildings by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* his agencies in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Costs £ thousands*
HM Treasury	
1991–92	405.2
1992–93	300.0
1993–94	318.1
No. 11 Downing street	
1991–92	18.8
1992–93	10.3
1993–94	9.7
Valuation Office	
1991–92	829.8
1992–93	883.1
1993–94	840.3
Central Statistical Office	
1991–92	285.9
1992–93	286.1
1993–94	284.9
Paymaster	
1991–92	281.6
1992–93	264.6
1993–94	236.6
Royal Mint	
1991–92	68
1992–93	100
1993–94	98

Building Societies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will issue regulations under the Building Societies Act 1986 to prevent building societies from becoming banks unless provision is made to ensure that directors and senior management do not increase their salaries and participation in share option schemes for five years thereafter.

Mr. Nelson: No. Under the terms of the Building Societies Act 1986, a conversion has to be approved by the members of a society, subject to stringent turnout and voting requirements. In the transfer statement put to the members, the board must disclose details of how the remuneration, including share options, of directors and senior management of the society will be affected by the conversion.

Donkey Rides

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of his recent Budget statement as it applies to VAT on donkey rides on Cleethorpes beach.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Since donkey rides are not a recognised form of public transport, even on Cleethorpes beach, they will continue to be subject to the standard rate of VAT.

Restaurant Meals

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been received in VAT levied on restaurant meals in the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: VAT arising from consumer spending is usually estimated from Central Statistical Office estimates of consumer spending. There are not separate figures for consumer spending on restaurant meals. The following figures for output tax paid by restaurants and cafés, etc, for the years 1991 to 1993 give a rough indication:

Year	*£ million*
1991	554
1992	523
1993	481

VAT (Fuel)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will direct Customs and Excise officials to send a refund to Robert MacDonald of Gullet house, South Pool, Kingsbridge, of VAT charged at 17½ per cent. for the kerosene delivered on 3 November for house central heating and hot water; and if he will make a statement about VAT on oil for domestic use.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. Customs has already confirmed to Mr. MacDonald that he was overcharged in error by his supplier. The normal operation of VAT means that his supplier will make the refund. All supplies of heating oil for domestic use are liable to VAT at 8 per cent.

VAT (Palace of Westminster)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what rules apply to the imposition of VAT on all goods and services, with particular reference to the sale of alcoholic beverages in the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The normal ones. The Palace of Westminster is registered for VAT purposes and accounts for tax on all taxable supplies like any other registered trader.

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Wherever it is sensible I travel by train to official engagements. Information on individual journeys and the times taken could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the next steps review of the Inland Revenue will commence.

Sir George Young: In April 1992, day-to-day responsibility for assessing and collecting the taxes for which the Inland Revenue is responsible and for providing support services to the Department was given to a number of executive offices. Each office agreed its own framework document, and all operate fully on next steps lines. In accordance with Government guidelines, a review of the executive office arrangements will begin in January 1995, with the aim of reporting to Ministers by 31 December 1995.

The review will cover the evaluation of the executive offices' performance; reconsideration of the way that their functions are organised and delivered—by reference to the prior operations tests set out in the 1993 "Next Steps Review" (Cm 2430)—and the revision of their framework documents as appropriate. A similar review of the Valuation Office Agency, the revenue's only executive agency, has already been announced and began on 1 August 1994.

Comments and contributions from those who are interested in the Revenue and its work would be welcome and should be sent by 15 March 1995 to Mary Hay, Inland Revenue Next Steps Review, Room 25, New Wing, Somerset house, Strand, London WC2R 1LB.

"Financial Statement and Budget Report"

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make available revised versions of tables 1.5, 6.3 and 6.5 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" in the light of the measures he announced on 8 December.

Mr. Aitken: The revised tables as requested are as follows:

Revised table 1.5: The public spending plans[1]: After changes announced on 8 December

£ billion

	Estimated Outturn	*New plans*			*Changes from previous plans*		
	1994–95	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1994–95*	*1995–96*	*1996–97*
Control Total by department							
Social Security[2]	70.4	72.8	76.0	79.2	1.5	–0.2	–0.3
Health	31.7	33.0	33.3	34.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
DOE—Local Government	29.9	30.3	30.9	30.9	0.0	–0.5	–1.5
DOE—Other	9.4	8.7	9.6	8.6	–0.1	–0.6	–0.6
Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland	28.3	28.9	29.3	29.6	0.0	–0.4	–0.6
Defence	22.5	21.7	21.9	22.3	–0.3	–0.3	–0.2
Education	10.5	11.0	11.2	11.2	0.0	–0.2	–0.2
Home Office	6.3	6.4	6.4	6.6	0.0	–0.1	–0.1
Transport	6.1	4.4	4.4	5.1	0.3	–1.1	–0.9
Other departments	23.6	23.7	23.2	23.0	0.8	–0.3	–0.5
Local Authority self-financed expenditure	11.9	11.8	12.0	12.2	1.0	0.7	0.8
Reserve	—	3.0	5.7	8.7	–3.5	–4.0	–4.8
Adjustment	–1.0	—	—	—	–1.0	—	—
Control Total	249.6	255.5	262.8	271.5	–1.3	–7.0	–8.9
– real terms[3]	244.7	242.6	243.5	246.0	3.5	–0.7	–2.2
– real growth[4]	1.4	–0.8	0.4	1.0			
Cyclical social security	14.1	14.0	14.0	14.4	–0.7	–1.5	–2.2
Central Government debt interest	22.1	24.5	26.0	26.2	–0.4	0.1	0.4
Accounting adjustments	9.5	10.7	12.5	12.7	0.2	0.2	0.9
General Government Expenditure excluding privatisation proceeds	295.2	304.8	315.4	324.8	–2.1	–8.3	–9.8
– real terms[3]	289.4	289.4	292.1	294.2	3.6	–0.7	–1.9
– real growth[4]	2.3	0.0	0.9	0.7	—	—	—
– per cent. of GDP	43.50	42.50	41.75	40.75	—	—	—

[1] For definitions, rounding and other conventions, see notes in Annex A to Chapter 6.

[2] Excluding cyclical social security

[3] 1993–94 prices

[4] Per cent.

Table 6.3: The Control Total and general government expenditure (excluding privatisation proceeds)[1]
After measures announced on 8 December

£ million

	Outturn 1993–94	Estimated Outturn 1994–95	New plans/projections 1995–96	1996–97	1997–98	Changes from previous plans/ projections 1994–95	1995–96	1996–97
Central Government Expenditure[2]	167,636	175,700	179,500	182,900	186,900	1,700	–1,700	–2,600
Local Authority Expenditure[3]	69,305	73,400	73,400	74,700	75,800	1,400	–500	–1,100
Financing requirements of nationalised industries	4,447	1,520	–370	–360	80	180	–870	–290
Reserve	—	—	3,000	5,700	8,700	–3,500	–4,000	–4,800
Adjustment	—	–1,000	—	—	—	–1,000	—	—
Control Total	241,387	249,600	255,500	262,800	271,500	–1,300	–7,000	–8,900
Cyclical social security	14,333	14,100	14,000	14,000	14,400	–700	–1,500	–2,200
Central Government debt interest	19,223	22,100	24,500	26,000	26,200	–400	100	400
Accounting adjustments	8,020	9,500	10,700	12,500	12,700	200	200	900
General Government Expenditure excluding privatisation proceeds	282,964	295,200	304,800	315,400	324,800	–2,100	–8,300	–9,800
GGE excluding privatisation proceeds as a per cent. of GDP	44.25	43.50	42.50	41.75	40.75	–0.25	–0.75	–0.75

[1] For definitions, rounding and other conventions, see notes in Annex A to Chapter 6.
[2] Excluding cyclical social security.
[3] Comprises total central government support for local authorities and local authorities self-financed expenditure.

Revised Table 6.5 Control Total by department[1]*: After measures announced on 8 December*

£ million

	Outturn 1993–94	Estimated Outturn 1994–95	1995–96	New plans 1996–97	Changes from previous plans 1997–98	1994–95	1995–96	1996–97
Defence	22,757	22,510	21,720	21,920	22,320	–260	–300	–200
Foreign Office	1,276	1,440	1,160	1,160	1,180	310	–10	–10
Overseas Development	2,239	2,400	2,360	2,420	2,480	90	0	60
Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	2,881	2,660	3,020	3,000	2,960	–150	40	20
Trade and Industry	2,805	1,860	1,380	800	750	10	–10	10
ECGD	–60	–70	–20	10	10	10	70	80
Employment	3,509	3,720	3,460	3,480	3,440	–10	–70	–40
ransport	5,993	6,100	4,390	4,450	5,080	300	–1,130	–860
DOE—Housing	7,734	7,350	6,890	6,910	6,920	–170	–770	–740
DOE—Environment	2,202	2,170	1,980	1,920	1,910	30	130	70
DOE—PH, PSA etc	–93	–130	–210	–220	–240	40	60	80
DOE—Local government[2]	29,362	29,900	30,290	30,900	30,870	–30	–550	–1,510
Home Office	5,962	6,260	6,410	6,420	6,570	0	–60	–60
Legal Departments	2,418	2,650	2,800	2,880	2,880	–90	–90	–120
Education	9,806	10,530	10,960	11,230	11,240	40	–180	–250
National Heritage	975	980	1,000	960	920	10	10	–10
Health	29,829	31,750	32,960	33,270	34,120	20	10	0
Social Security[3]	67,671	70,360	72,800	75,950	79,200	1,460	–220	–300
Scotland	13,559	14,200	14,410	14,570	14,680	0	–220	–35
Wales	6,302	6,580	6,770	6,870	6,920	–60	–130	–180
Northern Ireland[3]	7,086	7,490	7,710	7,870	8,010	100	–30	–70
Chancellor's departments	3,340	3,390	3,220	3,190	3,140	–40	–150	–210
Cabinet Office—OPSS	1,241	1,320	1,340	1,360	1,390	10	0	10
Cabinet Office—other, etc	1,233	1,200	1,120	1,130	1,160	0	–30	–70
European Communities	1,836	2,040	2,820	2,760	2,640	690	–70	–160
Local authority self-financed expenditure	9,525	11,900	11,800	12,000	12,200	1,000	700	800
Reserve	—	—	3,000	5,700	8,700	–3,500	–4,000	4,800
Adjustment	—	–1,000	—	—	—	–1,000	—	—
Control Total	241,387	249,000	255,500	262,800	271,500	–1,300	–7,000	–8,900

[1] For definitions, rounding and other conventions, see notes in Annex A. See Annex B for the composition of each departmental grouping.
[2] The entry for the Department of the Environment includes payments of Revenue Support Grant and National Non-Domestic rates to English local authorities. These finance, at local authorities' discretion, a range of local services, including education, social services and other environmental services.
[3] Excluding cyclical social security.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the rate of return on United Kingdom manufacturing in 1989–90; and what were the figures for other industrial countries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The rate of return on capital employed by manufacturing companies is published in Central Statistical Office First Release 94(205)—"Profitability of UK companies: rates of return of UK industrial and commercial companies (1962–1993)". Table 14 of OECD's national accounts volume II contains information on rates of return on capital employed in manufacturing for OECD countries. Figures are not comparable between countries because of differences in the calculation of data. For example, different assumptions are made about the life times of fixed assets. Both publications are available from the Library of the House.

Mortgage Interest Payments

Mr. Dewar: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what he estimates the cost to a typical mortgage holder will be of taking out unemployment insurance against the possibility of having to meet mortgage interest payments for a period of nine months.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 9 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *390–91*.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the duration of the trips, referred to in his answer of 2 November, *Official Report*, columns *1131–32*, which were undertaken by Ministers in his Department and on which they were accompanied by their spouses and paid for at public expense.

Mr. Heseltine: The duration of the six official trips referred to in the answer of 2 November, were as follows:

Minister	*Country*	*Duration of trip*
Mr. Hamilton, Minister for Corporate Affairs	Romania	2 days
Earl Ferrers, Minister for Small Firms and Consumer Affairs	Singapore/Australia New Zealand	14 days
Mr. Taylor, PUSS for Trade and Technology	Germany	1 day
Mr. Eggar, Minister for Industry and Energy	South America	11 days
Mr. Heseltine, President of the Board of Trade	Australia/Japan South Africa	8 days 6 days

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. Heseltine: Whenever it is appropriate I travel by train to official engagements. Nine journeys made have been by train in 1994. Information on individual journeys and the times taken could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Cuba

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from Unilever in respect of its investment programme in Cuba.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Water and Electricity Authorities

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current aggregate remuneration, including share options and incentive payments, of the chairman of each water and electricity authority; and what they received in the year before privatisation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Questions on the water industry should be directed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The remuneration of the privatised electricity supply industry is a matter for the companies concerned. Information on the remuneration of the chairman of Nuclear Electric, which is wholly owned by the Government, is set out below.

	1989–90 £	*1993–94* £
Remuneration	[1]3,651	[2]252,000

[1] Chairman appointed 19 March 1990. Figure excludes pension contributions, and taken from Annual Report for 1990–91.

[2] Includes salary, bonus, other benefits and pension contributions. Taken from annual report for 1993–94.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for each electricity authority *(a)* the number of executive and non-executive directors in the year before privatisation together with their aggregate remuneration and *(b)* the current number and their aggregate remuneration including share options and other incentive payments.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The remuneration of the privatised electricity supply industry is a matter for the companies concerned. Information on the remuneration of the directors of the successor electricity companies in England and Wales in 1989–90 is set out below. This information was taken from the main prospectuses, except where indicated.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for each electricity authority *(a)* the number of executive and non-executive directors in the year before privatisation together with their aggregate remuneration and *(b)* the current number and their aggregate remuneration including share options and other incentive payments.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The remuneration of the privatised electricity supply industry is a matter for the companies concerned. Information on the remuneration of the directors of the successor electricity companies in England and Wales in 1989–90 is set out below. This information was taken from the main prospectuses, except where indicated.

	Number of Executive Directors	*Number of Non-Executive Directors*	*Remuneration*
1989–90	4	2	[1]£11,000
1993–94	6	6	[2]£1,136,000

[1] Directors appointed on 19 March 1990.

[2] Including salaries, bonuses, other benefits and pension contributions.

Company	*Number of executive directors*	*Number of non-executive directors*	*Aggregate remuneration in 1989–90 £*
Eastern Electricity	6	5	415,000
East Midlands Electricity	6	4	425,172
London Electricity	5	4	384,712
MANWEB	6	5	464,002
Midlands Electricity	6	4	363,445
Northern Electricity	4	3	249,557
NORWEB	6	4	396,000
Seeboard	7	5	482,000
Southern Electricity	6	4	478,472
South Wales Electricity	6	5	434,233
South Western Electricity	8	4	524,605
Yorkshire Electricity	5	4	372,193
National Grid Company	6	4	[1]415,000
National Power	8	5	[2]47,931
PowerGen	6	5	[2]39,864

[1] Figures taken from 1989–90 annual report.

[2] No National Power or PowerGen Director was appointed prior to 8 March 1990.

Note:

Information on the remuneration of the directors of Nuclear Electric, which is wholly-owned by the Government, is set out below. This information is taken from the 1989–90 and 1993–94 annual reports.

Coal

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what level of financial assistance he intends to grant British Coal Enterprise for the year 1995–96; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: British Coal Enterprise, as a wholly owned subsidiary of British Coal Corporation, is funded by the corporation. My Department does not provide any separate financial assistance to BCE.

The corporation is eligible for restructuring grant under the Coal Industry Act 1987. This includes financial support for BCE. Proposals for payments of restructuring grant in 1995–96 will be presented to Parliament in the main estimates in the new year.

Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the increase in export prices for manufacturers for *(a)* Germany, *(b)* the USA, *(c)* France, *(d)* Italy, *(e)* Japan, *(f)* Spain, *(g)* the Netherlands and *(h)* the United Kingdom to (i) EEC and (ii) non-EEC countries between the last quarter for which figures are available and the corresponding quarter in 1992; and if he will give the figures in terms of a common currency.

Mr. Needham: Changes in United Kingdom export prices can be readily derived from export unit value indices available on the Central Statistical Office central shared database which can be accessed via the Library. Comparable information for the other countries listed is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Oil and Gas Exploration, East Timor

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what *(a)* financial and *(b)* other assistance is being given by his Department to United Kingdom companies exploring for oil and gas in the East Timor gap.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My Department is giving no assistance to United Kingdom companies for exploration for oil and gas in the East Timor gap.

Pool Reinsurance

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will authorise the Pool Reinsurance Co. to change the arrangements for the payment of terrorism insurance premiums for 1995.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I have agreed to an adjustment of the payment arrangements which will benefit policyholders if there are no large losses next year. In 1995, premiums will be payable in two instalments—60 per cent. of the annual premium will be payable at the start of the policy period, and the remaining 40 per cent. at the end of the year. The second instalment will, however, be waived if total losses notified to Pool Re during the year do not exceed £50 million. The instalment provision will be withdrawn in the course of the year in respect of subsequent new or renewed policies should losses exceed £50 million.

Arrangements for 1996 will be determined in the light of experience.

Accounts Services Agency

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has decided to whom he will award his Department's contract for the services supplied by the Accounts Services Agency.

Mr. Heseltine: I have decided to award the DTI contract for the services currently supplied by the Accounts Services Agency to the CSL Group Ltd. Bids were judged on the basis of quality of service, price, continuity of service, and commitment to developing the service. The contract will last for five years, with an option to extend for a further two years at the Department's discretion. Most of the staff, and all of the assets, will transfer to CSL.

Ian Greer Associates

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions he or his Ministers met representatives of Ian Greer Associates in the last three months to discuss matters relating to their clients' interests.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* Our records show that there have been no such formal meetings arranged for such a purpose.

Company Investigations

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many companies were not investigated in the last two years due to lack of resources after receipt of an initial report highlighting misconduct under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jonathan Evans *[holding answer 15 December 1994]:* The number of cases of reported unfit conduct which on first consideration warranted further investigation but which could not be taken forward were:

Year	*Number*
1992–93	192
1993–94	657
1994–95 (to 30 November 1994)	354

The Insolvency Service has not been able to take forward as many disqualification cases as would have been considered appropriate because of the need to balance priorities within the resources available to it against the background of a sharp and substantial increase in the number of insolvencies with which it has had to deal. More resources have now been made available to the service, particularly in the area of director disqualification, and this is resulting in a very significant increase in the number of disqualifications taken forward.

ENVIRONMENT

Humber Estuary

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on what basis he has determined that the Humber east of the Humber bridge is coastal waters for the purposes of the urban waste water treatment directive;

(2) what is the current level of waste water discharge into the Humber from Hull; and if it falls within the limit specified in paragraph 2 of article 6 of the urban waste water treatment directive;

(3) if he is yet able finally to determine whether primary treatment is appropriate for waste water discharges from Hull into the Humber estuary under the urban waste water treatment directive; and if he will make a statement;

(4) with whom the final decision rests as to appropriate treatment of waste water discharges into the Humber estuary from Hull under the urban waste water directive; and on what statutory basis any discharge consent or other approval will be given;

(5) how far is the Humber bridge from Spurn point;

(6) for what purposes the National Rivers Authority treats the Humber bridge as the outer limit of the estuary.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answers Wednesday 14 December 1994]:* The Humber bridge has been determined as the seaward limit of the Humber estuary, for the purposes of the urban waste water treatment directive, in the light of advice given by the National Rivers Authority.

The present sewage discharge at Hull represents a population equivalent of some 500,000 and is untreated. The final determination of whether primary treatment will be appropriate at any location will rest on whether the NRA is satisfied that the results of a comprehensive study demonstrate that a discharge treated to such standards will not adversely affect the environment. In the case of Hull, primary treatment as set out in article 6.2 will be permitted if the conditions set out in article 8.5 can be shown to apply. The NRA will then issue a discharge consent under regulation 6 of the Urban Waste Water Treatment (England and Wales) Regulations 1994 and chapter II of part III of the Water Resources Act 1991: the requirements will depend upon the outcome of the process described.

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of official duties.

Mr. Gummer: Five.

Oil and Gas

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what involvement his Department has in the procedure for licensing offshore oil and gas exploration and extraction.

Sir Paul Beresford: Responsibility for the licensing of offshore oil and gas exploration and extraction rests with the Department of Trade and Industry. My Department is, however, consulted about blocks proposed for licensing and passes comments to DTI in cases where environmental issues are involved.

Elderly and Disabled People

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the publication of the study commissioned by his Department from Ernst and Young on the housing needs of elderly and disabled people and on the main conclusions of the research.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: This research confirms that the Government's policy of enabling frail elderly and disabled people to remain as far as possible in their existing homes, through house adaptations and domiciliary care support, is the preferred option of the majority and is the most cost-effective solution to their housing needs. It also establishes that this policy has been successful in targeting those who are in most need of help, that is, elderly and disabled people in the highest dependency groupings, low-income households, and the most elderly single people and couples.

The report argues, however, that housing providers should re-assess their priorities over specialised accommodation for elderly and disabled people, such as sheltered housing. There is nationally a significant over-provision of ordinary sheltered housing and, to a lesser extent, an under-provision of very sheltered or extra-care housing. This under-provision can be remedied, in many cases through up-grading ordinary sheltered housing.

I welcome this report as a major contribution to the debate about the housing needs of elderly and disabled people and about new and more flexible forms of providing for them. I have placed in the Library today copies of *Living Independently—A Study of the Housing Needs of elderly and disabled people.*

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish technical guidance about identifying, phasing out and destroying polychlorinated biphenyls following the decisions of the third North sea conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My right hon. Friend is today publishing a new waste management paper 6, polychlorinated biphenyls: it supersedes the existing waste management paper 6, which was published in 1976. Because polychlorinated biphenyls are environmentally harmful, their use has been progressively restricted since the 1970s. Some older equipment, particularly electrical equipment, nevertheless still contains PCBs in quantity: these remaining PCBs must be prevented from causing any significant increase in the existing environmental PCB load. The eight North sea states therefore agreed to phase out and destroy all identifiable PCBs by 31 December 1999. A consequent United Kingdom draft action plan is the subject of current consultations. The technical guidance in the new waste management paper 6 will enable industry, commerce and the public sector to identify disposal measures for their remaining PCBs. I commend waste management paper 6 to all managers with a responsibility for premises or equipment. I am placing copies of the paper in the Library of the House.

Departmental Budgets

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to change his Department's cash limits and external financing limits for 1994–95.

Mr. Gummer: The DOE/HC, Housing Corporation, non-voted cash limit, covering grants and capital expenditure financed by the Housing Corporation in England, will be increased by £3,416,000 to £1,478,708,000. The increase is to fund an additional £3 million in respect of city challenge expenditure and for the take-up of end year flexibility entitlement of £416,000 as announced by the Chief Secretary on 14 July, *Official Report*, columns *729–34*, for expenditure under the corporation's approved development programme, including city challenge schemes.

The DOE/LACAP, local authority capital, non-voted cash limit will be increased by £836,000 to £2,221,200,000. The increase is for the take-up of end year flexibility entitlement for supplementary credit approvals to local authorities to enable funding of projects within the housing partnership fund. The entitlement has been recalculated on outturn figures and revised from £530,000, announced by the Chief Secretary on 14 July, *Official Report*, columns *729–34*, and based on forecast outturn data.

The external financing limit for the British Waterways Board will be increased by £500,000 to £48,866,000. This will help the board to cover the costs of canal repairs following a breach of the Leeds and Liverpool canal at Maghull and to bring forward essential maintenance work.

The increases will be offset by savings elsewhere or charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

WALES

Discretionary Grants

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations his Department has received over the last 18 months on the subject of discretionary grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Young People

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the obstacles which reduce the likelihood of young people aged 16 and 17 years who are currently classified as *(a)* ILO unemployed or *(b)* economically inactive and not currently in full-time education taking up one of the opportunities available to them under Government programmes (i) in general and (ii) in respect of each category of opportunity and each category of young people.

Mr. Redwood: All school leavers who do not go into further education or employment are eligible to register with the careers service for vocational training under the youth guarantee. I am not aware of any obstacles which prevent young people from registering, although it is evident that not all do so.

The careers service is to receive additional resources in 1995–96 to strengthen careers guidance from age 13 and I very much hope that this will have a significant effect in reducing the numbers of school leavers who fail subsequently to register for vocational training.

My Department is also helping to sponsor seven projects in Wales which are being run by the training and enterprise councils, in conjunction with voluntary bodies and other organisations, to identify such young people and to develop different ways of promoting their interest in further education, training or employment. Details of these projects will be announced shortly.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department (i) hold open meetings, (ii) conduct public consultation exercises, (iii) conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, (iv) publish a register of members' interests, (v) publish agendas for meetings and (vi) publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case *(a)* under a statutory requirement of *(b)* voluntary.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is as follows:

(i) Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales; (1)
(ii) Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales; Staff Commission for Wales;
(iii) Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales; (2)
(iv) None;
(v) Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales; (3) Welsh Economic Council;
(vi) Welsh Economic Council
(a) The Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales is under a statutory requirement to conduct public consultation exercises and, where appropriate, to hold open meetings in connection with the reviews it conducts. The Commission is also required to publish the reason for such meetings.
(b) The Staff Commission for Wales conducts public consultation exercises voluntarily. The Welsh Economic Council voluntarily publishes agendas for meetings and the minutes of its meetings.

Notes:

(1) The Commission's own meetings are not held in public.
(2) Although public consultations are not targeted at outside commercial interests, the Commission welcomes representations from commercial organisations with an interest in its reviews.
(3) The Commission does not publish the agendas for its own meetings.

Government Agencies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report,* column *515–16,* to the hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) if he will give the date of sale of any shares acquired in the course of underwriting activities by *(a)* the Welsh Development Agency and *(b)* any other Government agencies for which he is responsible.

Mr. Redwood: I will arrange for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Member and for a copy of his letter to be placed in the Library of the House. The WDA has ceased to undertake such activity and no other agency for which I am responsible does so.

Regional Development Grants

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the monitoring arrangements for European Union grant aid in Wales under the RECHAR, RESIDER and the integrated programme of the regional development programme; if he will list the duties of the proposed monitoring committee; and if he will list the representations he has received on this subject.

Mr. Redwood: There will be two monitoring committees in Wales covering the objective 5b, rural Wales, and objective 2, industrial south Wales, areas. The committees will have responsibility for monitoring the implementation of their respective mainstream programmes, and also any community initiatives that are relevant to the appropriate area. The duties of the monitoring committees will be agreed at their first meetings in the new year. I have received a number of representations from interested bodies on this subject.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last session of Parliament were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Baldry: During the period concerned, six questions were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not centrally held.

Gibraltar

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report* column *463,* what representations he has made to the European Union regarding harassment at the frontier between Spain and Gibraltar.

Mr. David Davis: We are considering all possible options. In particular, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs shall be raising the issue in the strongest possible terms when he meets his Spanish colleague on 19 to 20 December. I have already summoned the Spanish ambassador and made a formal protest.

Norwegian Referendum

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what effect the decision in the Norwegian referendum had on the agreement on qualified majority voting in the European Council of Ministers negotiated at Corfu on the understanding that European Union membership would rise to 16 countries.

Mr. David Davis: Article 2(2) of the accession treaty for Sweden, Finland, Austria and Norway provides for the Council to make the necessary amendments to the treaty to take account of non-accession of one of the applicants. A draft Council decision to take account of Norwegian non-accession had been submitted to the European Select Committees of both Houses for scrutiny. This amends the qualified majority voting articles of the treaty to remove Norway's allocation of three votes, and amend the qualified majority threshold from 64 to 62. A separate Council decision, a draft of which has also been submitted to the Select Committees, will amend the Ioannina decision to apply to dissenting minorities of between 23 and 25 votes. The Council will make these decisions on 1 January 1995.

European Union

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many specific decisions and powers hitherto in the ambit of Parliament to act have been ceded to the European Union in the form of *(a)* regulations, *(b)* directives incorporated into United Kingdom law and *(c)* adjudications of the European Court, since United Kingdom accession to the European Economic Community.

Mr. David Davis: This information is not held centrally.

Bosnia

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report,* column *817,* concerning the legal basis for the protection by the UN of the civilian population of safe areas in Bosnia Herzegovina, whether the bombs dropped within the UN-designated safe area of Bihac were dropped on UN troops and to what extent the counter-measures were taken in defence of UNPROFOR personnel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We believe that the sporadic bombardment of Bihac safe area has not been targeted specifically against UNPROFOR. We understand from the UN that UNPROFOR has adjusted its deployment and operations activity to take account of the prevailing security situation in Bihac.

Departmental Telephones

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by his Department for each of the last five years.

Mr. Goodlad: Figures for the FCO, ODA and the Natural Resources Institute are set out below. Costs are the aggregates of voice, data and fax traffic over the telephone network, including line charges. FCO costs are given for 1992–93 and 1993–94. Information for previous years could only be made available at disproportionate cost. Details of call volumes are not available for FCO prior to 1993–94. Call volumes for the ODA are available from 1992–93 onwards.

	1989–90 £ thousands	*1990–91 £ thousands*	*1991–92 £ thousands*	*1992–93 £ thousands*	*1993–94 £ thousands*
Costs					
FCO	n/a	n/a	n/a	10,579	11,220
ODA	452	405	534	442	509
NRI	n/a	170	193	176	189
Total	452	575	727	11,197	11,918
Calls					
FCO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	25,000
ODA	n/a	n/a	n/a	504	564
NRI	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	—	—	—	504	25,564

Cuba

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the United States Government for ending the trade embargo with Cuba.

Mr. David Davis: We believe that the United States embargo against Cuba is primarily a bilateral matter for those two Governments to resolve. But we and EC partners made clear to the United States Government our opposition to the extraterritorial extension of the embargo by the Cuban Democracy Act before that Act was signed in 1992. We have reaffirmed our view on many occasions since.

Ministerial Travel

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the countries to which his Department's Ministers and civil servants based in Britain travelled in 1993 and 1994; and by which airline.

Mr. Goodlad: In the course of their duties Ministers and civil servants travel to most countries using a variety of different airlines.

Overseas Travel

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report,* column *265,* about his Department's spending on air travel, what categories of people travel *(a)* first class, *(b)* business club class or *(c)* economy.

Mr. Goodlad: Ministers on official business travel first class. If this is not available, they travel business class. FCO officials accompanying Ministers who have work to transact with their Ministers during the flight travel in the same class.

On flights of two and a half hours or less, all other FCO officials of assistant under-secretary level and above on official business travel business class. All other staff travel economy class. On flights of more than two and a half hours, officials of permanent secretary level are entitled to first-class travel. All others travel business class.

As a rule, Queen's messengers travel business class. Where only economy and first class are available, they take the higher class.

Management Consultants

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, columns *264–65*, if he will list the names of *(a)* management consultants hired by the diplomatic wing and *(b)* management consultants, information technology consultancies and consultants involved in the aid programme overseas in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Goodlad: In the financial year 1993–94, the diplomatic wing employed the following financial management consultants:

Coopers and Lybrand
Neville Clarke Ltd.
BNB Total Quality Ltd.
Capita
J. Lang
R. Sullivan
R. Gallagher
T. Walk
J. R. Vincent
W. Jones

The aid wing employed the following IT Consultants in FY 1993–94:

The Bruton Consultancy
Team Technologies Inc.
Matrix Logic Ltd.

The aid wing employed the following management consultants in the same year:

Alex Sutherland
Amtec Consulting
Barony Consulting Ltd.
Bar-Quas Ltd.
CSL Group Ltd.
Daniel J. Edelman
Epic
Eric Gill
Ernst and Young
Intrac
Mr. B. A. C. Ager
Overseas Development Institute
Quality Business Management
Segal Quince Wicksteed Limited
The University of Nottingham
The University of Birmingham
Unecia Ltd.
University of Edinburgh
University of Wolverhampton
William Critchley

The aid wing employed the following consultants in the overseas aid programme in the same year:

A Lovegrove
A Ustraykh (Vega International Capital)
Adam Smith Institute
Allen Molesworth
Andersen Consulting
Arthur Winters
Ashridge Management College
Association of British Chambers of Commerce
Aupee
Balfour Williamson
Banes Dawes Associates (C. Banes)
Barclays Bank plc
BBC Management Training
BBC MPM Ltd.
Binnie and Partners
BPP Bank Training
Brian Thompson
British Council British
Postal Consultancy Service
Cadogan Financial
Cadogan Management
Caledonian University
Callund Consulting Ltd.
Capital Markets
CDC
Central Europe Training
Centre for Study of Public Policy
CFBT
Charlton Associates
Chartered Institute of Bankers
Christopher G. Wallden
City of Bradford Metropolitan Council
Clwyd County Council
Coopers and Lybrand
Corby District Council
Crawley District Council
Crown Agents
D. C. Gardner and Co. Ltd.
David Douglas
David Falcon
David James
David Rhodes SMCS International
Denton Hall
Derek Robinson
Dewe Rogerson Ltd.
DFC Ltd.
Doncaster Metropolitan Council
Dr. Chris Scott
Dr. P. K. Richardson
Dr. David Brown: University of Reading
Durham County Council
Durham University Business School
Durham University (Judith Brandsra)
E. Gill
Edinburgh District Council
Edwina Bell of Asru Ltd.
Electoral Reform Ltd.
Environmental Development Group
Environmental Resources Management
Ernst and Young
F. M. C. S. International
F. Wilkinson
Fairplace Consultancy Ltd.
Financial Research Associates
Focus Consultancy Ltd.
FSMD
G. Zielinski
Garside, Miller Associates Ltd.
Geoff Gardner of TRL
GHK/MRM International
Glasgow Caledonian University
Glasgow Chamber of Commerce
Gordon Fraser
Government Actuarys Department
Graham Bannock and Associates
Graham Bennett Associates
Graham Bentley
Heriot—Watt University
HM Customs and Excise (Overseas Training Branch)
Icat—Luton (Keay)
Institute for Fiscal Studies
Institute Local Government Studies Birmingham University
Intel Management
Inter Partner Ltd.
Interforum Services Ltd.

Immediate Technology Consultants, Lynn Muller
International Book Dev Ltd.
International Management Consultants
Islington Borough Council
ISM
Issis (A. Dolman)
J. P. Grierson
Jennifer Barnes Associates
Job Ownership Ltd.
John Buist
John Douglas Field
Johnathon Michie
J. S. Gorie
J. F. M. Arnold
Keith Hinchliffe
Keith Thomas
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
Kiron Sarkar
Kleinwort Benson
KPMG
KPMG Peat Marwick
Lancashire Enterprises
Lath
Leeds City Council
Linklaters and Paines
Liverpool John Moores University
Lloyds Bank plc
London Business School
London Economics
London Quality Centre—Robinson
London Stock Exchange
Lynn Hale, Crown Agents
Lywood David International
M. Jeremiah
M. Odesalchi
M. Sheldrake of Local Government Management Branch
M. Stanton
Manchester College of Arts and Technology
Mark Pinder
Martin Barnes
Maxwell Stamp plc
Michael Foyle (Q. D. Enterprises Ltd.)
Midland Bank plc
MIS Consultants
Mokoro Ltd.
Molly Meacher (Employment Policy Institute)
Mr. A. Molesworth
Mr. A. Murza-Murzcic
Mr. A. F. Lambert of McAllister Elliot and Partners
Mr. C. Elston of The Bank of England
Mr. D. Waddington
Mr. David Anderson of CSL Group Ltd. IS NOM CAND
Mr. E. Saunders
Mr. G. Eele of Oxford University
Mr. Gavin Fryer
Mr. Gopal Hooper
Mr. Heath
Mr. J. Levitsky
Mr. J. Short (Repim)
Mr. M. Martin
Mr. Mark Havers
Mr. Molesworth
Mr. N. Blackie
Mr. P. Le Cheminant
Mr. R. Allen
Mr. R. Lloyd
Mr. R. Rozwadowski
Mrs. Elizabeth Hall
Ms R. E. Henderson
Ms Walerie McFarlane
M. Bowerbank
N. Adams
N. Bond
N. King
Natasha Milanovich
National Audit Office
Neil Cameron—KPMG
Nick Van Den Brul (Itim Assc Ltd.)
Nigel Burton
Northern Ireland PS Enterprise Ltd.
Northumberland County Council
Nottingham Trent University
Overseas Records Management Trust
P. Hedges
P. Trinder
Pan Livestock Services
Paul Corcut
PBIAA Birmingham University
Peter Broadbent
Peter Kysel
Peterborough City Council
Price Waterhouse
Professor N. Hamdi
Professor P. Collier
Professor Seamus McDaid (Caledonian University)
Project North East
Q. D. Enterprises
R. Brewis
R. Giles
Realistic Consulting Company
Reg. Parr
Repim Ltd.
Resource
Riaz Ahmed and Associates Ltd.
Ripa International Ltd.
Roffey Park Management Institute
Royal County of Berkshire
Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
Rural Investment Overseas Ltd.
Rural Investments Overseas (J. Leech)
S. Chatterji
S. Vyakarnam of Transitions Enterprise Research
Samuel Montagu
Schroders
Scottish Enterprise Foundation
Sedgwick Payne Insurance Strategy Ltd
Segal Quince Wicksrad Ltd.
Simon Hawken
Sir Louis Bloom-Cooper
Small Business Research Trust
Steven Pollard
Stewarts Solicitors
T. Crawford
Team Technologies Incorporated
Telerique Ltd. (A. Wilkinson)
Terry Lawrence
The British Computer Society
The Hansard Society for Parliamentary Government
The International Securities Consultancy
The Small Business Programme Ltd.
The Wyatt Company (UK) Ltd.
Touche Ross
Trevor Slade
Unitech
University of Glasgow
University of Kent (Asru Ltd.)
University of the West of England (Bristol)
University of Warwick—Harold Coulombe
VSO East European Partnership
Welsh Development Agency
Wye College

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department *(a)* hold open meetings, *(b)* conduct public consultation exercises, *(c)* conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, *(d)* publish a register of members' interests, *(e)* publish agendas for meetings and *(f)* publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case (i) under a statutory requirement or (ii) voluntary.

Mr. Goodlad: The advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by this Department are:

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Diplomatic Service Appeals Board (2)

Wilton Park Academic Council
Wilton Park International Advisory Council
Government Hospitality Fund

Overseas Development Administration

Advisory Committee on Overseas Economic and Social Research
Indian Family Pension Funds Body of Commissioners
Overseas Service Pensions Scheme Advisory Board

The information requested by my hon. Friend is as follows:

a) None
b) None
c) None
d) None
e) None
f) None
i) Not applicable
ii) Not applicable

Overseas Diplomatic Residences

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *168*, if he will make it his policy to collect figures on the cost of upkeep of each overseas diplomatic residence owned by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Goodlad: The FCO plans to introduce a new financial management accounting system in April 1996. It is the FCO's intention to utilise this facility to make aggregation of the relevant figures more readily attainable.

Entry Clearance Fees

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase any of the entry clearance application fees.

Mr. Baldry: An Order in Council—the Consular Fees (Amendment) Order 1994—was made on 14 December which provides for changes in entry clearance application fees with effect from 4 January 1995.

A number of non-entry clearance consular fees were increased on 24 November. It is Government policy that the cost of entry clearance services should be borne by the users as far as possible. Some entry clearance fees, however, have remained unchanged for many years. To avoid too great a rise in the fee for settlement and analogous services, the increase will be made in two further annual stages until full cost-recovery is achieved in 1997.

European Union

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement on the forthcoming business of the European Union.

Mr. David Davis: Monthly statement of business for January 1995.

1. The provisional French Presidency Calendar is as follows:

16 January	ECOFIN. Agriculture
17 January	Agriculture
19 January	Fisheries
20 January	Transport
21 January	Transport
23 January	FAC
24 January	FAC
26 January	Informal Justice and Home Affairs Council

2. The following is a provisional agenda:

16 January, Agriculture
—Wine reform
—Sugar reform
—Price fixing proposals (possible)
—Horse competition rules (possible)
—Plant Breeders Rights (possible)
—Third country establishments (possible)
—Veterinary inspection fees (possible)

3. No other agendas are available. A revised forecast of business for January will be submitted after the Christmas recess.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Jack: According to the POLIS database, eight parliamentary questions, out of a total of 2,061, were answered during the last Session with the response that the information requested was not held centrally.

Slaughter Industry

Mr. Olner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what support his Ministry is providing to encourage expansion of the United Kingdom slaughter industry.

Mrs. Browning: Since there is over-capacity in the slaughter industry, the demand will be determined by the market place.

Mr. Olner: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated number of animals transported live for slaughter from the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1993, *(b)* 1983 and *(c)* 1973; and what was the total numbers of carcases exported for each of those years.

Mrs. Browning: Data on numbers of animals exported for slaughter and on numbers of carcases are not available. Figures for total recorded numbers of animals and weight of meat exported are given in the table. The figures given for live animals may be too low and are being investigated. I shall write to the hon. Member to inform him of the results of this investigation.

	(a) *1993*	*(b)* *1983*	*(c)* *1973*
Live animals exported	*Number*	*Number*	*Number*
Cattle	391,130	240,154	174,837
Sheep and goats	662,982	92,991	134,964
Pigs	151,149	571,245	55,533
Poultry	20,450,736	11,274,078	6,330,613
Horses etc	13,801	8,900	12,247
Weight of meat exported	*Tonnes*	*Tonnes*	*Tonnes*
Beef	182,654	186,016	65,478
Mutton, lamb and goat meat	95,060	43,317	27,376
Port	97,417	44,638	11,604

	(a) *1993*	*(b)* *1983*	*(c)* *1973*
Poultry meat	81,499	22,834	2,712
Horsemeat etc	1,189	7,055	1,402

Source:
H M Customs and Excise.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of the reports and submissions produced by each of the hill farming advisory committees in *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994.

Mr. Jack: The Hill Farming Advisory Committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland is chaired by my noble friend the Earl Howe. The committee advises Ministers on hill farming matters. It does not produce reports or submissions and my Department provides the secretariat.

The following table shows the number of meetings held, the budgeted expenditure and actual expenditure for the years 1992, 1993 and 1994.

	Number of meetings	*Budgeted expenditure £*	*Actual expenditure £*
1992	2	7,000	7,000
1993	2	9,000	8,500
1994	1	4,000	3,000

Note:
Costs do not include MAFF staff time.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the functions and objectives of *(a)* the consumers committees, *(b)* the agricultural dwelling house advisory committees, *(c)* the hill farming advisory committees, *(d)* the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and *(e)* the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee.

Mr. Jack: The functions of the consumers' committees for Great Britain, for England and Wales and for Scotland are laid down in section 19 of the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958. The committees consider and report to Agriculture Ministers on the effect of approved schemes on consumers of the products concerned. Currently, there are approved schemes for potatoes and wool only.

The agricultural dwelling house advisory committees' functions and objectives are to give information and impartial advice to local house authorities on the agricultural need and urgency for the re-housing of agricultural tied cottage occupants so as to make their vacated accommodation available to incoming agricultural workers.

The hill farming advisory committees' functions and objectives are to advise the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Wales on the exercise of their powers under the Hill Farming Act 1946 and on any matter relating to farming in the less-favoured areas that may be referred to the committee by them.

The Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee has been given the responsibility of maintaining an overview of research into the spongiform encephalopathies as well as advising the government on all matters relating to the spongiform encephalopathies.

The functions and objectives are of the Advisory Committee on Pesticides are published annually in its annual report, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of the reports and submissions produced by each of the agricultural dwelling house advisory committees in *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994.

Mr. Jack: Agricultural dwelling house advisory committees, which are statutory bodies under the Rent Agriculture Act 1976, are convened in England,—separate parallel arrangements apply in Wales—as required, by the chairman of the local agricultural wages committee. Secretarial support is provided by MAFF staff from the Ministry's regional service centres. In most instances, the Agricultural Development Advisory Committee provides a technical appraisal of the farm business involved.

The budgeted and actual expenditure for these committees is as follows:

Expenditure	*1992–93 £*	*1993–94 £*	*1994–95 £*
Budgeted	43,304	37,000	35,000
Actual	26,243	31,888	[1]17,059

[1] To 31 October 1994.

The budgeted costs and actual expenditure in respect of the ADAS appraisals, on a financial year basis, were:

	1992–93 £	*1993–94 £*	*1994–95 £*
Budgeted Expenditure	[1]—	180,000	126,000
Actual Costs	—	154,400	[2]66,750

[1] Internal recharging for these services did not apply. No separate budget allocation was therefore made.

[2] To 31 October 1994.

The remit of the committees is to give confidential advice to local housing authorities on the agricultural need for and urgency of re-housing applications. The following information summarises the conclusions reached by the committees on the cases examined:

	1992–93	*1993–94*	*1994–95*[1]
Agricultural need identified	165	146	68
No agricultural need identified	25	29	15

[1] To 31 October 1994.

On the urgency of the application, immediate rehousing was advised in the following numbers of cases where an agricultural need had been identified:

	Number
1992-93	40
1993-94	32
1994-95[1]	18

[1] To 31 October 1994.

Animal Transportation

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the place of departure and the place of destination given in *(i)* the certificate required under article 5 (d) of the Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992 and (ii) the journey plan required under article 5 (e) of the order, in respect of a consignment of calves flown at approximately 9 am on Wednesday 7 December from Coventry airport to Rennes.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am unable to release the precise information which covers matters of commercial confidentiality but am informed that the calves began their journey from premises in Somerset. Their final destination was notified as being to premises at Cherance Craon, in France.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those services that have been market tested by his Department and won by the private sector, indicating the organisation that won the tender and its value.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* The services that have been market tested by my Department and won by the private sector, together with the organisations that have won tenders, are as follows:

Term Commissions for Architectural and Engineering Design Services:

—Jefferson Sheard
—Rogers and Grundy
—Ferguson Bucknall Austin
—Lawrence Hewitt Partnership

IT Outsourcing (MVS):

—Data Sciences

Reprographics Services (ADAS):

—Rank Xerox

Supply of Overseas Trade Statistics:

—MDS Transmodal

Library Services (Books and Journals):

—Dawson UK
—Swets UK
—Hammicks
—Blackwell
—National History Book Service
—Dillons
—Eastlake Information

General Recruitment:

—MSL Advertising
—PA Consulting
—Austin Knight

Buildings and Estate Management:

—Balfour Beatty
—BET
—MJN
—Symonds Facilities Management
—Planned Maintenance Ltd
—Amey Facilities Management
—Haden Facility Management
—Lawrence Hewitt Partnership
—PSA North East
—Ferguson Bucknall Austin
—Henry Boot Management
—Drivers Jonas
—Knight, Frank and Rutley

Relocation Work (CSL):

—PE International

Pesticide Residues Testing in Bread:

—Severn Trent Laboratories

Pesticides Evaluation Work:

—Applications
—P Nichols
—Til Occam Ltd
—Campden Food and Drink Research Association
—Hazleton Europe Ltd.

R and D

—Whitbread plc
—Paterson Institute: Christie Hospital NHS
—Animal Health Trust
—A E Johnston
—Processors and Growers Research Organisation
—UMDS—Guys Hospital
—P E International
—Ashbourne BioSciences
—Cambridge Environmental Research Consultants
—RPS Clouston
Land Research Associates
W S Atkins
Mylnefield Research Service Ltd.

In order to preserve the legitimate commercial confidence of tenderers and contractors and protect the position of my Department in current or future tendering activities, the value of winning tenders cannot be disclosed.

Pigs

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what grant aid is available to pig producers in England to convert sow tether and stall accommodation.

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* In 1991, we decided that by giving producers eight years to phase out stalls and tethers the cost was reduced to containable levels and it was not a priority for the limited funds available. That remains our view.

Lindane

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the use of the pesticide lindane.

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* Lindane is approved for certain uses by the six Government Departments responsible for pesticide safety. The independent Advisory Committee on Pesticides initiated a review of agricultural uses in April 1992 and plans to complete this review by next spring.

Its review of other uses of lindane was completed in December 1992, and the committee recommended that these should continue. Ministers accepted this recommendation and the evaluation documents are available from the Pesticides Safety Directorate.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 19 December 1994

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Court Costs

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the average daily cost of running each level of court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: On the best information currently available, we calculate that the average daily cost of the county courts, including listing but excluding case preparation overheads, is approximately £900,000. An equivalent figure for the Supreme Court is £200,000, and for the Crown court £900,000. These figures are full costs, including costs borne by the Consolidated Fund, divided by the number of working days. A similar cost in the magistrates courts would be £1.2 million.

Social Security Commissioners

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many cases in each of the last five years have been presented to the social security commissioners on the grounds of breaches of natural justice; and how many have been successful.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available. Appeals are registered at the office of the social security commissioners only on the basis of the nature of the benefit being appealed.

DEFENCE

Aircraft Engines

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures he is taking to pursue collaboration on engine technology for future military aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: My Department has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the French Ministry of Defence. This arrangement covers any collaborative aero-engine technology demonstration. Initially, collaboration has been agreed for an advanced small turbine engine, demonstrate technology for future helicopter engines and for an advanced military engine technology programme in support of future combat aircraft engines, and it is hoped that it will eventually include a number of other projects. Through such programmes, we would seek to increase significantly thrust-to-weight ratios while reducing fuel consumption and production, maintenance and life-cycle costs.

Manpower Reductions

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on manpower reductions in the armed forces.

Mr. Soames: As we announced on 14 July, the "Front Line First" initiative will lead to manpower reductions of some 1,900 for the Royal Navy, 7,500 for the RAF, 2,200 for the Army and 7,100 for the civil service, and that this involves redundancies. As was promulgated on Friday 16 December, the further detailed work that has been done envisages some 1,500 Royal Navy, 7,500 RAF and some 400 Army redundancies in addition to the 80 Army redundancies announced on 17 November; an additional 900 Royal Navy and 1,100 RAF redundancies, resulting from previously announced efficiency measures, are proceeding in the same timescale. Civilian redundancies are not in general pre-determined centrally. We would expect a significant proportion of the civilian job losses announced in "Front Line First" to result in redundancy.

HMS Vanguard

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when HMS Vanguard will make her first deterrent patrol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I am glad to inform my hon. Friend that HMS Vanguard, the first of the United Kingdom's four Trident submarines, is at present at sea on her first patrol. HMS Vanguard's entry into service on time is a major achievement for a project of this scale and complexity, and marks a key point in the progressive replacement of the Polaris force by Trident. The Trident system will ensure that the United Kingdom's strategic deterrent will remain effective well into the next century.

Spearfish Torpedoes

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest position regarding the main production for spearfish torpedoes.

Mr. Freeman: I am pleased to announce that we have today placed a main production contract with GEC-Marconi Naval Systems for the supply and in-service support of Spearfish submarine-launched torpedoes for the Royal Navy.

The Spearfish torpedo is a highly advanced, submarine-launched anti-submarine and anti-ship torpedo and provides the Royal Navy with a capability designed to counter all known and predicted ship and submarine systems. Spearfish, which is already in service, will progressively replace the Tigerfish torpedo in Royal Navy submarines by the turn of the century.

The contract is worth some £630 million and will create some 40 new jobs and help to safeguard many more at the company's underwater weapons division at Waterlooville, Hampshire. As over 80 per cent. of the manufacturing and processing work will be sub-contracted, this order will be very welcome for a wide section of British industry.

The Royal Naval armament depot at Beith in Ayrshire will be acting as a major sub-contractor to GEC-Marconi Naval Systems for both the final assembly of the torpedoes and for all in-service support. Consequently, this contract will also help to safeguard a large number of jobs at RNAD Beith.

TRANSPORT

West Coast Line

11. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for future investment in the west coast rail line under the private finance initiative.

Mr. Watts: The then Secretary of State announced in December 1993 that the west coast main line would be modernised using private finance. These plans still stand.

Chelsea to Hackney Line

12. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in the plans for the Chelsea to Hackney underground line.

Mr. Norris: I understand that London Underground Ltd. has been reviewing the route and is currently considering the results.

London Underground

13. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about investment in London Underground.

Dr. Mawhinney: We receive a large number of representations about a variety of issues relating to investment in London Underground.

Northern Line

14. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress on the private finance initiative in relation to Northern line trains.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport was delighted to announce the go-ahead for this deal on Thursday 8 December.

A5

15. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last drove or was driven along part or all of the A5, Watling street; what congestion was apparent then; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: Since becoming Minister for Railways and Roads, I have not travelled on the A5, Watling street. However, I am aware of peak-time congestion on the A5 between the M69 and A47 near Hinkley at the south of my hon. Friend's constituency.

European Transport Networks

16. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he plans to meet his European Union counterparts to discuss European transport networks.

Dr. Mawhinney: The next discussion of transport networks is planned for the Transport Council meeting on 14 March next year.

Road Building Schemes

19. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on funding road building schemes in the light of the Budget; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: The Government remain firmly committed to substantial investment in the national roads programme and to making the most effective use of the existing trunk road network.

Decision Makers

20. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent lobbying by Decision Makers influenced departmental decisions on Ebbsfleet.

Dr. Mawhinney: Decision Makers had no influence on the Government's decision that three would be an international and domestic intermediate station on the channel tunnel rail link at Ebbsfleet, which I announced on 31 August. As I told the House on 21 November, the assessment of each of the intermediate station option was based on studies undertaken by Union Railways and its consultants. It was carried out on an entirely even-handed basis. No unfair advantage was given to the Ebbsfleet Promoters.

Channel Tunnel

21. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. John Watts: I have received representations from a wide range of interests and on a wide range of subjects.

Railtrack

22. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what legislation will govern the disposal by Railtrack of railway property; and what compensation will be available to those damaged by Railtrack decisions.

Dr. Mawhinney: The railway property transferred to Railtrack when it was established in April 1994 was limited to that necessary to run the network. The Railways Act 1993 contains provisions governing the closure of passenger networks and stations. The question of compensation for those affected by decisions taken by Railtrack is a matter for the parties concerned.

Bus Competition

23. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what analysis his Department has made of the competition in bus services following the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. Norris: The effects of competition in bus services has been fully monitored through a programme of research undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory, which has published a number of reports on the situation nationally and locally.

Sliding-door Trains

24. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the 317 sliding-door trains will now be brought into service on the London, Tilbury and Southend line.

Mr. Watts: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 25 November *Official Report*, column *381*.

Traffic Casualties

25. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new proposals he has to reduce traffic casualties.

Mr. Norris: A series of publicity campaigns aimed particularly at reducing speed in urban areas and reducing the amount of drinking and driving, the provision of grant—£50 million this year—in support of local safety schemes, approval of 20 mph zones, over 130 of which are now in operation, negotiation of improved vehicle standards and measures to facilitate the enforcement of road traffic law.

To reduce accidents involving newly qualified drivers, we are developing road safety education material for the 16-plus age group in schools and colleges, a scheme for post-test driver training—pass-plus—to be launched in early 1995, linked to lower insurance premiums, an enlarged theory element to be included in the driving test from 1996 and a scheme requiring newly qualified drivers to retake the driving test if they commit serious traffic offences.

Accident-damaged Vehicles

26. **Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider statutory controls over rebuilt accident-damaged vehicles.

Mr. Norris: I am looking at the whole matter of rebuilt accident-damaged vehicles. However, I would not wish to bring in new legislation unless it could be entirely justified on its merits.

A2

28. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his plans for the A2 highway and its upgrading in the context of the channel tunnel rail link project.

Mr. Watts: It is too early to be able to report on plans for the A2. We shall need to consider the effects of all the development in the area, including that related to channel tunnel rail link before deciding on appropriate improvements to the A2.

Public Transport (London)

29. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve public transport in London.

Mr. Norris: The Government's plans provide for continuing and substantial levels of public funding to support investment in maintaining and improving public transport in London. We also look forward to a growing contribution from the private sector in financing and operating services.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last had a meeting with the chairman of the British Railways Board to discuss progress on privatisation of Railtrack and rail services.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have regular meetings with the chairmen of the British Railways Board and of Railtrack to discuss a variety of railway privatisation issues.

Vehicle Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for increasing the number of vehicle inspectors to improve lorry safety.

Mr. Norris: None. However, the inspectorate is to continue to increase its enforcement effectiveness through better targeting and improved productivity and management of its enforcement resources.

National Roads Programme

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the national roads programme for 1995–96; whether the A5164 Stoke to Derby link and the Derby southern bypass are included; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have made it clear that the trunk road network is broadly complete. Our priority now must be to make the most effective use of the existing network—especially motorways—and to build to remove congestion and pollution blackspots.

I have instructed the Highways Agency to remove three major motorway bottlenecks. They cause congestion and pollution and damage the economic well-being of the country. They also cause frustration and diversion on to smaller, more unsuitable roads.

The schemes are:

phase one of the widening of the M1 between junctions 21 and 21A, at a cost of about £15 million, which is required to avoid congestion when the Leicester western bypass opens in 1995;

widening the M25 between junctions 8 and 10 from Reigate to the junction with the A3 at Wisley, at a cost of about £75 million. This adds a fourth lane in each direction within the existing boundary. Adjoining sections are currently being widened or already have been;

building the M1-M621 link road, to the south of Leeds, at a cost of about £12 million. This will remove severe congestion at the junction of two important motorways.

I have also instructed the Highways Agency to proceed with four important schemes in London.

In line with the priority to improve the orbital network in London, two schemes are to be taken forward on the north circular road: A406 Silver street to Fore street improvement, costing about £34 million and A406/A1/A598 Regents' park costing about £50 million.

The other two schemes will improve the western approach to the capital, relieving congestion and improving blackspots: the A40 Gypsy corner at a cost of about £26 million and the A40 western circus junction improvement at a cost of about £27 million.

In addition, I will be funding a further 12 new contracts, including the A564 Derby southern bypass, at a cost of about £475 million.

By redirecting resources, I shall no longer be proceeding immediately with a further six publicly funded schemes where work was scheduled to begin in 1994–95. We will consider taking four of them forward by design, build finance and operate contracts.

The private sector is playing an ever increasing role in delivering transport infrastructure. The Department is already in the process of preparing tenders for the first four major road building projects to be designed, built, financed and operated by the private sector.

There is huge interest from the City and industry in this private-public sector partnership and we can expect many more schemes with an increased role for the private sector over the next few years. Work on the other schemes scheduled to start in 1994–95 will wait until there is space in the programme.

For one other scheme—the A34 Newbury bypass—I have concluded that work should be delayed while further consideration is given to the proposed route. I reached this view after a private visit to Newbury to examine the existing A34 and the proposed bypass route. I have asked the Highways Agency to look again at the plans for the bypass and to explore other options. Once the agency has reported back to me I will make a further announcement. I would expect to be in a position to do this in about a year's time, when I announce road scheme starts for 1996–97.

These proposals mean that significant progress will be made with the Stoke to Derby link, in addition to the Foston Hatton-Hilton bypass currently under construction; work will start on the Derby southern bypass, and phase two of the Blythe bridge to Queensway improvement; and the Doveridge bypass is a candidate for a DBFO contract.

A full list of the schemes covered by this announcement is available in the Library of the House.

Rail Accident Inquiries

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the lengthy time lag between the date of serious rail accidents and the publication of the findings of any inquiry into them; and if he will speed up that process.

Mr. Watts: Her Majesty's chief inspecting officer of railways is committed to speeding up the publication of inquiry reports, while maintaining standards of investigation and analysis.

Inspectors immediately pass any emerging conclusions and recommendations to the operator concerned so as to avoid any recurrence of the accident.

Traffic Control and Parking

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to monitor the effectiveness of local councils over traffic control and parking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Counties, metropolitan districts and London boroughs, as local traffic authorities, are primarily responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of traffic control and parking on all local roads in their areas. My right hon. Friend already monitors the effectiveness of the legal framework within which the local traffic authorities must work.

College Road, Dulwich

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what study his Department has made of the effect on local road traffic patterns of the decision by the governors of the Dulwich College estate to re-open the toll gate on College road, Dulwich; how many road accidents there have been in the locality since the re-opening of the toll gate compared with those in a period of equal length before the re-opening; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: College road is a private road and no central record of local road traffic patterns is kept to measure the effect of the toll gate reopening. Similarly no central record of road accidents in the immediate vicinity is kept but total casualty figures for the London boroughs of Lewisham and Southward show a declining trend in recent years.

Railways (Funding)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ensure that funding is made available for station information equipment on the intermediate railway stations between Shrewsbury and Aberystwyth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Watts: This is a matter for British Rail.

Freight

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the implementation of his Department's policy of transferring freight from road and rail since its introduction.

Dr. Mawhinney: Rail must improve its performance if it is to attract and retain freight customers. The key to this is liberalisation and privatisation. We have already opened up the rail network to competition. Privatisation of British Rail's freight businesses will follow as soon as possible. Rail freight is being further encouraged by a considerably enhanced grants regime and a 44 tonnes weight concession for lorries engaged in combined road and rail transport.

Cycle Tracks

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total mileage of cycle tracks in each London borough and each English county.

Mr. Norris: No central record is kept of cycle track length.

Marchioness

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what funds he has allocated to meet the costs of legal representation for *(a)* the QC acting on behalf of the Marine Safety Agency and *(b)* his own Department at the inquest into the deaths following the Marchioness disaster scheduled for March 1995.

Mr. Norris: None. Officials from the marine accident investigation branch and the Marine Safety Agency will attend the inquest if requested to do so by the coroner. They will be legally represented if asked to attend and if necessary, but proceedings in coroners courts are usually informal and are concerned with the facts surrounding a death rather than issues such as civil or criminal liability. Legal representation is therefore generally unnecessary.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what basis he would be prepared to open a public inquiry into the Marchioness disaster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We do not consider that it would be appropriate or necessary to open a public inquiry into the loss of the Marchioness. The marine accident investigation branch has carried out a full and thorough investigation into the disaster and its report has been published.

Ports Office

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what will be the change in the number of administrative and civil service posts with the proposed privatisation of the Ports Office for Scotland in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* London.

Mr. Norris: My Department has no proposals to privatise the Ports Office for Scotland.

Cyclists (Fatal Accidents)

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many female cyclists were killed in road accidents aged *(a)* five years, *(b)* six years, *(c)* seven years, *(d)* eight years, *(e)* nine years, *(f)* 10 years, *(g)* 11 years, *(h)* 12 years, *(i)* 13 years, *(j)* 14 years, *(k)* 15 years and *(l)* 16 years in (i) 1991, (ii) 1992 and (iii) 1993;

(2) what were the total number of cyclists killed in road accidents between the dates 26 to 31 December, inclusive, in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is shown in the table.

Cyclist fatalities by age and year between the 26th and 31st December: 1991–1993

	5–16	*All ages*[1]
1991	0	0
1992	0	2
1993	0	0

[1] Includes fatalities where the age was unknown.

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will (1) list the total number of male cyclists that were killed in road accidents aged *(a)* five years, *(b)* six years, *(c)* seven years, *(d)* eight years, *(e)* nine years, *(f)* 10 years, *(g)* 11 years, *(h)* 12 years, *(i)* 13 years, *(j)* 14 years, *(k)*15 years and *(l)* 16 years in (i) 1991, (ii) 1992 and (iii) 1993;

(2) how many female cyclists were killed in road accidents aged *(a)* five years, *(b)* six years, *(c)* seven years, *(d)* eight years, *(e)* nine years, *(f)* 10 years, *(g)* 11 years, *(h)* 12 years, *(i)* 13 years, *(j)* 14 years, *(k)* 15 years and *(l)* 16 years in (i) 1991, (ii) 1992 and (iii) 1993;

(3) what was the total number of cyclists that were killed in road accidents in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1993.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is shown in the table.

Cyclist fatalities by age, sex and year: 1991–1993

		5 years	*6 years*	*7 years*	*8 years*	*9 years*	*10 years*	*11 years*	*12 years*	*13 years*	*14 years*	*15 years*	*16 years*	*5–16*	*All ages*[1]
1991	Male	0	1	3	4	2	4	7	4	7	3	4	7	46	202
	Female	1	0	0	3	1	1	0	1	1	2	0	1	11	40
	Total	1	1	3	7	3	5	7	5	8	5	4	8	57	242
1992	Male	0	1	2	3	2	4	5	9	4	5	10	5	50	183
	Female	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	21
	Total	0	1	2	3	2	4	5	10	4	5	10	5	51	204
1993	Male	1	2	1	1	3	1	3	3	4	4	3	4	30	144
	Female	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	2	3	0	1	1	11	42
	Total	1	2	1	3	4	2	3	5	7	4	4	5	41	186

[1] Includes fatalities where the age was unknown.

Vehicle Accidents

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of accidents involving *(a)* heavy goods vehicles, *(b)* public service vehicles and *(c)* minibuses for the West Midlands police force area for each of the last five years.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is shown in the table.

Number of personal injury road accidents involving, HGV's,PSV's or minibus/motor caravans in the West Midlands Police Force area: 1989–1993

[1]Accidents

Year	*Minibus/motor caravan*	*PSV*	*HGV*
1989	58	425	495
1990	51	437	479
1991	59	424	407
1992	55	399	421
1993	60	375	414

[1] There may be double counting of accidents where two or more of the above vehicles are involved in the same accident.

Operator Licences

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the number of heavy goods and public service vehicles specified on operator licences for the west midlands area for each of the last five years.

Mr. Norris: The information requested for the west midlands traffic area is as follows:

	Heavy goods vehicles specified[1]	*Public service vehicles discs*[2]
1989–90	46,811	5,817
1990–91	46,238	6,136
1991–92	45,082	6,264
1992–93	43,244	6,877
1993–94	43,158	7,150

Source:

[1] Annual Reports of the Licensing Authorities.

[2] DOT PSV Operator database—complied from returns by PSV operators.

Channel Tunnel

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the arrangements for joint health and safety protection of the safety of passengers on the channel tunnel rail link, following the construction and completion of the tunnel.

Mr. Watts: Union Railways has in consultation with the Health and Safety Executive, prepared an outline railway safety case for the proposed channel tunnel rail link from St. Pancras to Cheriton. I have today placed copies in the Library. The Health and Safety Executive has confirmed that there are no aspects of the outline design which would call for an objection.

The outline safety case recognises that an updated and more detailed safety case will need to have the approval of the Health and Safety Executive before the rail link is brought into use.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many meetings have been held with the French railways to discuss the safety of the channel tunnel rail link.

Mr. Watts: Union Railways, which has been responsible for developing the channel tunnel rail link project, is a member of European Union committees preparing standards relating to high-speed railways. SNCF is also represented on these committees. In addition, Union Railways is involved with a continuous dialogue with SNCF and other European railways on matters of common interest, including safety.

Public Transport

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to guarantee the provision of public transport to rural areas following petrol price increases.

Mr. Norris: The provision of bus services is primarily a matter for bus operators commercially and for local authorities who have powers to subsidise the running of additional services where they see a need which is not being met commercially. In addition, the rural transport development fund, which is run by the Rural Development Commission in England with funds from the Department of Transport, is available to assist with the provision of innovative rural transport services, including village community buses and post buses. Over 360 new projects have been funded and resources have been increased in the past two years to encourage further schemes. The Scottish and Welsh Offices run similar grant schemes.

Unadopted Roads

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the cost of adopting currently unadopted roads in residential areas in England.

Mr. Norris: We have made no estimate of the cost.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the number of miles of unadopted roads in Lancashire.

Mr. Norris: We have made no such estimates.

Pass-plus

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make the pass plus scheme compulsory.

Mr. Norris: None.

Driver Training

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of light goods vehicle drivers received formal training before completing their light goods vehicle test.

Mr. Norris: A survey conducted by the Driving Standards Agency in 1992 found that 99 per cent. of LGV test candidates had undertaken some formal training before taking the test. The vast majority had taken this training solely with professional training bodies. The remainder had combined this formal instruction with further practice with a friend or relative.

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has conducted into the prior training of light goods vehicle drivers who have been involved in accidents.

Mr. Norris: None.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost his Department.

Mr. Norris: The Department used executive search agencies to assist in filling two vacancies within the Department and its executive agencies in 1994. The total cost was £55,300.

ICAO

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how regularly the activity of the United Kingdom's representatives' office to the International Civil Aviation Organisation is monitored or audited.

Mr. Norris: Monthly.

Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to publish the report of his Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment on traffic generation.

Dr. Mawhinney: I am today publishing SACTRA's report and, following the normal practice with such reports, a full Government response. I am very grateful to SACTRA for the comprehensive and detailed work it has done in this difficult area. Copies of its report and the Government response, together with a brief summary, have been placed in the Library of the House.

SACTRA was asked to report on traffic generation because the Department recognised that, as economic growth over the last 15 years has greatly increased traffic levels, the number of congested areas has gone up and with them, the cases where a road scheme might bring costs as well as benefits. There was also a growing feeling that there should be a more general examination of whether roads do to some degree increase traffic as well as relieve congestion.

SACTRA has made the case for taking greater account of changes to the origin, destination and timing of existing trips, particularly when projecting traffic flows for road schemes in places where the road network is already congested. Although the report is consistent with our long-standing view that new schemes do not generate a significant number of trips which are entirely new, the overall amount of traffic on the network may in some cases rise by more than is usually allowed for under current appraisal methods.

The Department accepts this and is now looking at all national road schemes in the planning stages, to see if the changes in traffic considered by SACTRA are likely to be significant. If they are, the best means currently available for identifying possible changes in traffic patterns will be applied.

This work will be done with all speed. There is no reason to require or expect delay to road schemes or public inquiries. The important task is to ensure that, for those cases where extra traffic might adversely affect the cost-benefit justification, new traffic modelling is done so that the results can be examined.

However, some of SACTRA's work is not conclusive. There is insufficient evidence to support any simple rule governing the relationship between the amount of time saved on a journey and the use of that time on more travel.

It is clear that a great deal of research needs to be done to develop improved traffic modelling techniques for use in congested conditions. Additional research is already under way, and more will now be commissioned.

I have also been studying the recommendations that SACTRA made on strategic, economic and environmental appraisal and traffic modelling. SACTRA shows the way forward, but it recognises that further studies need to be undertaken before these recommendations could be put into practice. My Department will therefore be developing and testing new techniques in these areas.

I am determined that important, and often very difficult, decisions on road schemes are taken on the basis of the best and most up-to-date methods for forecasting their effects. SACTRA has made a valuable contribution to advancing our understanding of these issues.

Sickness Absence

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 5 December, *Official Report,* column *32,* if he will list separately for each agency in his Department and for the Central Transport Group, all the programmes and initiatives which fall within the approaches set out in the occupational health service notice 93/3.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* A number of common initiatives exist throughout the Department of Transport. The Department is committed to the "Look After Your Heart" programme; has, or is currently, offering health screening to staff; has announced its intention to provide a non-smoking working environment with facilities for those who wish to smoke; is currently reviewing areas of work activity; operates staff suggestions schemes; and gives advances of salary for purchase of bicycles for home to office travel;

In addition, agencies pursue local initiatives. These are:

Agency	*Programme/Initiative*
Coastguard Agency	Health awareness seminars stress awareness seminars workstation reviews Training Needs Analysis Coastal Staffing Review
Driving Standards Agency	Risk Assessments with steps taken to re-organise work
Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency	Fitness centre annual workplace cervical screening smoking cessation classes on-site occupational health service Health education courses bicycle hire Working Carers Support Group health eating options in staff restaurant recent winners of award for health promotion activities
Highways Agency	Survey of workstations at HQ
Marine Safety Agency	Risk analysis surveys
Transport Research laboratory	Stress survey
Vehicle Certification Agency	Self assessment in stress management staff participation in achieving business goals ideas boards work improvement teams
Vehicle Inspectorate	Total Quality Initiative staff participation in Correction Action Teams and Continuous Improvement Teams

River Thames

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for increasing passenger and freight traffic on the River Thames.

Mr. Norris: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 13 December, column 544-45.

PRIME MINISTER

Special Advisers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement regarding his Department's expenditure on special advisers for each of the last three financial years, and for the financial year 1979–80.

The Prime Minister: I refer to the reply which my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave to the hon. Member today.

Parliamentary Private Secretaries

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *447*, if he will specify where in the public record are to found the numbers of parliamentary private secretaries in November 1989, November 1984 and May 1979.

The Prime Minister: The information can be obtained from the Library of the House.

Managerial Systems

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister which Departments have MINIS—managerial information systems—or an equivalent system; and if he will list the names of the systems and whether hon. Members can access them indicating those Departments which do not have a similar system; and what is his policy towards introducing such systems or a Government-wide system.

The Prime Minister: A number of Departments have developed management information systems similar to MINIS since the launch of the financial management initiative in 1982. The main responsibility for developing such systems rests with Departments, and up-to-date information on such systems is not available centrally. A multi departmental efficiency scrutiny is currently examining management information and planning systems and is expected to report in the spring.

Honours

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Prime Minister how many *(a)* peerages and *(b)* knighthoods have been awarded since November 1979 to (i) Conservative hon. Members, (ii) Conservative former hon. Members, (iii) Labour hon. Members and (iv) Labour former hon. Members.

The Prime Minister: Forty-nine peerages have been awarded to ex-Conservative Members and 32 to ex-Labour Members. One hundred and fifteen knighthoods have been awarded to Conservative Members—60 of whom are no longer Members of the House of Commons—and two to Labour Members, one of whom is no longer a Member of the House of Commons.

Details of knighthoods awarded to ex-Conservative and ex-Labour Members after they have left the House can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Prime Ministerial Meetings

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister on what occasions and on what dates between 1982 and 1990 his predecessor met *(a)* the Prime Minister, *(b)* the President and *(c)* the Defence Secretary or Foreign Secretary of (i) Turkey, (ii) Indonesia and (iii) Botswana.

The Prime Minister: Archived material of this nature is not centrally recorded and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Turkey

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on how his Department's use of overseas aid helps promote good government in Turkey, in particular relating to the promotion of human rights as set out in paragraph 38 iii, page 58, of his Department's report 1994 Cm. 2502.

Mr. Baldry: In Turkey, British aid funds are used on projects which contribute to a number of the key objectives set out in paragraph 38 of the Department's report, particularly enhancing productive capacity and human development, as well as good government.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the total amount of overseas and grants made to Turkey for each year since 1979 in cash and constant 1993–94 prices.

Mr. Baldry: Prior to 1987–88, separate figures for annual amounts of aid grants made to Turkey are not available. The table gives gross public expenditure on aid to Turkey for each year since 1979, with the amount spent on grants for the years 1987–88 to 1993–94 inclusive.

	Cash prices		*Constant prices*	
Year	*Gross public expenditure* £	*of which grants* £	*Gross public expenditure* £	*of which grants* £
1979	4,252,000	n/a	10,601,000	n/a
1980	8,035,000	n/a	16,763,000	n/a
1981	32,109,000	n/a	60,117.000	n/a
1982	16,882,000	n/a	29,373,000	n/a
1983	5,398,000	n/a	8,925,000	n/a
1984	407,000	n/a	643,000	n/a
1985	10,280,000	n/a	15,374,000	n/a
1986	4,650,000	n/a	6,734,000	n/a
1987	3,041,000	n/a	4,196,000	n/a
1987–88	3,180,000	1,106,000	4,465,000	1,553,000
1988–89	3,828,000	3,387,000	5,038,000	4,558,000
1989–90	2,138,000	2,138,000	2,630,000	2,630,000
1990–91	3,151,000	3,151,000	3,589,000	3,589,000
1991–92	16,849,000	16,849,000	18,056,000	18,056,000
1992–93	9,324,000	9,324,000	9,609,000	9,609,000
1993–94	11,997,000	11,997,000	11,997,000	11,997,000

Source:

British Aid Statistics

Notes:

1. Before 1987–88 data is only available on a calendar year basis. It is not possible to compare expenditure produced on a calendar year basis with that produced on a financial year basis. The calendar year data has been deflated to constant 1993 prices.
2. The 1993–94 figures are provisional until the publication of the 1993–94 edition of British Aid Statistics.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* the current aid projects and *(b)* the current Government contracts with Turkey.

Mr. Baldry: Aid projects in Turkey currently supported by the aid programme are:

> provision of an English Language teaching specialist, plus training and equipment, for the School of Foreign Languages in Cukurova University at a cost of £475,000 over 1992–95;
>
> £1,030,000 for awards under the Chevening Scholarship Scheme in 1994–95;
>
> support from the Aid and Trade Provision for British sub-contractors to provide goods and services for the construction of a metro in Ankara £22.069 million over 1993–97. On 13 December my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced that in future expenditure on this project will be met from funds voted by Parliament outside the scope of the Overseas Development and Cooperation Act.
>
> support from the Aid and Trade Provision for a contract between a British company, TecQuipment International, and the Turkish Council of Higher Education for the supply of technical teaching equipment to 27 state universities in Turkey; £23.363 million over 1993–96.

Biological Diversity

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much money the United Kingdom Government will be spending over the next five years on assistance to countries overseas for the implementation of the convention on biological diversity; and what it will be spent on.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* We are providing help through both bilateral and multilateral aid channels. Between 1991–92 and 1993–94, ODA spent £34.7 million in bilateral aid on projects wholly or partly concerned with biodiversity conservation. In addition, the Department of the Environment has committed £9 million to the Darwin initiative over the next three years. This supports collaborative projects with developing countries in biodiversity conservation. On the multilateral side, we have committed a total of £130 million to the global environment facility, which, inter alia, is the financial mechanism of the convention and is designed to help developing countries and economies in transition to implement their undertakings under the convention.

Biwater Group

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those applications for aid and trade provision finance which were sought and subsequently withdrawn by Biwater group since 1983, together with the costs of contracts, the amount of aid and trade provision assistance sought, the countries involved and the dates on which the applications were *(a)* made and *(b)* withdrawn.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 15 December, *Official Report,* column *782–83.*

Know-how Fund

Mr. Rhodri Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each organisation in receipt of contracts from the know-how fund with respect to advice and support systems for small and medium sized enterprises in *(a)* the Moscow region and *(b)* Russia as a whole.

Mr. Baldry: A list of organisations currently in receipt of contracts from the know-how fund in the categories mentioned, together with a list of completed fund projects in Russia in the same sector, will shortly be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Sudan

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government (1) will give development as well as humanitarian aid to areas in the south of Sudan controlled by the Government of Sudan;

(2) how much *(a)* humanitarian and *(b)* development aid is annually being sent to the Sudan from Her Majesty's Government; and what are the reasons for this.

Mr. Baldry: We provided £14.7 million in emergency aid to Sudan in 1993–94 in order to meet urgent humanitarian needs. Our bilateral development aid programme to Sudan was closed in January 1991 for economic and political reasons, including the Sudan Government's record on human rights and their attitude towards terrorism. We have no plans to reopen it. Support for small projects including those managed by British NGOs under the joint funding scheme continues at about £250,000 per annum.

Aid and Trade Provision

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his oral statement of 13 December, if he will state the month and year in which it was agreed to provide ATP to the projects in *(a)* Turkey, *(b)* Botswana and *(c)* Indonesia; if he will identify the United Kingdom companies who benefited from the agreement and where there was a joint project, the local companies involved.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is as follows:

Project	*Approval date*	*UK companies*	*Local companies*
Turkey, Ankara Metro	September 1990	Coppee (UK) Ltd, Westinghouse Brake and Signal, NEI, GEC Alsthom, Cegelec, Crown Agents, Brecknell Willis, Balfour Beatty, Thorn EMI	Gamma Endustri Tesisleri Imalat, Ve Montaj A.S. and Giris Insaat, Ve Mohendislik A.S. Dorm.
Botswana, Flight Information Region	April 1988	Plessey Radar Ltd	None
Indonesia, TV Studio	January 1986	Link Electronics (1988) Ltd	None

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Recruitment

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish an update of the table, staff in post and grade on entry, produced for the 1988 Treasury document on departmental requirements in the recruitment of administrative assistants and administrative officers.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I know of no such document.

Research Councils

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the total annual amount paid by each of the research councils in research stipends.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: In 1993–94, the Agricultural and Food Research Council spend £2.2 million, the Economic and Social Research Council £6.9 million, the Medical Research Council £7.6 million, the Natural Environment Research Council £6.3 million and the Science and Engineering Research Council £53.7 million.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many research students made grant applications for the year 1993–94; how many were accepted and began their courses; and how many were refused.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The Economic and Social Research Council received 5,050 applications. The other councils did not collect data on the number of applications, which were made directly to course supervisors, but universities reported no shortage of applicants. The numbers taking up awards were: Agricultural and Food Research Council, 108; ESRC, 895; Medical Research Council, 439; Natural Environment Research Council, 530; and Science and Engineering Research Council, 4,845.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the annual amount paid to research students by each of the research councils and the number of students in each category.

Mr. Robert. G. Hughes: The figures for 1993–94 were: Agricultural and Food Research Council, £6,200 and 318; Economic and Social Research Council, £4,720 and 1,486; Medical Research Council, £6,145 and 1,071; Natural Environment Research Council, £4,950 and 1,190; and the Science and Engineering Research Council, £4,720 and 10,636. The councils supplemented the stipends for London and second and third year students and for those involved in collaborative projects with industry.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the criteria by which each of the research councils decide which category of stipend each research student receives.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: A student receives the stipend advertised by the council for the type of studentship for which he or she has applied.

Citizens Charter Panel of Advisers

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) if he will list all those appointed to the citizens charter panel of advisers since its inception showing which members have resigned and the dates of their resignations;

(2) if he will publish a table showing the number of meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by the citizens charter panel of advises in each year since its inception.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The table gives details of the appointments made to the Prime Minister's panel of advisers on the citizens charter since inception. Those members who have since left the panel did so at the end of their agreed periods of appointment, with the exception of Mr. John Spiers, who resigned as a panel member on 6 September 1994.

Member	*Appointment date*	*End of appointment*
Sir James Blyth (Chairman)	28 August 1991	6 May 1995
Dr Madsen Pirie	28 August 1991	6 May 1995
Lady Judith Wilcox	28 August 1991	6 May 1996
Sir Christopher Bland	28 August 1991	6 May 1994
Dr Nancy Lane	28 August 1991	11 May 1993
Christopher Swan	28 August 1991	30 September 1994
Stan Webster	28 August 1991	11 May 1991
Sir Peter Levene	13 January 1992	11 May 1993
Angela Heylin	24 May 1993	23 May 1995
Nick Rawlings	24 May 1993	23 May 1995
Baroness Perry	23 June 1993	22 June 1995
John Spiers	7 May 1994	6 September 1994
Neil Johnson	11 October 1994	10 October 1996
Anne Galbraith	8 November 1994	7 November 1996

Since the panel of advisers on the citizens charter was set up, it has officially met on 48 separate occasions. However, the duties of the panel extend beyond these meetings and include other meetings with the Prime Minister, other Government Ministers and officials.

The citizens charter unit, headed by Miss Genie Turton, provides secretarial and general support to the panel of advisers. Expenditure on panel members fees, travel and subsistence to date totals £257,636.37. The panel has not published any reports. It is not a function of the panel to produce or publish its own reports.

Open Government

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how many requests for information, made under the code of practice on access to Government information, have been received by each Government Department;

(2) how many requests for information, made under the code of practice on access to Government information, have been refused by each Government Department.;

(3) how many cases of refusal, by each Government Department, to provide information under the code of practice on access to Government information have been referred to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration;

(4) how many requests have been made to each Government Department to review a decision to refuse information which has been sought under the code of practice on access to government information.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is not as yet held centrally. Work has begun on the report on the first year's operation of the code of practice, which was promised by my predecessor before the launch of the code. The report will appear in the early part of 1995, and will give details such as the number of requests made under the code of practice.

My own Department, Office of Public Service and Science, has received four requests for information under the code of practice on access to Government information. Of these requests, one was refused in part. There have been no requests for internal review, nor have any of these cases been the subject of an appeal to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department *(a)* hold open meetings, *(b)* conduct public consultation exercises, *(c)* conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, *(d)* publish a register of members' interests, *(e)* publish agendas for meetings and *(f)* publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case (i) under a statutory requirement of (ii) voluntary.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* The answers to each part of this question are:

(a) None.

(b) The Citizen's Charter Complaints Task Force and the Technology Foresight Steering Group.

(c) The LINK Steering Group and the Technology Foresight Steering Group.

(d) The Advisory Committee on Advertising, which is sponsored by the Central Office of Information, for which the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has Ministerial responsibility.

(e) None.

(f) None.

In each case, it is voluntary.

None have a statutory requirement for any of the above.

My Department also sponsors the Standing Committee on Standards in Public Life, which will determine its own procedures. It has already conducted public consultation exercises, and has announced its intention to take evidence in public.

Market Testing

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the savings which have been achieved through market testing in his Department.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Savings in excess of £9.2 million have been achieved as a result of market testing under the "Competing For Quality" initiative by the Cabinet Office, Office of Public Service and Science, including its agencies, Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the Central Office of Information.

Citizens Charter

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many requests have been received by the citizens charter unit for copies of each of the citizens charters; how many such requests have been fulfilled by the unit; and how many have been referred to *(a)* other Government Departments, *(b)* agencies and *(c)* non-departmental Government bodies.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Individual public services, including Government Departments, deal with requests for copies for their own service charters. Information about the number of requests for these charters, either made directly to the relevant service, or through the citizens charter unit, is not held centrally.

Since 17 October 1994, Inform Communications has operated for the citizens charter unit a citizens charter publication line on 0345 22 32 42. This sends out on request certain citizens charter publications issued by the Office of Public Service and Science, but not the individual service charters. Customers requesting such information are sent a list showing which charters exist and where they can be obtained from individual public services. The current list is as follows:

TABLE I

United Kingdom: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Charter	*Service*
Contributor's Charter Social Security Contributions Agency	091 225 5134
Employers' Charter Social Security Contributions Agency	091 225 7522
Taxpayer's Charter HM Customs and Excise	Please see TABLE II
Taxpayer's Charter Inland Revenue	Tax Offices, Tax Enquiry Centres or phone: 071 438 6420
Traveller's Charter HM Customs and Excise	From Ports and Airport or phone: 071 202 4227

Great Britain: England, Scotland and Wales

Charter	*Service*
Benefits Agency Customer Charter Social Security Benefits Agency	Please see Table II
Child Support Agency Charter Child Support Agency	0345 133 133
Jobseeker's Charter Employment Service	Please see Table II
Passenger's Charter British Rail	Please see Table II
Redundancy Payments Service Charter Employment Department	0800 848 489

England and Wales

Charter	*Service*
Courts Charter Lord Chancellor's Department Home Office Crown Prosecution Service	Court Service Secretariat 071 210 1722

England only

Charter	*Service*
London Underground's Customer Charter: "the best possible service" London Underground Ltd	Customer Service Centre 071 918 4040

England only

Charter	*Service*
Charter for Further Education Department for Education	Publications Centre 081 533 2000
Charter for Higher Education Department for Education	Publications Centre 081 533 2000
Council Tenant's Charter Department of the Environment	071 276 0900
Parent's Charter Department for Education	Publications Centre 081 533 2000
Patient's Charter Department of Health	Please see Table II
Road User's Charter The Highways Agency	071 921 4307 (See Table II for other availability)
The London Bus Passenger's Charter London Transport Buses	Passenger Services 071 918 4300

Scotland only

Charter	*Service*
Council Tenant's Charter for ScotlandScottish Office	0345 741 741
Further and Higher Education Charter for Scotland Scottish Office	0345 741 741
Justice Charter for Scotland Scottish Office	0345 741 741
Parent's Charter for Scotland Scottish Office	0345 741 741
Patient's Charter for Scotland Scottish Office	0345 741 741

Wales only

Charter	*Service*
Charter for Further Education Welsh Office	0222 825862
Charter for Higher Education Welsh Office	0222 825829
Council Tenant's Charter for Wales Welsh Office	0222 825282
Parent's Charter for Wales Welsh Office	0222 761456 Xt 5364
Patient's Charter for Wales Welsh Office	0222 823219

Northern Ireland only

Charter	*Service*
Bus Passenger's Charter Ulsterbus/Citybus	From all Ulsterbus offices or phone: 0232 354042
Child Support Agency Charter Northern Ireland Child Support Agency	0345 139 700 outside Belfast (local rate) or 0232 896700 within Greater Belfast
Tenant's Charter for Northern Ireland Northern Ireland Housing Executive	0232 240588
Courts Charter for Northern Ireland Northern Ireland Courts Service	0232 328594
The Citizen's Charter for Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel	Full report from HMSO (£8.50). For copy of summary Guide, phone: 0800 243 174
Parent's Charter Department of Education for Northern Ireland	0247 279366
Charter for Patients and Clients Department of Health and Social Services, Northern Ireland	HPSS Management Executive 0232 524282
Railway Passenger's Charter Northern Ireland Railways	Northern Ireland Railways Headquarters 0232 899400
Royal Ulster Constabulary Charter Royal Ulster Constabulary	From police stations, or phone RUC Headquarters: 0232 650222 xt 22525
Social Security Agency Charter Northern Ireland Social Security Agency	Chief Executive's Office 0232 522457
Training and Employment Agency Charter Training and Employment Agency	0232 541613

TABLE PART II

Taxpayer's Charter (Customs and Excise)

Available from your Local VAT Enquiry Office. Their addresses and telephone numbers can be found in the phonebook under 'Customs and Excise'.

Benefits Agency Customer Charter

Available from all district offices of the Agency. Their addresses and telephone numbers can be found in the phonebook under 'Benefits Agency'. For bulk orders you can write to:

DSS Distribution Centre
DSS Leaflet Unit
Manchester Road
Heywood
Lancashire OL10 2PZ (Quote CUST 1).

Jobseeker's Charter

Available from all local Jobcentres and Unemployment Benefit Offices. The addresses and telephone numbers of which can be found in the phonebook under 'Employment Service'.

Passenger's Charter

Available from all British Rail stations and outlets or by writing to:

British Railways
Euston House
24 Eversholt Street
PO Box 100
London NW1 1DZ.

Patient's Charter

Copies of the Patient's Charter for England can be obtained by writing to (no stamp required):

The Patient's Charter
FREEPOST
London SE99 7XU.

Road User's Charter

Copies are available from most motorway service areas, AA shops and offices, the regional offices of the Department of Transport and the Highways Agency or from the Agency's Headquarters at the following address:

The Highways Agency
Room 12/23
St. Christopher House
Southwark Street
London SE1 OTE.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, if he will list for each edition of each citizens charter *(a)* the date of publication, *(b)* the department or agency responsible for its publication, *(c)* the name of the responsible Minister, *(d)* the cost of publication, *(e)* the cost of its distribution, *(f)* the means of its distribution, *(g)* the company, agency or other organisation responsible for its distribution and *(h)* the payment to such company, agency or other organisation.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of the letter in the Libraries of the House.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Syndicated Oral Questions

44. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what measures he intends to take to prevent syndicated oral questions.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to recommend any changes to the existing arrangements. If my hon. Friend wishes to make any proposals, he might wish in the first instance to put his thoughts to my right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Procedure Committee.

Parliamentary Recesses

45. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy to reduce the length of parliamentary recesses.

Mr. Newton: I have no such plans.

Parliamentary Timetable

46. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make it his policy to publish the estimated full year's parliamentary timetable at once, revise the programme monthly and give a firm programme of the business of the House a fortnight in advance.

Mr. Newton: The unpredictable nature and demands of parliamentary work would make the advance publication of an annual timetable impractical. I am, however, seeking to give earlier notice of recesses wherever possible.

Committee Membership

47. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to clarify the entitlements of appointment to Committees of hon. Members deprived of a party Whip; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The membership of Standing Committees is a matter for the Committee of Selection under the terms of reference set by Standing Order No. 86.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. Newton: In my duties as Lord President, none.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *264*, about the export of weapons to Indonesia, if he will list export equipment refused a licence because it was deemed likely to be used for internal repression; and if he will give dates.

Mr. David Davis: This Government, like all previous Governments, does not comment in detail on information on specific export licence applications since this information is commercially confidential.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to inquire from British civil personnel working on arms sold to Indonesia by Britain whether the arms have been used for internal repression.

Mr. Goodlad: We have made inquiries of those sources likely to be well informed on this question. No evidence has emerged that British-supplied defence equipment has been used against civilians in Indonesia or East Timor.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring of the use of British-manufactured armaments and aircraft in Indonesia is undertaken by British diplomatic representatives.

Mr. Goodlad: It would be impracticable on a regular basis to monitor, after transfer, equipment which we have licensed for export. We are, however, ready where necessary to ask recipient countries, on a confidential basis, about the location and use of defence equipment we have supplied. The Indonesians have assured us that British-supplied defence equipment will not be used against civilians, in Indonesia or East Timor.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support was given by the British embassy in Indonesia to the recent trip made by a delegation of hon. Members from the all-party anglo-Indonesian Committee to Indonesia.

Mr. Goodlad: The embassy provided an oral briefing. Her Majesty's ambassador gave a dinner in the group's honour. The deputy head of mission invited the group to meet representatives of Indonesian non-governmental organisations. Embassy representatives accompanied the group on most of their official calls.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of official entertainments, both at diplomatic residences, whether owned or rented and elsewhere, in Indonesia for each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: The costs for entertainment at diplomatic residences cannot be extracted from the overall cost of entertainment in Indonesia. These are as follows:

1991–92: £44,554

1992–93: £49,227

1993–94: £51,423

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of ministerial and civil servants' commercial overseas flights to Indonesia in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: Expenditure for duty travel to Indonesia for both Ministers and civil servants located in Britain in the FCO and ODA in 1993 and 1994 is as follows:

1993 (January to December): £20,416

1994 (January to November): £12,319

It is not possible to provide a figure for expenditure in 1992.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of upkeep of diplomatic residences owned by Her Majesty's Government in Indonesia in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: The information requested is not immediately available. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as it has been obtained.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of entertaining officials and representatives of the Government of Indonesia in each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodlad: These cannot be extracted from the overall cost of entertainment by our diplomatic mission in Indonesia and on Indonesian visitors to the United Kingdom. These are as follows:

1991–92: £105,221

1992–93: £ 73,452

1993–94: £ 83,238

The costs in the United Kingdom include the cost of accommodation and transport for official visitors.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs made only one train journey this year in the course of his official duties. This was from Brussels to London by Eurostar on November 28.

Sudan

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of changes in the level of respect for human rights in the Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The grave human rights situation in Sudan has not improved over the past year. The latest report by the UN special rapporteur, Dr. Biro, catalogued numerous abuses committed by the Government of Sudan and also the Sudan People's Liberation Army and other groups

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will sponsor a peace initiative aimed at containing the civil war in the Sudan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We fully support the ongoing peace initiative sponsored by four regional countries, members of the Inter-Governmental Authority for Drought and Development. We provide practical support for this initiative and, together with EU partners, have urged all parties to the conflict to negotiate in good faith.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about British arms manufacturers supplying arms to either side in the civil war in the Sudan; and if he will name them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are not aware of any violations by British companies to the EU arms embargo imposed on Sudan in March this year.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the disappearance of children from the Nuba mountains of Sudan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are disturbing reports of widespread human rights violations committed against civilians in the Nuba mountains region by Government of Sudan forces. References to these abuses are contained in the recent report by the UN special rapporteur.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current extent of rebel-held areas in the south of Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In large areas of southern Sudan, Government forces hold the main towns while the forces of the Sudan People's Liberation Army and other factions control much of the countryside. The precise areas held by the various forces varies constantly.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens travelled to the Sudan in each of the past five years; and how many Sudanese citizens entered Britain over the same period.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no means of calculating how many British citizens travel to Sudan, nor do we keep statistics on the number of visas issued worldwide to Sudanese nationals. The numbers of visas issued by HM embassy in Khartoum during the past five years were: 1993–4,450; 1992–3,730; 1991–8,030; 1990–7,490; 1989–7,450.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he has taken to review Her Majesty's Government's policy on the Sudan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We remain concerned about a number of issues including: the civil war, the appalling human rights situation, and problems over the distribution of humanitarian relief supplies. We shall continue to raise these issues with the Government of Sudan, and to press for action to resolve them.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the role and function of the remaining British diplomatic personnel in the Sudan; and what assessment he has made of whether they are being adequately monitored.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Her Majesty's embassy in Khartoum conducts a range of diplomatic activities, with political, aid, consular, commercial and visa sections. As with all our diplomatic missions, the embassy's activities are supervised from London.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in resolving the diplomatic impasse between Britain and the Sudan in relation to the exchange of ambassadors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in contact with the Sudanese authorities about this but a final decision has not yet been taken.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the extent of Islamic extremism in the Sudan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are concerned at reports of the presence in Sudan of Islamic militants from various countries.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British non-governmental organisations are currently operating in the Sudan; and if he will list them and their locations.

Mr. Baldry: There are nine British non-governmental organisations now operating projects in Sudan, with ODA funding.

These are:

NGO	*Location(s)*
Acord	Qala En Nahal, Port Sudan
British Red Cross	Juba
CARE	North Kordofan
Christian Outreach	Shagarab
Ockenden Venture	Gadem Gifrit, Port Sudan
OXFAM	Akot, Juba, Mundri, Terekaka, Maridi, Ed Daein, Red Sea Hills, North Tokar, Kababiya, Jebel Aulia, Gezira
PISCES AID	Sobat Basin
Save the Children Fund	Darfur, Waat, Yuai, Akon
You and Me	Awad El Sid

Addis Ababa

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current staffing level of entry clearance officers at the British embassy in Addis Ababa.

Mr. Baldry: The number of officers currently employed on entry clearance work at the British embassy in Addis Ababa is four. They include the consul and vice-consul, who have other duties in addition to entry clearance work and two full-time entry clearance officers with the effect from 31 December 1994.

There are plans to increase the staffing complement of the section by a further full-time ECO as soon as new offices are completed. This is expected to be in September 1995.

Ethiopia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the waiting time for entry clearance interviews at Her Majesty's post in Addis Ababa on the latest available information and in the last three years.

Mr. Baldry: Straightforward applications in Addis Ababa are dealt with in two working days. Those who require detailed interviews are now being given appointments in January. The visa section will be closed over the Christmas, new year and Ethiopian new year holidays.

The waiting time for straightforward Somalia reunion cases is currently one week. In other cases, where referral to the Home Office is necessary, applicants are being given appointments for interview in June 1996.

Corresponding information for the last three years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Gibraltar

D. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the European Union legislation that Gibraltar has not implemented.

Mr. David Davis: There is a backlog of EC legislation awaiting implementation in Gibraltar including directives in the areas of financial services, money laundering, the environment and health and safety. We are addressing this problem in co-operation with the Government of Gibraltar to whom we are giving substantial support in London and Gibraltar.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of 12 December, *Official Report,* column *487,* what considerations underlie the practice of British embassies in Belgrade, Sofia and Zagreb not recording the nationality of those to whom they issue visas to visit the United Kingdom; how many visas were *(a)* granted, *(b)* refused and *(c)* are awaiting decisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* As the immigration rules are applied without regard to nationality, and as the recording of applications by nationality is not operationally necessary, it is not the practice to record the number of applicants by nationality.

During 1993, the last full year for which figures are available, the following visas were issued, refused or awaiting decision in Belgrade, Sofia and Zagreb.

	Issued	*Refused*	*Awaiting*
Belgrade	1,772	105	62
Sofia	9,005	476	42
Zagreb	1,753	414	—

It is estimated that 95 per cent. of applicants in Sofia are Bulgarian nationals. Estimates are not available for Belgrade or Zagreb.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Photographic Unit

33. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what proposals the Commission has for contracting a House of Commons photographic unit.

Mr. Beith: None at present.

Upper Waiting Hall

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to Nuclear Electric Robotics to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 23 January to Friday 27 January 1995.

Mr. Deva: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to channel tunnel drawings by Mr. Ralph Lilliford to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 27 February to Friday 3 March 1995.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if consideration has been given to an application for an exhibition relating to the work of the Empty Houses Agency to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 16 January to Friday 20 January 1995.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Blackburn Partnership to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 3 April to Friday 7 April 1995.

Creche Facilities

Mrs. Roche: To ask the right hon. member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what recent progress has been made towards providing a creche for staff of the House, hon. Members' staff and hon. Members.

Mr. Beith: I understand that a debate on this matter has now been arranged for 12 January.

WALES

Smoking

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he is taking to discourage smoking amongst those under 16 years of age.

Mr. Richards: A wide variety of organisations are working locally and nationally to reduce the number of young people smoking. Health authorities were asked in "Caring for the Future" to pay particular attention to this group when drawing up their activity plans for promoting healthy lifestyles. Together with local education authorities, they are involved in projects such as life education centres and smokebusters, which are run through the Health Promotion Authority for Wales. Other, more general health education programmes include smoking as part of their broader approach.

The Government also encourage and monitor the enforcement of existing laws and voluntary agreements relating to tobacco sales to under 16-year-olds, and to relevant advertising and sponsorship issues.

Secure Accommodation

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a summary of the actions that were taken by his Department arising from the report by the working party chaired by Mr. Owen Hughes into the question of the provision of secure accommodation in Wales for people with psychiatric needs.

Mr. Richards: The Report, "Security in Psychiatric Hospitals in Wales", was produced in July 1975 and has long since been overtaken by more recent policy developments, culminating in the publication of the report of the all-Wales advisory group on forensic psychiatry in 1991, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

On 19 April 1993, it was announced that additional funding of £9.25 million for new hospital facilities in Wales for mentally ill offenders. This included £1.2 million for the expansion of the Caswell clinic from 14 to 33 beds and to provide additional revenue support to compensate health authorities for the high cost of maintaining these patients. Three million pounds was made available to fund the development of a medium secure unit for north Wales.

The new beds at the Caswell clinic should be available by 31 March 1995. In north Wales, planning approval to develop a purpose-built, 25-bed medium secure unit at Llanfairfechan was obtained on 9 November 1994. The facility is expected to open in the latter half of 1996.

Repair and Renovation Grants

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many houses in Wales *(a)* are in a condition which would qualify them for repairs or renovation grants and *(b)* were given such grants in 1993–94; and what is the average cost per household of such grants in that year.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Recent estimates are available only for mandatory renovation grants where the 1993 Welsh house condition survey estimated that 151,000 dwellings were in a condition which would qualify for such grants. Estimates of the number of houses in a condition which would qualify for discretionary grant are not available.

Householders' eligibility for grants depends on their means. Therefore, not all of the properties could be improved with grant aid. The number of completed grants in 1993–94 and the average amount paid are shown in the following table:

	Number of grants	*Average grant paid £*
Mandatory renovation grant	7,565	18,489
Discretionary renovation grant	422	17,184
Minor works	4,966	852

Hospital Closures

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospitals have closed since April 1991.

Mr. Richards: Seventeen NHS hospitals in Wales have closed, and remain closed, since 1 April 1991. In all but one case this has enabled patients to be moved to better facilities or into the community.

In one instance, responsibility for the care provided was transferred from the NHS to social and probation services.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales for how many accident and emergency departments there are currently proposals for closure.

Mr. Richards: None. The strategic reviews in south and west Glamorgan do, however, involve a transfer of these services to more appropriate locations nearby.

Telecentres

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications have been made by *(a)* each county council, *(b)* each district council and *(c)* Wales as a whole for telecentres under the strategic development scheme; and how many and what proportion of such bids have been successful.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There has been: *(a)* one successful bid by Gwynedd county council for 1995–96; one successful bid by Powys county council for 1994–95 and three unsuccessful bids for 1995–96—two bids were joint bids with Radnor district council and Brecknock borough council respectively. No other county councils have made applications for SDS funding of telecentres centres.

There has been: *(b)* one unsuccessful bid by Aberconwy borough council for 1994–95; one unsuccessful bid from Colwyn borough council for 1995–96; one unsuccessful bid by Ceredigion district council for 1994–95 and one unsuccessful bid by Brecknock borough council for 1995–96, which was a joint bid with Powys county council; oneunsuccessful bid by Radnor borough council for 1995–96, which was a joint bid with Powys county council. No other borough or district councils have made applications for SDS funding of telecentres.

There have been: *(c)* nine bids for SDS funding of, telecentres for the 1994–95 and 1995–96 SDS rounds: the joint bids have been counted as one in both cases. Three bids were successful, a 33 per cent. success rate.

Welsh Language

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Vote Office copies of the Welsh Language Board's draft guidelines on language schemes.

Mr. Richards: Copies of the Welsh Language Board's draft guidelines have already been placed in the Library of the House and sent to each Welsh Member of Parliament and other interested Members.

Teachers Union

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the teachers unions he has met formally.

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend has met the National Association of Head Teachers. Since my appointment I have met the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers. I hope to have the opportunity to meet other teachers' associations in the near future.

School Governing Bodies

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will list the school governing bodies in Wales that he has met.

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend and I meet a number of governors in the course of our visits to schools and will continue to do so.

Parent–teacher Associations

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the parent–teacher associations in Wales which he has met.

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend has not yet met any of the associations. Officials have met the parent teacher associations of Wales on a number of occasions.

Schools, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the schools in Clwyd which he has visited or proposes to visit.

Mr. Richards: In 1994, my right hon. Friend has visited two schools in Clwyd as follows:

St. Davids High School
Eirias High School (Grant maintained)

Since my appointment, I have visited Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan, which is grant maintained and Ysgol Gymraeg Dewi Sant, Rhyl. I also attended a life education centre, which was based at Ysgol Esgob Morgan in St. Asaph.

Pre-school Education

Mr. Llywd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are the future plans for the expansion of Welsh medium pre-school education; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are the future plans for the expansion of pre-school education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) on 8 December, *Official Report*, column *347*.

Ministerial Meetings

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales and the National Farmers Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I last met representatives of the Farmers Union of Wales on 26 October 1994 and representatives of the National Farmers Union (Wales) on 12 December 1994.

Planning Applications

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many planning applications his Department has called in during the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In the five years beginning December 1989, my right hon. Friend has called in 32 planning applications. The Government's policy is to be very selective about calling in planning applications, which will in general be called in only if planning issues of more than local importance are involved.

Secondary Schools

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of secondary schools in Wales.

Mr. Richards: There are 227 maintained secondary schools in Wales.

Wind Energy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further guidelines are being considered by his Department following the second report of Session 1993–94 on wind energy by the Welsh Affairs Select Committee HC336; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Dementia

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people with dementia there are in each district health authority area.

Mr. Richards: The information requested is not held centrally.

Severn Estuary

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to commission a study into the mineral resources of the Severn estuary.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Under the geological and mineral planning research programme the Department of the Environment is planning to undertake a study into the marine aggregate resources and constraints of the Bristol channel.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency regarding the publication of reports on *(a)* the Grant Thornton inquiry into the Cynon valley land deal, *(b)* the internal audit report into the use of agency investment funds on underwriting the BP share issue and *(c)* audit problems in the issuing of computer and consultancy contracts.

Mr. Redwood: I met the chairman on 6 December and discussed the issues contained in the Grant Thornton report. I have expressed my deep concern at the shortcomings identified in that report and at those other matters which have now been reported by the agency to the Chairman of the Committee of Public Accounts.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Redwood: Departmental telephone charges for years 1989–94 were:

	£
1989–90	921,440
1990–91	896,112
1991–92	1,159,874
1992–93	1,213,879
1993–94	1,300,889

These figures consist of call charges, equipment maintenance, line rental, provision of new extensions, moving existing ones and provision of freephone facilities.

Details of the number of calls made per year are not held centrally.

Police Authorities

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what was the total sum allocated to Welsh police authorities in 1994–95 and 1995–96; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the budget available to his Department to allocate to Welsh police authorities in 1994–95 and 1995–96; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: For 1994–95 there are no standard spending assessments for police authorities in Wales on which to base year-on-year comparisons. County council SSAs include provision for police services. Expenditure on policing is determined by county councils in the light of their statutory responsibilities, local needs and available resources. Some 51 per cent. of current and capital expenditure incurred by police authorities is met by Home Office grant. For 1994–95 this is expected to amount to £150.6 million.

From 1 April 1995, police authorities will be self-standing local authorities with their own cash-limited police grant and SSA allocations. I announced on 1 December that I propose to make £300.7 million available from total standard spending in Wales to fund police services in 1995–96.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many grant-maintained schools there were on 1 January 1993 and 1 January 1994 respectively; how many are there today; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Four, 15 and 16 respectively. The decision to establish a GMS is one for the school and the parents of children attending the school.

Training

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the programmes for which his Department is responsible directly, or via agents, to train employed people, or provide on-the-job training; and what funding is available for each scheme.

Mr. Redwood: The information is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Public Bodies

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the future functions of the Land Authority for Wales, the Development Board for Rural Wales and the urban regeneration division of the Welsh Development Agency in urban redevelopment.

Mr. Redwood: These bodies, working closely with local authorities, will continue to have a role in attracting private sector investment to regenerate Welsh towns and cities.

Consultants

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 13 December, *Official Report*, column *606*, if he will list the number of consultants employed, and at what total cost, by his Department in 1989, 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Redwood: Details of management and other consultants engaged by the Welsh Office are as follows:

	Number of occasions	*Total payments (£000s)*
1989–90	8	342
1990–91	24	229
1991–92	38	1,109
1992–93	74	1,416

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 13 December, *Official Report* column *606*, if he will institute a system for the central collection of information on the use of consultants by non-departmental public bodies in Wales, and of monitoring its effectiveness and for the issuing of guidelines with respect to controlling the use of consultants.

Mr. Redwood: No, these would be additional costs to the Welsh Office and NDPBs to set up a system for central collection.

Countryside Council for Wales

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the attendance record of each member of the board of the Countryside Council for Wales since its inception in 1991.

Mr. Redwood: Details of the current members' attendance at meetings of the Countryside Council for Wales since 1 April 1991 are as follows:

Name	
Mr. E. M. W. Griffith (Chairman)	26 out of possible 26
Professor D. Q. Bowen (Deputy Chairman)	23 out of possible 26
Professor D. Bellamy	22 out of possible 26
Mr. M. Chambers	24 out of possible 26
Dr. W. A. Evans	23 out of possible 26
Mr. T. Jones	20 out of possible 26
Dr. S. Ormerod	19 out of possible 23
Mr. B. K. Thomas	14 out of possible 19
Dr. L. Warren	10 out of possible 12
Mr. M. Williams	23 out of possible 26

Blood

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for ensuring co-ordination of the activities of the National Blood Transfusion Service (Wales) with that of *(a)* the National Blood Authority and *(b)* the Scottish Blood Transfusion Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Discussions between Welsh Office and Department of Health Officials about the future relationship between NBTS(W) and the NBA are on-going. There has been no direct contact with the SBTA.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Health Consumer Services Authority concerning the future capital and revenue funding for the National Blood Transfusion Service (Wales); what consultations he has had in relation to the command and control system for the collection and processing of blood from north, mid and west Wales; and what consultations he has had in relation to the demands from hospitals and other providers with respect to the ordering of blood supplies from the National Blood Transfusion Service (Wales).

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 17 October, *Official Report*, column *80*. Management of the collection and processing of blood in north Wales is the responsibility of the NBA.

Cardiff Community Health Council

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his current estimate of the date for hearing the appeal with respect to the nomination of Alan Trew to the Cardiff community health council.

Mr. Redwood: The two-year disqualification period ended on 14 December 1994. Therefore, Mr. Trew may now apply to me in writing at any time to remove his disqualification for membership of the CHC. There is no requirement to convene a hearing to consider such an application.

Lynon Valley

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) at 12 December, *Official Report*, columns *515-16*, what legal opinions he has obtained from leading counsel and disclosed to his

Department in relation to the propriety of participation by the Welsh Development Agency in underwriting or sub-underwriting of *(a)* Government privatisation share issues and *(b)* Welsh-based private company stock market flotations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None. My Department's lawyers are currently considering the legal advice obtained by the agency in 1988 and recently revealed to my Department, and whether further legal advice should be sought.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report*, columns *515-16*, to the hon. Member for the Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), if he will make a statement on the legal and corporate status of joint venture boards in publicly-funded urban regeneration schemes in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: Joint venture boards set up for the purpose of urban regeneration do not, in general, have separate legal identity.

Planning Policy Guidance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue planning policy guidance notes covering the topics covered by PPG9 Nature Conservation (October 1994), PPG13 Transport and Out of Town Shopping Centres (March 1994), PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment (September 1994), PPG23 Planning and Pollution Control (July 1994), and PPG24 Planning and Noise (September 1994); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I am considering what planning guidance on these topics it would be appropriate to issue in Wales.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Scottish Consumer Council

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of funding for the Scottish Consumer Council in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992, *(c)* 1993 and *(d)* 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The grant-in-aid paid to the Scottish Consumer Council for each year since 1990–91 was:

1990–91: £293,273
1991–92: £307,048
1992–93: £409,944
1993–94: £389,265

Final figures for 1994–95 are not yet available.

Note:

Figures do not include central costs, such as staff salaries, which are borne by the National Consumer Council.

Source:

National Consumer Council Annual Reports 1990–91 to 1993–94.

Post Office

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library copies of the responses to his consultation paper on the future of the Post Office.

Mr. Eggar: No. These responses were submitted in confidence. However, for a summary of the responses I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend) on 14 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *658-59.*

Foreign Investment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made on the effect of the level of foreign investment on the amount of net capital employed in United Kingdom manufacturing since 1979.

Mr. Needham: Figures are not available for the amount of foreign net capital employed in United Kingdom manufacturing industry.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last session of Parliament were not answered on the ground that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Heseltine: My Department replied on that ground to nine questions tabled during the last Session of Parliament.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by his Department for each of the last five years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Details of departmental charges for telephony for 1989–90 and 1990–91 are not readily available. Comparison of the figures for successive years must be treated with caution as they are affected by major accommodation moves and, for the DTI agencies and regional offices, only include the use of the Government telephone network.

Year	*£ million*
1991–92	3.2
1992–93	4.2
1993–94	3.9

Details of the number of calls made per year are not held centrally.

Disabled People

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list his Department's responsibilities for providing opportunities for disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Department has such responsibilities for its own staff.

Aerospace Equipment

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the report "Engineering Economic Trends", a copy of which has been sent to him with particular reference to predictions for output of aerospace equipment for 1995.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have written to the hon. Member.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of output for aerospace equipment for 1995.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is not this Department's practice to forecast industrial output by sector.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the change in constant purchasing power for aerospace equipment from the second half of 1992 to the first half of 1994.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Between the third quarter of 1992 and the second quarter of 1994, the producer price index for aerospace equipment increased by 5.75 per cent. This index is the most appropriate for converting aerospace sales figures into constant prices.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the aerospace industry regarding change in constant purchasing power.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with his right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, about a strategy to meet any concerns expressed by the industry regarding output for the aerospace industry.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None.

Engineering Steel Production

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advance has been made in preventing unfair support from public funds of engineering steel production in other EC states which proves disadvantageous to United Kingdom producers.

Mr. Eggar: The Government have consistently pressed for strict implementation of the rules governing state aids to the steel industry. We have continued to impress upon the Commission the importance we attach to rigorous implementation of the monitoring arrangements agreed at the December 1993 Industry Council. At the June 1994

Industry Council, we obtained from the Commission a commitment to take action in the event of any breaches of the conditions agreed in December.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, if he will make a statement on the outcome of the negotiations between the European Commission and the United States Government to update the 1959 US-Euratom nuclear co-operation agreement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Negotiations between the European Commission and the United States Government are continuing. A copy of the Commission's press release on the occasion of the last negotiating round in October has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. I understand that there will be no further formal negotiation sessions before the new year.

National Engineering Laboratory

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many people were employed at the National Engineering Laboratory in each of the last five years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: On 1 April from 1990–94, each year the staffing levels at the National Engineering Laboratory were as follows:

	Year
1990	481.0
1991	390.0
1992	388.5
1993	363.5
1994	283.5

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what facilities and services provided by the National Engineering Laboratory have closed or contracted since it became a next steps agency.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The only facility to have closed is the calibration service, which was provided by NEL for the Scottish calibration service. There has been a reduction in all existing areas of work for DTI, reflecting reduced demand. However, since NEL was created as a next steps agency, there has been an increase in work done for other customers.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the remuneration of the chief executive of the National Engineering Laboratory payable in each of the last five years.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The post of chief executive came into existence only in October 1990. The information requested by the hon. Member is published annually in the report for the National Engineering Laboratory, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Insurance (Terrorism Premiums)

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the insurance industry about removing or reducing terrorism premiums on property insurance following the changed situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the change in arrangements for paying terrorism insurance premiums detailed in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on 16 December, *Official Report,* columns *850–51.*

Indonesia (Trade Delegations)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the names and dates of planned trade delegations to Indonesia in which hon. Members are taking part.

Mr. Needham: There are at present no plans for hon. Members to take part in trade delegations to Indonesia.

Sudan

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the export earnings of British firms in relation to the Sudan in each of the past five years; and what was the value of imports from the Sudan for the same period.

Mr. Needham: Information on United Kingdom trade with the Sudan is regularly published by the Central Statistical Office in the overseas trade statistics of the United Kingdom. Copies of the publication are available from the Library of the House. The information on export earnings is not classified according to the nationality of the firm.

Regional Policy

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list his Department's regional policies.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is responsible for co-ordinating policy on the European structural funds and for regional industrial policy, in particular the delivery of regional selective assistance in the English assisted areas.

Assisted-area Status

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what formula is used to determine assisted-area status designation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The DTI, Scottish Office and Welsh Office jointly issued a background document on the assisted-areas map on 23 July 1993, setting out the factors that were used to determine the revised map implemented on 1 August 1993.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department (i) hold open meetings, (ii) conduct public consultation exercises, (iii) conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, (iv) publish a register of members' interests, (v) publish agendas for meetings and (vi) publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case *(a)* under a statutory requirement or *(b)* voluntary.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* A list of advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by my Department is set out in the annual publication "Public Bodies", copies of which are in the Library of the House. These bodies are consulted by the Department on a wide range of issues and provide a valuable source of independent advice.

These answers to the individual questions are:

(i) none.

(ii) and (iii) none. However my Department, who normally provide the secretariat to the advisory NDPBs, conduct public consultation exercises when appropriate; and the committee members themselves may consult other parties informally.

(iv) none.

(v) none.

(vi) none.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Heating Costs

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the percentage of extra fuel which is required to heat an identical house in Belfast taking Bristol as a base.

Mr. Ancram: The percentage of extra fuel required to heat a typical semi-detached house in Belfast compared with Bristol is estimated to be 19 per cent. This figure has been calculated using the building research establishment domestic energy model.

Objective 1 Funding

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library his Department's guidelines on eligibility for objective 1 funding for agricultural projects.

Mr. Ancram: The guidelines on eligibility for objective 1 funding of agricultural projects are contained in the Northern Ireland single programming document, which is being published by the European Commission and is expected to be available shortly. I will make arrangements for a copy to be placed in the Library as soon as possible thereafter.

Agriculture (EC Aid)

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress towards the implementation of agricultural measures under objective 1 status.

Mr. Ancram: The agriculture measures under Northern Ireland's objective 1 status are contained in the sub-programme for agriculture, fisheries and rural development—SPARD—a constituent part of the Northern Ireland single programming document, which was approved by the European Commission in July 1994.

Some aspects of the sub-programme are support measures, such as hill livestock compensatory allowances, and expenditure on these has been ongoing throughout 1994. The capital grants and farm innovation schemes opened for applications on 14 November 1994. The processing and marketing grants for agricultural products has not yet opened for applications as the Northern Ireland sectoral plan has still to be approved by the European Commission.

Hospital Closures

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many hospitals have closed since April 1991.

Mr. Moss: Eight. With the exception of one hospital, which provided GP maternity and obstetric services, these facilities provided services for elderly people and people with a mental handicap.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for how many accident and emergency departments there are currently proposals for closure.

Mr. Moss: I am not aware of any current proposals from health and social service boards or trusts for the closure of accident and emergency departments.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost his Department.

Sir John Wheeler: During the last year no use has been made of executive search agencies by the Northern Ireland Departments or the Northern Ireland Office.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report*, columns *477–78* on market testing, what is the total value of the contracts awarded.

Sir John Wheeler: The total value of the contracts is £8.26 million. The duration of individual contracts making up this figure varies from one to five years.

Child Care

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of the total social services budget was spent on child care provision in each of the health board areas in each of the last five years.

Mr. Moss: Resources are allocated to health and social services boards by the Department on a block grant basis. The level of resources expended on child care provision is determined by each board in accordance with the strategic priorities for the board area. Actual expenditure on child care provision expressed as a percentage of total personal social services expenditure in each of the health and social services boards in each of the last five years was as follows:

Per cent.

Board	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992—93*
Northern	11.5	11.0	11.0	11.1	16.8
Southern	10.7	10.7	10.8	12.4	11.9
Eastern	14.6	13.4	12.3	12.9	13.9
Western	14.4	14.6	15.1	15.8	10.2

(1) Expenditure figures for 1993–94 are not yet available.

(2) Expenditure figures for the provision of child care services used to calculate the above percentage figures do not include Administration or Fieldwork costs.

(3) The financial reporting arrangements of Boards were revised in 1992–93 to accommodate the Health Service reforms. It is therefore difficult to meaningfully compare the 1992–93 percentage figures with those of previous years.

Tourism

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish figures showing the number of inquiries made to the Northern Ireland tourist board by potential holidaymakers; what further measures are proposed to encourage visitors on vacation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* For the year to date, the NITB has handled 281,411 inquires—a 28 per cent. rise on 1993. In particular, inquiries during October 1994 increased by 92 per cent. on the same period last year. NITB is planning a stepped up promotional campaign for 1995 in all its main markets to capitalise on this increasing interest.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the recent announcement of a £6.8 million initiative to boost tourism in the island of Ireland in co-operation with the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Ancram *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* The tourism marketing initiative builds upon existing co-operative activities by the tourism authorities in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It consists of a set of pilot programmes and will be concentrated on marketing the island of Ireland in the United States, Great Britain and Holland. For a limited investment by the Northern Ireland tourist board, it will bring significant benefits to an industry with considerable potential to assist economic growth throughout Ireland.

EDUCATION

Special Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to ensure that when children are given statements of special educational needs that their parents or guardians are advised to investigate whether their children may be eligible for benefits and or the disabled living allowance.

Mr. Forth: Statements for children with special educational needs are made by local education authorities. The code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs, issued jointly by the Department and the Welsh Office in May this year, advised LEAs to work in close partnership with the parents of such children, and also with the local health and social services. How, within these collaborative arrangements, parents or guardians are advised on entitlement to benefit is best decided locally by the parties concerned.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to her answer of 12 December, *Official Report,* column *456,* on market testing, what is the total value of the contracts awarded.

Mr. Boswell: The total value of the contracts concerned, two of which are still in the process of being finalised, is some £1,036,000 per annum.

Teaching Qualifications

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education for each main subject, what percentage of teachers, according to the 1993 secondary schools staffing survey, without a past A-level qualification in that subject, taught that subject in the survey week.

Mr. Boswell: The following table is derived from the 1992 secondary schools staffing survey and shows the percentage of full-time secondary teachers in England who gave some tuition in a subject in which they held no post-A level academic qualification, and the percentage of tuition this represented. About half of this tuition was by teachers with five or more years experience of teaching the subject.

Subject	*Per cent. of teachers without a qualification*	*Tuition by these teachers as per cent. of all tuition in subject*
Mathematics	22	10
Biology	14	11
Chemistry	5	3
Physics	6	4
General Science	16	9
CDT	50	34
English	27	14
French	18	9
German	24	13
Other Languages	34	19
History	28	11
Geography	29	10
Music	19	5
Art	24	7
Physical Education	32	9
Religious Education	54	25

The Government have, for a number of years, provided substantial support for programmes to enhance and update teachers' subject knowledge in support of the national curriculum.

Disabled Access

Mr. Kilfoyle: To asks the Secretary of State for Education what directions she has issued concerning the provision of disabled access within new school buildings.

Mr. Forth: The requirements for disabled access to new school buildings are currently set out in the Department's design note 18 "Access for Disabled People to Educational Buildings". As my hon. Friend the Minister for the Disabled announced on 24 November, *Official Report,* column *743,* the Government intend to bring the requirements into line with the national standards specified in part M of the Building Regulations 1991. We shall be consulting on the necessary measures shortly.

Overseas Students

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will publish the responses to the consultation exercise engaged in by her Department regarding the proposal to amend the Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 1983 to allow institutions to charge overseas students on part-time courses higher fees.

Mr. Boswell: In line with the code of practice on access to Government information, a summary of the responses to the consultation exercise will be provided in the new year following a decision on the proposal. Copies of individual responses will be made available in the public enquiry room of the Department, unless the respondent has specifically requested confidentiality.

City Technology Colleges

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list for each city technology college the percentage of pupils entitled to receive free school meals.

Mr. Robin Squire: Using January 1994 data, the percentages are as follows:

	Percentage
Kingshurst	30
Djanogly	32
Macmillan	27
Emmanuel	11
Dixons	13
Leigh	12
Harris	23
BRITschool	22
Bacon's	31
Haberdashers'	28
Thomas Telford	14
Brooke Weston	12
ADT	26
Landau Forte	8
John Cabot	19

Grant-maintained Schools

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the total number and the percentage of parents *(a)* voting in favour of grant-maintained status, *(b)* voting against it and *(c)* not voting in parental ballots on grant-maintained status (i) from September 1988 to date and (ii) from September 1993 to date.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is as follows:

Period	*Number and percentage of eligible parents* Voting yes	*Voting no*	*Not voting*
1 September 1988–15 December 1994	558787 (41%)	324986 (24%)	493830 (36%)
1 September 1993–15 December 1994	70116 (34%)	63564 (31%)	73499 (35%)

because of rounding, the sum of percentages shown may not be 100 per cent.

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many complaints her Department has received about the admissions policies of grant-maintained schools; to which schools they relate; and, in each case, what action has been taken.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department receives a substantial number of inquiries, both in writing and by telephone, about school admissions. Sometimes concern is expressed about the particular admissions arrangements operated by a school or local education authority. The Department does not keep a central register of admissions inquiries, but it is comparatively rare to receive a specific complaint about the admissions policy of an individual GM school.

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which grant-maintained secondary schools include as part of their admissions policy an interview with *(a)* pupils and *(b)* parents which forms a significant part in the allocation of places, other than church schools which do so solely to judge religious suitability and make this clear in their written policy.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible in the new year.

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total value of the formula allocation of capital grant to grant-maintained schools in each year since 1990.

Mr. Robin Squire: Capital formula allocations to grant-maintained schools in the years between 1990–91 and 1993–94 are set out in the table. Formula allocation 1994–95 is now the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the agency to write to the hon. Member with this information.

Year	*Allocation £ million*
1990–91	0.7
1991–92	2.5
1992–93	6.4
1993–94	16.0

Universities (Business Links)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to measure the number of joint projects between universities and *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* chambers of commerce and *(c)* training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend welcomes the growing number of such joint projects, of many diverse kinds. Their development is a matter for autonomous universities and their partners, and no information is collected centrally.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to encourage university involvement in business links initiatives.

Mr. Boswell: Responsibility for developing links with business, of all kinds, rests with individual institutions. Many are conscious of the need to do so, and some are working with the local business links promoted by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. Ministers take opportunities, by means of speeches or visits, to encourage universities to see the importance of developing links with business. Equally, we encourage the world of business to recognise the value of working with universities.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more she has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of her official duties.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Whenever possible, I travel by train to official engagements. I have made eight journeys as defined by train since my appointment.

Student Loans and Grants

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total predicted saving to the Treasury in 1995–96, based on the latest available record, from the phasing out of the means-tested allowance payable as part of the maintenance grant to students over 26 years who had previously been in employment.

Mr. Boswell: We estimate that the total saving in the 1995–96 financial year will be about £5 million. This reflects the maintenance of the allowance to existing students, and savings will increase substantially in subsequent years.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what is the new rate of loan to apply to students who are studying in London and living away from the parental home but who could conveniently live with their parents while studying;

(2) what is the total saving based on the latest available student numbers which would accrue in 1995–96 from the introduction of the new rate of loan to apply to students who are studying in London and living away from the parental home but who could conveniently live with their parents while studying; and what guidelines he has issued regarding the definition of convenient.

Mr. Boswell: The maximum rate of student loan for students who are studying in London and living away from the parental home but who could conveniently live with their parents will be £1,530 in the 1995–96 academic year. Resources available through full year loan and grant to these students will increase broadly in line with the general uprating for student support. It is for local education authorities to decide whether it is convenient for students to live with their parents. We do not collect data on the number of students affected by such decisions by their local education authorities.

Science Subjects

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each year since 1979 the numbers and percentages of *(a)* students attaining GCSE, or equivalent, in each science subject, *(b)* students attaining A levels in science subjects, *(c)* students studying science and technology to degree level and *(d)* graduates in science and technology by university.

Mr. Boswell: The table lists for England the numbers and percentages of *(a)* students attaining GCSE, or equivalent, in each science subject and *(b)* students attaining A-levels in science subjects for each year since 1979.

Information on the numbers of students each year studying, and graduating in, science—including technological—subjects at English former University Funding Council funded universities is contained in volume 1 of "Students and Staff" published by the "Universities Statistical Record", copies of which are in the House Library. Comparable information for institutions recently awarded university status is not available in published form and I will write to the hon. Member with the data.

(A) GCSE results of pupils attaining science subjects

Academic year	*Maths*	*Physics*	*Chemistry*	*Biology*	*Other science*	*Single/double science*
(i) numbers in thousands						
1979	509.0	201.1	149.9	264.7	249.5	—
1980	558.0	219.8	164.9	281.3	287.8	—
1981	557.9	226.0	169.0	285.8	285.3	—
1982	582.3	246.6	184.6	301.0	295.0	—
1983	569.1	256.4	193.4	301.7	275.7	—
1984	560.0	248.7	195.3	300.2	268.7	—
1985	550.8	245.8	195.8	291.5	266.0	—
1986	535.2	235.8	190.4	276.5	262.9	—
1987	537.3	234.6	191.4	271.3	263.1	—
1988	503.6	217.6	181.1	239.9	248.5	—
1989	493.8	192.3	173.3	206.7	40.6	131.4
1990	461.6	150.0	140.1	166.7	30.9	190.8
1991	449.1	98.3	96.3	107.0	20.1	284.9
1992	439.0	51.4	50.9	55.1	15.8	372.0
1993	428.4	43.9	44.4	47.8	12.9	378.6
(ii) as a percentage of the 15 year old population						
1979	66.1	26.1	19.5	34.4	32.4	—
1980	70.3	27.7	20.8	35.5	36.3	—
1981	70.6	28.6	21.4	36.2	36.1	—
1982	75.3	31.9	23.9	38.9	38.1	—
1983	75.1	33.8	25.5	39.8	36.4	—
1984	75.6	33.6	26.4	40.5	36.3	—
1985	75.3	33.6	26.8	39.8	36.4	—
1986	75.2	33.1	26.8	38.9	37.0	—

(A) GCSE results of pupils attaining science subjects

Academic year	*Maths*	*Physics*	*Chemistry*	*Biology*	*Other science*	*Single/double science*
1987	74.5	32.5	26.5	37.6	36.5	—
1988	74.8	32.3	26.9	35.7	36.9	—
1989	78.4	30.5	27.5	32.8	6.4	20.8
1990	77.5	25.2	23.5	28.0	5.2	32.0
1991	78.4	17.2	16.8	18.7	3.5	49.7
1992	79.3	9.3	9.2	10.0	2.9	67.2
1993	80.1	8.2	8.3	8.9	2.4	70.8

1979–88: data is for all school leavers (Source School Leavers Survey).
1989–91: data is for the 15 year old pupils (School Examination Survey).
1992–93: data is for 15 year old pupils, including special schools (Publication of the School Performance Tables).
Age as at start of academic years.

(B) GCE A/AS examination results of students in schools and further education colleges

Academic Year	*Maths*	*Physics*	*Chemistry*	*Biology*
(i) numbers in thousands				
1979	41.8	32.9	29.6	25.6
1980	45.5	34.6	29.2	26.9
1981	47.1	35.5	31.5	27.7
1982	50.4	37.3	33.8	29.0
1983	51.6	37.0	33.9	30.2
1984	52.6	37.7	33.9	30.0
1985	53.6	36.9	34.0	29.5
1986	53.0	35.0	32.8	27.8
1987	50.0	31.9	31.3	28.0
1988	51.1	31.6	30.8	27.7
1989	48.6	30.9	29.5	28.4
1990	47.1	31.0	31.8	31.4
1991	44.5	28.5	29.9	29.0
1992	44.0	28.5	30.0	32.9
1993	44.3	27.4	29.0	32.6
(ii) as a percentage of 17 year old population				
1979	5.6	4.4	4.0	3.5
1980	6.0	4.5	3.8	3.5
1981	6.1	4.6	4.1	3.6
1982	6.3	4.7	4.2	3.6
1983	6.5	4.6	4.2	3.8
1984	6.8	4.8	4.4	3.9
1985	7.0	4.8	4.5	3.9
1986	7.1	4.7	4.4	3.7
1987	6.8	4.3	4.3	3.8
1988	7.1	4.4	4.3	3.9
1989	6.7	4.3	4.1	3.9
1990	7.0	4.6	4.7	4.6
1991	7.0	4.5	4.7	4.6
1992	7.3	4.7	5.0	5.5
1993	7.6	4.7	5.0	5.6

1979–1991: data is for all school leavers (Source School Examinations Survey formerly the School Leavers Survey) and all students in Further Education Colleges (FE113 Survey).
1992–93: data is for students of any age in schools and Further Education Colleges who took examinations in the relevant year (School and College Performance Tables).
Age as at start of academic years.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what use her Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within her Department and executive agencies administered by her Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost her Department.

Mr. Boswell: During the last year, no use has been made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within the Department or the Teachers' Pensions Agency, which is the only executive agency administered by this Department.

Departmental Telephones Calls

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much has been spent on telephone charges; and how many telephone calls have been made by her Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Forth: Departmental charges for telephony for years 1990–1994 were:

1990–91: £539,000
1991–92: £846,000
1992–93: £863,000
1993–94: £938,000

Figures are not available centrally for 1989–90 or for the number of telephone calls made in each year.

The sums include installation, rental and maintenance costs, as well as call charges, for the use of telecommunication links. Call charges currently amount to £350,000 a year.

EMPLOYMENT

Jobfinders Grants

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when his Department will publish the results from the evaluation of the jobfinders grant pilots that ran between February and July 1994.

Miss Widdecombe: The jobfinders grant pilots were extended to run until the end of December 1994. A report based on analysis of management information will be available in February 1995. Further information from a survey of participants and a follow-up study will be available in August 1995.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Miss Widdecombe: Whenever it is appropriate, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State travels by train to official engagements. We estimate that my right hon. Friend and his predecessor have made 25 train journeys of one hour's duration or more on official duties since January 1994.

Absenteeism

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the absenteeism rate for his Department in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the absenteeism rate for the Employment Service in 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. David Chidgey, dated 19 December 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the absenteeism rate in the Employment Service for the years 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Our central payroll records hold information on individual absence details for sickness absence, special leave without pay and maternity leave but not aggregated information on absenteeism.

I am therefore unable to provide this information which could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

I am sorry I cannot be more helpful.

Employment Service

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many casual staff have been made redundant from Employment Service offices in each region and at each office in the past year.

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Jim Dowd, dated 19 December 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about how many casual staff have been made redundant from the Employment Service in the past year, by both Region and local office.

The Employment Service (ES) has always employed a proportion of casual staff to enable it to manage staffing levels as unemployment rises and falls. At a time when unemployment is falling, termination of casual contracts is the obvious, sensible step to take and in fact avoids any necessity for redundancies among permanent staff.

Casual staff in the ES have contracts which are renewable up to a maximum of 51 weeks (103 weeks in exceptional circumstances). Under the terms of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978, only an employee who has a minimum two years continuous service can be regarded as redundant. The number of casual employees who have been made redundant by the ES during the past year therefore is nil.

However, in line with the fall in unemployment, the ES has recently reduced the number of casual appointments, with the number of contracts terminated in the 12 months ending 30 November being 7,300. The majority (7,142) were of Administrative Assistant and Administrative Officer level.

Breakdown of this figure by Regional and Head Office locations is as follows, although details of contracts terminated by individual offices are, unfortunately, not available.

Regional/head office location	*Contracts terminated*
Office for Scotland	564
Northern Region	353
North West Region	1,050
Yorkshire and Humberside Region	465
Office for Wales	291
West Midlands Region	930
East Midlands Region	520
South West Region	416
London and South East Region	2,578
London Head Office	3
Sheffield Head Office	130
Total	7,300

I hope this is helpful.

Departmental Budgets

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was his Department's projected budget for this financial year and for each quarter.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department's projected budget for this financial year is £3,770 million. This information is set out in table 1 of the Employment Department group's departmental report 1994, Cm 2505. The Department does not produce quarterly budgets.

Staff Statistics

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff have been drafted into the London region on detached duty for each month of this year.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff drafted into the London region on detached duty have had to stay overnight.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is not available.

Labour Statistics

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what were the proportions of full-time employees earning less per week than *(a)* £221.50, *(b)* £208.53, *(c)* £156.40, *(d)* £150.80, *(e)* £131.95, *(f)* £113.10 and *(g)* £94.25, excluding overtime payments, and part-time employees earning less per hour than (i) £5.88, (ii) £5.53, (iii) £4.15, (iv) £4.00, (v) £3.50, (vi) £3.00 and (vii) £2.50, excluding overtime payments, in April 1994 in (1) Great Britain as a whole, (2) each county in England, (3) each county in Wales, (4) each London borough and Greater London as a whole and (5) each regional authority and borough in Scotland;

(2) what was the number of adult *(a)* male and *(b)* female part-time workers in Great Britain in April 1994, and the proportion of *(a)* and *(b)* whose earnings, excluding overtime, fell below (i) £5.88 per hour, (ii) £5.53 per hour, (iii) £4.15 per hour, (iv) £4.00 per hour, (v) £3.50 per hour, (vi) £3.00 per hour, and (vii) £2.50 per hour;

(3) if he will give the proportions of *(a)* manual, *(b)* non-manual and *(c)* all full-time employees (i) male, (ii) female and (iii) all, earning less per week than (1) £221.50, (2) £208.53, (3) £156.40, (4) £150.80, (5) £131.95 and (6) £94.25 in April 1994, excluding overtime payments, by standard economic region, for Great Britain as a whole, and for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Oppenheim: As the information is contained in a number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy in the Library.

Fraud

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the measures available to the Employment Service in respect of people it suspects of fraud on unemployment benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: Employment Service inspectors have been vested with inspection powers since the Social Security Act 1975, section 144, and more recently under section 110 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992, which empowers them to examine employers' records at any reasonable time. In England and Wales, they must also operate within the guidelines of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. In Scotland, inspectors operate within common law and apply the rules of fairness.

Fraudulent benefit claimants may be prosecuted under the following legislation:

Social Security Administration Act 1992

112. (1) If a person for the purpose of obtaining any benefit or other payment under the legislation to which section 110 above applies' whether for himself or some other person, or for any other purpose connected with that legislation:

> (a) makes a statement or representation which he knows to be false;
>
> (b) produces or furnishes, or knowingly causes or knowingly allows to be produced or furnished, any document or information which he knows to be false in a material particular,

he shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) A person found guilty of an offence under subsection (1) above shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (maximum £5,000), or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months, or both.

> (a) the Social Security Act 1973;
>
> (b) the Contributions and Benefits Act;
>
> (c) this Act;
>
> (d) the Pensions Act;
>
> (e) Part 1 of the 1986 Act.

Theft Act 1968

A person who by any deception dishonestly obtains property—belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it, shall on conviction on indictment be liable to:

> Summary conviction—A fine not exceeding £5,000 and/or imprisonment not exceeding 6 months.
>
> Indictable conviction—A statutory limitless fine and/or imprisonment not exceeding 10 years.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department *(a)* hold open meetings, *(b)* conduct public consultation exercises, *(c)* conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, *(d)* publish a register of members' interests, *(e)* publish agendas for meetings and *(f)* publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case (i) under a statutory requirement or (ii) voluntary.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* The Department sponsors the following advisory non-departmental public bodies:

> The National Advisory Council on Employment of People with Disabilities;
>
> Committees for the Employment of People with Disabilities (sixty local committees);
>
> Supported Employment Consultative Group;
>
> Race Relations Advisory Group.

None of these hold their meetings in public, or make minutes or agendas public, carry out public consultation or have a register of members' interests. They are bodies set up by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to advise him and the Department on particular matters.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Hostels

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what standards are required at private hostels provided by his Department.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Department of Social Security does not provide any private hostels.

State Pension

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion annually, by percentage, of gross domestic product is spent by the United Kingdom on payment of state pensions.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information for Great Britain is in the table.

For information on Northern Ireland, I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Percentage of gross domestic product spent by Great Britain on payment of state pensions

Year	*Per cent.*
1992–93	4
1993–94	4
1994–95	4
1995–96	4

1. The data source is the 1994 Departmental Report and the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1995–96.

2. 1992–93 is the latest year for which the outturn figures for expenditure for State pensions are available, therefore the percentage figures from 1993–94 to 1995–96 are estimates.

Income Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will estimate the effect on the number of claimants of mortgage interest assistance with income support *(a)* from April to October 1995 and *(b)* from October 1995 to April 1996, of the decisions to (i) reduce the cap for income support mortgage interest payments to £100,000 and (ii) to pay income support for mortgage interest only after the first nine months on benefit; and what will be the savings in benefit expenditure which result from each of these measures;

(2) what savings he estimates will result from the proposed reduction of the cap on mortgages for mortgage interest payment purposes in a full financial year.

Mr. Roger Evans: The effect on the number of claimants of mortgage interest assistance with income support, from April to October 1995, of the decision to reduce the cap for new income support mortgage interest payments to £100,000 will negligible. The estimated savings for the period April to October 1995 is around £1 million, and for October to April 1996 a further £1 million. These estimates are based on the 1993 annual statistical inquiry, uprated to 1995–96 levels.

The new arrangements to pay income support mortgage interest only after the first nine months on benefit will not come into operation until 1 October 1995 and will be subject to wide consultation. The financial effect will depend on the outcome of the consultation and the final detail of the scheme.

National Insurance

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many national insurance numbers are currently on issue in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Arbuthnot: There are approximately 64.2 million national insurance numbers currently in issue in the United Kingdom. This is the total number of national insurance numbers issued to date, and, as such includes numbers issued to persons now deceased.

Mortgage Interest Payments

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what savings have resulted in each of the last three years from the introduction of a period of reduced mortgage interest payments.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is set out in the table. Savings are estimated to be the annual cost of paying half mortgage interest payments, based on average weekly expenditure from the May 1991, May 1992 and May 1993 annual statistical inquiry.

Year	*Estimated annual savings from reduced mortgage interest payments £ million*
1991	135
1992	100
1993	65

Incomes

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the net spending power figures for *(a)* a single-wage couple with two children aged four and six, and *(b)* a lone mother with two children aged four and six, each working full time, for 30 hours a week or more, earning £100, £110, £120, £130, £140, £150, £160, £170, £180, £190, £200, £210, £220, £230, £240, £250, £260, £270, £280, £290 and £300 a week assuming child care costs for the lone mother of £70 a week and taking into account the £40 child care allowance introduced last October and also assuming that the £10 a week family credit premium for full-time workers announced in the Budget was already in place.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table:

Net spending power after payment of rent, council tax and childcare charges

	Spending power (£ net)	
Earnings level (£ gross)	*Lone parent with two children aged 4 and 6*	*One-earner couple with two children aged 4 and 6*
100	106.66	139.14
110	107.71	139.46
120	108.76	139.77
130	109.41	140.07
140	109.94	140.36
150	110.62	140.66
160	111.30	140.95
170	111.99	141.24
180	112.67	142.21
190	113.35	144.16
200	114.03	146.11
210	114.91	148.06
220	116.86	150.01
230	118.81	151.96
240	120.76	157.65
250	122.71	164.15
260	124.66	170.65
270	126.61	177.15
280	128.56	183.65
290	130.51	190.15
300	135.50	196.65

Notes:

1. Each family type is assumed to pay estimated average local authority rent and council tax for 1994–95.

2. Families are assumed to be receiving any Family Credit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and Child Benefit to which they are entitled. The lone parent families are also assumed to be in receipt of One Parent Benefit.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by his Department for each of the last five years.

Mr. Hague: Departmental telephony charges for years 1989–94 are:

1989–90: £29,738,061.83
1990–91: £36,195,446.12
1991–92: £36,762,993.82
1992–93: £52,665,961.71
1993–94: £61,699,223.12

Details of the number of calls made per year are not held.

VAT (Fuel)

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what special notice will be included in pensioners' order books explaining the compensation arrangements for the first stage of VAT on fuel at eight per cent. following the decision not to proceed with the second stage of VAT on fuel to 17.5 per cent.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Help with 8 per cent. VAT on domestic fuel has been included in order books since April this year; introducing explanations now would be inappropriate. In addition, there is little evidence that there is any need for them.

The uprating in April 1995 will be higher as a result of the 8 per cent. levy feeding through in the retail prices index and Rossi. However, with a further tranche of help now unnecessary, there will be no additional increases above normal uprating. A special explanation next year would therefore also be inappropriate.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost his Department.

Mr. Hague: Such agencies have been used on three occasions in the last year. The total cost was £75,100.

Habitual Residence Test

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many British citizens have failed the habitual residence test since the introduction of the regulations designed to clamp down on European benefit tourism; and what information he has on their ethnic origins.

Mr. Roger Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) on 5 December, *Official Report*, column *10*. Information on the ethnic origin of claimants is not collected.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. Lilley: Three return journeys and one single.

Severe Disability Premium

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps the Benefits Agency intends to take to review income support claims to establish whether the severe disability premium is payable.

Mr. Roger Evans: I have asked the Benefits Agency to check all live claims where potential entitlement to the severe disability premium has not previously been considered. We are taking steps to establish whether similar action is needed in claims where income support is no longer in payment. This will be a large and complex task, which will not be completed until well into next year.

Pensions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the names and addresses of the persons and organisations from whom he invited comments on each of the discussion papers relating to the future of pensions issued since June 1994; if he will place in the Library copies of the responses received which did not include a request that they be kept confidential; and if he will list the other organisations from whom he has received representations since June 1994 on the Government's proposals for legislation on pensions.

Mr. Arbuthnot: This Department has issued four consultation papers since June 1994: "The Selection and Appointment of Member-nominated Trustees", "The Structure of the Levies", "A Requisite Benefits Test" and "Age Related Rebates for Contracted Out Money Purchase Occupational Pension Schemes". I shall shortly place in the Library a list of the persons and organisations to whom copies were sent, together with copies of their responses, except where these included a request that they be kept confidential.

We have received a large number of comments and representations on the Government's proposals for legislation on pensions. A list of the organisations concerned could be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Disabled People (Rights)

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to ensure by legislation that disabled people have the same civil rights as non-disabled people.

Mr. Hague: Our policy is to combine legislation with education and persuasion to produce positive and lasting results in tackling discrimination against disabled people.

I announced a comprehensive package of anti-discrimination measures on 24 November, which outlined the Government's plans to introduce legislation in the areas of employment, access to goods and services and the establishment of a national disability council and other initiatives in the areas of transport and education to give disabled people greater independence. Our goal is the elimination of discrimination against disabled people.

The first phase of a publicity campaign aimed at raising awareness amongst the general public was launched in early December.

Information Technology Services Agency

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those organisations which have submitted a bid to take over the day-to-day running of the information technology operations and support services of the Information Technology Services Agency.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The following companies have each submitted proposals

Electronic Data Systems Ltd
Hoskyns Group plc
ICL plc and ICL plc/De La Rue plc as a consortium
Integrated Systems Solutions Company Ltd
SEMA Group plc
Siemens Nixdorf Information Systems Ltd

Income Support

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to address the needs of parents on income support who are having difficulty supporting their student sons and daughters in further education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: Parents in receipt of income support or other social security benefits are entitled to child benefit and a dependency addition for any dependent child aged under 19 who is in full-time non-advanced education.

We believe that young people remaining at school after their 19th birthday to complete their studies, and their families, should turn for any necessary additional financial assistance to the sources of funding available through the educational maintenance system.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases income support payments by his Department were discontinued within nine months of payment commencing; and what percentage that represented of the total number of claimants in the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is not available in the form requested. The income support statistical inquiries collect information only on the stock of people actually in receipt of benefit on a single day each quarter.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to alter the claims and payments regulations for income support in order to amend preserved rights to income support and end the consequent two-tier system in sheltered housing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: The reference to sheltered housing is inferred to mean persons living in residential care and nursing homes.

Preserved rights to income support at the higher levels are available to most people living in residential care and nursing homes on 31 March 1993. Preserved rights were introduced to provide reassurance to vulnerable people that the introduction of community care would not affect their eligibility for the higher levels of income support and to assist in the smooth changeover to the new community care arrangements. Preserved rights are lost only if the resident is absent from residential care for a specific length of time, depending on the circumstances. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Social Fund

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in the last year for which figures are available applied for *(a)* grants and *(b)* loans from the social fund in respect of expenses incurred in visiting sick children in hospital.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Figures on the number of social fund awards for travelling expenses for the current financial year to 30 November 1994 are set out in the table.

Award types	*Number*[1]
Grants	51,056
Loans	10,324

[1] The reason for travel cannot be identified.

Fraud

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people are employed by his Department to deal with fraud in relation to people who are falsely claiming to be unemployed;

(2) what is his estimate of the cost to his Department of organised fraud relating to benefits for the unemployed;

(3) if he will make a statement on benefit fraud among people who are claiming benefits as unemployed and failing to declare income from *(a)* casual work and *(b)* full-time work;

(4) what is his estimate of the number of people who are claiming benefits on the basis of being unemployed despite being in full-time work;

(5) what was the estimated cost of fraud in benefits for the unemployed in each year since 1978–79 *(a)* in total and *(b)* for each specific category of benefit;

(6) what is his estimate of the number of people claiming benefits as unemployed, who are failing to declare income from *(a)* casual work and *(b)* full-time work.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The number of claimants receiving benefit as unemployed while failing to declare income from work, and the costs of these frauds, are not known.

We have estimated that 60 per cent. of all fraud involves misrepresentation of a claimant's financial circumstances. This includes, for example, income from investments and savings as well as undeclared income from employment.

The Benefits Agency employs over 3,000 staff, combating fraud of all types, whether committed by an individual or by organised teams. Last year—1993–94—312,000 irregularities were identified and a record £654 million of fraud was detected.

My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Social Security announced recently the investment of £300 million, over the next three years, in measures to prevent and deter fraud, and to improve further the effectiveness of investigations.

Benefits Statistics

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish figures showing, for each year since 1987 *(a)* the total amount of cash losses due to irrecoverable payments of pensions, etc., income support and family benefits recorded during the year, *(b)* the total amount of errors in benefit payments recorded and *(c)* total savings for the year from anti-fraud initiatives.

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 16 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about irrecoverable overpayments of benefits, recorded benefit payment errors and benefit savings obtained from fraud initiatives.

Decisions about whether an overpayment of benefit has occurred, how much has been overpaid, whether it is recoverable and from whom it should be recovered are made by the independent adjudicating authorities. However, an officer acting on behalf of the Secretary of State may subsequently decide not to pursue recovery.

Complete information concerning the amount and number of irrecoverable overpayments is not available. I have provided the details which are available at Appendix A, B, C and D. These give the total benefit losses and do not differentiate between irrecoverable and unrecovered losses. The data provided was used to compile the Benefits Agency's (BA) annual accounts for the years 1987–92; figures for 1993–94 are not included because the National Insurance Fund Annual Account has neither been audited by the National Audit Office, nor signed by the Accounting Officer.

Records and data on Retirement Pension and Widows Benefit for the year 1987–88 are no longer available. In addition, the data on losses by category for Income Support and Family Benefits for the period 1987–92 are no longer available as they have been routinely destroyed.

A statistically valid sample of payments is selected for accuracy checking and I have provided at Appendix E the percentage accuracy and error rates as requested. These figures are taken from the BA's Management Information Statistics. They do not tally directly with National Audit Office figures because they are derived from different forms of check.

The DSS/BA Fraud estimated benefit savings are set out at Appendix F. All the Appendices have been placed in the Library.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Appendix A—Losses due to irrecoverable and unrecovered overpayments of Income Support, and Family Benefits

£000

Year	*Supplementary Benefit/Income Support*	*Family Benefits*
1986–87	31,987	3,234
1987–88	32,024	2,718
1988–89	41,112	3,333
1989–90	40,211	3,901
1990–91	28,608	3,417
1991–92	32,974	3,908
1992–93	44,576	4,073
1993–94	52,435	3,730
TOTAL	303,927	28,314

Source:

1986–1991 VOTE 2 Supplementary benefits/income support

1986–1991 VOTE 3 Family benefits

1991–1994 VOTE 1 Amalgamated pension benefits/income support/family benefits

Appendix B—Losses by category

£000

	1992—93	*1993—94*
Mistake by beneficiary		
Income Support	7,216	8,758
Family Benefits	2,564	2,243
Mistake—other		
Income Support	22,007	28,194
Family Benefits	496	574
Fraud		
Income Support	15,353	15,483
Family Benefits	1,013	913

Appendix C—Irrecoverable and unrecovered overpayments by category—retirement pension

£000

Year	*Total*	*Mistake—Other*	*Mistake—Beneficiary*	*Fraud*
1988–89	2,500	1,942	465	93
1989–90	2,676	2,099	536	41
1990–91	2,879	2,368	438	73
1991–92	3,474	2,808	587	79
1992–93	3,544	2,820	695	29

Source:

Management Information Statistics.

Appendix D—Irrecoverable and unrecovered overpayments by category—widows benefit

£000

Year	*Total*	*Mistake—other*	*Mistake—beneficiary*	*Fraud*
1988–89	605	449	75	81
1989–90	535	363	119	53
1990–91	534	397	131	6
1991–92	610	427	175	8
1992–93	704	497	168	39

Source:

Management Information Statistics.

Appendix E—Benefit Errors: Percentages

	1986–87	*1987–88*	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Supplementary Benefit/Income Support								
Per cent. Correct	90	88.5	90.5	92	94	96	94.5	91
Per cent. Incorrect	10	11.5	9.5	8	6	4	5.5	9
Child Benefit								
Per cent. Correct			98.5	98.5	98.5	99	98.5	98
Per cent. Incorrect			1.5	1.5	1.5	1	1.5	2
One Parent Benefit								
Per cent. Correct			96.5	97	97.5	97.5	96.5	96
Per cent. Incorrect			3.5	3	2.5	2.5	3.5	4
Family Credit								
Per cent. Correct			90	92	92.5	91.5	89	92.5
Per cent. Incorrect			10	8	7.5	8.5	11	7.5
Guardians Allowance								
Per cent. Correct				100	100	100	100	100
Per cent. Incorrect				—	—	—	—	—
Retirement Pensions/Widows Benefits								
Per cent. Correct		96.5	98	98.5	98.5	99	98.5	98.5
Per cent. Incorrect		3.5	2	1.5	1.5	1	1.5	1.5

Source:

Management Information Statistics.

Appendix F—Estimated fraud benefit savings

£ million

Year	*Estimated benefit savings*
1987–88	196
1988–89	262
1989–90	309
1990–91	341
1991–92	447
1992–93	558
1993–94	654

Source:

Management Information Statistics.

Habitual Residence Test

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if it is intended that the habitual residence test should be applied by local Benefits Agency officers to those applying for asylum in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans *[holding answer 5 December 1994]:* The application of the test to asylum seekers was unforeseen but has no practical effect on their benefit entitlement. We will correct the position at the earliest opportunity.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will indicate the additional cost to his budget if the European Court of Justice upholds the Social Security Commissioner's decision of 1 April 1992 on the payment of invalidity benefit to women on their reaching pension age.

Mr. Hague *[holding answer 7 December 1994]:* The estimated additional cost is £210 million in 1995–96.

Note:

1. Figure expressed at 1994–95 prices, rounded to the nearest £5 million, and taking account of income related benefit costs and the introduction of incapacity benefit from April 1995.

Child Dependency Additions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost, in a full year, of full uprating of child dependency additions of all categories using their year of introduction as a base.

Mr. Roger Evans *[pursuant to his reply, 12 December 1994, c. 542]:* I regret that the notes accompanying the reply contained a typographical error. A further copy of the reply and a revised set of notes follows:

The estimated net cost would be £90 million in 1994–95.

1. The estimate has been calculated by:
    (i) taking the child dependency increase (CDI) rate for the eldest child payable in 1948—the year of introduction—then
    (ii) inflating that figure to take account of upratings from 1948 up to and including April 1994. The percentage rate of increase used is the same as that of personal Retirement Pension; then
    (iii) deducting the rates of Child Benefit payable from April 1994 to arrive at the rates that would apply for both the eldest child and subsequent children; then
    (iv) following conversion to an annual gross figure, applying an offsetting reduction on expenditure on income-related benefits.
2. The estimate excludes the cost of restoring Sickness Benefit, Maternity Allowance and Unemployment Benefit CDIs, which were discontinued with effect from November 1984.
3. The estimate has been rounded to the nearest £5 million and should be treated with caution owing to small sample sizes.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, if he will make it his policy to ensure that housing authorities should not pay housing benefit until they are satisfied that the property is fit for human habitation.

Mr. Roger Evans: Local authorities already have considerable powers to ensure that dwellings meet standards of fitness for human habitation. Housing benefit is available to help people who have a legal liability to pay rent for their accommodation.

TREASURY

Special Advisers

Mr. Vaz : To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *803*, if he will make a statement regarding his Department's expenditure on special advisers in each of the last three financial years and for the financial year 1979–80.

Mr. Aitken: Salaries for special advisers are negotiated individually in relation to their previous earnings and are confidential. The total pay bill[1] for all the Government's special advisers in November 1994 was £1.29 million at 1994–95 prices[2]. The figures for the other years requested—in 1994–95 prices[2]—are as follows:

As at	*Paybill*[1] *£ million*
June 1993	1.40
September 1992	1.36
September 1991	1.2
May 1979	0.53

[1] These figures have been calculated by annualising the salaries in payment at the dates shown. They do not include earnings related national insurance contributions and other personnel overheads.

[2] Calculated using the gross domestic product deflator.

Banking Ombudsman

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will review the terms of reference of the banking ombudsman in dealing with complaints by non-customer third parties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The office of the banking ombudsman is not a statutory one. The ombudsman is appointed not by the Government, but by an independent council which is responsible for his terms of reference.

Child Benefit

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate by how much child benefit would rise if the savings from the abolition of the married couples allowance and additional personal allowance were added to child benefit.

Sir George Young: Married couples allowances and the additional personal allowance have not been abolished. If these allowances were abolished in 1995–96 and the savings added to child benefit, the child benefit rate could be increased by £6.30. This assumes no compensating increases in the income support and family credit child allowances.

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was *(a)* gross domestic product per head of population in pounds sterling at constant prices and *(b)* column *(a)* expressed as a percentage of the United Kingdom average in (i) Wales, (ii) south-east England, (iii) the United Kingdom and (iv) each of the member states of the OECD, for the last three years for which comparable figures are available.

Mr. Nelson: Constant price GDP per head in the United Kingdom is published in table 2.4 of "Economic Trends" and the Central Statistical Office databank, which can be accessed through the Library. Constant price GDP per head is not available for the regions of the United Kingdom nor is comparative data for the member states of the OECD.

Herr Walter Laup

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the involvement of the United Kingdom Government or its agencies in supplying evidence or statements in the trial of Herr Walter Laup, a former employee of British Aerospace, in Germany.

Mr. Heathcoate-Amory: Customs provided evidence in the form of a statement to German Customs for use in the trial of Herr Walter Laup, a director of Hechler and Koch, Obendorf, Germany, but the German authorities did not use this evidence during the trial.

Manufacturing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will show, for manufacturing for each year since 1970, the net operating surplus as a percentage of net average capital employed based on historic costs.

Mr. Nelson: Estimates for net average capital employed by manufacturing companies are not readily available on a historic cost basis. The equivalent series calculated on a current cost basis is published in CSO "First Release" 94(205)—Profitability of United Kingdom companies: rates of return of United Kingdom industrial and commercial companies". Data are available between 1970 and 1991 on a historic cost basis, but these are based on the old definition of manufacturing and do not include any revised information since they were last calculated in September 1992.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what non-oil export and import prices his calculation in paragraph 3.51 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" of a 2 per cent. fall in terms of trade was based; and if he will list comparable figures for manufactures, finished manufactures and semi-manufactures, together with the increase in the terms of trade for finished manufactures since the second half of 1973, the fourth quarter of 1976, the second quarter of 1979 and the fourth quarter of 1986.

Mr. Nelson: The figures for trade prices quoted in paragraph 3.51 of the FSBR are based on average value indices. Comparable figures for manufactures, semi-manufactures and finished manufactures can be calculated from the value and volume numbers available on the CSO database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will break down his 1993 figures and forecasts in paragraph 3.51 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" for EEC and non-EEC countries showing *(a)* the increase in non-oil import and export prices and corresponding change in the terms of trade, *(b)* comparable figures for semi-manufactures, finished manufactures and manufactures and *(c)* figures on the same basis as *(a)* and *(b)* for the second half of 1973, the fourth quarter of 1976, the second quarter of 1979 and the fourth quarter of 1986.

Mr. Nelson: Average value indices by commodity are available separately for trade with other EC countries and non-EC countries from 1988. These can be calculated from the value and volume figures available on the CSO database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library. Forecasts are not made separately for trade with other EC countries and non-EC countries.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the level of volume for imports and exports in respect of *(a)* manufactures, *(b)* finished manufactures and *(c)* semi-manufactures with (i) the EEC and (ii) other countries for (1) the last three months for which figures are available and (2) the equivalent months in 1992; and what is his assessment of the growth of the market for imports in those markets.

Mr. Nelson: Figures for export and import volumes by commodity for trade with other EC countries and with non-EC countries are available from the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library. The Government's assessment of trade performance, published in chapter 3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", took into account all relevant factors, including market growth.

Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the weighted average increase in the price of goods in the retail price of non-food goods since August 1992; and how much of the increase has been due to the fall in the exchange rate.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested is not available as there is no single definition of goods in the retail prices index.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he made in December 1992 of the effect of the fall in the exchange rate on retail prices after *(a)* one and *(b)* two years.

Mr. Nelson: The Government published an assessment of economic prospects, including the outlook for retail prices, in the November 1992 Autumn Statement. The depreciation of sterling that followed the suspension of the United Kingdom's membership of the exchange rate mechanism was one of the many factors taken into account in this forecast.

Sterling (Velocity of Circulation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will lift the annual increase in velocity of circulation of sterling M4 between 1986 and 1991 and since 1991 together with his estimate of the effect on output and employment (i) in the whole economy and (ii) in manufacturing;

(2) what was the change in velocity of circulation of sterling M0 at an annual rate between 1986 and 1989 and since 1989; and what is his estimate of the effect on output and employment *(a)* in the whole economy and *(b)* in manufacturing.

Mr. Nelson: Data on the velocity of circulation of M0 and M4 is published in "Financial Statistics", table 3.1B. Data on output and employment are published in "Economic Trends", tables 2, 15 and 21. If shifts in velocity reflect changes in willingness to hold money, it is not clear that they would have any implications for output and employment.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the present level of the exchange rate; and what is his assessment of its effects on competitiveness.

Mr. Nelson: Movements in the exchange rate are considered as part of the general assessment of monetary conditions in setting monetary policy. The Government recognise the value of a stable exchange rate but do not set target rates. The United Kingdom is very competitive, as demonstrated by our strong export performance; in the third quarter of 1994 export volumes—excluding oil and erratics—were up 14 per cent. on a year earlier.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria are used by the Government in assessing whether the exchange rate is correctly valued.

Mr. Nelson: The Government do not have a target rate for sterling. Movements in the exchange rate are considered as part of the general assessment of monetary conditions in setting monetary policy.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change in the exchange rate of *(a)* pound sterling and *(b)* the lira against the ecu and non-ecu currencies since August 1992; and what has been the change in (i) the United Kingdom non-oil balance of trade and (ii) the Italian visible balance of trade in the first half of the current year with the EEC and non-EEC countries.

Mr. Nelson: Exchange rate data can be found in the CSO publication "Financial Statistics".

The United Kingdom's non-oil trade deficit with other EU member states widened by some £300 million in the first half of 1994 compared to the same period a year before; while the trade deficit with countries outside the EU narrowed by £600 million over this period. However, the improvement in the third quarter of 1994 has been marked: the deficit with other EU countries narrowed by around £500 million, compared with the second quarter of 1994; and the deficit with non-EU countries narrowed by some £600 million. Italy's visible trade surplus with other EU countries was largely unchanged between the first halves of 1993 and 1994, but increased by £2.5 billion on trade with non-EU members.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost his Department.

Mr. Nelson: Her Majesty's Treasury has not made use of executive search agencies during the last 12 months.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by his Department for each of the last five years.

Mr. Nelson: Departmental telephone charges within the Treasury for the past five years are:

1989–90: £798,243
1990–91: £740,185
1991–92: £721,751
1992–93: £628,599
1993–94: £662,310

Details of the number of calls made per year are not held centrally.

Italian Imports and Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change since 1992 in the dollar value of Italian imports and exports of goods expressed as a percentage difference from the United Kingdom figures to the United Kingdom for the latest three months for which like figures are available; and what has been the corresponding change in the exchange rate against the ecu, the deutschmark and the dollar respectively.

Mr. Nelson: United Kingdom exports to Italy, expressed as a proportion of Italian exports to the United Kingdom, have risen by around 6 percentage points, from 1992Q3 to 1994Q3. Over the same period sterling has depreciated by some 9.5 per cent. against the ecu, 15.5 per cent. against the deutschmark, and 19.5 per cent. against the United States dollar.

Interest Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the Government's assessment of the economic role of interest rates.

Mr. Nelson: It is the role of monetary policy to deliver low inflation. As monetary policy influences inflation with a lag, interest rate decisions are based on an assessment of the prospects for underlying inflation in one to two years' time.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent he expects the rises in interest rates in the current year will benefit the economy.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend's decisions this year to increase interest rates will help to ensure that inflation is kept under control and the current healthy recovery is sustained.

EU Membership

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will publish his recent assessment of the advantages and inconveniences of EU membership.

Mr. Nelson: No. I have nothing to add to the replies I gave to the hon. Member on 17 March, *Official Report*, column *822*, and on the 30 June, *Official Report*, column *680*, the reply my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave on 18 May, *Official Report*, column *470*, the reply my hon. Friend the Paymaster General gave on 25 November, *Official Report*, column *468*, and the reply my right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave on 29 November, *Official Report*, column *583*.

Tobacco and Alcohol

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the abolition of frontier checks on the recording of imports of *(a)* alcoholic drinks and *(b)* tobacco in (i) 1993 and (ii) this year to date.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Since the abolition of frontier checks for the import of goods from European Community countries on 1 January 1993, import statistics on alcoholic drinks and tobacco have been captured through the Intrastat system. In December 1993 Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the Central Statistical Office commenced a joint review of the Intrastat system and the results were published in the August edition of "Economic Trends". This showed that the system was generally functioning well. The system for recording imports of these goods from outside the EC has not changed.

Energy-Saving Products (VAT)

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations have been made to him regarding VAT rates on energy-saving products.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Treasury Ministers and Customs and Excise receive representations about the VAT treatment of a wide variety of goods and services. No record of the number of such representations specifically in respect of energy-saving products is available, but they are relatively few and infrequent.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Treasury of reducing VAT on energy-saving products to 8 per cent.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information on which such an estimate of revenue effect would be based is not available.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect on the national economy of delaying the Nirex repository project for nuclear waste for 50 years.

Mr. Aitken: As part of the review of radioactive waste management policy, the Government carried out an assessment of whether there is an economic case for delaying developing of the deep repository for radioactive waste being undertaken by UK Nirex Ltd. The results of this assessment are set out in the consultation document "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy Preliminary Conclusions" published by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 5 August. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

Living Standards

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures he has used to define the standard of living.

Mr. Nelson: A wide range of statistics illustrating aspects of the standard of living are published in "Social Trends", including household disposable income, real take-home pay, GDP per head, housing standards and access to consumer durables.

Central Bank

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the benefits to the United Kingdom of the existence of a central bank.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee—first report, Session 1993–94—reported recently on the role of the Bank of England. The Government's response to the report was published on 13 April 1994.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Burden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the reduction in income to the Exchequer, to date, from the changes in the 1993 Budget which extended mortgage tax relief to loans taken from non-British lenders.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* Negligible to date, since the first tax year to which this provision applies is the current year. No estimate can be made of the longer-term cost. But it is likely to be slight: the main effect of the change is on non-residents buying United Kingdom property for letting rather than on mortgage tax relief for owner-occupiers. In the latter case, relief on loans by non-United Kingdom lenders would already, in general, have been available under pre-existing law.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the reduction in income to the Exchequer from the changes in the Budget which allow people with a mortgage on an overseas property rented out all year to offset, against income tax, the interest paid on the loan.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* This measure, to bring the treatment of income from the letting of properties overseas more into line with that of letting United Kingdom properties, is likely to have a negligible effect on Exchequer receipts.

Taxation

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) of 19 January 1994, *Official Report,* column *635—42*, take account of changes he is making in the Budget, and to provide latest estimates of the burden of direct and indirect taxes for 1993–94, 1994–95, 1995–96 and 1996–97, including figures for the effect of the council tax.

Sir George Young: Real household disposable income per head has risen by nearly a half since 1979. Tax increases taking effect over the next year will cost all households on average about £2.30 a week. The impact on pensioners should be, on average, neutral. After taking account of these tax changes, real personal disposable income is still expected to rise by 1.5 per cent. next year. This should mean that households will on average be about £5 a week better off after tax and inflation.

The tables show revised estimates of tax payments in 1993–94, 1994–95 and 1995–96. These figures relate to hypothetical households assumed to have particular characteristics and do not represent the effect of the tax system on the population as a whole. For example, less than 1 per cent. of households are one-earner couples with two children and income close to male average earnings.

Changes in the figures shown in the tables for different years mainly reflect assumed growth in average earnings and should not be taken as the impact of Budget measures. Real take-home pay at average earnings for all the family types in the table is now 40 per cent. higher—over £80 a week—than in 1978–79.

Tax payments in 1994–95 and 1995–96 are based on illustrative assumptions for growth in earnings and take account of revised Budget measures. Tax payments in 1996–97 will depend on decisions in the November 1995 Budget and on what happens to earnings and prices. Estimates of council tax payments in 1993–94 will not be available until analysis of the 1993 family expenditure survey is complete.

Income tax, National Insurance and indirect taxes at multiples of average earnings 1993–94

	Percentage of average male earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	179.55	269.33	359.10	538.65	718.20	1,077.30	1,436.40	1,795.50	2,513.70	3,591.00	7,182.00
Income tax and NICs	38.16	68.68	99.21	152.07	223.89	367.53	511.17	654.81	942.09	1,373.01	2,809.41
Indirect taxes[1]	—	34.37	43.86	64.17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		103.05	143.07	216.24							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	21.3	25.5	27.6	28.2	31.2	34.1	35.6	36.5	37.5	38.2	39.1
Indirect taxes[1]	—	12.8	12.2	11.9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		38.3	39.8	40.1							
Married no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	179.55	269.33	359.10	538.65	718.20	1,077.30	1,436.40	1,795.50	2,513.70	3,591.00	7,182.00
Income tax and NICs	29.89	60.41	90.94	141.31	210.66	354.30	497.94	641.58	928.86	1,359.78	2,796.18
Indirect taxes[1]	—	35.50	45.52	67.37	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		95.91	136.46	208.68							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	16.6	22.4	25.3	26.2	29.3	32.9	34.7	35.7	37.0	37.9	38.9
Indirect taxes[1]	—	13.2	12.7	12.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		35.6	38.0	38.7							

Income tax, National Insurance and indirect taxes at multiples of average earnings 1993–94

	Percentage of average male earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Married, two children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	179.55	269.33	359.10	538.65	718.20	1,077.30	1,436.40	1,795.50	2,513.70	3,591.00	7,182.00
Income tax and NICs	11.79	42.31	72.84	123.21	192.56	336.20	479.84	623.48	910.76	1,341.68	2,778.08
Indirect taxes[1]	—	35.15	44.94	66.28	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		77.46	117.78	189.49							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	6.6	15.7	20.3	22.9	26.8	31.2	33.4	34.7	36.2	37.4	38.7
Indirect taxes[1]	—	13.1	12.5	12.3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		28.8	32.8	35.2							
Married, two earners, no children: Earnings split 60:40											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	179.55	269.33	359.10	538.65	718.20	1,077.30	1,436.40	1,795.50	2,513.70	3,591.00	7,182.00
Income tax and NICs	11.11	37.86	68.05	129.10	189.16	304.58	434.55	578.19	865.47	1,296.39	2,732.79
Indirect taxes[1]	—	41.10	51.00	70.68	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		78.96	119.05	199.78							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	6.2	14.1	19.0	24.0	26.3	28.3	30.3	32.2	34.4	36.1	38.1
Indirect taxes[1]	—	15.3	14.2	13.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		29.3	33.2	37.1							

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[1] Figures for indirect taxes are only shown for a narrow earnings range because the margin of error outside this range is too high to produce even illustrative estimates using the methods outlined in notes 4-6 below. Spending patterns vary widely between households with the same income and composition and all figures shown for indirect taxes are very approximate.

Income tax, National Insurance and indirect taxes at multiples of average earnings—1994–95

	Percentage of average male earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Single											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	185.85	278.78	371.70	557.55	743.40	1,115.10	1,486.80	1,858.50	2,601.90	3,717.00	7,434.00
Income tax and NICs	41.04	73.56	106.09	163.71	238.05	386.73	535.41	684.09	981.45	1,427.49	2,914.29
Indirect taxes[1]	—	36.89	46.96	68.35	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		110.45	153.05	232.06							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	22.1	26.4	28.5	29.4	32.0	34.7	36.0	36.8	37.7	38.4	39.2
Indirect taxes[1]	—	13.2	12.6	12.3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		39.6	41.2	41.6							
Married no children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	185.85	278.78	371.70	557.55	743.40	1,115.10	1,486.80	1,858.50	2,601.90	3,717.00	7,434.00
Income tax and NICs	34.43	66.95	99.47	157.09	231.43	380.11	528.79	677.47	974.83	1,420.87	2,907.67
Indirect taxes[1]	—	37.81	48.41	70.91	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		104.76	147.88	228.01							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	18.5	24.0	26.8	28.2	31.1	34.1	35.6	36.5	37.5	38.2	39.1
Indirect taxes[1]	—	13.6	13.0	12.7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		37.6	39.8	40.9							
Married, two children											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	185.85	278.78	371.70	557.55	743.40	1,115.10	1,486.80	1,858.50	2,601.90	3,717.00	7,434.00
Income tax and NICs	15.98	48.50	81.02	138.64	212.98	361.66	510.34	659.02	956.38	1,402.42	2,889.22
Indirect taxes[1]	—	37.52	47.94	70.06	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		86.02	128.97	208.70							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	8.6	17.4	21.8	24.9	28.7	32.4	34.3	35.5	36.8	37.7	38.9
Indirect taxes[1]	—	13.5	12.9	12.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		30.9	34.7	37.4							
Married, two earners, no children: Earnings split 60:40											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	185.85	278.78	371.70	557.55	743.40	1,115.10	1,486.80	1,858.50	2,601.90	3,717.00	7,434.00

Income tax, National Insurance and indirect taxes at multiples of average earnings—1994–95

	Percentage of average male earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Income tax and NICs	13.52	43.56	75.47	140.51	203.96	332.20	469.48	618.16	915.52	1,361.56	2,848.36
Indirect taxes[1]	—	43.86	54.37	75.16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		87.42	129.83	215.67							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	7.3	15.6	20.3	25.2	27.4	29.8	31.6	33.3	35.2	36.6	38.3
Indirect taxes[1]	—	15.7	14.6	13.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		31.4	34.9	38.7							

[1] Figures for indirect taxes are only shown for a narrow earnings range because the margin of error outside this range is too high to produce even illustrative estimates using the methods outlined in notes 4-6 below. Spending patterns vary widely between households with the same income and composition and all figures shown for indirect taxes are very approximate.

Income tax, National Insurance and indirect taxes at multiples of average earnings 1995–96

	Percentage of average male earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Single											
1995–96 tax system applied in 1995–96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	194.20	291.30	388.40	582.60	776.80	1,165.20	1,553.60	1,942.00	2,718.80	3,884.00	7,768.00
Income tax and NICs	43.31	77.29	111.28	172.11	249.79	405.15	560.51	715.87	1,026.59	1,492.67	3,046.27
Indirect taxes[1]	—	39.29	50.12	72.98	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		116.58	161.39	245.09							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	22.3	26.5	28.6	29.5	32.2	34.8	36.1	36.9	37.8	38.4	39.2
Indirect taxes[1]	—	13.5	12.9	12.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		40.0	41.6	42.1							
Indexed 1978–79 system applied in 1995–96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	194.20	291.30	388.40	582.60	776.80	1,165.20	1,553.60	1,942.00	2,718.80	3,884.00	7,768.00
Income tax and NICs	54.19	92.55	129.71	197.83	295.41	551.32	849.69	1,172.06	1,816.80	2,783.92	6,007.64
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	27.9	31.8	33.4	34.0	38.0	47.3	54.7	60.4	66.8	71.7	77.3
Married, no children											
1995–96 tax system applied in 1995–96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	194.20	291.30	388.40	582.60	776.80	1,165.20	1,553.60	1,942.00	2,718.80	3,884.00	7,768.00
Income tax and NICs	38.34	72.33	106.31	167.15	244.83	400.19	555.55	710.91	1,021.63	1,487.71	3,041.31
Indirect taxes[1]	—	39.80	51.18	75.23							
Total		112.13	157.49	242.38							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	19.7	24.8	27.4	28.7	31.5	34.3	35.8	36.6	37.6	38.3	39.2
Indirect taxes[1]	—	13.7	13.2	12.9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		38.5	40.5	41.6							
Indexed 1978–79 system applied in 1995–96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	194.20	291.30	388.40	582.60	776.80	1,165.20	1,553.60	1,942.00	2,718.80	3,884.00	7,768.00
Income tax and NICs	43.60	81.95	119.11	184.99	277.75	527.79	823.03	1,145.40	1,790.15	2,757.26	5,980.98
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	22.4	28.1	30.7	31.8	35.8	45.3	53.0	59.0	65.8	71.0	77.0
Married, two children											
1995–96 tax system applied in 1995–96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	194.20	291.30	388.40	582.60	776.80	1,165.20	1,553.60	1,942.00	2,718.80	3,884.00	7,768.00
Income tax and NICs	19.49	53.48	87.46	148.30	225.98	381.34	536.70	692.06	1,002.78	1,468.86	3,022.46
Indirect taxes[1]	—	39.43	50.66	74.38	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		92.91	138.12	222.68							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	10.0	18.4	22.5	25.5	29.1	32.7	34.5	35.6	36.9	37.8	38.9
Indirect taxes[1]	—	13.5	13.0	12.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		31.9	35.6	38.2							

Income tax, National Insurance and indirect taxes at multiples of average earnings 1995–96

	Percentage of average male earnings										
	50	*75*	*100*	*150*	*200*	*300*	*400*	*500*	*700*	*1,000*	*2,000*
Indexed 1978–79 system applied in 1995–96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	194.20	291.30	388.40	582.60	776.80	1,165.20	1,553.60	1,942.00	2,718.80	3,884.00	7,768.00
Income tax and NICs	23.93	62.28	99.44	164.49	255.50	503.78	797.49	1,119.87	1,764.61	2,731.73	5,955.45
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	12.3	21.4	25.6	28.2	32.9	43.2	51.3	57.7	64.9	70.3	76.7
Married, two earners, no children: Earnings split 60:40											
1995–96 tax system applied in 1995–96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	194.20	291.30	388.40	582.60	776.80	1,165.20	1,553.60	1,942.00	2,718.80	3,884.00	7,768.00
Income tax and NICs	16.90	48.31	81.65	149.62	214.98	349.61	494.62	649.98	960.70	1,426.78	2,980.38
Indirect taxes[1]	—	46.29	57.56	79.88	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		94.59	139.21	229.50							
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	8.7	16.6	21.0	25.7	27.7	30.0	31.8	33.5	35.3	36.7	38.4
Indirect taxes[1]	—	15.9	14.8	13.7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total		32.5	35.8	39.4							
Indexed 1978–79 system applied in 1995–96											
Amounts, £ per week											
Gross income	194.20	291.30	388.40	582.60	776.80	1,165.20	1,553.60	1,942.00	2,718.80	3,884.00	7,768.00
Income tax and NICs	24.35	59.44	97.79	174.50	255.56	408.26	605.65	846.73	1,410.06	2,344.12	5,567.84
Percentage of earnings											
Income tax and NICs	12.5	20.4	25.2	30.0	32.9	35.0	39.0	43.6	51.9	60.4	71.7

[1] Figures for indirect taxes are only shown for a narrow earnings range because the margin of error outside this is too high to produce even illustrative estimates using the methods outlined in notes 4-6 below. Spending patterns vary widely between households with the same income and composition and all figures shown for indirect taxes are very approximate.

Notes:

(1) Income tax payments are calculated on the assumption that the households receive no tax reliefs other than the standard allowances and only have income from employment. All earners, including wives, are assumed to pay Class 1 NI contribution at the contracted-in rate. Child benefit is treated as a negative income tax in order to provide comparability with support given through child tax allowances.

(2) Earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of all full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. Estimates of earnings in 1994–95 and 1995–96 are based on earnings growth assumptions of 3½ per cent. in 1994–95 and 4½ per cent. in 1995–96.

(3) Figures for indirect taxes include estimates of the intermediate taxes on households as well as the impact of taxes on final goods and services. Estimates of the impact of taxes on final goods and services assume that these taxes are fully incident on households. Estimates of the impact of intermediate taxes are based on the relation between intermediate production costs and final consumption derived using input-output techniques.

(4) Estimates for most indirect taxes are based on equations derived from the 1985 Family Expenditure Survey uprated to later years using forecasts of aggregate tax receipts. Estimates of VAT on domestic fuel and power, Airline Passenger Duty and Insurance Premium Tax are based on equations using results from the 1991 and 1992 Family Expenditure Survey uprated using a similar methodology. All estimates are based on the illustrative assumption that 10 per cent. of disposable income is saved.

(5) These figures do not include estimates of council tax payments. Estimates of council tax burdens in 1993–94 will not be available until analysis of the 1993 Family Expenditure Survey is complete.

(6) Estimates of indirect taxes are very approximate, even within the range for which figures are shown, because spending patterns vary widely between households with the same composition and income. The margin of error is even higher outside the range shown, and even illustrative estimates cannot be made. Because of sampling variation, there can be substantial differences between estimates obtained from Family Expenditure Surveys for different years.

SCOTLAND

Flow Country

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment his Department has made of the effect on carbon release from peat bogs of continued afforestation in the flow country of northern Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: Research undertaken by the Forestry Commission indicates that afforestation of areas of deep peat may lead to the net release of up to 2.5 tonnes of carbon per hectare per year.

Inner City Regeneration

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to increase funding for inner city regeneration projects in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Inner city and other urban regeneration projects are supported by a wide range of public expenditure programmes, including the urban programme and those relating to local authorities, the enterprise bodies and Scottish Homes, and my right hon. Friend announced his expenditure plans for these and other programmes on 6 December. We plan to announce shortly the outcome of the review of urban regeneration policy in Scotland, which was launched last year with the publication of the consultation paper, "Progress in Partnership".

Salmon Roe

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the potential trade in salmon roe and the legal constraints upon it.

Sir Hector Monro: Sales of all salmon roe are prohibited by the terms of section 18 of the Salmon Fisheries (Scotland) Act 1868, which is a conservation measure for wild salmon to discourage interference with gravid fish or spawning redds. My Department is currently considering whether it would be possible to relax this prohibition and permit trade in farmed salmon roe without reducing the protection afforded to wild salmon stock. There is a market for salmon roe both at home and abroad.

Hospital Closures

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospitals have closed since April 1991.

Lord James Douglas Hamilton: Thirty-four hospitals have closed in Scotland since April 1991.

Since that time, however, the number of patients treated in hospital has increased by 14.1 per cent.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland for how many accident and emergency departments there are currently proposals for closure.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Ministerial approval has been given for the accident and emergency departments at Dundee royal infirmary and the Royal infirmary of Edinburgh to close.

Accident and emergency services will transfer to Ninewells hospital from the functionally unsuitable accommodation at Dundee royal infirmary when that hospital closes. In Edinburgh, most of the royal infirmary will close and services, including accident and emergency services, will transfer to the new royal infirmary to be built in the south-east of the city.

I understand that Ayrshire and Arran health board is currently consulting on options for alterations to acute hospital provision. One of the options proposed would involve the transfer of accident and emergency services from Ayr hospital to Crosshouse hospital, Kilmarnock. Ministers look forward to seeing the board's final proposals in due course.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 5 December, *Official Report*, column *51*, how many outstanding sheep annual premium payments will be made in the week beginning 12 December; when payment will be made in respect of the remainder; if sufficient financial resources are available to make all outstanding sheep annual premium payments in the week beginning 12 December; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: On 9 December the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department issued payments totalling £25 million to 3,560 claimants under the 1994 sheep annual premium scheme. In total £50.4 million has now been paid to 12,900 claimants—around 85 per cent. of the total. The remaining claims will be processed as soon as possible and most should be paid in January. Funding is available as soon as claims are cleared for payment.

Land Transfers

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to review his policy in respect of Scottish land asset disposals following the transfer of ownership of the island of Dun Maraig, off Skye, via a German television game; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have no plans to impose restrictions on the market for land. In a free society, sellers must generally be allowed to dispose of their possessions as they think best.

Correspondence

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many "Dear Accounting Officer" letters his Department has written to his non-departmental public bodies in each year since 1984.

Mr. Lang: "Dear Accounting Officer" letters are issued by the Treasury. Where appropriate my departments draw the contents of "Dear Accounting Officer" letters to the attention of non-departmental public bodies which they sponsor.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in the course of official duties in 1994.

Mr. Lang: In the course of official duties throughout Britain in 1994, I have made two train journeys of one hour's duration or more.

Right-to-buy Legislation

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what measures are in place to ensure that the right-to-buy legislation is not exercised for profit motives by a resident's family instead of for genuine residency need;

(2) what measures are in place to ensure that the right-to-buy legislation does not deplete council housing stocks to nothing;

(3) what measures are in place to ensure that the right-to-buy legislation does not prevent those in real need to secure housing places from obtaining council places.

Mr. Lang: The right-to-buy legislation has been an outstanding success in enabling thousands of public sector tenants to exercise the choice of becoming home owners rather than continuing to rent their homes.

Tenants who are buying their homes are free to make whatever financial arrangements they consider appropriate, subject to the right of the former landlord to recover some or all of the discount if the house is sold within three years of its initial purpose.

Local authorities will continue to be significant providers of housing for the foreseeable future. There is no question of council housing stocks being reduced to nothing as a consequence of the right-to-buy legislation as there will always be tenants who are unable or unwilling to assume the responsibility of home ownership.

Local authorities are also free to invest the substantial capital receipts generated by the right-to-buy in improving their stocks or in new building to meet local housing needs if they consider it appropriate. In addition, local authorities can act in an enabling capacity in partnership with Scottish Homes, housing associations and the private sector to ensure that housing is available for those in need.

Agricultural Grants

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what assessment he has made of the impact upon environmental and conservation considerations in placing limits on payments to farmers in environmentally sensitive areas in Scotland and of the system outside Scotland;

(2) what reasons spending limits are in place on support for farmers and crofters in environmentally sensitive areas in Scotland; and what assessment he has made of the system outside Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The limits on annual payments to participants in the Scottish environmentally sensitive areas scheme are intended to ensure value for money and to maximise the conservation benefits of the scheme within the resources available. The limits are set in the light of the conservation requirements in each area and are kept under review. The Scottish environmentally sensitive areas scheme is distinct from the agri-environment schemes in other parts of the European Union and reflects Scottish circumstances.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when the first payments of hill livestock compensatory allowance and sheep annual premium were made in 1994; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the current value of hill livestock compensatory allowance and sheep annual premium for the average recipient; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what factors have led to delay in paying hill livestock compensatory allowance and sheep annual premium in the current year; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what percentage of Scottish claims for hill livestock compensatory allowance had been settled by *(a)* 20 May 1994 and *(b)* 2 December 1994; and if he will make a statement;

(5) what has been the average delay in the current year in the receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowance and sheep annual premium by Scottish farmers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The first payments under the 1994 HLCA scheme were issued on 25 February 1994. The first payments of advances under the 1994 sheep annual premium scheme were issued on 27 October 1994.

The average payments per claim under the 1994 HLCA scheme and the 1993 sheep annual premium scheme were £2,510 and £6,665 respectively. The full rate for the 1994 sheep annual premium is not yet known.

There was no delay in the payment of 1994 HLCA claims. Eighty-eight per cent. had been paid by 31 March 1994, which compares favourably with previous years. Ninety seven per cent. of claims had been paid by 20 May 1994 and 99 per cent. by 2 December 1994.

Concerning the 1994 sheep annual premium, the EC regulations do not specify a date for the payment of advances of the premium, but I refer the hon. Member to the answers which my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibilities for agriculture and the environment gave to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 24 November.

Nursery School Education

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of nursery school places which will be available in each of the next three years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The provision of nursery school places is a matter for local authorities to decide, in the light of their own policies and local circumstances. However, the Government have given a long-term commitment to provide quality pre-school places for all four-year-olds whose parents wish to take them up, with the first new places being provided during the life of this Parliament. Detailed proposals are currently being worked up, following preliminary consultations with interested bodies. Against this background, it would be premature to provide estimates of the number of nursery places which might be available in the future.

Vocational Education

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the results of the consultation he has initiated on the EU's Leonardo proposals on vocational education in the upper secondary school.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Copies of summaries of the responses to the consultation exercise mounted early this year by the Scottish Office education department on the Socrates and Leonardo proposals were circulated, together with other documents, on 19 May to the bodies consulted. Copies of these papers have been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Nursery Education

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to carry forward the Prime Minister's commitment to increasing the availability of nursery places.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following my right hon. Friend's announcement in October, officials in the Scottish Office education department have made preliminary contacts with parents' groups, education authorities and interested bodies in the private and voluntary sectors to obtain their views. Detailed proposals are now being worked up. We shall make a further announcement in due course.

Higher Education

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what discussions he has had on the Howie committee's proposal that pupils leaving before the end of S5 should not receive any external certification;

(2) if he will ensure that implementation of the Howie committee proposals will not result in the creation of schools that concentrate effort on either Scotbac or Scotcert;

(3) how many hours per week he expects will be devoted to each subject taken at higher level, assuming that five higher courses are studied in a single year; and how many hours per week would be available for the totality of non-higher education;

(4) what discussions he has had on the content of higher and advanced higher vocational courses and how they might differ from existing higher and CS75 and higher national certificate courses which cover similar ground;

(5) what is his policy concerning a national curriculum in relation to the introduction of Howie committee proposals;

(6) what action he will take to prevent streaming in secondary schools, following the introduction of assessment for some pupils for standard grade at the end of standard 3.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Details of our decisions on upper secondary education following consideration of the report of the Howie committee are set out in the policy document "Higher Still: Opportunity for All" published by The Scottish Office in March. A high level development programme strategy group and three task groups on curriculum and assessment, staff development and information and publicity have been established to take forward work on detailed aspects of the programme. There will be full consultation on these at appropriate stages throughout the planning period.

State Veterinary Service

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration has been given by the Scottish Office to the consequences of local government re-organisation for the work of the state veterinary service.

Sir Hector Monro: The state veterinary service will continue to co-operate closely with the new local authorities on the enforcement of animal health, animal welfare and, where appropriate, food safety legislation.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number and location of *(a)* main offices and *(b)* sub-offices relating to the work of the state veterinary service.

Sir Hector Monro: There are seven main animal health divisional offices located at Ayr, Dumfries, Galashiels, Hamilton, Inverness, Inverurie and Perth. A further eight sub-offices are located at Edinburgh, Elgin, Forfar, Kirkwall, Oban, Stirling, Stranraer and Thurso. In addition, there are two regional veterinary offices located in Edinburgh and Inverurie and one headquarters unit also located in Edinburgh.

Health Authority Finance

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what *(a)* surpluses and *(b)* deficits were recorded by each health authority in each of the last three years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* In Scotland, health boards have broadly similar responsibilities to regional district and family health authorities in England and Wales. The table shows the surplus or deficit for each health board, special health board and the Common Services Agency for each of the last three years.

Surplus (Deficit) for Health Boards and the Common Services Agency

£000s

	1991–92	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Argyll and Clyde Health Board	(1,112)	3,516	1,409
Ayr and Arran Health Board	505	1,878	3,077
Borders Health Board	(604)	(120)	(151)
Dumfries and Galloway Health Board	499	(1,842)	1,044
Fife Health Board	(2,014)	537	2,248
Forth Valley Health Board	(240)	256	(495)
Grampian Health Board	(1,750)	(3,390)	1,171
Greater Glasgow Health Board	(6,429)	1,578)	(1,427)
Highland Health Board	(997)	1,277	1,125
Lanarkshire Health Board	2,170	(1,849)	2,910
Lothian Health Board	1,392	(6,321)	(835)
Orkney Health Board	(127)	175	(155)
Shetland Health Board	163	177	118
Tayside Health Board	(2,775)	1,865	2,113
Western Isles Health Board	(148)	(437)	1,106
State Hospital, Carstairs	(161)	100	(131)
Health Education Board for Scotland	88	71	2
Scottish Council for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education[1]	–	–	355
Common Services Agency	4,115	5,914	2,148

[1] A Special Health Board from 1 April 1993.

The information has been taken from the annual accounts of health boards and the Common Services Agency in Scotland. Prior to 1993–94 the accounts of these bodies were produced on a cash basis. From 1993–94 these accounts have been produced largely on an accruals basis.

Bellwin Formula

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what alteration to the Bellwin formula for flood compensation will occur following the establishment of unitary local government authorities under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* There are no plans at present to alter the basis on which grant under the Bellwin scheme is calculated, but it will be necessary to alter the scheme to reflect the fact that the new unitary local authorities, like the islands councils at present, will perform all continuing local authority functions.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Doncaster Prison

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many and what percentage of the staff at Doncaster prison on 1 November had previous employment in a prison prior to joining Doncaster.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 19 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the staff employed at Doncaster prison.

I understand from the Director of Doncaster prison that sixty of the staff employed there on 1 November had previous employment in a prison. This represents 14 per cent. of the workforce of the prison.

Boards of Prison Visitors

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who have been appointed to boards of visitors to prisons in England and Wales during the last 12, six and three months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In the last 12 months, up to 14 December 1994, 109 men and 90 women have been appointed to boards of visitors in England and Wales. Of these, 47 men and 36 women were appointed in the last six months and 37 men and 22 women in the past three months.

Members of boards of visitors carry out vital work and I am sure that the forthcoming review of their role, which I am undertaking, will serve to emphasise the importance of their contribution to the efficient running of prison establishments.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women of an ethnic minority background who are members of boards of visitors at prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are currently 84 men and 44 women of an ethnic minority background who are members of boards of visitors at prisons in England and Wales.

Prison Security

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what checks are made and how often on alarm systems and security cameras at prisons in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 19 December 1994):

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about checks on alarm systems and security cameras at prisons in England and Wales.

Governors of Prison Service establishments are responsible for the maintenance of security at their establishments. Checks on all key security systems are regular and frequent. In addition, governors of all establishments are required to carry out security audits of their physical and procedural security at least annually. Procedural security includes the maintenance of an effective alarm system and of any security cameras installed in the establishment. All establishments should have a planned maintenance system and a testing schedule for any security cameras and alarm systems. Prison Service area managers are responsible for verifying that these procedures and systems are in place.

Asylum Seekers

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers in each of the past three years have been granted permission to work in advance of their having waited six months or more for a decision on their applications.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information requested is not separately identifiable in the statistics.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provisions have been made by his Department to provide translators, and translation facilities to asylum seekers detained under the Immigration Act 1971.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: All asylum seekers, whether detained or not, are interviewed in a language which they understand, using an interpreter if necessary, to assess their claim. A large pool of interpreters is available.

Information for detainees in detention centres is provided in a large number of languages. This includes advice on how to seek free legal assistance. Interpreters are called in to assist when there are difficulties in communicating with detainees.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers detained under the Immigration Act 1971 have *(a)* committed suicide or *(b)* attempted suicide during the past five years.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information available does not distinguish between asylum seekers and others in detention.

One suicide of a person detained under powers in the Immigration Act 1971 has occurred in the past five years. This was in the Harmondsworth detention centre in 1990.

Records of the number of attempted suicides are not held.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provisions have been made by his Department for asylum seekers who have been detained to contest the reasons for detention at an independent and automatic review hearing; and what assessment he has made of the application of article 5 of the European convention on human rights to such provisions.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Anyone refused asylum may appeal under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 and may apply for bail to the independent appellate authorities at any time while an appeal is pending. Bail may also be sought from the appellate authorities by any passenger who has been detained for longer than seven days pending further examination. These statutory provisions are supplemented by the general power of the courts to grant a writ of *habeas corpus* and to grant bail in any case before them.

I am satisfied that detention under the Immigration Act 1971 does not breach the United Kingdom's obligations under article 5 of the European convention on human rights.

Whitemoor Prison

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to receive the report of Sir John Woodcock concerning Whitemoor prison; and when it is likely to be published.

Mr. Michael Howard: The report has been published today and placed in the Library.

Sudanese Citizens

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Sudanese citizens were given exceptional leave to remain or refugee status in the United Kingdom in each of the past five years.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information on the number of Sudanese nationals recognised as refugees and granted asylum and the number granted exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom, for the years 1989–1993, is given in tables 3.1 and 3.2 of the Home Office statistical bulletin, "Asylum Statistics United Kingdom 1993", issue 17/94, a copy of which is available in the Library.

In the period 1 January 1994 to 30 November 1994, 30 Sudanese nationals were recognised as refugees and granted asylum and 20 were granted exceptional leave to remain in the United Kingdom.

Prisons (Floating Structures)

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to convert any floating structures into prisons.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. George Howarth, dated 19 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about converting floating structures into prisons.

At present there no plans to convert floating structures into prisons.

Prisoners

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in England and Wales at the most recent date available had previously served a term in *(a)* an approved school, *(b)* a community home with in-house education facilities, *(c)* a detention centre, *(d)* a borstal or *(e)* under section 53 of the Children Act 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available in the form requested.

Offenders (Warrants)

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offenders who were breached for not complying with a probation or community service order and who are the subject of a magistrates court warrant have had that warrant outstanding for *(a)* more than 12 months, *(b)* more than six months and *(c)* more than three months.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information is not available centrally.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offenders the subject of a probation or community service order, breached them by failing to comply with the conditions of that order during 1993 and for the first six months of 1994; in how many cases a warrant was issued by the relevant magistrates courts; and in how many of these cases the warrant is still outstanding.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The available information published in "Probation Statistics, England and Wales 1993" is as follows:

Persons whose supervision terminated early due to failure to comply with requirements of the order in England and Wales for 1993

	Number of persons	*Percentage*
Probation	1,500	3
Community service	6,700	16

Probation Service

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* probation orders, *(b)* community service orders, *(c)* combination orders and *(d)* parole cases were being supervised by the probation service on (i) 30 June 1993 and (ii) 30 June 1994.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Persons supervised by the probation service in England and Wales were as follows:

	Thousands of persons	
	30 June 1993	*31 December 1993*
Probation	46.7	48.2
Community service	36.3	38.8
Combination	5.1	9.0
Parole	9.1	7.0

Figures for 30 June 1994 are not yet available.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the resource implications of extra duties in respect of victims for the probation service.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I have received a number of representations that changes to national standards for the supervision of offenders in the community which were published for consultation in the autumn would impose additional costs for the probation service in relation to contacts with the victims of crime. I am still considering whether those representations have substance and whether the earlier proposals should in any event be modified.

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much the Probation Service's overall budget in England and Wales changed as a result of the Chancellor's statement in November 1993 for the financial years 1994–95 and 1995–96.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Planned levels of central Government support for probation service expenditure both before and after the Chancellor's statement in November 1993 were:

	1994–95	1995–96
		£ million
Pre-Statement		
Probation current grant	307.4	323.6
Probation capital grant	20.1	20.7
Post-Statement		
Probation current grant	306.3	309.1
Probation capital grant	19.2	19.3

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many probation service posts will be abolished or frozen as a result of reductions in the Probation Service budget during 1994–95 and 1995–96.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: It is for individual probation committees to decide what measures to take to live within their budget. I understand that committees are still considering how best to plan their 1995–96 expenditure in the light of the Chancellor's Budget statement.

"Continuity and Change"

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the effects of the White Paper, "Continuity and Change", published in July 1994 for the Prison Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Many of the developments outlined in the White Paper, such as taking responsibility for pay and grading, developing effective management systems and improving the measurement of performance, are already reflected in the Prison Service's programme of work. A review of the senior management structures in Home Office agencies, including the Prison Service, is planned to take place in the second half of 1995; this will take into account the White Paper's proposals for a new senior management structure in the civil service.

Lowdham Grange Prison

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to re-open Lowdham Grange prison.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. George Howarth, dated 19 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about plans to re-open Lowdham Grange prison.

Proposals for the re-opening of Lowdham Grange prison are currently under consideration. No final decision has yet been reached.

Immigration

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 14 December, *Official Report,* column *693* on what grounds the immigration officer was satisfied that the requirements of section 128–130 of the immigration rules effective on 1 October 1994 were complied with in relation to the crew of the Ofelia having regard to its journey from Ullapool on or about 10 December 1994 to Lerwick; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: A relief crew for the FV Ofelia arrived at Glasgow airport on 10 December 1994 and they were given leave to enter as the immigration officer was satisfied that they were seamen under contract to join a ship on which they were to leave the United Kingdom. I understand the Ofelia has now arrived in Lerwick from Ullapool in order to take on fuel prior to leaving British waters with possible further stops at United Kingdom ports en route.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will immediately investigate the manning of FV Ofelia in or near Lerwick harbour and in British waters in respect of contravention of immigration rules.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The present crew of the FV Ofelia were given leave to enter the United Kingdom at Glasgow airport on 10 December on condition that they joined the vessel and subsequently left the United Kingdom in that vessel. The Immigration Act 1971 contains powers to deal with seamen who fail to comply with the conditions of their admission and the Immigration Service will not hesitate to use these where necessary. I therefore see no need for any further investigation.

Parole Board

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what rights the victim of crime in an individual case will have to challenge the Parole Board's decision to release a prisoner.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Victims of crime have no rights to challenge a decision of the parole board, although any relevant representations submitted before a decision is taken would normally be included in the papers which are considered by the parole board.

ENVIRONMENT

Pollution

Sir Peter Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans his Department has to undertake a full economic appraisal of all the recommendations included in the Royal Commission on environmental pollution's 18th report on transport and the environment.

Mr. Atkins: Assessing and consulting upon the relative costs and benefits of the recommendations of the report will be one of the principal considerations in determining the Government's response.

Sir Peter Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations and individuals who contributed oral evidence to the Royal Commission on environmental pollution's 18th report on transport and the environment.

Mr. Atkins: The names of those who submitted evidence to the royal commission are listed in appendix H to the report.

Birmingham

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how the amount of money allowed by his Department for the inclusion of 9,000 Frankley residents into Birmingham reflects the pro rata to population formula used by his Department;

(2) what is the pro rata to population calculation which his Department has used in the calculation of the capping limit for Birmingham city council for 1995–96;

(3) how much he has allowed in Birmingham city council's capping limit for 1995–96 for the addition of an extra 9,000 residents of Frankley transferred to Birmingham as a result of boundary changes.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Non-domestic rates are distributed on the basis of population adjusted for boundary changes. Revenue support grant is determined by standard spending assessment calculations. In general, SSAs, other than the part relating to capital financing, are adjusted for boundary changes using population figures. However, for 1995–96 we are proposing to use pupil numbers to adjust three elements of the education calculation—for primary, secondary and post-16 education.

Relevant authorities have been sent information showing the calculations used in the boundary change adjustments. The boundary change involving 8,750 Bromsgrove residents has the following effect on the provisional SSAs for 1995–96:

	£
Birmingham City Council	+2,447,310
Bromsgrove District Council	–664,019
Hereford and Worcester County Council	–1,928,991
West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority	+145,700
West Mercia Police Authority	–379,115
West Midlands Police Authority	+379,115

The boundary change adjustment within Birmingham city council's notional amount for 1995–96 is therefore £2,447,310.

The Department is consulting on proposals for 1995–96 standard spending assessments and the content of the draft limitation of council tax and precepts (relevant notional amounts) report (England) 1995–96, sent to authorities on 1 December, and would welcome representations from authorities. We have had a representation from Birmingham city council, and we will consider it before taking our final decisions on the settlement.

Water

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy towards water companies that supply water unfit for human consumption.

Mr. Atkins: The supply of water unfit for human consumption by water undertakers is an offence under section 70 of the Water Industry Act 1991. Where incidents occur which may involve such a supply, they are investigated on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment by the drinking water inspectorate. Consideration is given as to whether there is sufficient evidence to justify proceedings, and whether the public interest requires them.

Burlington House

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to transfer the freehold of Burlington house to a third party.

Sir Paul Beresford: A number of learned societies occupy courtyard buildings at Burlington house, which were erected for them in the late 19th century at Government expense. The accommodation has since been provided rent free to the societies, including external and structural repairs. Following recommendations on future management of the Government's civil estate made earlier this year by the Prime Minister's efficiency unit, my Department approached the learned societies to discuss future arrangements for ownership and management of their buildings. At a preliminary meeting in September, it was agreed that it was essential to establish, as clearly as possible, the legal basis for the present arrangements. The societies now anticipate being able to provide copies of the relevant documentation which they hold, early in the new year. Once the legal uncertainties have been resolved, I intend to have discussions with representatives of the societies about the future of their buildings.

Commercial Property

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table setting out, for each Government Department *(a)* the total stock of commercial property owned by each Department, by both square footage and number of units, *(b)* the amount of such commercial property which is currently empty, by both square footage and number of units and *(c)* the proportion of such empty commercial property as a percentage of the total stock owned by each Department, in terms of both square footage and of number of units.

Sir Paul Beresford: The Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible for the Government office estate, space on which is allocated to Departments in relation to their operational needs. This estate, known as the common user estate, is made up of over 3,000 buildings with a total floor area of approximately 7,515,000 m^2, of which 2,801,000 m^2 is freehold and the remaining 4,714,000 m^2 is leasehold. Currently, some 934,700 m^2 or, 12.5 per cent., of the CUE is vacant.

In addition, the Department of the Environment has its own, specialist, departmental estate with an area of some 87,000 m^2, none of which is vacant.

Skyglow

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on skyglow; and what assessment he has made of the matter.

Mr. Atkins: Representations have been made by the British Astronomical Association through its campaign for dark skies about skyglow, which is caused when artificial light is scattered by dust particles and water droplets in the atmosphere.

Light can be reflected upwards from a variety of sources. Given the legitimate desire for roads and public areas to be well lit for security and amenity reasons, there is a limit to how much of this reflected light can be eliminated. However, significant improvements can be achieved by lowering the intensity of and redesigning some existing lighting schemes and encouraging the sensitive design of new ones.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to deal with skyglow.

Mr. Atkins: Useful guidance on improvements in the design and sensitive use of lighting schemes has been issued by Government Departments and a number of professional organisations.

We are keeping under review whether other measures might usefully be taken to minimise excessive lighting, taking account of the recent findings of an informal survey of local authorities' handling of complaints about light pollution. At present it seems that many of these problems are most appropriately tackled through education and guidance, rather than regulation.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the reasons why single regeneration budget bids in the north-west failed.

Mr. Curry: No. Bids for funding from the single regeneration budget were considered individually against the criteria set out in the bidding guidance. Government regional offices will be ready to discuss with the partnerships concerned issues relevant to the performance of the bid.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those authorities whose single regeneration budget bids were unsuccessful.

Mr. Curry: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment further to his statement of 6 December on projects to be funded under the single regeneration budget *(a)* how many bids were not successful, *(b)* what was the total value of the unsuccessful bids, *(c)* how many (i) successful and (ii) unsuccessful bids involve a local authority as active participant *(d)* how many (1) successful and (2) unsuccessful bids support the teaching of ethnic minority pupils, and *(e)* what was the value of (x) successful and (y) unsuccessful bids to support the teaching of ethnic minority pupils; and if he will make a statement for *(A)* Eastern region, *(B)* East Midlands region, *(C)* London region, *(D)* Merseyside region, *(E)* North East region, *(F)* North West region, *(G)* South East region, *(H)* South region, *(I)* West Midlands region. *(J)* Yorkshire region and *(K)* Humberside region.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer Friday 9 December 1994]:* The information requested is as follows:

(a) 268 bids were unsuccessful;

(b) the total value of funds requested by these bids in 1995–96 was approximately £144 million;

(c) (i) 183 successful bids had local authorities as a partner;

(c) (ii) 192 unsuccessful bids had local authorities as a parnter;

(d) (1) 51 successful bids contained proposals to support the teaching of ethnic minority pupils;

(d) (2) 38 unsuccessful bids contained proposals to support the teaching of ethnic minority pupils;

(e) (x) the total value of funds obtained by successful bids which contained proposals to support the teaching of ethnic minority pupils is approximately £92 million in 1995–96;

(e) (y) the total value of funds requested by unsuccessful bids which contained proposals to support the teaching of ethnic minority pupils is approximately £49 million in 1995–96.

The breakdown by Government offices for the regions is given in the table, using the references in the hon. Gentleman's question:

	Question reference number:							
Government Office	*(a)*	*(b) £ million*	*(c)(i)*	*(c)(ii)*	*(d)(1)*	*(d)(2)*	*(e)(x) £ million*	*(e)(y) £ million*
Eastern	11	2.66	13	5	5	—	1.449	—
East Midlands	15	9.487	11	13	3	3	2.39	0.282
London	75	52.513	38	52	14	17	22.442	19.394
Merseyside	9	7.563	14	7	1	—	1.1	—
North East	26	6.395	27	18	3	—	4.955	—
North West	35	14.930	19	25	6	5	8.287	2.690
South East	33	8.415	19	25	4	2	2	0.87
South West	24	7.373	10	21	2	—	4.939	—
West Midlands	24	13.999	12	14	6	6	14.071	9.639
Yorkshire and Humberside	16	20.564	20	12	7	5	27.511	16.039
Total	268	143.899	183	192	51	38	89.144	48.914

Rough Sleepers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much he proposes to spend on assistance to people sleeping rough on streets outside London this winter.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: It is the responsibility of each local authority, in drawing up its annual housing strategy, to consider the housing needs of all people living in its area, including people sleeping rough. In 1994–95 the Government are providing £6.8 million in grants to over 150 projects across England that provide direct, practical assistance to people who are either homeless or in danger of becoming so and who might otherwise sleep rough.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the average cost to a local authority of submitting a bid to the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Curry: None.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost his Department.

Sir Paul Beresford: Executive search agencies have been used to assist with the filling of three vacancies in the planning inspectorate and the Buying Agency during the last year. The cost of their services was £73,536.

Cemfuel

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the components used in the manufacture and production of Cemfuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Cemfuel is a blend of residues from solvent recovery plants and other solvents that are not suitable for economic recovery. Cemfuel can be used only if it meets a specification agreed in advance with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and which covers limits on, for example, chlorine, polychlorinated biphenyls, sulphur and heavy metals content.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigations and research his Department has carried out into the impact of the use of Cemfuel by industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: As I said in my statement in answer to a question from the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) on 23 June *Official Report,* column *261* before trial burning of secondary liquid fuel in cement kilns is approved, satisfactory baseline data on the normal operation of the cement manufacture will need to be provided to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. This will cover details of the kiln, its operating characteristics and the emissions to the environment during normal operation.

Trials will be run in accordance with a schedule of conditions to be agreed in advance with HMIP. Operators will be required to make ongoing reports in the progress of all trials. For monitoring purposes, HMIP will impose an enhanced and stricter regime to meet the particular circumstances of the trials.

The trials will be principally concerned with the testing and monitoring of releases. Continuous monitors for particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and oxygen, calibrated to the satisfaction of HMIP, will have to be installed before trials commence. HMIP will carry out independent testing to verify the results of the trials.

Monitoring results obtained during trial burns will be used by the company to prepare an environmental impact assessment report which will be submitted to HMIP. This report will be evaluated by HMIP when deciding whether the practice of burning these materials can be allowed on a more permanent basis. The monitoring results, plus any application from the company to burn secondary liquid fuel on a permanent basis will be placed on the public register.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what health hazards have been discovered by his Department in the use of Cemfuel by industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is responsible for protecting the environment under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and has been closely supervising these tests.

Results obtained so far indicate no cause for concern. The emissions of dioxins and heavy metals are well within the limits that HMIP will impose on incinerators. Milk monitoring by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for dioxins has indicated no ill effects from the burning of Cemfuel.

HMIP is keeping a close watch on the emissions from the trials and will shut them down if the environment is being damaged.

Opencast Planning Applications

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a list of opencast planning applications which have been refused by the mineral planning authorities and appeals that have been lodged since January 1989 with his Department, indicating in each case *(a)* the date of refusal, *(b)* the date of the appeal, *(c)* the date the inspector submitted his report to the Secretary of State, *(d)* the date when he arrived at his decision and *(e)* whether the appeal was granted or refused.

Sir Paul Beresford: This information is not readily available. I will however arrange for it to be assembled and then write to the hon. Member with the information.

Anglo-Great Lakes Corporation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what inquiries the National Rivers Authority has undertaken and what reports it has received in respect of releases of toxic material into the Tyne from the site of the Anglo-Great Lakes Corporation, Newcastle, after the works ceased operating.

Mr. Atkins: The results of National Rivers Authority monitoring of controlled waters, including the Tyne, are on public registers in NRA regional offices. I understand that relevant monitoring shows no evidence of pollution before or since the Anglo-Great Lakes Corporation ceased operations.

Scrap Yards

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations his Department has received regarding control of scrap yards; what plans his Department had to introduce changes regarding the control of scrap yards; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 7 December, *Official Report,* column *216.*

Housing Renovation Grants

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what recent representations he has had from local authorities regarding grants for housing renovation and improvement;

(2) what discussions he has had regarding problems in meeting commitments for mandatory housing renovation and improvements grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Matters relating to grants for house renovation and improvement were on the agenda of the housing investment programme meetings offered by the Department to all housing authorities in England. In addition, the Department has received 149 written representations.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now proposes to introduce changes in the housing renovation and improvement grant schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We will announce our conclusions on the future of private sector renewal programmes, following last year's consultation exercise, in due course.

Seven Estuary

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to commission a study into the mineral resources of the Severn estuary.

Sir Paul Beresford: Minerals planning guidance note No. 6 published by the Department in April 1994, which sets out guidelines for aggregates provision in England, states that the Government will undertake an examination of the marine sand and gravel resources in the Bristol channel. It is expected that this research will be commenced next year.

Local Government Act 1992

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the legislation repealed or otherwise affected by the Local Government Act 1992.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Legislation repealed by the Local Government Act 1992 is listed in schedule 4 to that Act. Other legislation that was affected is referred to, where relevant, in the body of the Act and in schedules 1 and 3.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by region the current waiting list times and numbers for schemes under the home energy efficiency scheme; what additional steps he intends to take to reduce waiting times; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The average waiting times by region for work under the home energy efficiency scheme, based on information supplied by installers appointed by the energy action grants agency, are set out in the table. It is not possible to provide a regional breakdown of the numbers of householders waiting for HEES work to be done, because the practice of installers in recording information about their clients, who contact them directly, varies. However EAGA estimates that, nationally, about 100,000 householders are waiting. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has announced that an extra £30 million will be allocated to the home energy efficiency scheme in each of the next three years. This will bring the total budget for the scheme to more than £100 million a year—a 185 per cent. increase on the 1993–94 allocation. This will enable 600,000 homes a year to be treated.

Country	*Region*	*Waiting time (weeks)*
Wales		11
Scotland		6
England	London	10
	South West	13
	South East	10
	North East	16
	North West	10
	West Midlands	10
	East Midlands	14
	Yorkshire and Humberside	13

Public Phone Boxes

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to making the installation and removal of public call boxes subject to planning permission.

Sir Paul Beresford: It would not be appropriate to require planning permission to be obtained simply for the removal of a public call box; that is more properly a matter for commercial judgment. Telecommunications code system operators are granted a general planning permission to install, alter or replace public call boxes through the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988. However, before carrying out such works they must give the local planning authority the opportunity to say whether it wishes to approve details of siting and appearance. If the authority is not satisfied and there is a serious threat to amenity, it can refuse such approval.

Lancashire

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to refer back to the Local Government Commission its recommendation for the status quo in Lancashire.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: My right hon. Friend is still considering the Local Government Commission's recommendations about the future structure of local government in Lancashire.

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the Government's commitment to reducing carbon dioxide emissions following the Chancellor's statement on value added tax on domestic fuel.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) on 12 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *435*.

Landfill Tax

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the consultation paper on the proposed landfill tax will be published; and to whom it will be distributed.

Mr. Atkins: We anticipate launching a consultation exercise on the proposed landfill levy early in 1995. The consultation document will be sent to a wide range of interested bodies, including representatives of waste producers, the waste disposal industry, local authorities and environmental interests.

Toxic Materials

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *134*, if he will list the sites at which all current and planned trials of substitute fuels in kilns are being carried out.

Mr. Atkins: The following kilns are currently undertaking trials with substitute fuels.

Castle Cement Clitheroe—Ribblesdale Works, Clitheroe, Lancashire
Rugby Cement Barrington—Barrington Works, Barrington, Cambridge.

Rugby Cement Ketton—Ketton Cement Works, Ketton, Stamford, Lincolnshire.
Blue Circle Weardale—Weardale Works, Eastgate, Bishop Auckland, County Durham.
Redland Aggregates Thrislington—Thrislington Works, West Cornforth, Ferryhill, County Durham.

The following plant has made an application to undertake trials.
Rugby Cement Southam—Southam Works, Long Itchington, Rugby, Warwickshire.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the Home Secretary about the effect of Home Office decisions in respect of section 11 funding on decisions in respect of allocating single regeneration budget resources to a borough with particular reference to ethnic minorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The criteria for decisions on the allocation of the SRB bidding round and section 11 resources were set out respectively in the SRB bidding guidance issued on 14 April and in letters sent by the Home Office on 7 September and 24 November to local authorities and others. These were agreed by both Departments and recognise the needs of ethnic minorities. Decisions on section 11 bids will take into account relevant funding under the SRB.

Housing Associations

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what encouragement his Department is giving to encourage housing associations to refurbish properties rather than new-build.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: We are placing an increasing emphasis on regeneration in the Housing Corporation's approved development programme. Some 40 per cent. of approved development programme resources for new housing association schemes in 1995–96 will be for regeneration purposes, including rehabilitation and short-life housing, and schemes in city challenge and renewal areas.

Unitary Authorities

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the official working definition of a unitary authority.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: There is no statutory definition of "unitary authority". I would understand it to mean a local authority responsible for carrying out both county and district level functions.

Planning Inspectorate

Mr. Sims: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to review the planning inspectorate.

Mr. Gummer: The planning inspectorate, as an executive next steps agency, is being reviewed. As part of the usual arrangements for next steps agencies, performance and activities will be subjected to the normal prior options tests set out in the 1993 "Next Steps Review", Cm 2430.

Comments and contributions from those with an interest in the work of the agency will be welcome, and should be sent, by 28 February 1995, to Richard Jones, Planning Directorate, Department of the Environment, Room C13/16a, 2 Marsham street, London SW1P 3EB for England or to Peter Roderick, Planning Division, Welsh Office, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NQ for Wales.

The planning inspectorate was launched as an executive agency in the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office in April 1992. It serves the Secretaries of State for the Environment and Wales on appeals and other casework under planning, housing, environment, highways and allied legislation.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the undertakings given by the Government in their response to the first report from the Environment Select Committee, Session 1993–94, on standard spending assessments, Cm. 2494, indicating in respect of each undertaking what action has been taken and when.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The undertakings that were given in the Government's response to the Select Committee report and the action that has been taken are as follows:

Subject—Openness *(Recommendation 1)*

Undertaking—The Government will continue to discuss possible changes in SSA methodology with the local authority associations and to provide them with the data underlying any analyses.

Action—Between March and September 1994 there were 11 meetings of the SSA sub-group. This sub-group is the forum for discussions between the local authority associations and central Government Departments about possible changes in the formulae for SSAs. A report of the work of this sub-group was received by the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance in October.

Subject—Judgment *(Recommendation 4)*

Undertaking—Later this spring, the Department of the Environment will publish an updated edition of the SSA "Background and Underlying —Methodology" booklet which will explain how Ministers reached decisions on the choice of particular indicators and the research underpinning those decisions.

Action—The publication of the methodology handbook has been delayed. I hope it will be possible to publish it in January.

Subject–Information for authorities on calculation of SSAs *(Recommendation 5)*

Undertaking—To discuss with the local authority associations the value to individual authorities of providing them with completed calculations. If there is agreement that information in this form would be of use to individual authorities we will consider, with the associations, whether this can be provided.

Action—We discussed the issue with local authority associations and completed calculations have been sent to individual local authorities. The authorities have been invited to comment on their usefulness.

Subject—Use of regression analysis *(Recommendation 6)* and Factors which influence local authority spending *(Recommendation 19)*

Undertakings—The Government will be setting in motion some research to consider the scope for alternatives to regression, particularly those involving expenditure data ... It is unlikely that this research would be completed in 1994.The Government are looking carefully at the priorities for future work into SSAs in consultation with the local authority associations. This work is likely to include an examination of alternative ways in which the assessment might be made. This work would need to include consideration of any extra information which might be required and the cost and feasibility of collecting it.

Action—We have drafted a specification for research which we plan to discuss with the local authority associations on 17 January. The research would consider alternatives to regression analysis as ways of examining the factors which influence local authority spending.

Subject—Change in SSA methodology following reorganisation *(Recommendation 7)* and Damping effects of changes following reorganisation *(Recommendation 10)*.

Undertakings—The Department will be reviewing whether any SSA methodology changes will be necessary as a result of the local government review and will discuss such matters with the local authority associations within the forum of the settlement working group, which is informed by the SSA sub-group and the restructuring finance sub-group. The impact on SSAs of the reorganisation of local authorities and the need for any safety net arrangements will be discussed extensively with the local authority associations during the course of this year within the forum of the settlement working group.

Action—We have analysed the likely effects of local government reorganisation and considered whether damping and any methodology changes are necessary. We discussed the effects with the local authority associations in the restructuring finance sub-group. For 1995–96 we considered that no damping and only minimal changes were required, though more substantive changes may need to be considered for 1996–97. Changes for 1996–97 will be considered initially by the SSA sub-group.

Subject—Future recalibration of SSAs *(Recommendation 9)* and future work on SSAs *(Recommendation 20)*

Undertakings—During 1994 the Government intend to discuss with the local authority associations more limited changes in SSAs which now require examination, such as changes in the formula relating to the police which were not examined as part of the 1993 review of SSAs. The SSA sub-group will meet again in 1994 to consider SSA data and methodology issues. Among the Government's priorities for work in 1994 will be the police SSA and the way in which the area cost adjustment tapers outside London.

Action—Possible changes to SSA methodology, put forward by Department of the Environment, other Government Departments and local authority associations, were considered by the SSA sub-group and, in respect of police formula, by a working party chaired by the Home Office. The Government's proposals for SSAs in 1995–96, which incorporate proposed changes in methodology, were published on 1 December 1994. The proposed changes include a significant change relating to police and a change to the taper on the area cost adjustment, but are more limited than those arising from the 1993 review.

Subject—Stability and the SSA reduction grant *(Recommendation 14)*

Undertakings—The Department of the Environment will be considering with other Government Departments and the local authority associations whether to commission research into ways of updating before 2001 the proxy variables derived from the census. Decisions on whether to pay SSA reduction grant for 1995–96 will be taken, together with other decisions on the local government finance settlement for that year.

Action—Discussions have taken place with the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys about work it has started in this area. Their proposals will be discussed with the local authority associations early in 1995. The proposals for local authority finance in 1995–96 include payment of SSA reduction grant in respect of changes resulting from the 1993 review of SSAs, and in respect of changes in the police SSA, and police grant.

Subject—Community Care *(Recommendation 15)*

Undertaking—The distribution—of the special transitional grant—will continue to be discussed with the local authority associations in the normal way and in the light of overall monitoring.

Action—The arrangements for distributing the 1995–96 STG for community care were discussed at a meeting between officials of Department of Health and the local authority associations. The associations were also given the opportunity to comment on these matters in writing. In the light of the views expressed, it is the Government's intention to base the distribution of the 1995–96 STG wholly on the SSA for personal social services. The Government remain of the view that it is not possible to monitor the effect of the chosen distribution in isolation from other factors.

Subject—Day visitors *(Recommendation 18)*

Undertaking—A number of issues regarding the day visitor estimates have been raised in discussion with local authority associations and by individual authorities. These issues and other matters concerning potential enhancements to the day visitor estimates will be addressed in the coming year as part of the process of keeping this indicator under review.

Action—In 1994, the SSA sub-group considered a paper presented by DOE and Department of National Heritage looking at the strategy for updating the day visitor numbers. It was generally agreed that, pending a more comprehensive review during 1995, when updated information will become available, there should be no change for 1995–96.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if county councils are permitted to exceed standard spending assessment limits by the use of reserves.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* Yes. Expenditure funded from reserves or balances lies outside an authority's budget requirement, which is the quantity to which the capping principles apply.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what procedures exist for the review of individual standard spending assessments issued to individual county councils in the event of substantial and unexpected increases in the demand for services; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* Standard spending assessments are calculated using a uniform methodology which is applied to all authorities. The methodology is discussed in detail with the local authority associations. Where possible, the data used in the calculation of SSAs are brought up to date each year to reflect the changing conditions in the area of each individual local authority. Where demand for an individual authority's services increases we would normally expect this to be reflected in the data underlyings its SSA, albeit with a time lag.

The proposed SSAs for 1995–96 were announced on 1 December. Authorities have the opportunity to make representations in the period to 6 January. Having considered the representations, the Secretary of State will lay before the House of Commons a local government finance report setting out SSAs for each authority for 1995–96.

Once the report is approved, there can be no more than one amending report. There is a separate scheme, the Bellwin scheme, to deal with major emergencies.

The capping principles recognise that SSAs cannot reflect precisely every local circumstance, by allowing a margin of 12.5 per cent. over an authority's SSA before its budget requirement is regarded as excessive. In addition, local authorities will normally hold balances to meet expenditure unexpected at the time of their budget.

Coventry Airport

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received a letter from the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth about matters raised by B. Oakley about Coventry airport; when he decided to refer the matter to the Department of Transport; and what were the reasons for the lapse of time.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* A letter from the hon. Member dated 31 October, addressed to the Minister for the Environment and Countryside, about matters raised by B. Oakley about Coventry airport was received in my Department on 3 November. The subject matter was confirmed as being for the Department of Transport on 30 November and the correspondence transferred on 2 December. The main reason for the delay in confirming that the matter was not for this Department was an oversight by staff in my Department.

Sewage Disposal

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's policy with regard to the disposal of sewage through long sea outfall pipes.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* Government policy is that all significant discharges of sewage into coastal and estuarial waters should be treated. This will be achieved through implementation of the EC urban waste water treatment directive.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the location and date of commissioning for long sea outfall pipes for sewage which are *(a)* proposed, *(b)* already commissioned and *(c)* under construction.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* Comprehensive information on the numbers and locations of existing or proposed long sea outfall pipes is not kept by my Department.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the estimated volumes for low-level radioactive waste which the recent consultation document proposes shall be dumped in public refuse tips;

(2) what are the origins of the low-level radioactive waste from the nuclear industry which it is proposed to dump on public refuse tips according to the recent consultative document;

(3) what consideration has been given to the transportation problems associated with the dumping of low-level radioactive waste on public refuse tips as proposed in the recent consultative document.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 15 December 1994]:* The consultation document, "Review of Radioactive Waste Management Policy: Preliminary Conclusions", proposed that there would be advantage in encouraging greater use of controlled burial of low-level radioactive waste in landfill sites.

Low-level waste from the nuclear industry includes discarded protective clothing, used paper towels and plastic wrappings, and other lightly contaminated items of equipment, as well as building rubble and steelwork from decommissioned plant. No estimate has been made of the volumes of waste which producers might seek to dispose of in this way. No transportation problems were anticipated; where the level of radioactivity requires it, waste consignments are subject to control under international regulations made by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The consultation document was sent to a wide range of interested bodies and we shall be considering future policy in the light of the many responses received.

Water Authorities

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people are employed, and at what locations, by *(a)* the National Rivers Authority, *(b)* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, *(c)* the London Waste Regulation Authority, *(d)* local waste regulation authorities, *(e)* the nuclear installations inspectorate and *(f)* the drinking water inspectorate.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 15 December 1994]:* The numbers of persons employed by the following organisations are, from recent information available to the Department, as follows:

(a) the National Rivers Authority: 7,709;

(b) Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution: 430;

(c) the London Waste Regulation Authority; 122;

(d) other local authorities in England and Wales who are waste regulation authorities—the number of persons working on those authorities' waste regulation functions: 982;

(e) the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate: 269; and

(f) the Drinking Water Inspectorate: 30.

The figures for different organisations are not necessarily on a comparable basis or at the same date. Details of the location of the employees of all these organisations are not held centrally.

Biological Diversity

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the first conference of the parties meeting for the convention for biological diversity.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* The first meeting of the conference of the parties to the convention on biological diversity took place in Nassau, the Bahamas from 28 November to 9 December 1994. A good start was made towards implementing the convention and setting up the administrative machinery to operate it. The United Nations environment programme was designated as the organisation to host the convention secretariat. The work of the scientific advisory body was set in train, with its first meeting due to take place in Paris from 4 to 8 September 1995. A working group was established to enable the next COP to consider the need for a biosafety protocol. A three-year work programme was agreed for the COP which reflects the three objectives of the convention, namely conservation of biodiversity, its sustainable use, and sharing of the benefits derived from it. On finance, appropriate policy guidance was issued to the global environment facility, which was confirmed as the interim financial mechanism to fund the incremental costs of projects in developing countries designed to deliver the objectives of the convention. The rules on voting on financial provisions were left to be resolved at a future meeting.

The provisional dates for the next meeting of the conference of the parties are 6 to 17 November 1995. It will consider, inter alia, voting on financial provisions, the location of the convention secretariat and the designation of the permanent financial mechanism and will make decisions on the substantive work of the convention, including the consideration of biodiversity under threat.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the United Kingdom Government took at the first meeting of the conference of the parties for the convention on biological diversity to ensure that the convention is used as a means of conserving forests.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* The conservation of forests was not a substantive item on the agenda of the first meeting of the conference of the parties to the convention on biological diversity held in Nassau, the Bahamas from 28 November to 9 December 1994. However, a statement to be conveyed to the Commission on Sustainable Development on behalf of the COP emphasises the importance of conservation, management and sustainable use of forests for achieving the objectives of the convention and makes clear that the COP stands ready to develop measures to achieve the convention's objectives with respect to forests. The convention will undertake a programme of work on terrestrial biological diversity. This will take account of the consideration of forests and biodiversity by the third session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development next year.

National Theatre

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to call in the current planning application for alterations to the National theatre for public inquiry.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* I will await the local planning authority's consideration of the applications before considering whether or not to call them in.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department *(a)* hold open meetings, *(b)* conduct public consultation exercises, *(c)* conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, *(d)* publish a register of members' interests, *(e)* publish agendas for meetings and *(f)* publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case (i) under a statutory requirement or (ii) voluntary.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* A list of my Department's advisory bodies can be found in "Public Bodies". The following bodies carry out activities falling within the specified categories:

(a) hold open meetings,
Local Government Commission
Local Government Staff Commission
(b) conduct public consultation exercises,
Local Government Commission
Local Government Staff Commission
Building Regulations Advisory Committee
Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council
(c) conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests,
Local Government Commission
Building Regulations Advisory Committee
Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council
Advisory Panel for Construction Research
(d) publish a register of members' interests,
Advisory Committee on Hazardous Substances
(f) publish the minutes of meetings,
Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council

The Local Government Commission is required by statute to carry out consultation exercises. None of the other activities are statutory requirement.

Wolf Hybrids

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will apply the provisions of the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 in regard to the trading in wolf hybrids and to the keeping of these animals as domestic pets.

Sir Paul Beresford: The 1976 Act already applies to wolves and wolf hybrids, which may not be kept by individuals without a licence. Licensing under the Act is the responsibility of district councils, which may impose conditions on licences, including requirements that an animal must be kept only by particular persons at specified and secure premises. The Act also allows district councils to control the movement of any wolf or wolf hybrid. Trade in threatened species of wolves and first-generation hybrids is covered by EC regulation 3626/82 and other regulations applying the convention on international trade in endangered species within the European Union.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what considerations he is giving for the merging of the National Rivers Authority closed fund with the National Rivers Authority active fund.

Mr. Atkins: The National Rivers Authority is sponsored by the Department of the Environment. In the course of establishing the Environment Agency, consideration is being given to the future arrangements for the National Rivers Authority's closed and active pension funds. The arrangements must protect the position of the beneficiaries, while minimising any cost for the taxpayer.

One of the options being looked at is the merger of the funds.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Lindane

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the research conducted by his Department in 1981 in respect of Lindane and breast cancer.

Mrs. Browning: The Ministry has not conducted research on Lindane and breast cancer. The hon. Member may be referring to a 1981 study on lindane residues in milk following treatment of cattle with delousing powder. I have arranged for copies of this study to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year, and how much these services have cost his Department.

Mr. Jack: Only the Agricultural Development Advisory Service, an executive agency, has used an executive search agency, at a cost of £6,068.18.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by his Department for each of the last five years.

Mr. Jack: Departmental charges for telephone for years 1989–94 are:

	1989–90 £000s	*1990–91 £000s*	*1991–92 £000s*	*1992–93 £000s*	*1993–94 £000s*
HQ		1,377	943	1,089	1,045
GTN		471	595	989	873
AHVG		397	421	639	705
Regions		388	389	419	581
Other		457	480	392	415
ADAS		1,421	1,279	—	—
CVL		99	112	—	—
CSL		175	182	—	—
Total	4,481	4,785	4,401	3,528	3,619

Details of the number of calls are not held centrally.

1. The figures include CSL, CVL and ADAS up to 1991-92. After this date figures for them are not available. ADAS and CSL became agencies in April 1992 and CVL became an agency in April 1990.
2. Only the total figure for 1989–90 is available. A breakdown between major areas (as for other years) cannot be done until 6 January at the earliest.
3. Figures include line rental, hardware maintenance, call charges, minor capital spending, telex, agency operators, cellphones and pagers.
4. Budgetary responsibility is decentralised to over 150 operating units within MAFF and so a more detailed breakdown would require more time.
5. All figures are in thousands of pounds.

Bovine Immunodeficiency Virus

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many herds have been affected by bovine immunodeficiency virus.

Mrs. Browning: No specific disease condition caused by bovine immunodeficiency virus in cattle in the field has been identified in this or any other country. Investigations are continuing in a herd in Cheshire where cattle with serological evidence of exposure to BIV and a range of other common ailments have been identified. Investigations have also been carried out on one farm in Scotland.

Animal Exports

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will legislate to ensure that animals for export are slaughtered in the United Kingdom; if he will commend to other countries across Europe the principle that animals for export are slaughtered in the country of origin; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Browning: It would be against the terms of the treaty of Rome to prevent the export to other member states of live animals for slaughter. This trade is, however, subject to statutory requirements designed to ensure that the welfare of animals is properly protected.

We have pressed hard in the Community negotiations for tough controls, enforceable in all member states, on feeding and watering intervals and journey times. It is disappointing that a number of member states, mostly from the south of the Community, have so far blocked any improvements to the package of measures which the United Kingdom and others opposed as inadequate last June. However, in the light of the lack of progress at Community level, a new order has been made, to come into force on 23 January 1995, to help tighten up enforcement of the national requirements on journey plans, through which we safeguard the welfare of animals in transit pending the adoption of Community measures.

State Veterinary Service

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total sum expended in connection with the direct work of the state veterinary service in each year since 1990; what expenditure is envisaged for the next five years; and what will be the financial consequences of the Lebrecht review.

Mr. Waldegrave: Pay costs for the state veterinary service, comprising the veterinary field and investigation services together with veterinarians at headquarters, are;

Year	*Pay costs £'000*
1990–91	[1][2]19,936
1991–92	[1][2]20,477
1992–93	[1]25,925
1993–94	30,060
1994–95 (forecast)	30,903
1995–96 (allocation)	31,154
1996–97 (baseline)	31,135
1997-98 (baseline)	31,581

[1] Excludes superannuation.

[2] Excludes administration in the regions.

The financial consequences of the review cannot be assessed until final decisions have been taken following the consultation exercise.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what number and percentage of visits by the state veterinary service have identified infringement of welfare legislation since 1990; and what emphasis has been placed on follow-up visits.

Mrs. Browning: In the four years 1990–93, the state veterinary service carried out 16,977 welfare inspection visits to farm premises. This figure includes follow-up visits, which are always undertaken where appropriate. In the same period, the SVS initiated or assisted with 493 successful prosecutions.

TB and Brucellosis

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations have recently been held between his Department and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons on TB and brucellosis testing.

Mrs. Browning: The royal college has received a copy of the consultation document which my Department circulated on 24 October about the management review of animal health and veterinary group which dealt with a number of issues including tuberculosis and brucellosis testing. The royal college has yet to reply.

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the names and status of those consultants participating in the policy evaluation of the brucellosis eradication arrangements.

Mrs. Browning: The team of consultants whose competitive bid was successful to carry out the evaluation of the bovine brucellosis eradication policy comprises agricultural economists, statisticians, veterinarians and epidemiologists from the Centre for European Agricultural Studies (Wye) Ltd; Wye College (University of London), farm business unit; and the Royal veterinary college (University of London).

Animal Health and Veterinary Group

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many responses he has received from *(a)* groups and *(b)* individuals to the publication of the review of the animal health and veterinary group.

Mr. Waldegrave: As at 15 December, I had received 15 responses from organisations and 13 from individuals. The consultation period runs to 31 December 1994.

HEALTH

Redundancies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what have been the costs of redundancy payments to staff in each of the last five years;

(2) if she will list the number of redundancies among NHS staff *(a)* by grade and *(b)* by reason for each of the last five years.

Mr. Malone: Redundancy in the national health service is not a new phenomenon. Compensation for loss of office was introduced in 1948 as part of the establishment of the service. NHS redundancies in recent years have resulted from re-organisation and mergers at local level as part of continuing improvements in patient services. In 1989–90, gross redundancy payments to staff by regional health authorities were £516,000, by district health authorities £8,975,000 and by special health authorities £243,000. In 1990–91, gross redundancy payments by regional health authorities were £948,000, by district health authorities £10,722,000 and by special health authorities £68,000.

The increase in expenditure in this and subsequent years by regional health authorities is largely accounted for by restructuring and contraction while the largest single factor in redundancies in district health authorities during this and subsequent years is the reorganisation of mental health services in connection with care in the community, involving the closure of psychiatric hospitals. In 1991–92, gross redundancy payments by regional health authorities were £2,720,000, by district health authorities £25,875,000, by special health authorities £481,000 and by NHS trusts £3,675,000. Increases in expenditure in this and subsequent years by special health authorities and trusts result largely from reorganisation and mergers at local level and, in London, especially from the implementation of the report of Professor Sir Bernard Tomlinson. In 1992–93, gross redundancy payments by regional health authorities were £3,237,000, by district health authorities £31,871,000, by special health authorities £1,128,000 and by NHS trusts £14,546,000.

Reasons given by trusts with the largest expenditure on redundancy payments include particularly the implementation of reviews of skill mix and ancillary staff, together with increased concentration on patient services and contracting out of non-clinical services. Provisional figures for 1993–94 are £11,486,000 for regional health authorities, £31,971,000 for district health authorities, £1,185,000 for special health authorities and £49,122,000 for NHS trusts.

Management restructuring caused by the reduction in the size and number of regional health authorities, leading to their eventual abolition in 1996, has added to redundancy costs for 1993–94, as have the merger of some district health authorities and changes in working practices.

Information on the number of redundancies by grade and cause is not available routinely in the form suggested. However, some information is available about redundancies in particular staff groups and I will write about this to the hon. Member.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 6 December, (1) if the guidance set out in TEL(94)2 applies to senior health service managers whose employment with an NHS trust dates from after its publication;

(2) what advice or guidance she has given or has been called to give prior to the publication of TEL(94)2 concerning the dismissal of senior managers.

Mr. Malone: TEL(94)2 sets out for national health service trusts what is expected in providing for termination payments for senior managers. We have not issued any advice to NHS trusts concerning the dismissal of senior managers. NHS trusts are free to employ staff on whatever conditions they think fit.

Small Pharmacies

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received with regard to the future of the professional allowance for small pharmacies dispensing between 1,000 and 1,500 prescriptions per month; and what assessment she has made of the importance of such pharmacies in rural areas and the effect of changes following the representations being made to her on these matters.

Mr. Malone: Three recent representations have been received, one of which is a pay claim for 1995–96 from the pharmaceutical services negotiating committee. The claim refers to the threshold for payment of the professional allowance. The Department extended the essential small pharmacy scheme in 1993 specifically because it remains committed to maintaining good access for patients to dispensing services in both rural and urban areas.

Hospital Closures

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals have closed since April 1991.

Mr. Sackville: Decisions on closing or opening facilities are for local management. The Department collects information only on proposed closures which are referred for a ministerial decision following objections from a community health council.

Breast Cancer

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of women aged 50 to 64 years had been screened for breast cancer within the previous three years in each *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority in 1989–90 and in each year since then.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 27 October, *Official Report,* column *820–21.*

"The Health of the Nation" Indicators

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the death rate from breast cancer per 100,000 population in each *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority in 1989–90 and each year since then;

(2) what was the average percentage of food energy derived by the population from total fat in each regional health authority area in 1989–90 and each year since then;

(3) what was the incidence of invasive cervical cancer per 100,000 population in each *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority in each year since 1986;

(4) what was the rate of conception among girls aged under 16 in each *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority in 1989–90 and in each year since then;

(5) what was the death rate from stroke per 100,000 population for *(a)* people aged under 65 and *(b)* people aged 65 to 74 in each (i) regional health authority and (ii) district health authority in 1989–90 and each year since then;

(6) what was the suicide rate per 100,000 population in each *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority in 1989—90 and each year since then;

(7) what was the death rate from coronary heart disease per 100,000 population for *(a)* people aged under 65 and *(b)* people aged 65–74 in each (i) regional health authority and (ii) district health authority in 1989–90 and each year since then;

(8) what was the death rate from lung cancer per 100,000 population for (i) men and (ii) women aged under 75 in each *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority in 1989–90 and each year since then;

(9) what was the death rate per 100,000 population for accidents among *(a)* children aged under 15, *(b)* people aged 15–24 and *(c)* people aged 65 and over in each (i) regional health authority and (ii) district health authority in 1989–90 and each year since then;

(10) what was the average percentage of food energy derived by the population from saturated fatty acids in each regional health authority area in 1989–90 and each year since then.

Mr. Sackville: The data requested are "The Health of the Nation" indicators, which are available for the latest years 1989–91, baseline data and 1990–92, monitoring data. These data are contained in the public health common data set 1993 volume 5 "The Health of the Nation" baseline and monitoring data—definition booklet with data on computer disks—a copy of which is in the Library. The indicators in question are:

HON-A1—Mortality rates from coronary heart disease in persons under 65.

HON-A2—Mortality rates from coronary heart disease in persons aged 65–74.

HON-A3—Mortality rates from stroke in persons under 65.

HON-A4—Mortality rates from stroke in persons aged 65–74.

HON-A8[1]—Average percentage of household food energy derived from saturated fatty acids.

HON-A9[1]—Average percentage of household food energy derived from total fat.

HON-B1—Mortality rates from breast cancer in women aged 50–69.

HON-B2[2]—Incidence of invasive cervical cancer.

HON-B4, B5—Mortality rates from lung cancer in men and women under 75.

HON-C2—Suicide rates.

HON-D3[3]—Conception rates below 16.

HON-E1—Mortality rates from accidents in children under 15.

HON-E2—Mortality rates from accidents in persons aged 15–24.

HON-E3—Mortality rates from accidents in persons aged 65 and over.

[1] Available only for Standard regions and Greater London for the years 1988–90 (baseline data) and 1990–92 (monitoring data).

[2] Only available for the years 1985–87 (baseline data) and 1986–88 (monitoring data).

[3] Baseline data only: conceptions estimated to have occurred in 1989–91, based on birth registrations and legal terminations of pregnancy recorded in 1989–92.

NHS Trusts (Termination Payments)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the termination payments made to chief executives and general and senior managers in each trust since its inception, indicating the size and number of individual payments.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally for payments made before April 1994. Under the monitoring arrangements established by TEL(94)3, national health service trusts have notified the NHS executive of the following termination payments to chief executives and general and senior managers this financial year.

	Number of payments	*Amount £*
Broadgreen Hospital NHS Trust	3	4,487
		7,323
		31,078
Burton Hospitals NHS Trust		7,053
Cheviot and Wansbeck NHS Trust	2	10,086
		6,329
Chorley and South Ribble NHS Trust		28,749
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Learning Disabilities NHS Trust		11,000
Dudley Priority Health NHS Trust		37,222
East Surrey Learning Disability and Mental Health Services NHS Trust		36,677
Epsom Healthcare NHS Trust		15,000
Fosse Health NHS Trust		19,500
Hammersmith Hospitals NHS Trust	2	47,616
		75,073
Herefordshire Community Health NHS Trust		28,416
Healthlands Mental Health NHS Trust		25,008
Hertford Health Agency	3	3,000
		3,000
		3,000
Kings Heathcare NHS Trust	2	55,573
		1,005
The Medway NHS Trust	3	12,991
		12,803
		13,501
Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust		31,549
North East Essex Mental Health Services		26,188
North Hampshire Hospitals NHS Trust		30,000
North Mersey Community NHS Trust		11,300
North Tees Health NHS Trust		27,764
Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust		25,000
Northampton Community Healthcare NHS Trust	2	20,259
		19,540
Pilgrim Health NHS Trust		7,864
Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust		7,865
Queens Medical Centre Nottingham University NHS Trust		77,715
Royal Liverpool University Hospital		47,355
Royal Liverpool Children's NHS Trust		18,466
Royal United Hospital Bath NHS Trust		19,343
South Bedfordshire Community Healthcare Trust		17,771
South Kent Hospitals NHS Trust		8,626
South Warwickshire General Hospitals NHS Trust		34,829
Southend Healthcare NHS Trust	3	43,908
		29,901
		7,031
Teddington Memorial Hospital NHS Trust		18,750
United Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust		30,000
Walsall Community NHS Trust		35,000
Walsall Hospital NHS Trust		6,926
West Herts Community Health NHS Trust	2	2,633
		2,276
Wiltshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust		27,314
Worcester Royal Infirmary NHS Trust		22,167
Worthing and Southlands Hospitals NHS Trust	2	34,547
		18,200

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent on telephone charges; and how many telephone calls have been made by her Department in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Telephone charges incurred by the Department of Health over the past four years are:

1990–91: £4,739,561
1991–92: £3,017,000
1992–93: £3,490,000
1993–94: £3,419,000

Separate figures for the Department of Health are not available prior to 1990–91 since such costs were incurred by the combined Departments of Health and Social Security. Details of the number of calls made per year are not available centrally.

Gonorrhoea

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the incidence of gonorrhoea per 100,000 population in each *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority in 1989–90 and in each year since then.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Additionally, rates of incidence per head of resident district or regional population would not be meaningful because data on new cases of gonorrhoea are collected by district of treatment not district of residence.

Empty Residential Properties

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the empty residential properties owned by her Department are *(a)* operational and *(b)* surplus; and in the latter case for how long have they been surplus.

Mr. Sackville: The Department directly owns very little residential accommodation, all of which is in operational use and fully occupied except for any short periods when staff change. For the national health service, the information is not available centrally. Residential property is owned and managed by national health service trusts, although regional health authorities manage some residual residential property. A survey conducted in 1992 estimated that there were some 1,800 houses and flats vacant comprising:

1,050 awaiting tenants

450 undergoing renovation

150 awaiting decision

150 for disposal.

Drugs Advisory Committee

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a register of the interests of members of the advisory committee on national health service drugs.

Mr. Malone: The Department does not maintain such a register. However, members of the advisory committee on national health service drugs are governed by a code of practice which requires them to declare any interests which might affect the advice they give.

Residential Care

Mr. Pike (Burnley): To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to assist local authorities to maintain residents with preserved rights in their own home; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: People living in their homes are not eligible for preserved rights to higher rates of income support. These apply only to people who are resident in nursing homes and residential care homes on 1 April 1993.

Public Appointments

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health from what sources she seeks information on the political affiliation of candidates for appointment to paid or unpaid posts for which she is responsible.

Mr. Sackville: None. Appointments are made on the basis of aptitude, merit and suitability.

Mental Illness

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of mental illness hospital admissions nationally and in each NHS region for each year since 1990–91; and what percentage of total admissions such admissions represented in each year.

Mr. Bowis: The information needed to calculate the volume change in finished consultant episodes, by specialty, for each regional health authority, is available in "Ordinary admissions and day case admissions for England" for the financial years 1993–94, copies of which are available in the Library.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more she has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of her official duties.

Mr. Sackville: Twenty-Three.

Social Services Budget

Dr. Hendron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the total social services budget was spent on child care provision in England in the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: Information for the last five years for which information is available is shown in the table.

Gross expenditure on personal social services in England

Year	*Total £ million*	*Children's services £ million*	*Percentage*
1988–89	3,776.1	1,164.3	30.8
1989–90	4,204.4	1,277.3	30.4
1990–91	4,697.7	1,449.4	30.9
1991–92	5,127.4	1,551.4	30.3
1992–93	5,464.7	1,810.3	33.1

Social Work Diploma

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what numbers and proportions of residential child care staff currently hold *(a)* the diploma in social work or an equivalent qualification and *(b)* a national vocational qualification at level III.

Mr. Bowis: Information on the qualifications held by social work staff is not collected by the Department of Health. The Local Government Management Board and the Association of Directors of Social Services collect this information in an annual survey and publish it in the "Social Services Workforce Analysis", copies of which will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's target for the number and proportion of residential child care staff to be qualified to the level of the diploma in social work; and what is the proposed date by which this target should be achieved.

Mr. Bowis: Under the residential child care initiative, the Government are assisting local authorities to achieve the recommendation in the 1991 Utting report that all officers in charge of residential children's homes should be qualified to diploma in social work level by 1995.

Hospital Freeholds

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those national health service hospitals where the freehold is held other than by the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: Property holding information of this kind is maintained by regional health authorities and national health service trusts, and is not available centrally.

Child Care Qualifications

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's target for the number and proportion of residential child care staff to hold a national vocational qualification to level III; and what is the proposed date by which this target should be achieved.

Mr. Bowis: National vocational qualifications appropriate to staff in residential child care settings are still being developed. New occupational standards on which these qualifications will be based will be available from next spring.

Information Technology

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will issue advice to south west region on the sale of its information technology department.

Mr. Sackville: The regional health authority consulted departmental officials before reaching decisions on its review of future arrangements for its computer centre. General guidance to assist health authorities and national health service trusts in deciding and implementing future arrangements for NHS trading agencies such as this were issued on 15 December. Copies of the guidance HSG(95)54 are available in the Library.

Solvent Misuse

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what lessons can be learnt from the reduction in deaths from volatile substance misuse shown in the analysis of figures published on 9 December by the St. George's hospital medical school in its report, "Trends in Deaths Associated with Abuse of Volatile Substances: report No. 7."

Mr. Bowis: The report shows that the number of deaths fell in 1992 to 79, the lowest figure for 10 years. The statistical analysis shows a strong correlation between numbers of deaths and the timing of the first national publicity campaigns of the health departments on solvent abuse by young people aimed at parents. This is very encouraging but not a reason for complacency. We shall continue to monitor numbers of deaths and the impact of publicity campaigns and other initiatives to combat drug and solvent misuse so that more young people's lives can be saved. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

Health Education Authority

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if a decision has been reached about the future of the Health Education Authority.

Mr. Malone: The Government have decided that the Health Education Authority should continue, albeit on the basis of a radically changed funding mechanism. This reflects our view that, while much health promotion needs to be commissioned at local level, there remains a need for national campaigns and for a national health education body which can advise Ministers and act as a centre of expertise.

From 1 April 1996, the authority will be largely funded on a contract basis. The authority will seek contracts from the Department and other organisations to provide health education programmes and projects and for the supply of health education material, research and expertise. There will be no automatic right to such contracts. These new arrangements will help ensure that the authority has strong incentives to maintain and develop its reputation as the leading provider of health education advice, projects and material, to be responsive to the needs of its customers and to provide cost-effective services. We are grateful to the authority for having already set in train the implementation of these changes.

Staff Cars

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she is now able to list for 1993–94 expenditure on staff cars for *(a)* regions, *(b)* districts and *(c)* trusts.

Mr. Sackville: Provisional figures for expenditure on staff cars by regional and district health authorities and national health service trusts will be placed in the Library.

Mental Illness Hospitals

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list *(a)* the national health service mental handicap hospitals and *(b)* the NHS mental illness hospitals which have closed and the capital and revenue resources which have accrued as a result in each year since 1979.

Mr. Bowis: Information on the closure of mental illness hospitals can be obtained from the "Survey of English Mental Illness Hospitals March 1993" copies of which are available in the Library. A survey of learning disability hospitals is in progress.

Drugs (Deaths)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her calculation of the numbers of people who died as the result of the use of medicinal drugs in each of the last 10 years *(a)* accidentally, *(b)* in suicide or self-inflicted injury or *(c)* in injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted; and which drug each death involved.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows the number of people who have died as a result of poisoning by drugs, medicaments, and biological substances (ICD 960–979) in the last 10 years in England and Wales, under the headings of accidental, suicide and self-inflicted injury, and injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted. The drugs implicated in these deaths are published each year in tables nine and 10 of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication series DH4, which is available in the Library.

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
ICD number: *960-979*										
Accident	381	377	314	321	347	335	341	411	410	501
Suicide and self inflicted injury	1,219	1,099	1,031	1,013	902	915	785	816	793	874
Injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted	419	441	447	558	568	609	586	544	588	596

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
965										
Accident	137	148	116	112	144	124	138	176	191	244
Suicide and self inflicted injury	453	417	383	412	326	332	287	319	314	372
Injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted	145	161	153	174	218	219	221	221	248	259
977										
Accident	55	51	36	50	61	54	50	73	72	101
Suicide and self inflicted injury	181	153	156	155	167	133	121	135	130	129
Injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted	54	54	61	85	76	103	84	78	92	82

[1] International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision.

Paracetamol

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new proposals she has to restrict the availability of medicinal drugs to children, following the recent survey carried out by the Pontefract and district community health council in respect of the purchase of paracetamol over the counter by children; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: No new proposals are planned. Community pharmacists are under a clear obligation not to supply a medicine to a child unless satisfied that the product would be used safely or, if it is for another person the pharmacist must take steps to ensure that it will be delivered safely to an adult and appropriate information will be conveyed to the patient or responsible adult. Pharmacists are further advised that where a young child is sent to collect a medicine a pharmacist should be prepared to make arrangements for delivery to the home of the patient and ensure that advice is given on how the medicine should be properly used.

In addition, the pharmacy profession is introducing protocols for the sale of medicines in pharmacies from January 1 1995, which will ensure that patients using a pharmacy are referred directly to the pharmacist when their needs dictate. The advice to pharmacists from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britian is that in all cases requests for medicines made by children should in future be referred to the pharmacist.

Waiting Lists

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has received concerning waiting lists for operations at hospitals contracted to the Camden and Islington health authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: Information on waiting times by national health service trust and district health authority is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England", published twice yearly. Copies are available in the Library.

Conduct and Practice Standards

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who was the successful tenderer for the contract to develop social services standards for conduct and practice; and what is the price of the successful bid.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on 1 November, *Official Report*, column *1087*. Details of the individual contracts are confidential.

Casualty Units, London

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects a statement to be made by the London implementation group on the future of casualty units in north and east London; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: It is for local health authorities and trusts to determine the appropriate pattern of accident and emergency services to ensure that the needs of local people are met.

Camden and Islington Health Authority

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the annual departmental allocation to the Camden and Islington health authority or its predecessor for each of the last five years and planned for 1995–96.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir William Staveley, chairman of North Thames regional health authority, which allocates funds to district health authorities.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has concerning the number of unused beds and non-used operating theatres in hospitals contracted to the Camden and Islington health authority.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Family Health Services Appeal Unit

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps the family health services appeal unit takes to identify practitioners who have persistently been found in breach of the terms of service.

Mr. Malone: The family health services appeal unit maintains records of practitioners who have been found in breach of their terms of service. The director of the unit may take these into account when exercising his functions under the National Health Service (Service Committees and Tribunal) Regulations.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what performance standards the family health services appeal unit has.

Mr. Malone: The family health services appeals unit has drawn up internal performance standards for appeals. These standards will be printed in the unit's annual report which is due to be published soon.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the average time taken by the family health services appeal unit since 1 April 1992 from time of receipt of request, to reach a decision concerning waiving of time limits;

(2) what is the average time taken by the family health services appeal unit since 1 April 1992 to arrange an appeal hearing, from the time of receipt of appeal, when a practitioner has appealed against a withholding;

(3) what is the average time taken by the family health services appeal unit since 1 April 1992 to arrange an appeal hearing from time of receipt of appeal, when the appeal is made by the complainant;

(4) what is the average time taken by the family health services appeal unit since 1 April 1992 to notify the result of an appeal hearing after the date of the hearing;

(5) what is the average time since 1 April 1992 taken by the family health services appeal unit, from the time of appeal, to reach a decision concerning a breach of the terms of service.

Mr. Malone: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the family health services appeal unit uses the information it receives to monitor and improve services.

Mr. Malone: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the then Minister for Health gave him on 18 July, *Official Report*, column *170*.

Dental Services

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is her Department's estimate of the proportion of dental work that is now happening outside national health service pay scales *(a)* in total and *(b)* by region;

(2) what is the total value of dentistry that is paid for by the individual patient directly or indirectly through private insurance;

(3) what proportion of dentists' remuneration was paid by the NHS Dental Practice board in each of the last five years at 1993–94 prices;

(4) what information she has on the level of subscriptions to private dental insurance plans over the past four years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: Data are not available on the amount of dental treatment provided outside the national health service, the expenditure by patients on such private dental treatment, the proportion of dentists' income represented by earnings from private treatments, or the level of subscriptions to private dental insurance plans.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has had concerning the availability of national health service dentistry in areas of England.

Mr. Malone: We have received a number of letters, some from right hon. and hon. Members, about the availability of national health service dentists. Family health services authorities in England report that they can help patients to find national health service dentists.

Video Surveillance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, columns *210-11*, if the use of covert video surveillance at North Staffordshire infirmary is linked with, or covered by, section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

Mr. Bowis: Yes, if it is conducted under the agreed protocol.

Doctors (Working Hours)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has of the connection between the length of a doctor's working week and *(a)* the health of that doctor and *(b)* the quality of care she or he is able to provide.

Mr. Malone: There is no positive evidence to link the length of the working week as such with the health of doctors and the quality of care they provide.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 12 December, *Official Report*, columns *474-75*, on market testing, what is the total value of the contracts awarded.

Mr. Sackville: The aggregate value of contracts awarded to the private sector as a result of market testing were as follows:

	£
1992–93 programme	10,517,000
1993–94 programme	3,026,503
Total	13,543,503

Cancer and Palliative Care

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what standards the new National Health Service Executive offices will be applying in monitoring the purchasing and provision of cancer and palliative care.

Mr. Sackville: Last year, the chief medical officers of England and Wales established an expert advisory group on cancer to consider the provision of cancer services. Its consultative report "A Policy Framework for Commissioning Cancer Services" is available in the Library. The National Health Service Executive's priorities and planning guidance requires health authorities to ensure the best quality of care for cancer patients when commissioning health services with reference to this report. Guidelines are to be developed in consultation with professional bodies to help with the contracting process.

Junior Doctors

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's estimate of the date by which the target of 72 hour maximum contracts for junior doctors will be met.

Mr. Malone: Regional task forces are due to conduct a further monitoring exercise in early February 1995. They will validate the position at the end of 1994 and report progress since then. Their returns will form the basis of an assessment of any further action necessary to bring posts within the targets set for 31 December 1994.

Food Safety

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action has been taken following the recommendation by the Advisory Committee on Microbiological Safety of Food that the quality of investigations into outbreaks of foodborne illness should be improved.

Mr. Sackville: The guidance "Management of Outbreaks of Foodborne Illness" is published today.

The need for the guidance to improve the quality of outbreak data was recognised by the Richmond committee in 1990 and by the Advisory Committee on the Microbiological Safety of Food in its report "Salmonella in Eggs" in 1993.

The guidance, which has been produced by an informal working group of outside experts set up by the Department, offers informal "best practice" advice for all those involved in the management of local outbreaks of foodborne illness. In addition to helping outbreak investigation teams at the local level, we hope that the guidance will also assist in improving of data collected on a national basis. We have asked relevant professional staff in health and local authorities to promote its use as far as possible within existing resources.

Copies of the guidance will be placed in the Library.

Anthrax Vaccine

Mr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the country of origin of anthrax vaccine batch number 337/E used by British service personnel during the Gulf war; and by which company was it manufactured.

Mr. Sackville: Anthrax vaccine batch number 337/E was manufactured in the United Kingdom as a product licensed under the Medicines Act 1968 by the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research. However the final stage of production—that of filling and packaging ampoules—was carried out for CAMR by Evans Medical. We cannot comment on use of this vaccine by British service personnel.

Bone Necrosis

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will allow full access to the decompression control register to former tunnellers pursuing compensation claims relating to the medical condition known as bone necrosis.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: I have been asked to reply.

The records in the former Decompression Sickness Central Registry—referred to in the Question as the Decompression Control Register—were collected over a period of 30 years until the registry ceased operation in 1984. They were recorded only for the purpose of health research.

The contractors who initiated the records and whose property they are, have always been able to request information from the stored records of decompression, manlock registers etc. Access by others to the records, for example an individual or his solicitor seeking to establish dates and decompression times relating to his own exposure to compressed air, will be granted only with the full knowledge and written permission of the contractor who initiated the records.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 20 December 1994

WALES

Special Advisers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 1 December, *Official Report*, columns *814-15*, if he will make a statement regarding his Department's expenditure on special advisers in each of the last three financial years and for the financial year 1979–80.

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretaryon 19 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *937*.

Clwyd Education Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make additional moneys available to enable Clwyd education authority to meet its special needs duties; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what measures he proposes to take to enable head teachers to reduce large class sizes; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will visit Clwyd education authority and discuss with it the difficulties they face in delivering its statutory responsibilities;

(4) what percentage increase in cash he has proposed for Clwyd education authority for recruitment of more teaching staff;

(5) by what percentage he plans to increase Clwyd education authority's budget to enable it to spend more cash on its books and its equipment budget; and if he will make a statement.

(6) if he will convene a conference of local education authorities in Wales to discuss funding difficulties; and if he will make a statement;

(7) if he will fund Clwyd education authority to enable its head teachers to provide additional cover for absent staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: Clwyd county council's provisional standard spending assessment for 1995–96 is £266.642 million, an increase of 1.7 per cent. including resources for community care. It is for the authority to decide on spending priorities between and within services in the light of its statutory responsibilities and its perception of local needs and priorities. Discussions with local authorities on funding issues are undertaken through the forum of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost his Department.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local education authority chairmen in Wales he has met formally.

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend has not yet had any formal meetings with individual local education authority chairmen.

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. Redwood: I regularly travel to Wales by train; each journey takes longer than one hour.

Primary Schools

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to improve the resourcing of primary schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend recently announced his plans for Welsh local government revenue spending in 1995–96. He proposed that total standard spending should be set at £2.767 million. It represents an increase of £72 million, 2.7 per cent on the comparable level of funding for 1994–95.

It is for individual local authorities to determine how their available resources are allocated between services including education, taking account of their statutory responsibilities and their perception of local needs and priorities.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to visit Meirionnydd Nant Conwy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I visited the hon. Member's constituency recently in September this year, and have no other immediate plans to visit Meirionnydd Nant Conwy again in the near future.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many schools in Wales have opted to become grant maintained in 1992, 1993 and to date in 1994; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Richards: Parental ballots at seven schools in Wales in 1992 and six in 1993 were in favour of applying for grant-maintained status. No schools have balloted in favour of grant-maintained status in 1994.

NHS Managers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of, and expenditure on, managers within the NHS in *(a)* 1979–80 and *(b)* 1993–94.

Mr. Richards: At 30 September 1993 there were 1,159 general and senior managers—whole-time equivalents—employed by the NHS in Wales. The salary and wage cost of employing these staff during the financial year 1993–94 was £30.7 million—provisional. The grades of general and senior managers were introduced gradually from 1985 onwards so comparable figures for 1979–80 are not available.

The figures include staff employed and expenditure by district health authorities, the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, family health services authorities, NHS trusts and the Health Promotion Authority for Wales.

Long-term Care

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the projected cost to the NHS of providing long-term care for the chronically sick and terminally ill in *(a)* 1995–96 and 1996–97.

Mr. Richards: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost to the NHS of providing long-term care for the chronically sick and terminally ill for each of the last five years.

Mr. Richards: This information is not held centrally. However, the Welsh Office has made a series of allocations to support the voluntary hospice as follows:

Year	*£*
1991–92	1,000,000
1992–93	1,900,000
1993–94	2,304,000
1994–95	[1]2,477,000

[1] including £100,000 agreed but not yet allocated.

NHS Pay

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how performance-related pay will be calculated for national health service employees.

Mr. Richards: Local pay provides the opportunity to reward the contributions which individual members or groups of staff make to the provision of high-quality, cost-effective patient services. The precise nature of pay schemes will be a local matter.

Home Helps and District Nurses

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many home helps and *(b)* district nurses per 1,000 people over the age of 65 there are; and what are the equivalent figures for other European countries.

Mr. Richards: At 30 September 1993 there were 8.6 whole-time equivalent home helps—including home care organisers and family aides—per 1,000 people aged 65 and over in Wales. Reliable estimates of the numbers of nursing staff employed in specific occupational groups, such as district nursing, and information on equivalent figures for other European countries for these two groups of staff are not available centrally.

Bryngías Tunnels Bypass

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial penalties have been paid by the contractor on the Brynglas tunnels bypass scheme; and what new date has been agreed for its completion.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The contract completion date for the M4 Brynglas tunnels and A4042 Malpas road relief scheme has been extended from 4 December 1994 to 5 February 1995. I am advised that the contractor will not achieve actual completion until summer 1995. Liquidated damages are not yet applicable.

Young People

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the opportunities available for young people aged 16 and 17 years old who are classified as *(a)* International Labour Organisation unemployed and *(b)* economically inactive.

Mr. Redwood: The Government guarantee a place on the youth training programme to all 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in education or employment. There is a wide range of opportunities available in employment, education, training and voluntary work.

National Curriculum Tests

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of the cost of his plans to oversee national curriculum tests in schools and provide for their external marking.

Mr. Richards: The precise requirements for 1995–96 have still to be determined by the Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales. The latest estimate to meet the assessment needs in Wales to cover test development and distribution, guidance to teachers and external marking is in the order of £4.5 million to £5 million.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimates he has made of the savings which will accrue in each of the next three years arising out of the creation of unitary authorities; and if he will itemise the specific areas where he expects these savings to accrue.

Mr. Redwood: Paragraph 6.8 of "Local Government in Wales: A Charter for the Future", Cm 2155, made it clear that financial savings were possible as a result of the reorganisation but that the exact level would depend on decisions taken by the new authorities after their election.

I do not expect any savings in 1995–96. I informed the House on 14 December, *Official Report,* columns *925–40,* of the funding for transitional costs which I propose to make available, and offered to provide further money for compensation costs to facilitate changes where authorities decide that they want to make major administrative savings at the point of reorganisation.

I have not made any estimates in respect of 1996–97 or 1997–98 and is too early to do so. I would expect savings to result from such things as the reduction in the number of councillors and in the number of chief executives, treasurers and other posts in central administrative departments.

Local government and the public will also benefit from non-financial improvement which result from the reorganisation, such as improved co-ordination of services and greater accountability.

Schools

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money he plans to make available for his new initiative for popular schools; when he expects this initiative to get under way; and when the first pupils will take up places in schools taking part in the programme.

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend has made £20 million available over the next four financial years for the popular schools initiative. Bids will be invited for consideration under the initiative early in the new year and I would hope to be in a position to make the first announcement of schools to benefit by summer 1995.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to launch a major new initiative like that announced for popular schools to raise standards in schools which are identified by the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector or the local education authority as having particular problems to overcome in providing a high standard of education for their pupils.

Mr. Richards: The whole thrust of the Government's education policies and reforms is to raise standards. The Education Act 1993 contained specific provisions to deal with schools identified by inspectors as failing to provide acceptable standards of education. It is our policy to raise the standards of education in all Welsh schools.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what specific programmes and publications he has funded in each of the last three years to promote the dissemination of information about making schools successful.

Mr. Richards: The Welsh Office has over that period issued advice and guidance in a variety of forms about aspects of school performance and management which contribute to making schools successful, as has the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by local education authority the *(a)* secondary schools, *(b)* primary schools and *(c)* special schools that will be eligible for his new initiative for popular schools, and what estimate he has made of the capacity of these schools' sites to accommodate the extra facilities that he is proposing.

Mr. Richards: All maintained schools which are oversubscribed will be eligible under the popular schools initiative. It is for local education authorities and/or the school to decide whether to bid for funds and whether the school site is able to accommodate the additional facilities.

Home Ownership

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has *(a)* to publish material to promote low-cost home ownership schemes and *(b)* to include in this material information about the Government's proposals to change the rules regarding the payment of housing benefit to people who lose their jobs.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In the new year I intend to publish information about home ownership opportunities to support the work of local authorities and housing associations that are seeking to respond to the continuing demand for home ownership.

Disabled People

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his oral statement of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *926*, whether the further £6.6 million for disabled people will be allocated exclusively to schemes brought forward by local authorities; and whether he will be issuing new guidelines governing the type of scheme which will be eligible for consideration.

Mr. Richards: Of the total of £6.6 million announced by my right hon. Friend, £1.85 million will be allocated to help with housing, including for disabled facilities grants. We are presently considering how the remaining £4.75 million will be allocated but intend that schemes from the local authorities and the voluntary sector will be eligible for support.

Teachers' Unions

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the teachers' unions he has met formally.

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend has met the National Association of Head Teachers. Since my appointment I have met the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers. I hope to have the opportunity to meet other teachers' associations in the near future.

Young People

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish tables showing for spring 1994 and for the latest date which figures are available the total number of 16 and 17-year-olds in Wales together with the number and percentage who are *(a)* employed, *(b)* self-employed, *(c)* full-time students, *(d)* undertaking Government employment and training programmes, *(e)* classified as International Labour Organisation unemployed and *(f)* economically inactive.

Mr. Redwood: The available information is given in the table. All those included in the ILO unemployed category are eligible to take up a training place if they wish to do so. The summer figure represents a peak with school leavers appearing.

Economic activity of 16 and 17-year-olds in Wales

	Spring 1994	*Summer 1994*
Total	63,000 (100%)	68,000 (100%)
Employed [234]	22,000 (35%)	28,000 (42%)
Full-time student	48,000 (76%)	47,000 (70%)
ILO unemployed	[1]—	11,000 (17%)
Economically inactive	37,000 (59%)	28,000 (42%)

Source:

The labour force survey.

Notes:

[1] Indicates less than 10,000 in a cell. Estimates of less than 10,000 are subject to unacceptably high sampling error and are not published.

[2] The number of 16 and 17-year-olds in employment is based on the internationally recognised measure of employment and therefore *includes* self-employed and those on government employment or training programmes. Separate estimates of these are not given since the estimates are less than 10,000.

[3] The 1991 census of population recorded only 242 16 and 17-year-olds as self-employed.

[4] TEC management information for September 1994 recorded approximately 5,500 16 and 17-year-olds as being on youth training or youth credits.

Indicative Delegated Budgets

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date indicative delegated budgets were circulated to the heads of groups in his Department.

Mr. Redwood: The answer is 2 December 1994.

Departmental Running Costs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the running costs of his Department in real and cash terms for each year since the 1977–78 financial year.

Mr. Redwood: The available information is as follows:

Welsh Office running costs

	Cash terms £ million	*1993–94 prices £ million*
1977–78	9.1	29.1
1978–80	14.4	41.3
1979–80	17.8	43.6
1980–81	22.6	46.9
1981–82	24.7	46.7
1982–83	25.4	44.8
1983–84	31.5	53.2
1984–85	32.9	52.8
1985–86	32.8	49.9
1986–87	37.9	56.0
1987–88	39.2	55.1
1988–89	40.5	53.3
1989–90	45.7	56.2
1990–91	51.4	58.5
1991–92	58.1	62.2
1992–93	70.4	72.5
1993–94	71.5	71.5
1994–95	73.0	71.5

Footnote:

The figures relate to gross Welsh Office administrative expenditure, not including capital expenditure. Figures are not available on a consistent basis over this period. The most significant change is the introduction of superannuation changes in 1993–94. Including superannuation, running costs in cash terms were £76.5 million in 1993–94 and £78 million in 1994–95. There are other discontinuities, for example reflecting the development of inter-departmental charging arrangements. The Welsh Office has also assumed certain additional responsibilities over this period. Following the transfer of responsibility for training in Wales, the TEC management fee has been included in the figures since 1992–93.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Nineteen.

Small Claims

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what resources are available to provide plaintiffs with legal advice in small personal injury claims.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Plaintiffs who meet the financial criteria would be eligible for legal advice under the green form scheme. Payments under this scheme for advice on accidents and injuries totalled almost £8.4 million in the financial year 1993–94.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the statutes which govern *(a)* consumer cases worth less than £1,000 and *(b)* personal injury cases worth less than £1,000.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are no statutes specific to small claims in either category. The County Courts Act 1984 provides the power to prescribe the cases to be referred to arbitration and the procedures to be followed on any such reference. Other general legislation applies both to small claims and to larger claims.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment his Department has made of the safeguards necessary to ensure that plaintiffs and defendants in personal injury cases worth less than £1,000 are equal contestants.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In its judgment in Afzal-*v.*-Ford Motor Co. Ltd. the Court of Appeal gave its view that the potential for inequality of representation is present in all cases where the means of the parties are unequal. However, county court rules governing the small claims procedure allow for a party to be represented by someone other than a lawyer, and provide for the arbitrator to adopt a method of procedure which will give both parties an equal opportunity for their case to be presented.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many personal injury cases worth less than £1,000 have been decided in the small claims procedure since the small claims limit was raised to £1,000.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not available for the stated period and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, available statistics indicate that approximately 300 personal injury cases are currently concluded by arbitration each month.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in what proportion of small personal injury claims *(a)* defendants and *(b)* plaintiffs are represented by solicitors or barristers.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Legal Aid

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much has been recovered by the Legal Aid Board in each of the last three years in 1994 prices; and what percentage this represents of the civil legal aid budget.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Payments made to the legal aid fund in respect of civil cases for each of the last three years, at 1994–95 prices, were as follows:

	1991–92 *£ thousands*	*1992–93* *£ thousands*	*1993–94* *£ thousands*
Contributions	21,093	22,010	23,892
Costs	104,573	137,832	183,133
Damages	73,677	73,645	80,916
Miscellaneous receipts	686	1,483	1,839
Total receipts	200,030	234,970	289,780

Total civil legal aid receipts represented 35.7 per cent. of gross civil legal aid expenditure in 1991–92. The equivalent figures for 1992–93 and 1993–94 were 32.5 per cent and 34.3 per cent. respectively.

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proportion of the total legal aid budget was *(a)* awarded to claimants and *(b)* spent on administration and establishment in each of the last two years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The legal aid fund is provided solely for the purpose of providing help and assistance. Net expenditure on legal aid in 1993–94 and 1992–93 was £1.21 billion and £1.093 billion respectively. The cost of administering legal aid is met by separate provision. For the Legal Aid Board, which administers 80 per cent. of the legal aid budget, the cost of administration in 1993–94 and 1992–93 amounted to £47 million and £43.9 million respectively. The Lord Chancellor's Department and the courts are responsible for administering criminal higher legal aid but equivalent figures are not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proportion of the legal aid budget was spent in each region of the United Kingdom in each of the last two years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information is not available in the form requested. For England and Wales, the proportion of gross legal aid payments to solicitors—including counsels' fees—made by the Legal Aid Board in the last two years was as follows:

	1992–93		*1993–94*	
	£ million	*Per Cent.*	*£ million*	*Per Cent.*
London	139.6	18.56	167.6	19.57
South & East	168.1	22.35	191.2	22.33
South West & Wales	129.1	17.16	142.6	16.65
Midlands	121.8	16.19	137.8	16.08
Merseyside & the North	193.6	25.74	217.3	25.37

An equivalent breakdown for payments made direct to counsel is not available. Total gross payments to counsel in 1992–93 and 1993–94 were £92.6 million and £104.6 million respectively.

The Lord Chancellor's Department meets the cost of criminal higher legal aid. Gross payments to both solicitors and counsel in respect of criminal higher legal aid, by administrative circuit, were as follows:

	1992–93		*1993–94*	
	£ million	*Per cent.*	*£ million*	*Per Cent.*
South Eastern	113.0	50.91	118.3	49.74
Midland and Oxford	28.6	12.89	32.7	13.75
North Eastern	20.6	9.30	23.5	9.87
Northern	29.3	13.22	29.6	12.46
Wales and Chester	11.2	5.06	14.4	6.05
Western	19.1	8.62	19.3	8.12

Separate schemes exist for legal aid in Scotland and Northern Ireland. For each jurisdiction gross payments in 1992–93 and in 1993–94 were £129.3 million and £144.5 million, and £45.7 million and £53.6 million respectively.

Magistrates Courts Committees

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to amalgamate magistrates courts committee areas in England and Wales; if he will name those committees so affected; and if he will list the names of the individuals and organisations that have made representations to him on this matter since the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994 received the Royal Assent.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No formal submission under section 69 of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994 has yet been received by the Lord Chancellor. The Lord Chancellor does not therefore have any settled plans to exercise his power, under section 69(3) of the Act, to amalgamate magistrate courts committees. Before that power may be exercised the affected magistrates' courts committees, magistrates, and interested authorities will be consulted under the Act. Informal discussions have taken place between representatives of several magistrates courts committees and me and my officials. Those discussions have explored both the question of amalgamation and alternatives to it which achieve the same objectives.

Civil Justice System

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what procedures are in place for the integration and co-ordination of his Department's review of public expenditure and Lord Woolf's review of the civil justice system.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Lord Woolf is conducting an independent review of access to justice, and those findings of the Department's fundamental review of expenditure which are relevant to his inquiry have been made available to him.

Parental Responsibility Agreements

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of parental responsibility agreements are currently recorded by the principal registrar of the family division within seven working days of receipt of the completed application and fee.

Mr. John M. Taylor: All parental responsibility agreements are recorded within seven working days of receipt of the completed application. There is no fee to have an agreement recorded.

Probate

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of people seeking a grant of probate currently receive it within eight weeks of an application being received by the authorities.

Mr. John M. Taylor: All grants of probate and other grants of representation are issued within eight weeks, unless the grant cannot be issued because of factors beyond the control of the probate service.

Courts Charter

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many complaints have been received and what amount of compensation for errors and delays has been paid out by county courts in *(a)* London and *(b)* the rest of England and Wales for each month since the implementation of the courts charter.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is not possible to provide the information requested in the time available. I will give the hon. Member a written reply before the House reassembles.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which court has *(a)* received the most complaints and *(b)* had to pay out the most compensation for errors and delays since the implementation of the courts charter; and what plans he has for regular publication of the figures for compensation payments.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is not possible to obtain the information requested in the time available. I will provide the hon. Member with a written reply before the House reassembles. There are no plans for regular publication of these figures.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of jurors outside London currently sit on trials for at least 70 per cent. of the days that they attend court; and what percentage of jurors within London sit on trials for at least 85 per cent. of the days that they attend court, as stipulated by the courts charter.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Performance against the courts charter target is measured by the percentage of juror attendance days spent on trials. During the period April to October 1994, the figures for outside London and within London were 72.4 per cent. and 87.4 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of defendants *(a)* in custody and *(b)* on bail are not dealt with in the target times set out in the courts charter; what number of defendants (i) in custody and (ii) on bail this affects on average each month; how many defendants in custody have had to wait more than (1) three months, (2) six months and (3) 12 months before trial; and what percentages of defendants in custody these numbers represent.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The available information covering the period April to October 1994 is shown in the table. Statistics on the number of defendants in custody waiting more than 12 months before trial at the Crown court and the distribution of waiting times at magistrates courts are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Waiting times at the Crown Court: Defendants committed for trial dealt with during April to October 1994

Type of remand and waiting time limit	*Defendants exceeding waiting time limit* *Percentage*	*Average number per month*
Custody		
8 weeks	56	1,266
12 weeks	36	827
26 weeks	12	268
Bail		
16 weeks	39	2,565

Defence Witnesses (Expenses)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of defence witnesses do not currently receive their expenses within five working days of their handing in their expenses claim at court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since April 1994, all courts in England and Wales have achieved the standard of paying defence witnesses' expenses within five working days of their handing in their expense claim at court.

Magistrates Courts (Hearings)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of adults do not currently have their first appearance before a magistrates court within five weeks of the start of proceedings against them; and what percentage of children and young people do not have their first appearance before a youth court within three weeks of the start of proceedings against them.

Mr. John Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department carries out surveys of time intervals between stages in proceedings completed in magistrates courts in three sample weeks, in February, June and October of each year. The results of the October survey are not yet available. The results of the February and June surveys are as follows:

	Percentage of defendants who did not have their first appearance before a magistrates' court in: *21 days (Juveniles only)*	*35 days (Adults only)*
February 1994[1]	64.68	20.86
June 1994[2]	68.90	44.20

[1] Surveys covers indictable and triable either way cases only.

[2] Survey covers indictable, triable either way and summary cases.

Jurors (Expenses)

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of jurors are currently sent a cheque to cover their expenses claim within five working days of the end of their service; and what percentage receive some payment for days already served before the end of their service.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since April 1994, all courts in England and Wales have achieved the standard of sending a cheque to jurors to cover their expenses claim with five working days of the end of their jury service.

Information on the percentage of jurors who receive some payment for days already served before the end of their service is not available, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

PRIME MINISTER

Pakistan

Mr. Alton: To ask the Prime Minister what specific cases of persecution against Christians in Pakistan he raised with Benazir Bhutto during her recent visit to the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: When my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary met Prime Minister Bhutto, he welcomed the acquittal and release of Gul Masih. He also discussed with Ms Bhutto her Government's plans to improve religious safeguards.

Prime Ministerial Visits

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to pay an official visit to Fort William; and by what means of transport he plans to travel there.

The Prime Minister: I have no immediate plans to do so.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Cummings: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

Ms Jowell: To ask the Prime Minister, if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 20 December.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I had meetings with Ministerial colleagues and others. I shall be having further meetings later today.

Trans-European Road Network

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what discussions took place at the Essen summit on the Trans-European road network, with particular reference to the M2, M25 and M4;

(2) what submissions were made by the British Government to the Christophersen commission prior to the Essen summit on the trans-European road network in the British Isles; and if he will list those routes that were proposed;

(3) pursuant to his oral statement of 12 November, *Official Report*, columns *613-15*, if the TERN proposals discussed at the Essen summit included a trans-European network from the south-east of Ireland to the eastern English channel ports;

(4) pursuant to his oral statement of 12 December, *Official Report*, columns *613-15*, what other TERN routes the British Isles discussed at the European Council meeting at Essen.

The Prime Minister: The Essen European Council welcomed the report of the Christopherson group of personal representatives and endorsed its main recommendations. It confirmed that the 11 priority projects agreed at the Corfu Council and the three further projects now added to the list had either already been started or could be started shortly. Four United Kingdom projects are included among the 14 endorsed by the Essen Council: the channel tunnel rail link; the Cork-Dublin-Belfast-Larne rail link; the Ireland-United Kingdom-Benelux road link; and the upgrading of the west coast main line. In addition to the 14 projects on the Christophersen group list, discussions are continuing in Brussels on the Commission's wider proposals for a trans-European transport network. These proposals include a strategic route linking the south-east of Ireland with the eastern channel ports via south Wales.

Heads of Government (Guide Dogs)

Mr. Lamont: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral statement of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *625*, whether France was one of the countries whose Head of Government might not be able to find his way to the Parliament without the aid of a guide dog.

The Prime Minister: I have a close and productive working relationship with Mr. Balladur. I have no doubt that he and all sensible observers will take my remarks in the light-hearted manner in which they were made.

Gibraltar

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what representations, and at what level, he has made to the Spanish Government about the conduct of their officials at the customs and border post with Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We have made repeated and high-level representations to the Spanish Government about the disruptive and intrusive control at the border. These have now ended. It is important that they are not reimposed.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister when he last discussed the future of Gibraltar with the Prime Minister of Spain; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I last discussed the subject of Gibraltar in any detail with the Prime Minister of Spain in May 1991.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has held with the Government of Gibraltar regarding the resumption of some powers and duties of the local government and legislature by the Governor or Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Human Rights

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what investigations of human rights records are undertaken before aid is given to a particular country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We keep the human rights record of individual countries under regular review. We rely on information from a wide range of sources including our overseas posts and international and non-government organisations. We also co-ordinate our views with other Governments, notably in the European Union. Decisions on provision of aid take explicit account of recipients' human rights record alongside consideration of other criteria for aid.

European Union Aid

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the European Union has offered, including balance of payments assistance, to countries without a structural adjustment programme agreed with the International Monetary Fund and what position the United Kingdom Government have taken in the Council on Ministers of these issues.

Mr. Goodlad: European Union assistance for structural adjustment is normally in support of adjustment programmes agreed with the International Monetary Fund. Since January 1992 the only exceptions have been:

(i) A sectoral import programme for Ethiopia for 27 mecu agreed in April 1992 while discussions with the International Monetary Fund were still under way. The United Kingdom voted in favour.

(ii) A structural adjustment support programme for 5.5 mecu to the Ivory Coast in February 1992. The United Kingdom opposed the project on the grounds that the international financial institutions had suspended their assistance. The decision was adopted by qualified majority.

(iii) A proposal for 70 mecu "Community support for structural adjustment" was agreed for Algeria in April 1993 in the absence of an agreed International Monetary Fund programme. The United Kingdom voted in favour of the proposal on the ground that it was considered that Algeria had embarked on a serious programme of economic reforms.

(iv) A further 30 mecu "Agriculture sector import programme" for Algeria was approved in October 1993 on condition that the Algerian Government would, before the end of 1993, take the necessary steps to agree a programme with the International Monetary Fund. The United Kingdom supported, but requested that Algeria's progress with the International Monetary Fund be kept under review and agreement reached before funds were disbursed.

Nigeria

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the projects in Nigeria for which Britain has given aid in the last five years.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Mr. Lennox-Boyd) gave to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 7 February 1994 at column *66*.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how aid to Nigeria has been distributed in each of the last 10 years;

(2) how much aid has been given to Nigeria, and to which organisations, in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Goodlad: United Kingdom aid to Nigeria in each of the last 10 years has been as follows:

1984–85, £3.8 million; 1985–86, £3.5 million; 1986–87, £3.6 million; 1987–88, £3.15 million; 1988–89, £3.4 million; 1989—90, £66.6 million; 1990–91, £33.5 million; 1991–92, £13.4 million; 1992–93, £12.7 million; 1993–94, £7.95 million.

The sharp increase in our aid in 1989–90 was due to balance of payments assistance provided as part of an international effort to help Nigeria with its IMF and World bank supported structural adjustment programmes.

A list of projects funded in the last five years was placed in the Library of the House in response to a question by the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 7 February 1994 at column *66*.

Prior to 1989, our aid programme to Nigeria was confined to technical co-operation assistance centred on small education and training initiatives.

Nagorno-Kharabakh

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom assistance to the refugees displaced by the Nagorno-Kharabakh conflict.

Mr. Goodlad: We have provided over £13.2 million of relief assistance to the refugees and the internally displaced since December 1992. This includes over £6.8 million of bilateral assistance mainly through the UN relief agencies and non-governmental organisations, and our share of assistance—£6.4 million—provided by the European Union. This assistance has been provided in broadly equal proportions to both the Azeri and Armenian populations.

We will continue to respond to the needs of the most affected populations.

Refugees (Africa)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the refugee camps organised by the United Nations in Africa and the latest number of refugees in each camp; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Currently the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that there are some 9 million refugees in Africa. Precise information on the population of individual camps is not available.

President Mubarak

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what promises of increased aid were given to President Mubarak of Egypt during his recent visit to London.

Mr. Goodlad: No promise of increased aid was given to President Mubarak during his visit.

EU Development Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 7 December to the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr.

Ottaway), *Official Report*, column *223*, what was the voting record of each member state on items agreed at the meeting of the European Union's Development Council held on 25 November.

Mr. Goodlad: Decisions in the Development Council are taken by consensus.

Natural Resources Institute

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will make a statement on the future of the Natural Resources Institute.

Mr. Goodlad: Following the receipt of advice by consultants, my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has decided that formal tenders should be invited to take over the future ownership of the Natural Resources Institute.

The consultants' report shows that there is widespread recognition of the high quality of work being undertaken at NRI. A number of universities have expressed interest in taking over, singly or jointly, the ownership of NRI. The Government welcome this interest. We intend that it should continue to provide a centre of multi-disciplinary expertise on the sustainable management of renewable natural resources. The Overseas Development Administration expects to remain a substantial customer for NRI's services.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Cabinet Committee on Women's Issues

Ms Short: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many times the Cabinet Committee on Women's Issues has met in the past year.

Mr. David Hunt: Although the membership and terms of reference of ministerial committees and sub-committees of the Cabinet are published, it is not the practice to give details of meetings.

Open Government

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster how much has been spent, by each Government Department, on publicising the code of practice on access to Government information.

Mr. David Hunt: The Office of Public Service and Science, which is the lead Department on the code of practice on access to government information, has spent some £18,252 publicising the code of practice. Many Departments have issued press releases and make explanatory material available on request. Those listed have produced additional explanatory material tailored to their own circumstances. Entries marked with an asterisk are approximate figures.

Department	*Expenditure*
Department for Education	£581
Department of Employment	*£9,265
Department of the Environment	*£170
Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Including Overseas Development Administration)	£1,875
Department of Health	*£3,135
Home Office	£1,350
Lord Chancellor's Department	*£1,000
Northern Ireland Office	£2,945
Department of Trade and Industry	£971
Department of Transport	£1,338
Welsh Office	£2,881
Other (Non-Ministerial) Departments	
Customs and Excise	£258
Office of Fair Trading	£6836
Ofsted	*£200
Ofwat	*£100

Magistrates

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will set out the procedures he currently adopts for the appointment of magistrates.

Mr. David Hunt: The recruitment and appointment of magistrates in the Duchy area follow the same pattern as in the remainder of the country. Advisory committees recommend suitable candidates to me after interviewing applicants and considering the balance of the bench, which takes into account age, profession, residence and political views. In this way we try to ensure that a bench broadly reflects the community that it serves.

Benevolent Fund

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many schools have applied for financial assistance from the Duchy benevolent fund for each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of schools which have applied for financial assistance from the Duchy of Lancaster benevolent fund for each year since 1979 are as follows:

1979 to 1987—none
1988–two schools
1989–one school
1990–two schools
1991–two schools
1992–one schools
1993–four schools
1994–six schools

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to what specific purpose the £5,000 donated by the Duchy benevolent fund to the Royal grammar school in Lancaster for new buildings was put in 1993, 1991 and 1990.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1989 the Chancellor of the day approved a major project donation of £5,000 per annum for four years towards the Royal grammar school in Lancaster's development appeal.

Donations were made in 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1994. Over £640,000 was raised by the school. The donation from the Duchy benevolent fund was put towards the building of a new mathematics and information technology classroom block.

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

(2) how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more the Minister without Portfolio has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. David Hunt: My predecessor and I have travelled by train to official engagements this year on 55 journeys. The Minister without Portfolio travels frequently by train, but has not travelled by train in the course of his official duties as Cabinet Minister without Portfolio.

Press Releases

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the annual cost to the Central Office of Information of the conversion of Government Department press releases to electronic format and making them available electronically; and what is the annual income gained from the charges made for Government press releases in electronic format.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: It is not possible to identify the cost to the Central Office of Information of the conversion of Government Department press releases to electronic format.

Government Department press releases are supplied electronically to the news media and the Central Office of Information makes no charge to recipients for this service.

Public access to press releases in electronic format is provided via commercial on-line services some of which provide universal access via the Internet.

Income from these services was £35,186 in 1993–94, and this income was used to offset the cost to Government of distributing press releases to the media.

"Competing for Quality"

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which functions and services previously provided in-house have been contracted out under the 1992 "Competing for Quality" programme in the period from 1 April 1992 to 31 December 1993.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The following services previously performed in-house have been contracted out under the "Competing for Quality" programme between 1 April 1992 and 31 December 1993, according to information provided by Departments to the efficiency unit in the Office of Public Service and Science.

COMPETING FOR QUALITY PROGRAMME APRIL 1992–DECEMBER 1993

ACTIVITIES PREVIOUSLY PROVIDED IN-HOUSE WHICH HAVE BEEN CONTRACTED OUT

Customs and Excise
- Catering, London HQ
- Staff Restaurant, Queens Dock
- Catering—Custom House London
- Catering—Dorset House London
- Catering—Manchester HQ
- Debt Recovery Services
- Vehicle Fleet Management

Central Statistical Office
- Catering

Department of Employment
- Materials Management (Employment Service)
- Travel Services (Employment Service)
- Field System
- ERC Courses for Disabled (Employment Service)
- National Jobclub Services (Employment Service)
- Microcomputer Training (Employment Service)
- Publications Distribution (Health and Safety Executive)
- Travel Services
- Van Service Sheffield-London
- Van Services Sheffield-Runcorn
- Estates Maintenance
- Reprographics
- Security EDHQ Runcorn

Department of Education
- Catering

Department of National Heritage
- Hampton Court Garden Maintenance
- IT Provision

Department of National Savings
- Press Cuttings
- Estate Management Phase 1
- Catering Services Durham
- Estate Management Phase 2

Department of Environment
- Property Holdings, Professional Property Services
- Planning Inspectorate IT Project Management
- Research Services—Project on Early Heat Cycle Effects—on PFA and Slag Concretes
- Staff Catering (Building Research Establishment)

Department of Health
- Welfare Foods Scheme
- Office Services Quarry House
- Operation and Redevelopment of HES Statistics
- Health Survey for England
- National Diet and Nutrition Survey OAPs
- Clerical Support Staff (NHS)
- Office and Building Service London

Department of Social Security
- Benefits Agency Travel Services
- Benefits Agency Office/Building Services Quarry House
- Resettlement Units (Resettlements Agency)
- Facilities Management (HQ)
- Audit ITSA)

Department of Trade and Industry
- Press Notice Distribution (HQ)
- Offshore Focus Magazine (HQ)
- Security (Other HQ)
- Database Maintenance (Other HQ)
- Photographic Service (NPL)
- Support Services Patents Office
- Stationery Supply
- Central Training (HQ Services)
- Monitoring R and D Projects (HQ)
- Offshore Geology

Department of Transport
- Research

Export Credits Guarantee Department
- IT Operational Support
- Receptionist/Telephonist

Forestry Commission
- Operations
- Operations

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
- Purchasing Services
- Administration of Insurance

HM Treasury
- Internal Audit

- *Home Office*
  - Forensic Science Service Waste Disposal
  - Forensic Science Service Estate Management
  - Escort Services
  - HMP Blakenhurst
  - Prison Education
  - D. Tels Repair
- *Land Registry*
  - Staff Catering
  - Legal Services
  - Estate Management
- *Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
  - Document Creation Unit (ADAS)
  - Pesticide Evaluation
  - Research and Development
  - Buildings and Estate Management
  - Marine Surveillance
  - Library
  - Recruitment (up to Grade 7)
  - Radionuclide Analysis
  - Overseas Trade Statistics
- *Ministry of Defence*
  - Freight Services
  - Food Distribution
  - Bielefeld Bakery
  - Food Distribution
  - Plant Hire
  - AWE
  - Engineering Support Scampton
  - Elementry Flying Training
  - Works Services: Cyprus, Gibraltar, Falklands, Belize
  - Security
  - Reconnaissance
  - Combat Systems Information
  - Helicopter Simulator
  - Harrier Support
  - Helicopter Support: Osprey, Heron, Seah
  - Gardening Deal
  - IT Processing
  - Works Management
  - Air Weapon Range Holbeach
  - Flight Checking
  - Inspectorate of Recruitment
  - Catering Boscombe Down
  - Submarine in Service Support
  - Tailoring Northern Ireland
  - Ration Delivery Northern Ireland
- *Northern Ireland Civil Service*
  - Property Certificate Service
  - Data Preparation
  - Hillsborough Castle Maintenance
  - Operating Mainframe Computer
  - Prison Officer Messes
  - Sludge Contract 1
  - Sludge Contract 4A
  - Roads Reinstatement State II
  - Staff Restaurant Phase II
  - CSA Catering Service
  - CSA Post Room Messengers
  - CSA Security Services
  - CSA Cleaning
  - CSA Typing Services
  - CSA Facilities MGT
  - Mainframe Operation Services
- *Intervention Board*
  - Travel Service
  - Olive Oil Sample Analysis
  - Sugar Sampling
- *Inland Revenue*
  - Estate Management—Maintenance
  - Estate Management—Capital Works
  - Forms Procurement and Printing
  - Facilities Management (Nottingham/Lincs)
  - Writing Training Material
  - Employers' Annual Pack
  - IT Services
  - Catering
  - Reprographics
- *Lord Chancellor's Department*
  - Court Buildings Maintenance
  - Surveying
- *HM Land Registry*
  - Surveys
- *Office Fair Trading*
  - Distribution of Publications
- *OPSS*
  - Catering and Related Services (Civil Service College)
  - Distribution (Civil Service College)
  - Consortium Reports
  - GTN-LD Outsourcing (CCTA)
  - Unison Phase 1 (Chessington Computer Centre)
  - Typing Services, Publications (HMSO)
  - London Centre Relocation (Civil Service College)
  - Downing St. Telephone Service
  - Office Services
  - Elements of Training (Chessington Computer Centre)
  - Reprographics (Chessington Computer Centre)
  - Reprographics (Recruitment and Assessment Service)
- *Ordnance Survey*
  - Hardware Maintenance
  - Bulk Enveloping and Dispatch
  - Digital Conversion
  - Gazeteer of Postal Addresses
  - IT Mainframe Services
- *Paymaster General*
  - Staff Restaurant
- *Scottish Office*
  - Estate Management Marine Laboratory
  - Animal House—Scottish Agricultural Science Agency
  - Capital Building Programme Scottish Prison Service
  - Mobile Microwave Radio Systems
  - Auditors Second Wave NHS Trust
  - Audit of NHS Boards
  - Design, Print and Publications
  - Auditors First Wave NHS Trusts
  - Catering, Fire School
  - Payroll Computing Service
- *Treasury Solicitor*
  - Security
- *Welsh Office*
  - Legal Services
  - Estates Management

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total cost of all work undertaken by Departments and outside groups in the market-testing process in each of the past three years.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: My Department holds information centrally on the cost to Government Departments of employing external consultants to support the "Competing for Quality" programme; other set-up costs; and the cost of departmental market-testing units and related support. Costs were reported in the citizens charter second report in March 1994. The information is currently being updated and will be announced in the new year. I will write to the hon. Member at that stage.

Civil Service

Mr. Faber: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the future of the civil service occupational health service.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: The first review of the OHS has shown that it has performed well since becoming an agency of the Cabinet Office—Office of Public Science and Service—in 1990. Agency status within central Government has allowed it to develop a comprehensive, high-quality, professionally based occupational health service for civil service departments and agencies, which has kept pace with the changing structure and needs of the civil service and with developments in the fields of occupational health and safety. The review has also been helpful in identifying where there is room for improvement.

In the light of this and the state of the wider market for occupational health services, I have agreed that the OHS will remain as an executive agency.

We shall continue to seek improvements in the operation of the OHS and will review it again under normal procedures for executive agencies. I have also agreed that in future is should be known as the Civil Service Occupational Health and Safety Agency, better to reflect the full range of its services.

I am today placing in the Library of the House a summary of the findings of the review.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Building Refurbishment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will itemise the refurbishment works undertaken on buildings housing departmental staff in the last three years, indicating the costs involved and the nature of the refurbishments.

Sir John Wheeler: The information has been placed in the Library.

Power Station, Ballymoney

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration is being given to granting early approval for the construction of a lignite-fired power station at Ballymoney, County Antrim; and when an announcement will be made of a start date for the project.

Mr. Ancram: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Special Advisers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *823*, if he will make a statement regarding his Department's expenditure on special advisers in each of the last three financial years and for the financial year 1979–80.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, *Official Report*, column *937*.

Brendan Smyth

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) on what basis the decision was reached to take no further action in respect of the complaint investigated by the RUC that there had been an attempt to pervert the course of justice by a member of the public who approached the family of a victim of Brendan Smyth;

(2) who took the decision to take no further action in respect of the complaint investigated by the RUC that there had been an attempt to pervert the course of justice by a member of the public who approached the family of a victim of Brendan Smyth.

Sir John Wheeler: I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the duration of the trips, referred to in his answer of 1 November, *Official Report*, column *1027*, which were undertaken by Ministers in his Department and on which they were accompanied by their spouses and paid for at public expense.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The information is as follows:

(i) Mr. and Mrs. Tim Smith visited Dublin on 5 February 1994;

(ii) Lady Mayhew and I visited Canada and the USA between 5 and 15 April 1994;

(iii) Lady Mayhew and I visited Italy on 14–15 May 1994.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by his Department for each of the last five years.

Sir John Wheeler: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have made the following journeys by rail on official duties in 1994:

(i) 9 March—from London to Bristol

(ii) 30 September—from London to Bath

(iii) 17 November—from London to Poole

Children's Hospitals

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list by health and social services board all children's hospitals giving *(a)* the total number of beds, *(b)* the total number and percentage of beds available for overnight parental accommodation and *(c)* the average annual number of overnight stays by parents.

(2) if he will list by each health and social services board all hospitals with children's wards giving *(a)* the total number of beds, *(b)* the total number and percentage of beds available for overnight parental accommodation and *(c)* the average annual number of overnight stays by parents.

Mr. Moss: The Royal Belfast hospital for sick children, one of the hospitals making up the Royal group of hospitals trust, is the only children's hospital in Northern Ireland. In 1993–94, the latest period for which figures are available, there were 130 beds in wards open overnight. Information on the number of beds for parents and overnight stays by parents is not available centrally.

Information about the number of beds in children's wards in hospitals in Northern Ireland for 1993–94 is set out in the tables. Information on the number of beds for parents and overnight stays by parents is not available centrally.

Hospital—by board area	*Average available beds on wards open overnight*
Belfast City	10
Belvoir Park	7
Forster Green	20
Lagan Valley	4
Musgrave Park	25
Royal Victoria	21
Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children	118
Ulster	66
Eastern Board Area Total	271
Coleraine	16
Mid Ulster	21
Waveney	31
Northern Board Area Total	68
Craigavon Area	36
Daisy Hill	28
South Tyrone	16
Tower Hill	25
Southern Board Area Total	105
Altnagelvin Area	32
Stradreagh	5
Erne	22
Tyrone County	18
Western Board Area Total	77
Northern Ireland Total	521

Figures exclude beds and designated intensive care cots for Neonates less than 28 days of age.

Government Employees

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many employees there were in each Department of Government in each council district at the latest available date and five and 10 years ago; and what are the projections for next year.

Sir John Wheeler: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Agencies

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of employees of each agency in Northern Ireland when it was first created and at present; what is the projection for next year; and if he will break down the figure by local offices or council area.

Sir John Wheeler: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Electricity

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the installed capacity of electricity by *(a)* wind power, *(b)* water power and *(c)* other non-fossil fuel renewable energy sources, and the amount of electricity purchased by Northern Ireland Electric and its predecessors over each of the last five years; what is his projection for the present year and the next five years; what percentage of generated power this represents in each such year; what is the unit price paid and the total sums paid for such energy; and what effect the purchase of such energy has on the price of a unit of electricity to a (1) domestic and (2) commercial consumer.

Mr. Ancram: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman.

Civil Service

Mr. Dover: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how he intends to implement the principles in the White Paper "The Civil Service: Continuity and Change" in the particular circumstances of the Northern Ireland civil service.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have today placed in the Library of the House a document which sets out my initial proposals for how the principles underlying the White Paper might be implemented in the particular circumstances of the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department (i) hold open meetings, (ii) conduct public consultation exercises, (iii) conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, (iv) publish a register of members' interests, (v) publish agendas for meetings and (vi) publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case *(a)* under a statutory requirement or *(b)* voluntary.

Sir John Wheeler *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* I shall write to the hon. Member.

Single Programme

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the projects in the Northern Ireland single programme on which European assistance is forecast to be spent in 1994, indicating the amount forecast to be spent in each case.

Sir John Wheeler: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many parents with care at each Child Support Agency reporting centre have *(a)* claimed exemption because of fears of undue harm or distress, *(b)* been unable to give information about the whereabouts of a non-custodial parent and *(c)* been unable to name the non-custodial parent;

(2) how many parents with care at each Child Support Agency reporting centre have *(a)* had a claim for exemption accepted, *(b)* had a claim for exemption refused and *(c)* withdrawn a claim for exemption.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Letter from Ann Chant to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 20 December 1994:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of cases the Child Support Agency has considered under the requirement to co-operate, and the number of cases in which the whereabouts of the absent parent (AP) was unknown.

Figures for 1993/94 are available only for the whole Agency, and cannot be broken down by Agency Centre (CSAC).

During 1993/94, 64,812 claims by parents with care (PaWC) were subject to investigation into the requirement to co-operate. Of those, the requirement was waived in 31,749 cases and not waived in 18,857. In a further 14,206 cases the PaWC named the AP.

Information is collected on the reasons why the requirement to co-operate is waived, rather than on the reasons why PaWCs claim that they have good cause not to co-operate in naming the AP. In 1993/94, the requirement was accepted in 15,823 cases due to the possible threat of violence, in 8,424 cases where the AP was unknown, and in 7,502 other cases.

*Requirement to co-operate waived—April to September 1994**

CSAC	*Fear of violence*	*Other†*	*Total good cause accepted*	*Good cause not accepted*	*Claim for good cause withdrawn*
Belfast‡	2,235	1,276	3,529	2,654	1,225
Birkenhead	2,387	1,508	3,895	3,232	1,339
Dudley	2,313	1,212	3,525	3,023	800
Falkirk	2,537	1,267	3,804	2,310	856
Hastings	2,386	1,091	3,459	2,832	942
Plymouth	2,291	1,270	3,561	3,311	902

* Since April 1994, the Agency has not collected data on cases where the identity of the AP is unknown. This is because such cases are no longer considered under the retirement to co-operate.

† Includes cases where it is considered that not to accept good cause would be detrimental to the welfare of the child.

‡ GB cases only.

You also asked about the number of PaWCs unable to give information about the whereabouts of the AP. During 1993/94, 33,000 cases were subject to specialist tracing action because the whereabouts of the AP was unknown. The AP was traced in over 28,000 of cases.

Specialist traces completed April to September 1994

CSAC	*Specialist traces cleared*	*Successful traces*	*Work on hand at 30 September 1994*
Belfast*[1]	2,004	1,664	3,526
Birkenhead	5,672	3,620	4,839
Dudley	5,154	4,500	2,819
Falkirk	3,665	2,997	4,165
Hastings	4,882	2,445	3,082
Plymouth	7,137	5,502	2,845

[1] GB cases.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many parents with care at each reporting centre *(a)* have asked for maintenance payments to be paid via the Child Support Agency, *(b)* are having their maintenance payments paid via the Child Support Agency and *(c)* have been refused the option of having their maintenance payments paid via the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Letter from Ann Chant to Mr. Adam Ingram, dated 20 December 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the number of parents with care who have asked for child maintenance to be paid via the Child Support Agency; are having maintenance paid via the Agency; and have been refused the option of having maintenance paid via the Agency.

As the Agency makes no distinction between parents with care and absent parents information is not available in the precise form requested, but I can confirm that at 30 September accounts for maintenance to be paid via the Agency had been set up in around 150,000 cases.

Clients would not be refused the option of having child maintenance paid via the Agency.

Information broken down by Agency Centre is currently under evaluation, and will not be available until the new year.

I am sorry I cannot be more helpful.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report* column *244*, if he will investigate the circumstances in which Peter Stevenson, Ref.

7000102373, was sent two CSA assessments of £53.45 and £42.09 per week by the same office on 2 December; and by what amount his income had changed since his assessment of March 1994.

Mr. Burt: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the absenteeism rate for the Child Support Agency in 1993.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ann Chant to Mr. David Chidgey, dated 20 December 1994:

I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about staff absences in the Child Support Agency.

The number of working days lost through sick absence in the Child Support Agency in 1993 was 9.8 days per staff year. This compares with a Civil Service average of 10.1 days per staff year.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to propose changes in the system of recovery of overpayments of child support maintenance arising from error by the Child Support Agency or the receipt of incorrect information; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received regarding cases involving the Child Support Agency where overpayments have been made in payment of child support maintenance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency has received a number of representations in cases where the amount at which an overpayment of child support maintenance is being recovered does not reflect the size of that overpayment or have regard to the remaining period of liability.

We are currently looking at the application of regulation 10 of the Child Support (Arrears, Interest and Adjustment of Maintenace Assessments) Regulations 1992 and if changes are required an announcement will be made.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether children's national savings accounts are taken into account in calculating a father's liability under the Child Support Act 1991.

Mr. Burt: Interest on children's national savings accounts is taken into account as an income available to the parent with whom they live, subject to limits in certain prescribed circumstances.

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to make a further statement on improvements to the present system of child support.

Mr. Burt: The Government have been keeping the operation of the Child Support Act under close review for some time. We are now considering carefully the recent report of the Social Security Select Committee and expect to respond to the Committee by the end of January 1995.nb

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to relocate the headquarters of the Child Support Agency away from London.

Mr. Burt: It has always been the intention that the Child Support Agency's headquarters would move out of London when it became fully established. The agency's headquarters is now ready to relocate and it will move to Dudley by April 1996.

Following a relocation study, Dudley has been chosen because it offers value for money. The headquarters will be located in premises already held by the agency. Location alongside operations will also enhance staff development opportunities for both headquarters and operations staff and ease the exchange of business skills.

I am satisfied that the new headquarters will attract good quality staff. Appointments will be made from existing headquarters staff who wish to transfer and from existing managers and staff and new recruits from the Dudley and surrounding areas.

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action the Child Support Agency will take in order to manage the backlog of cases and to improve the quality of service from the agency.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency will delay the take-on of the remaining cases where the parent with care was already receiving income support before April 1993 until it is in a position to tackle them promptly and to a high standard. The agency will, however, continue to provide sympathetic consideration to requests by individual parents who wish their application to be dealt with early. In addition, the agency will not pursue, for the time being, cases where it issued a maintenance application form over six months ago which either has not been returned or has been returned with insufficient information to progress it. By prioritising cases in this way, the agency will get the existing backlog cleared and allow proper attention to be paid to accuracy and customer service.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were not answered on the ground that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Hague: Of the 2,705 parliamentary questions answered during the 1993–94 Session, only six were not answered on such grounds.

Special Advisers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *891*, if he will make a statement regarding his Department's expenditure on special advisers in each of the last three financial years and for the financial year 1979–80.

Mr. Hague: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, on Monday 19 December, *Official Report*, column *937*.

Weather Stations

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his letter of 25 October to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, if he will list the criteria by which he concluded that the linking of the community of Garve, Ross-shire to Tiree weather station was both sensible and meteorologically sound; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roger Evans: Weather stations are chosen in consultation with the Meteorological Office using its judgment and expert climatological knowledge. The key criteria taken into account are: how close a weather station is to the main centre of population, how representative it is of local climatic conditions for those main centres of population, and the speed and reliability with which temperature information can be obtained.

For automatic payments to be made in 1991, weather stations were linked to postcode areas which vary in size throughout the United Kingdom. The Meteorological Office considers that the temperatures recorded at Tiree are far more representative of the whole of the postcode area—IV23—in which Garve lies, than those recorded at any other site in Scotland at which the temperatures are measured. The links are reviewed with the Meteorological Office each year, principally to take account of weather station and postcode changes. No changes were required for postcode IV23 for 1994–95.

Mortgage Interest Support

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out how the standard rate of interest on which mortgage interest support will be based after 1 October 1995 will be calculated; and what that rate would currently be if that formula were now in force.

Mr. Roger Evans: The method of calculating the standard interest rate will be included for consideration as part of the consultation process.

VAT (Fuel)

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how much compensation married pensioners will receive for the introduction of VAT on fuel in *(a)* 1994–95 and *(b)* 1995–96;

(2) how much compensation the single pensioner will receive for the introduction of VAT on fuel in *(a)* 1994–95 and *(b)* 1995–96;

(3) how much compensation disabled people will receive for the introduction of VAT on fuel in *(a)* 1994–95 and *(b)* 1995–96.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Using the 1990–91–92 family expenditure surveys, uprated to 1994–95 and 1995–96 prices and benefit levels, the estimated average amounts of compensation for the introduction of VAT on fuel are contained in the following table.

Client group	*Average weekly amount of help in 1994–95*	*Average weekly amount of help in 1995–96*
Single pensioner	50 pence	75 pence
Couple pensioner[1]	75 pence	£1.15
All disabled[2]	65 pence	£1.00

[1] Couple where the head of the couple is over pension age.

[2] Average compensation for all single disabled people, and all couples where at least one person in the couple is disabled.

Note:

1. Average amounts of help are higher than the amounts contained in standard rate retirement pension, because some pensioners receive other benefits, and some receive RP at a higher rate.

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the compensation for VAT on fuel at 8 per cent. is worth to pensioners following the decision not to proceed to VAT on fuel at 17.5 per cent. from April 1995 at 1 April *(a)* 1994 in weekly and annual terms, *(b)* 1995 in weekly and annual terms and *(c)* 1996 in weekly and annual terms.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Using the 1990–91–92 family expenditure surveys, uprated to 1994–95 and 1995–96 prices and benefit levels, estimated help for VAT on fuel for all pensioners is given in the table. The amounts of help in 1996–97 are likely to be similar to the amounts estimated for 1995–96.

	Average weekly help 1994–95	*Average annual help 1994–95*	*Average weekly help 1995–96*	*Average annual help 1995–96*
All pensioners[1]	60 pence	£31	90 pence	£47

[1] Includes all single people over pension age, and all couples where the head of the couple is over pension age.

Notes:

1. Average weekly help rounded to nearest 5p, annual help rounded to nearest £1.
2. These figures are calculated at benefit unit level.

Benefits

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of the total annual expenditure on social security benefits for people in employment, for the latest available year, broken down by *(a)* family credits, *(b)* income support, *(c)* housing benefit and *(d)* council tax benefit.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table.

Social Security benefits for people in employment

Benefit	*Number of cases[1] (£000s)*	*Average weekly amount (£)*	*Total weekly expenditure (£ million)*	*Implied annual expenditure (£ millions)[5]*
Family Credit[2]	489	43.34	21	1,101
Income Support[3]	192	61.51	12	615
Housing Benefit[4]	390	29.60	12	600
Council Tax Benefit[4]	453	5.35	2	126

[1] Figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Sources:

[2] Family Credit Enquiry May 1993. The figures shown cover all awards. Some recipients may not have been in employment at the time of enquiry.

[3] Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry May 1993.

Expenditure is for cases where the claimant and/or partner is in part-time work, including the self-employed.

[4] Housing Benefit Management Information Statistics Annual 1 per cent. Enquiry May 1993. Expenditure is for cases where the claimant and/or partner has declared full-time or part-time earnings.

[5] Implied Annual Expenditure is derived by multiplying the weekly expenditure by 52. Multiplication of the figures shown in the table will not correspond due to rounding.

National Insurance

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the change in legislation to equalise the eight and 16-hour rules for national insurance class 1 contributions was originally proposed to be introduced; when it is now expected to be introduced; and what are the reasons for the delay.

Mr. Arbuthnot: There were no previous proposals for the introduction of this legislation. As part of the measures associated with the introduction of jobseeker's allowance, legislation to raise from eight to 16 the number of hours that an unemployed person can work and still qualify for the award of a national insurance contribution credit is expected to be introduced from April 1996.

Income Support

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females in receipt of income support are having fines paid by means of deduction of benefits.

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is set out in the table.

Income support recipients with deductions from IS for fines recovery

	Number of cases
Male recipients	4,000
Female recipients	2,000
All recipients	6,000

Source:

Income Support Statistics Quarterly Enquiry February 1994

Notes:

The figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

Fuel Bills

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the average fuel bill for a single pensioner for the financial year 1994–95; and what it is projected to be in 1995–96;

(2) what is the average fuel bill for disabled people for the financial year 1994–95; and what is it projected to be in 1995–96;

(3) what is the average fuel bill for a pensioner couple for the financial year 1994–95; and what it is projected to be for 1995–96;

Mr. Arbuthnot: Using the 1990–91–92 family expenditure surveys, uprated to 1994–95 and 1995–96 prices and benefit levels, estimated average weekly fuel bills are set out in the table.

Client group	*Average weekly fuel bills in 1994–95* £	*Average weekly fuel bill in 1995–96* £
Single pensioner	9.25	9.20
Couple pensioner[1]	13.15	13.00
All disabled[2]	11.45	11.35

[1] Couple where the head of the couple is over pension age.

[2] Average fuel bills for single disabled people, and all couples where at least one person in the couple is disabled.

Notes:

1. Average weekly fuel bills rounded to the nearest 10 pence.
2. It is difficult to forecast future fuel expenditure; fuel prices have fallen by over 1 per cent. in real terms over the past two years inclusive of VAT. Further reductions have been assumed in 1994–95 and 1995–96.
3. The figures are calculated at benefit unit level.

Invalidity Benefit

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce a scheme to provide for the deduction of benefit for those in receipt of invalidity benefit who are at risk of imprisonment for non-payment of fines.

Mr. Hague: Arrangements currently exist for making payments of invalidity benefit to a suitable third party where the beneficiary becomes incapable of managing his or her own affairs through mental impairment. It is also possible to divert payments to protect the interests of the beneficiary or his family where there are exceptional circumstances. We have no plans to extend these arrangements.

Pensioner Incomes

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what income pensioners with £3,000 savings are deemed to be receiving therefrom per week; and what assumptions as to interest rate lie behind this calculation.

Mr. Roger Evans: Pensioners with £3,000 savings are not deemed to be receiving any income therefrom.

Benefits Agency

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the Benefits Agency market tests for which *(a)* BET Facilities Management, *(b)* Group 4, *(c)* Hoden, *(d)* Manpower, *(e)* Mowlam, *(f)* Procord, *(g)* Reliance, *(h)* SERCO and *(i)* Turner Townsend were invited to tender; whether they did so; and in which they were successful.

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information has been placed in the Library.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Prosecution Witnesses

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of prosecution witnesses currently have to wait more then two hours at court before being called to give evidence.

The Attorney-General: No statistics are kept for witness waiting times in the magistrates courts. In April 1994 the Crown Prosecution Service commenced a national survey of witness waiting times in the Crown court. The survey does not capture information about waiting times for professional witnesses, expert witnesses and police officers. The results for the first six months of the survey show that, for a random sample of cases 55.2 per cent. of witnesses had to wait for more than two hours at court before giving evidence.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Attorney-General what percentage of prosecution witnesses do not currently receive their expenses within 10 working days of the Crown Prosecution Service receiving their completed claim form.

The Attorney-General: The results of a sample survey carried out during the quarter ending September 1994 show that 20 per cent. of prosecution witnesses do not currently received their expenses within 10 working days of the Crown Prosecution Service receiving their completed claim.

Brian Patchett

Mr. Allason: To ask the Attorney-General what international arrest warrant or any extradition proceedings are outstanding on Brian Patchett, formally of the Intelligence Corps.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

There is no record of an international arrest warrant or extradition proceedings against Mr. Patchett.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. Waldegrave: I and my predecessor have made a total of 33 such train journeys.

Beef

Mr. Gill: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in which countries the tins of beef from the intervention stores and distributed free of charge by registered charities were manufactured.

Mr. Jack: The processing and canning of beef from United Kingdom intervention stocks for distribution under the EC surplus food scheme are carried out in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Trend: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether all 1994 autumn environmentally sensitive area and farm woodland premium scheme payments were made in accordance with targets published in "Commitment to Service"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Short delays occurred in making payments made under both these schemes this year. These arose because of the need to accommodate changes in the way part of the national expenditure under the schemes is reimbursed by the European Community.

Reimbursement from the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund now comes under the guarantee section, rather than the guidance section as was previously the case. It has to be reclaimed by member states from the European Community in the month in which it makes the payments to farmers. When reimbursement was claimed from the guidance section, payments were made annually to member states, in arrears.

Payments under both the environmentally sensitive area and farm woodland premium schemes are normally made to farmers during October. The EC budget year starts on 16 October. This means that payments made in October would fall, unpredictably, within two financial years, leading to budgetary and accounting problems. To avoid this, all payments in 1994 under both schemes were delayed slightly, so that they all took place after 16 October. This has meant that the targets published in "Commitment to Service" could not be met.

Payments have been made as soon as practicable under the new arrangements. Revised "Commitment to Service" targets, taking account of these changes, will be published shortly.

Diagnostic Social and Market Research Ltd.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the cost of the research work being undertaken by Diagnostic Social and Market Research Ltd.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* The cost of the work undertaken by Diagnostic Social and Market Research Ltd. to evaluate the results of the MAFF exhibition at the national history museum was £9,106, including charges made by the Central Office of Information.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what involvement he had in the drawing up of questions by Diagnostics Social and Market Research Ltd. at his Department's exhibitions at the natural history museum.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* None. The market research was commissioned by MAFF, via the Central Office of Information, to evaluate the effectiveness of its natural history museum exhibition and to assist with future planning. The questions were draw up by Diagnostics Social and Market Research Ltd. based on a brief provided by MAFF's information division and COI's market research department.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what use is to be made of the data collected on behalf of his Department by Diagnostics Social and Market Research Ltd. at his Department's exhibition at the natural history museum.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* The data collected by Diagnostics Social and Market Research Ltd. in connection with the MAFF exhibition at the natural history museum will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the exhibition and to assist with planning of future publicity on the environment.

Pig Farming

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the state and prospects of the British pig farming industry.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* British pig producers, like those in most other European countries, have suffered a long period of low prices and poor profitability. The pig cycle, whereby good profitability leads to herd expansion, increased supplies and ultimately falling producer prices, is characteristic of the industry which relies on the marketplace for its returns. The most recent trough in the cycle has been longer lasting than anyone in the industry expected. However, the signs are that supply is slowly reducing across Europe and we expect to see improvements in producer profitability in 1995. As my hon. Friend explained in the debate on the pig industry on 15 December, *Official Report,* columns *1189–93,* it is important that our industry works to distinguish British pigmeat from that of our competitors on the grounds of high quality and welfare standards in order to help boost its prospects for the future.

Agricultural Wages Board

Mr. Trend: To ask the Minster of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has reached a decision on the future of the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have now completed our consideration of the views expressed during the consultation period on the operation of the Agricultural Wages Board for England and Wales. We have also had an opportunity to consider the changes to the wages order that the AWB has proposed in response to the judicial review action initiated by the Transport and General Workers Union. It is clear from the responses to consultation that there is wide acceptance, from both sides of the agricultural industry, of the present arrangements. We do not therefore currently intend to change the existing statutory framework. However, since the Government believe that statutory wage fixing arrangements can introduce inflexibilities which prevent rather than encourage job creation, we shall continue to keep the future existence of the AWB under close review.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has had, and what meetings or contacts his officials have had, with the National Rivers Authority regarding measures to avoid flooding of farmland on the Somerset levels this winter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I wrote to my hon. Friend on 9 December in response to his representations on behalf of a constituent. MAFF officials are in regular contact with National Rivers Authority officers on flood defence and water level management issues in the Somerset levels. Operational responsibility rests with the National Rivers Authority and the internal drainage boards in the areas concerned.

North Sea

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the proposed agenda for the 1995 North Sea ministerial conference, indicating in respect of each agenda item whether or not a draft declaration has been prepared; and whether an annexe of detailed follow-up actions will be included or is being prepared;

(2) whether the North Sea ministerial declaration on fisheries is to include an annexe outlining detailed actions on fisheries, including the control of industrial fishing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

The agenda for the fourth international conference for the protection of the north sea, to be held in Esbjerg, Denmark next June, will be determined by those participating in the light of the work being done by officials at the various preparatory meetings. It is too early yet to say what the agenda will be, but it seems likely that the effect of fisheries on the marine environment will be included, in view of the recommendations on this subject in the quality status report on the North sea published last March. The declaration that can be expected to result from the conference will be determined by the Ministers participating in it: it is therefore too early to forecast what form it will take, as much preparatory work remains to be done.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will show, for each year since 1970, the net average capital employed in manufacturing in terms of 1993 prices, together with a breakdown showing the corresponding figures for textiles, basic metals and metal products, machinery and equipment, and road motor vehicles.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Figures on net average capital employed in manufacturing are not available in 1993 prices and a breakdown of the manufacturing sector is also not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the information in the Central Statistical Office "First Release" (94)205 on the profitability of United Kingdom manufacturing companies, in 1993 and between 1988 and 1990; and to what extent the change was accounted for by a change in profitability of the principal import-competing and export industries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Profitability is now rising again, having fallen during the recession from the peak levels of the late 1980s. Estimates of profitability contained in the Central Statistical Office "First Release" (94)205 are not available for principal import-competing and export industries.

Special Advisers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement regarding his Department's expenditure on special advisers for each of the last three financial years, and for the financial year 1979–80.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on 19 December, *Official Report*, column *937*.

Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of the effects of increases in the price of imported goods.

Mr. Needham: Import prices impact on the economy in a number of ways. The Government's assessment of economic developments and prospects, published in chapter 3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", took into account all relevant factors, including the prices of imported goods.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate for each line of the import figure corresponding to exports, as set out in table 2.1 for the 1994 edition of the United Kingdom national accounts.

Mr. Needham: The answer is in the table.

Imports, from the Input-Output Make matrix for the United Kingdom for 1991 and 1992

	£ million at purchasers' price
1991	
Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	4,007
Mining and quarrying including oil and gas extraction	7,759
Manufacturing	107,753
Electricity, gas and water supply	349
Construction	0
Wholesale and retail trade; repairs; hotels and restaurants	6,142
Transport, storage and communication	8,268
Financial intermediation, real estate, renting and business activities	4,483
Public administration, national defence and compulsory social Security	394
Education, health and social work	319
Other services including sewage and refuse disposal	1,336
Total¹	140,810
1992	
Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	4,210
Mining and quarrying including oil and gas extraction	7,456
Manufacturing	115,180
Electricity, gas and water supply	378
Construction	0
Wholesale and retail trade; repairs; hotels and restaurants	6,864
Transport, storage and communication	8,692
Financial intermediation, real estate, renting and business activities	4,634
Public administration, national defence and compulsory social Security	387
Education, health and social work	271
Other Services including sewage and refuse disposal	1,421
Total¹	149,492

Source:

[1] CSO Differences between totals and sums of components are due to rounding

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the Government's policy to increase the share of imports in the United Kingdom market for non-food manufactures; and what was the figure for import penetration in *(a)* 1973, *(b)* 1979 and *(c)* at the latest available date.

Mr. Needham: It is not the Government's policy to increase the share of imports in the United Kingdom market for non-food manufactures. The information requested can be compiled only at disproportionate cost.

Aid Programmes

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list he direct and indirect aid programme offered by the Governments of the United Kingdom, United States of America, France, Germany and Japan to their space and aerospace industries; and if he will make a statement on how such programmes will be affected by the recent general agreement on tariffs and trade.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The estimated outturn in 1994–95 for the United Kingdom on indirect support for the civil aerospace industry is £21.6 million and direct support is £2 million. The published information on the French budget indicates that in 1994–95 there is funding for indirect supports of around FF400 million and direct support of about FF1500 million. Similarly for Germany, the published information shows indirect supports of about DM100 million and direct support of around DM200 million in 1994–95.

The approved civil aeronautics budget for NASA for 1994 is $1.02 billion; a further $1 billion has been allocated for the provision of aeronautics facilities. This does not include expenditure by other departments with direct or indirect benefits for civil aerospace manufacturers, for which no easily obtainable figure is available. Comparable figures for Japanese aeronautics expenditure are nor readily available.

Civil space expenditure in the current financial year—1994–95—is as follows:

Country	*Amount (£ million)*
United Kingdom	181
France	926
Germany	633

Comparable figures for the United States and Japan are not available.

Commercially published information indicates that the comparison between space expenditure in 1993 is as follows:

Country	*Amount ($ million)*
United Kingdom	257
France	2,009
Germany	1,052
United States of America	28,712
Japan	1,896

Source:

"European Space Directory 1994"

It is too early to say how the recent GATT might affect aid programmes in the space and aerospace industries.

Light Commercial Vehicles

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the change in *(a)* output and employment in the light commercial vehicle industry since 1973, 1979 and 1989, *(b)* the volume of imports and exports since 1973, 1979 and 1989 and *(c)* import penetration since 1973, 1979 and 1989; and what is his estimate of the current margin of spare capacity in the United Kingdom industry.

Mr. Needham: Employment in the manufacture of light commercial vehicles is not recorded separately in official statistics. Details of United Kingdom production, trade and registrations of light commercial vehicles are available in the annual publication "Motor Industry of Great Britain, World Automotive Statistics", copies of which are available in the Library of the House. No estimate of the current margin of spare capacity, if any, is readily available.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the change in *(a)* output and employment, *(b)* volume of imports and exports and *(c)* import penetration in (i) road passenger vehicles, (ii) commercial shipbuilding, (iii) commercial aircraft, (iv) railway vehicle, (v) motor car, (vi) heavy commercial vehicle, (vii) other non-metallic products, (viii) basic metal and metal products, (ix) transport and equipment, (x) clothing, (xi) machine and equipment and (xii) other manufacturing industries since (1) 1973, (2) 1979 and (3) 1989; and what is his estimate of the current margin of spare capacity in those industries in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Needham: Official information for the variables requested is not readily available by the categories listed. Some information, by broad industry sectors, is available in Central Statistical Office publications available in the Library of the House. Series for import penetration are not available. My Department has made no estimates of spare capacity in United Kingdom industry.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board Trade what was *(a)* the balance of visible trade with the EEC in the first nine months of this year and *(b)* the balance in the first nine months of 1992.

Mr. Needham: The information is available from the central shared database, access to which is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the change in *(a)* output and employment in the intermediate materials goods industries, *(b)* the volume of imports and exports and *(c)* the increase of import penetration since 1973, 1979 and 1989; and what is his estimate of the current margin of spare capacity in the United Kingdom industry.

Mr. Needham: It is not possible to split employment in the manufacturing industries into that which is specifically for the production of intermediate goods. The change in output for intermediate goods is available from data in the index of production. This and the trade data are on the CSO central shared database, which is available in the Library of the House. A series for import penetration is not available. My Department has made no estimate of spare capacity in United Kingdom Industry.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the change in *(a)* output and employment in the investment goods industries, *(b)* changes in the volume of imports, *(c)* the change in the level of import penetration since (i) 1973, (ii) 1979 and (iii) the second quarter of 1990; and what is his estimate of the current margin of spare capacity in United Kingdom industry.

Mr. Needham: It is not possible to split employment in the manufacturing industries into that which is specifically for the production of investment goods. The change in output for investment goods is available from data in the index of production. This and the trade data are on the CSO central shared database which is available in the Library of the House. A series for import penetration is not available. My Department has made no estimate of spare capacity in United Kingdom industry.

Mineworkers Pension Scheme

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will investigate the withdrawal by Apedale Hall Ltd., Ashbourne, Derbyshire, of miners from the mineworkers pension scheme before vesting day.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The participation of a private sector small-mine licensee in the mineworkers pension scheme is a matter for the company and the scheme.

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the transfer of miners' pensions from the mineworkers pension scheme to the new industry-wide scheme.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There will be no general transfer of miners' past service pension entitlements from the mineworkers pension scheme to the new industry-wide mineworkers pension scheme. Entitlements of pensioners and deferred pensioners from service before privatisation will remain in the mineworkers pension scheme, in which pension increases linked to the retail prices index are now guaranteed by Government. Contributing members of the mineworkers pension scheme will have the right at privatisation to transfer to the industry-wide scheme for pension accruals from future employment in the coal industry and can choose either to leave their accrued rights from past service in the mineworkers pension scheme or to transfer them to the new scheme.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will investigate the sending of letters dated 11, 17 and 24 November to the National Union of Mineworkers requesting nominations for trustees for the new industry-wide mineworkers pension scheme in the same parcel of documents; and what was the deadline for nominations.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The National Union of Mineworkers was invited to nominate trustee directors for the industry-wide mineworkers pension scheme in a letter dated 10 November and delivered by hand the next day. Nominations were requested by 30 November. Further letters relating to the scheme arrangements were sent separately as dated. I understand that the NUM nominated three trustee directors at the earliest possible moment after the meeting of its executive on 8 December.

Pit Closures

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the British Coal pits which have closed since October 1992, with the date of closure and number of staff involved.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since October 1992, British Coal has decided that it does not itself wish to keep in operation 34 pits. Silverwood colliery is currently operating but its closure has been agreed. Of the 34 pits, eight—Clipstone, Rossington, Calverton, Trentham, Markham Main, Silverdale, Betws and Hatfield—have reopened under lease and licence to the private sector and Annesley, Ellington and Tower collieries are subject to privatisation bids.

The 34 pits, the dates they ceased coal production and their industrial work force in October 1992 are given in the table:

Colliery	*Date ceased coaling*	*Men on books October 1992*
Annesley	February 1994	814
Bentley	December 1993	582
Betws	January 1993	96
Bevercotes	April 1993	737

Colliery	*Date ceased coaling*	*Men on books October 1992*
Bolsover	April 1993	452
Calverton	November 1993	694
Clipstone	April 1993	894
Cotgrave	October 1992	565
Easington	May 1993	1,331
Ellington	February 1994	1,607
Frickley	November 1993	933
Goldthorpe	February 1994	485
Grimethorpe	October 1992	788
Hatfield	December 1993	409
Houghton Main	October 1992	396
Kiveton Park	September 1994	715
Littleton	December 1993	829
Manton	February 1994	677
Markham	June 1993	1,212
Markham Main	October 1992	672
Ollerton	February 1994	944
Parkside	October 1992	716
Rossington	April 1993	803
Rufford	November 1993	735
Sharlston	May 1993	695
Shirebrook	April 1993	947
Silverdale	December 1993	642
Silverhill	October 1992	757
Taff Methyr	October 1992	368
Tower	April 1994	399
Trentham	October 1992	1,420
Vane Tempest	October 1992	873
Wearmouth	December 1993	929
Westoe	May 1993	1,170

Nuclear Liabilities

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 9 December, *Official Report,* column *389,* what payments have so far been made by his Department to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority or British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. in respect of the agreements on nuclear liabilities outlined, and the payment estimated to be made within the public expenditure plans for the next three years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: UKAEA's decommissioning and radioactive waste management operations programme—DRAWMOPS—was established in April 1986. Between that date and the end of the financial year 1993–94 a total of £600 million was paid to UKAEA, by the Department of Energy and DTI, in respect of the nuclear liabilities on UKAEA and BNFL sites for which the Department has accepted responsibility.

Estimates which include DRAWMOPS costs for 1994–95 were published in Cm 2504. The actual amount paid in the financial year 1994–95 will not be settled until the year end. The amounts to be included in the Department's public expenditure plans for the years 1995–96 to 1997–98 will be included in the Department's estimates, which are due to be published in March 1995.

Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the extent of profiteering by United Kingdom exporters since December 1992.

Mr. Needham: None. It is greatly to the credit of United Kingdom exporters that they have been achieving record levels of exports in highly competitive world markets.

Mercury

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with Mercury concerning its decision no longer to operate public phone boxes.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My Department has had discussions with Mercury about the future direction of its business. The licensing implications of Mercury's decision no longer to operate public phone boxes are a matter for the Office of Telecommunications.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who will bear the cost of *(a)* removing Mercury public phone boxes and *(b)* reinstating the pavement or other place to its previous condition.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Under the New Works and Street Works Act 1991, and the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 as amended, these costs will be a matter for Mercury Communications Ltd.

Data Protection Directive

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the outcome of last week's Council of Ministers' meeting that discussed the proposed EC directive on data protection; and if he will undertake that Her Majesty's Government will oppose the directive unless it respects the principle of subsidiarity.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Internal Market Council on 8 December made some improvements to the proposed directive, including, in particular, the extension from 10 to 12 years of the period within which existing manual records must be brought into compliance with the requirements of the directive. Improvements were made to the provisions which deal with research and statistics, and with the media. The Council identified a number of key issues requiring further discussion and no attempt was made to seek a common position. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is in the lead on this subject. In the continuing consideration of the draft directive we shall seek the best outcome for the United Kingdom within the constraints of qualified majority voting procedures.

Jordan (Exports)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether exports to Jordan carried out under the terms of the memoranda of understanding between the Governments of Jordan and of Britain signed in 1985 and 1989 were required to have end user certificates.

Mr. Needham: It is not Her Majesty's Government practice to comment on detailed matters concerning individual defence exports. However, certain information about exports made under the Jordan defence package has been made public during Sir Richard Scott's enquiry. Exceptionally, therefore, I am able to say that the memoranda of understanding required that no equipment exported to Jordan would be sold or disposed of without the prior written agreement of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the export licences issued for exports under the 1979, 1985 and 1989 memoranda of understanding between the Governments of the United Kingdom and of Jordan were referred of the interdepartmental committee.

Mr. Needham: The interdepartmental committee to which I believe the hon. Gentleman refers examines export licence applications to Iran—and previously to both Iran and Iraq. No licence applications for Jordan are copied to the IDC. Where appropriate, applications for export licences are copied to both MOD and FCO for their advice.

British Gas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what discussions he has had with the regulator of the gas industry about British Gas's policy on direct debit discounts to customers;

(2) what discussions he has had with the regulator of British Gas over the proposed differential pricing as it affects claimants and pensioners.

Mr. Eggar: None. Gas price changes are a matter for the independent regulator, the Office of Gas Supply. The Director General of Gas Supply has confirmed that the discount tariff, for those customers paying by direct debit, meets the terms of the "tariff formula" which limits the prices which British Gas can charge to tariff customers and is within the provisions of section 14(3) of the Gas Act 1986 which relate to undue discrimination against any group of consumers.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received on the declared policy of British Gas to reward those customers who pay by direct debit and penalise those who pay by other means.

Mr. Eggar: A substantial number of written representations have been received by my Department from gas consumers and their Members of Parliament about British Gas's discount tariff which is available to those customers paying by direct debit.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the proposed price per therm for *(a)* those British Gas customers who pay by direct debit and *(b)* those who pay by other means; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: British Gas's tariffs will be:

(a) 1.433p per kilowatt hour for those customers paying by direct debit.

(b) 1.520p per kilowatt hour for customers who pay by other means.

Note: British Gas's prices are now quoted in the metric unit kWh rather than therms.

The standing charge will be 10.10p per day for customers on the discount tariff and 10.39p per day for standard tariff customers. The new prices will be introduced on 1 January 1995.

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to put the privatisation of all aspects of UKAEA on a statutory basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A Bill to privatise the commercial activities of UKAEA was announced in the Queen's Speech. Other initiatives recently announced by UKAEA—for example, the sale of the facilities services division—are being carried out within the authority's powers under existing legislation.

Fireworks

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to require all advertisements for fireworks to indicate *(a)* the minimum age of persons to whom fireworks can be sold and *(b)* a warning on the dangers of fireworks, both to be printed in letters equal to the largest on the advertisement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My Department will raise this during discussions early next year with the fireworks industry in preparation for our annual firework safety campaign.

Public Telephones (Unauthorised Display)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, column *752*, what assessment he has made of an appropriate remedy for unauthorised advertisements in public telephone boxes; if he will visit a telephone box; and what obstacles inhibit him from proposing an effective remedy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Taylor: As I explained in the answer I gave to my hon. Friend on 8 December, *Official Report*, column *296*, I do not regard it as appropriate to seek to regulate the placing of advertisements in unauthorised places through telecommunications legislation. If my hon. Friend wishes to propose a simple and effective remedy to the concerns he has raised, my hon. Friends and I in other relevant Departments would be happy to consider this, and examine any obstacles which might inhibit action. I have visited telephone boxes, to make respectable phone calls.

Regional Assistance

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the amounts of regional and similar financial assistance going to *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* the area covered by the counties of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset in each year since 1979.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information on regional financial assistance to Scotland and Wales was given in the *Official Report*, columns *675-78*, of 5 June 1992. More recent information has been published in the latest edition of "Regional Trends", which is available in the Library of the House.

Information by county is available only at disproportionate cost.

German Packaging Ordinance

Mr. Thomason: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the reasons for the European Commission's delay in starting infringement proceedings against Germany over its packaging ordinance; and if he will urge the Commission to act swiftly.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We have urged the Commission to follow up swiftly its investigation of the German packaging ordinance.

In the longer term, the difficulties caused by unilateral regulations of this kind should be alleviated by the recently adopted packaging and packaging waste directive.

Nuclear Materials Trafficking

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will place in the Library a report of the expert proposals to the International Atomic Energy Agency conference on control of trafficking in nuclear materials held on 2 and 3 November;

(2) if he will make a statement on the proposals of the secretariat of the International Atomic Energy Agency on nuclear materials trafficking; and if he will list each proposal, together with the response of Her Majesty's Government to those proposals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The IAEA meeting on illicit trafficking held in Vienna on 2 and 3 November was called by the director general of the IAEA in response to a resolution of the IAEA general conference in September 1994.

There was no official report produced by the expert's meeting in November but the director general drew on the views expressed by the experts in preparing a report for the board in December. This proposed that the agency should:

(i) intensify its activities in those areas in which it is already supporting member states in preventing and responding to illicit trafficking i.e.:

—assistance with physical protection measures;

—assistance in improvement of state systems of accounting control; and

—assistance with analysing confiscated nuclear materials

ii) develop a database of incidents of illicit trafficking

iii) intensify assistance to member states to strengthen their radiation safety infrastructure, and

iv) continue to examine activities relating to incidents of illicit trafficking.

The board received these proposals favourably and will resume its discussions of the report at its meeting in March. The Government will continue to support proposals for action which will effectively reduce the risks of illicit trafficking. In their view the agency's role in the area of physical protection should be as a focal point and a co-ordinator of bilateral activities and throughout the agency's activities clear priority should be given to work relating to safeguardable nuclear material.

Smoke Detectors

Mr. Garrett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to ensure that smoke detectors exceeding the legal limit for the unapproved disposal of radioactive material are returned to the manufacturer.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My Department has no present plans to control the disposal of smoke detectors. Disposal of radioactive material is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, who have the necessary regulatory powers under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993.

Mr. Garrett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many smoke detectors of the ionising type have been imported in each of the last five years; and from which countries.

Mr. Ian Taylor: The information requested is not available since the product in question is not an identifiable commodity within the standard international trade classification.

British Coal

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the value of British Coal's land and property holdings; how far this value will be reduced by liabilities and contamination; what nature of disposal into the private sector is proposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The various options for the future of British Coal's non-operational property portfolio are currently being considered by British Coal, in consultation with the Government. No decisions have been taken.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on progress in discussions with the preferred bidders for the regional coal companies in the privatisation of the mining business of British Coal.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 2 December 1994, c. 939-40]:* The Government have agreed with Celtic Energy, subject to contract, that Celtic will acquire the South Wales Coal company for £94.5 million; £88.4 million would be payable at completion. Of the balance, £4.9 million would be payable with interest in instalments over the three following years. Final payment of £1.2 million is expected in two instalments, with interest, in 1999 and 2000.

The bid price has been adjusted as envisaged in the information memorandum. The adjustments reflect developments since tenders were submitted in September 1994 or information which was not available at the time. The main adjustments relate to changes in the expected level of stocks, and certain liabilities and price information disclosed after bids were submitted. Celtic's bid price following these adjustments still clearly represents best value for money.

The Department will shortly lay a minute before the House describing certain limited warranties and indemnities which it proposed to give to Celtic Energy.

The acquisition price would also be subject to certain technical adjustments following completion to take account of differences between the value of certain assets and liabilities as estimated at signature of the acquisition arrangement and the corresponding value to be established at completion.

Changing Tack Programme

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to restart the regional changing tack seminars on defence diversification; and if he will make a statement on the changing tack programme.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government have no plans to restart the changing tack seminar programme. The changing tack manual "New Perspectives for Defence Suppliers" remains available from the Department of Trade and Industry.

Ian Greer Associates

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions he or his Ministers met representatives of Ian Greer Associates in the last week to discuss matters relating to its clients' interests.

Mr. Heseltine: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave on 16 December, *Official Report*, column *851*.

Biological and Chemical Warfare

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all the quantities of biological and chemical warfare weapons material and precursors that have been imported from the mainland of Europe to the United Kingdom for storage or destruction.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is not available.

Telecommunications Licences

Mr. Congdon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many telecommunications licences have been granted since the duopoly review in 1991.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I have today granted licences to Concert—the joint venture between BT and Microwave Communications International, MCI—and AT and T. This brings the number of licences granted since the end of the telecommunications duopoly to 60.

The privatisation and liberalisation of telecommunications in this country have made the UK one of the most advanced countries in the world in terms of the availability of modern, competitive telecommunication services. The services that Concert and AT and T plan to provide under these new licences will further boost competition in the international simple resale market, which is already one of the most exciting sectors in telecommunications. Prices are falling for international calls, benefiting both business and individuals.

Companies House

Mr. Congdon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the future of the Companies House agency.

Mr. Heseltine: The Department of Trade and Industry is looking at the scope for maximising private sector involvement in its work across the range of its activities.

On 19 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *179*, I reported to the House that my Department had appointed consultants to explore further with the market how best to contract out most of the services of Companies House; and to consider whether and, if so, how far Companies House should withdraw from those activities where it might compete with other parts of the business information industry. I have now considered SRU Ltd's report, copies of which have been placed in the House Library—edited to omit commercially sensitive information.

The object of the review of the future of Companies House has been to consider how best to build on its excellent record of improvements in efficiency, value for money and standards of service. I believe that this can best be achieved by closer involvement of the private sector in the running of Companies House activities.

The business information industry is in the early stages of major technological change. In any plan for the future of Companies House, it will be important for it to be able to meet the changing needs of the market. I therefore propose to proceed with contractorisation on a progressive basis. This will involve Companies House—which will remain an executive agency—working in partnership with the private sector, both customers and suppliers, to develop and deliver new technology. At the same time, it will work through a programme of contracting out a range of activities, including functions carried out by the London and Edinburgh offices. It will be an essential part of any contracts that the existing high standards of service provided by Companies House should continue to be improved. Once the new technology is in place, I would expect to look again at the scope for further contracting out.

It is my intention to lay an order under the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 early next year to enable the contracting out of the relevant CH functions.

The SRU report also concludes that the best way to maximise the exploitation of the information held in Companies House is for it to continue to provide as wide a range of access as possible to the raw data, leaving it to the rest of the business information industry to exploit that information through analysis, assessment, etcetera. I agree with this conclusion.

Electricity

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *807*, he has now made a decision on any further amendments to the Electricity (Class Exemptions from the Requirement for a Licence) Order 1990.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Following consultation with the electricity industry and others, I have decided that the Electricity (Class Exemptions from the Requirement for a Licence) Order 1990 should be amended to make it clear that on-site generators who belong to the electricity pool may be exempt from the requirement for a supply licence where they supply qualifying consumers on the same site through a distribution or transmission system belonging to a third party.

I must make it clear that these on-site generators will have to meet all of the criteria for exemption that are presently described in this order, and that this amendment will not alter the present arrangements for trading electricity through the electricity pool.

I will lay an order bringing this amendment—and the extension of transitional exemptions, which I announced on 1 December—into effect early next year.

Non-fossil Fuels

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to announce the details of the third renewables non-fossil fuel obligation order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I have today laid before Parliament an order requiring the regional electricity companies in England and Wales to make arrangements to secure 626.92 MW of new electricity generating capacity from a range of renewable energy sources. This is the third renewables order under the non-fossil fuel arrangements—widely known as NFFO3—and covers the period 1 April 1995 to 31 March 2014.

The prime purpose of this third renewable order is to create an initial market for those renewables-based electricity generation technologies which have the prospect, in the not-too-distant future, of competing against conventional generation technologies in the open market for electricity. In addition to market enablement, it will contribute towards the Government's broad aim of working towards 1,500 MW of new renewables-based generation capacity in the United Kingdom by the year 2000, thereby assisting the Government in meeting their Rio commitment of returning United Kingdom emissions of carbon dioxide to 1990 levels by same year. NFFO3 will also contribute to the policy objectives of establishing diverse, secure and sustainable energy supplies and encouraging the development of internationally competitive renewable energy industries.

I am pleased with the response to the tender invitation, which resulted in 520 firm bids coming forward, for a total of some 2,500 MW of capacity. The Government are therefore able to set an order covering technology bands previously supported under the first and second orders and showing clear convergence towards the market price for electricity, while also enabling a number of projects using energy crops and agricultural and forestry wastes to come forward. I understand the regional electricity companies have met their obligations arising from this NFFO3 order by signing collective contracts for 141 projects. I understand also that letters of notification will be issued shortly to all tenderers bidding into NFFO3.

Successful bidders will now need to obtain planning permission for their projects—if they have not already done so. The award of a NFFO contract is totally without prejudice to the planning approval process, which must be carried out in the normal way. Developers will also need to secure firm fuel supply contracts where this is relevant. For these reasons therefore, among others, the Government expect that around 300 to 400 MW of the 627 MW contracted capacity are likely to go forward to commissioning. The order provides for the obligation placed on the RECs to be reduced to reflect non-commissioning of projects. To the extent that it appears in later years that the outturn will be outside this range, the Government would expect to take that into account in setting the policy for the further orders foreshadowed last year in my Department's "Renewable Energy Bulletin No. 5".

The following table shows the breakdown of contracted capacity under the obligation, according to technology band, together with the number of contracts signed, the lowest price to be paid for the electricity produced, the average price paid—weighted according to the expected output from each project—and the marginal highest price paid.

Summary of third renewables order (NFFO—3)

Technology Band	*Contracted capacity MW dnc*	*Number of projects*	*Lowest contracted price p/kWh*	*Weighted average price*[1] *p/kWh*	*Highest contracted price p/kWh*
Wind					
Exceeding 1.6 MWdnc	145.92	31	3.98	4.32	4.80
Not exceeding 1.6 MWdnc	19.71	24	4.49	5.29	5.99
Hydro	14.48	15	4.25	4.46	4.85
Landfill Gas	82.07	42	3.29	3.76	4.00
Municipal and industrial waste	241.87	20	3.48	3.84	4.00
Energy crops and agricultural and forestry waste					
Energy crops/forestry waste-gasification	19.06	3	8.49	8.65	8.75
Residual (other)	103.81	6	4.90	5.07	5.23
Total	626.92	141	—	4.35	—

[1] Average price to be paid, weighted according to the expected output from each project.

Detailed consultations have taken place throughout the NFFO3 process, from the formulation of initial plans for the third order, to the decision on the shape and size of the order—the latter taking account of the cost and quality of bids received. The Government acknowledge the contribution of all those bodies which have been involved in many ways in the making of this order. In particular, it welcomes the advice from the Director General of Electricity Supply, as a contribution to the debate and the perspective it brings.

The Government's overall consideration has been to strike a balance between the degree of market stimulation brought forward through the obligation and the cost to the customer. The difference between the "pool price" for electricity and the price paid to the generator for electricity supplied under NFFO contracts is funded through the fossil fuel levy, which is applied to sales of electricity to the final customer. If contracted projects do not go forward to commissioning and generation, then the cost to the fossil fuel levy will reduce accordingly. The Government have also considered the balance between support for renewables technologies covered by previous orders and support for newer renewables technologies. The Government are determined to work towards convergence between the price for electricity from renewables and the open market price, and believe that the inclusion of promising newer technologies in NFFO3 is the most likely way to achieve this for these technologies.

The Government believe that, in addition to the general prospects for the utilisation of agricultural and forestry wastes, there is considerable long-term potential for short-rotation coppice as an energy crop. However, the commercial exploitation of coppicing will require substantial reductions in costs through experience and optimisation of both the fuel supply chain and the conversion technology. I believe, therefore, that the time is now ripe to include within NFFO a tranche of capacity based on biomass gasification, which is both technically efficient and offers the prospect of significant economies of scale and replication. In addition, I am pleased to announce that, as a contribution to the process of optimising the production of coppice wood, the Government have awarded a £500,000 contract to the Forestry Commission research division for coppice field trials over the whole of the United Kingdom, bringing the total DTI R and D support in this area to £2 million per year.

The Government have also reflected on how best to continue the stimulus given to wind power. The Government consider that they should distinguish between wind farms and smaller projects involving single individual turbines or small clusters of them—perhaps community based and serving a different market. They expect that only 20 or so of the wind farms will commission, having regard to factors such as the need for planning permission referred to. In addition, the Government have noted that one developer was responsible for a large number of the bids for wind farms put forward under NFFO3. By holding this developer to no more than 10 projects, the Government have been able to secure increased diversity of supply within the wind band. At this early stage in the development of the market for wind, the Government believe that this diversity is desirable, in order not to lose the potential benefits that may arise from a spread of players in this field.

I welcome the publication in late November of the "Best Practice Guidelines for Wind Energy Development" by the British Wind Energy Association. This is a constructive step, representing a responsible approach, which should ensure that wind projects are appropriately sited. I welcome also the announcement this morning by "The Wind Fund plc" of its intention to open an investment fund to the public in January 1995, which will offer an opportunity to individuals to invest in wind projects—particularly smaller projects—and possibly other renewable energy schemes. This is a further positive step forward in bringing renewable energy projects from conception to commissioning and generation, and in part results from research funded by the DTI.

With the conclusion of this third round of bidding, it is important to enter a period of analysis, reflection and full consultation, so that lessons can be fully learned from NFFO3, before contemplating options for the size and shape of any future order—or the bidding process which might be employed. Nevertheless, the Government hope that a fourth order can be announced in 1995, to come into effect in 1996. Views on the future of NFFO would be welcome, preferably expressed collectively by the relevant association or trade body.

NFFO is a success, with over 340 MW of capacity already operational under NFFO1 and NFFO2 contracts, and this third order is expected to double that capacity. NFFO has an international reputation, as a process that works, stimulating the market and manufacturing industry. By continuing our policy, we have high expectations of enabling a significant contribution to electricity generation—at market prices—from renewable sources of energy in the medium and longer term.

Statutory Bodies

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all those statutory bodies which must, within their statutory remit, protect the interests of consumers.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* The following statutory bodies have a general responsibility for the interests of consumers, or classes of consumers, of the industries which they shadow:

Domestic Coal Consumers Council—section 4 of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946;

Post Office Users National Council and the Country Councils for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland—section 14 of the Post Office Act 1969;

Advisory committees on telecommunications for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and the advisory bodies on telecommunications matters affecting small businesses, and persons who are disabled or of pensionable age—section 54 of the Telecommunications Act 1984;

Gas Consumers Council—section 2 of the Gas Act 1986;

Central Rail Users Consultative Committee and eight rail users consultative committees—section 77 of the Railways Act 1993;

London regional passengers committee—section 40 of the London Regional Transport Act 1984.

In addition, the Director General of Fair Trading; the Director General of Telecommunications; the Director General of Gas Supply; the Director General of Electricity Supply; the Director General of Water Services; and the Rail Regulator have specific responsibility for promoting and/or protecting the interests of consumers/customers. The Director General for Electricity Supply is required to appoint consumers' committees and the Director General of Water Services to appoint customer services committees.

Coal

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the total subsidy paid for additional deep-mined coal as outlined in "Prospects for Coal"; how many tonnes of coal this involves; and how many individual payments have been made.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* To date, the Department has paid £6,109,510 of subsidy covering the sale of almost 600,000 tonnes of additional coal.

The Department has made seven offers of subsidy so far. Under the terms of each offer, claims for payment are made on the basis of actual deliveries made. To date, the Department has made 15 such individual payments.

Russian Military Design Bureaux

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultation he has had with his United States counterparts in the Department of Commerce and Department of Energy over the reasons for the United States Government's refusal to allow the direct commercial trading by United States private companies with the Russian military design bureaux and production associations; and if he will review the present permissive arrangements in the United Kingdom on the direct commercial agreements by British companies with military design bureaux and production associations in Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* I am not aware of any such contacts by members of my Department and I do not intend to instigate a review. Overseas trading arrangements of British companies are a matter for their own commercial judgment subject only to export control procedures where applicable.

Cuba

Mr. Parry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's trading relations with Cuba.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* Cuba is on the United Kingdom list of destinations for which export licence applications are subject to special licensing procedures. There are no United Kingdom restrictions on imports from Cuba which are not applied more generally against imports from all sources.

Subject to the above, the United Kingdom enjoys normal trading relations with Cuba, and the Government's policy is to encourage United Kingdom firms to exploit the growing civil market opportunities there.

I visited Cuba in September with a group of senior British business men to promote the development of trading relations, and initialled a bilateral investment promotion and protection agreement.

Arms Exports

Mr. MacShane: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) which Arab or middle east countries have been the subject of arms export licence refusals in 1993 on the grounds of internal oppression or regional security;

(2) which countries in Europe or the former Soviet Union have been the subject of arms export licence refusals in 1993 on the grounds of internal oppression or regional security;

(3) which countries in Asia have been the subject of arms export licence refusals in 1993 on the grounds of internal oppression or regional security.

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answers 19 December 1994]:* Export licence applications for arms may be refused for a number of reasons and these questions could only be answered at disproportionate cost. The annual report of the Export Control Organisation will, however, be available shortly and will give some details of licences refused by destination and classification of goods. A copy of that report will be placed in the Library of the House and I will also arrange for the hon. Member to receive a personal copy.

Research

Mr. Battle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what sum was spent by his Department on research in each of the last 10 years; what percentage this was of the total annual budget; what is the budget for the forthcoming year; what percentage this is of his total budget; and what additional new research is to be undertaken.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* The sums spent on research and development by the Department for the last 10 years were reported in the statistical supplement to the 1994 "Forward Look of Government-funded Science, Engineering and Technology". The expenditure on research and development and the percentage that this expenditure was of total departmental expenditure are given:

	R and D expenditure £ million	*Percentage of total expenditure*
1985–86	406.7	21.1
1986–87	555.3	20.3
1987–88	500.8	33.6
1988–89	504.6	23.3
1989–90	476.1	30.2
1990–91	462.6	29.5
1991–92	364.8	26.0
1992–93	350.8	26.6
1993–94	310.3	23.2
1994–95	245.0	17.8

Notes:

1. Figures include the Department of Energy.
2. The percentages are based on total central Government spend on trade and industry excluding nationalised industries financing requirements.
3. Figures for 1993–94 are estimated outturns.
4. Figures for 1994–95 are at provision.

The expenditure on research and development in the coming year has still to be determined, and will be reported in the statistical supplement to the 1995 "Forward Look".

The decline in the Department's spend on R and D over the period partly reflects the inclusion of net aerospace launch aid figures. In the first half of the period, launch aid payments far outstripped receipts. More recently, this situation has been reversed. There has also been a substantial reduction in expenditure on energy R and D, the principal factor in which has been the decision to withdraw from research on the prototype fast nuclear reactor at Dounreay.

Economic Development

Mr. Harvey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy that local authority economic development plans are held in regional Government offices.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I have been asked to reply.

We see no need to introduce such a policy; local authorities that have prepared an economic development plan are required by statute to make the document available to representatives of the local business community and to such other persons as they consider it desirable to consult about their plan.

Water Authorities

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many executive and non-executive directors there were in each water authority in the year before privatisation; what was their aggregate remuneration; and what is their current number and aggregate remuneration, including share options and other incentive payments.

Mr. Atkins: I have been asked to reply.

Information about the numbers and remuneration of water authority chairmen and members in the year prior to privatisation can be found in "Public Bodies 1989", issued by the Cabinet Office, Office of Public Service and Science. A copy of this publication is available in the Library.

Information relating to the numbers and remuneration, share options and other incentive payments of current water company directors is published in the annual reports of individual companies. This information is not held centrally.

SCOTLAND

Empty Property

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to make use of his Department's empty residential property.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office target for 1994–95 is to dispose of, or bring back into use, 60 out of an estimated total of 158 empty residential properties. The report of the task force on Government Departments' empty houses did not identify any problem affecting the Department which needed attention but we are committed to doing all we can to bring empty property back into constructive use. Sale or lease to a housing association for rent to those in housing need is one option to be considered for empty property, but the approach in each case will depend on local circumstances.

Roads

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many miles of motorway are currently *(a)* open, *(b)* under construction and *(c)* planned in Scotland either (i) as new motorway or (ii) as existing motorway being widened.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As at 30 November 1994 in Scotland there were 188 miles of trunk road motorway and a further 19 miles of non trunk motorway, the responsibility for which lies with the local authorities.

Twelve miles of new trunk road motorway are currently under construction with a further 30 miles planned. Four miles of non-trunk motorway are also planned.

Much of the motorway network constructed in the 1960s and 1970s is approaching the end of its structural life and will require major maintenance or reconstruction. Some of this work may involve widening.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the parliamentary constituencies in which lies each scheme in his Department's national road programme.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table for all those schemes costing over £3 million which either are under construction or were announced by my right hon. Friend on 19 May 1994 as expected to start before March 1997. Our future plans are, of course, subject to schemes satisfying the usual value for money criteria together with satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the necessary preparatory work.

Scheme	*Parliamentary constituency*
A74(M) Eaglesfield to Kirkpatrick-Fleming	Dumfries
A74(M) Cleuchbrae to Dinwoodie Green	Dumfries
A74(M) Ecclefechan to Eaglesfield Phase 2	Dumfries
M8 Newbridge to Edinburgh	Livingston
A87 Skye Bridge Approach Roads	Ross, Cromarty and Skye
M77 Ayr Road Route	Eastwood
A74(M) Paddy's Rickle Bridge to Beattock	Clydesdale/Dumfries
A1 Tranent to Haddington	East Lothian
A74(M) Beattock to Cleuchbrae	Dumfries
M8 Baillieston to Newhouse	Motherwell North
M77 Fenwick to B764 (Floak)	Kilmarnock and Loudoun
A68 Dalkeith Bypass (advance works)	Midlothian
A1 Haddington to Dunbar	East Lothian
A96 Kintore Bypass	Gordon
A9 Logie Easter to Garrick Bridge	Ross, Cromarty and Skye
A830 Loch Nan Uamh to Polnish Bridge	Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber
A828 Creagan Bridge	Argyll and Bute

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to monitor the on-going composition of the boards of local enterprise companies, particularly in respect of such boards continuing to reflect a diverse business, community and geographic representation of the entire area covered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Local enterprise companies are required to ensure that at least two thirds of their boards of directors are chairmen, directors, chief executives or other top level managers within the private sector who either live or work within the local enterprise company's area of operation. Other board members must live within the local area. These requirements are placed on the local enterprise companies through their operating contracts with Scottish Enterprise and with Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Responsibility for contract compliance and monitoring rests with the enterprise bodies and I have therefore asked their chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost his Department.

Mr. Lang: My Department has made use of executive search agencies on two recruitment campaigns between 1 December 1993 and 30 November 1994. The total cost of these services was £69,912 including VAT. None of the executive agencies within my Department has made use of such services during the last year.

Geese

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what non-lethal methods of goose control are approved by his Ministry; and what measure he is taking to promote them.

Sir Hector Monro: Copies of the advisory leaflet "Wild Geese and Scottish Agriculture" are available at offices of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department and are issued to farmers who report problems associated with the presence of geese on their land. The leaflet provides information about various scaring devices including flags, scarecrows, gas guns and mechanically operated scarers.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his reasons for the granting of a licence to a farmer on the Solway firth to kill barnacle geese; how many geese have so far been killed under licence on the Solway firth; and how many are permitted to be killed overall.

Sir Hector Monro: Licences were granted in January 1994 and October 1994 for the purpose of preventing serious damage to crops. In issuing licences the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department takes into account the history of goose usage of an area, reports of goose numbers at particular times and carries out on-the-ground inspections. Account has also been taken of the outcome of a case in Dumfries sheriff court in which the farmer was acquitted on charges of killing geese without a licence.

Ten geese were reported killed under the licence issued in January and which expired in April. As at 15 December no geese had been killed under the current licence.

The licence is not subject to a bag limit but can be revoked at any time for example for non-compliance with the conditions attached to it.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to monitor the damage done to crops by geese in the Solway firth; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department makes inspections at approximately fortnightly intervals of the farm on the Solway firth where a licence is in operation. The department also inspects other farms where numerous geese have been reported and which might be the subject of future applications for a licence.

Health Care International

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which Scottish health boards have contracted with the Health Care International hospital at Clydebank to treat patients from their area; how many patients were treated from each health board area; and what was the cost of the contracts to each of the health boards.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There have been six such contracts, the details of which are as follows:

	Patients
Lothian Health Board	17 (Cardiac)
Grampian Health Board	7 (Oral Surgery)
Grampian GP Fundholders	5 (Orthapaedics)
Shetland Islands Health Board	13 (Ophthalmic) 3 (Cardiac)
Ayrshire and Arran Health Board	1 (Vascular)
National Specialism Contract	10 (Cardiac)

Cost is a matter between the receivers and the health boards. However, in each case the contracts represented a saving to the national health service.

Homelessness

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what assessment he has made of the London rough sleepers initiative in forming Scottish Office policy for the homeless;

(2) what action he is proposing to meet the needs of homeless 16 and 17-year-olds;

(3) how much money the Scottish Office has spent in each of the last three years on its rooflessness initiative.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish office policy on homelessness draws on a wide range of sources, including not only experience of initiatives elsewhere in the United Kingdom but reports directly prepared or commissioned in Scotland, for example, the 1993 Donnison report, "Young Homeless People in Scotland", and the 1994 report on the operation of the code of guidance on homelessness.

During the years 1991–92 to 1993–94, £50,000 per annum was made available to voluntary bodies under the rooflessness initiative. This programme has been followed by initiatives undertaken through voluntary bodies and by Scottish Office support for continuing projects.

Our main response to homelessness, including rooflessness, is made through support for local housing authorities, which have the primary statutory responsibility for tackling homelessness. A total of £29 million extra capital allocations were made available to housing authorities throughout Scotland during the period 1991 to 1994 for homelessness projects, many of which were for young homeless people, including those who were at risk of becoming roofless. We are also providing grants amounting to over £300,000 in 1994–95 for voluntary bodies that support homeless and roofless people, for example, the Bridges one door initiative in Edinburgh. The 1991 code of guidance on homelessness already advises that 16 to 17-year-olds may be vulnerable and hence in priority need.

Care in the Community

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will direct Scottish health boards *(a)* to ensure that every patient discharged from psychiatric units in their area has a care plan capable of being implemented and *(b)* to retain an adequate number of rehabilitation and long-stay psychiatric beds in their areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for the clinicians to assess the individual needs of patients and for those assessed as likely to benefit from care in the community, to decide with the local authorities how that care and accommodation are to be organised. Where social care and health care needs have been identified, discharge from a psychiatric unit only occurs following a full multi-disciplinary assessment and the pre-placement of a comprehensive package of support services to meet the person's assessed needs.

As regards national health service long stay provision, it is for individual health boards to determine the care needs for this population and to purchase accordingly.

School Annexes

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what incentives or support his Department has offered to local authorities since 1977 to reduce and eventually eliminate the use of school annexes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There has been no specific programme of support to local authorities for the elimination of the use of school annexes. However, the capital allocations for educational building have enabled authorities to undertake the extension or adaptation of main buildings to allow the withdrawal of annexes where they have considered that a priority.

Sex Abuse Crimes

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many crimes involving sex abuse involving young people under 21 years of age were recorded by each of the police forces in Scotland in each of the past five years; and how many people were found guilty of such offences.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not available in the form requested. The tables give the number of sexual offences which by definition involve persons aged under 16 and, separately, those offences involving sexual abuse where the age of the victim is unknown.

Crimes involving sexual abuse recorded by the police and persons with charges proved[1], Scotland, 1989–1993[2]
Crimes of indecency recorded by the police and persons with charge proved where victim was aged under 16[3]

	1989		1990		1991		1992		1993	
Police	Crimes recorded by the police	Persons with charge proved	Crimes recorded by the police	Persons with charge proved	Crimes recorded by the police	Persons with charge proved	Crimes recorded by the police	Persons with charge proved	Crimes recorded by the police	Persons with charge proved
Central	109	19	136	22	92	24	92	23	113	22
Dumfries and Galloway	33	13	29	6	45	9	49	13	69	12
Fife	79	23	115	19	128	27	102	20	159	21
Grampian	163	23	245	44	166	39	180	35	240	21
Lothian and Borders	236	54	187	39	212	46	270	36	278	39
Northern	102	22	82	17	77	14	91	12	67	8
Strathclyde	450	97	512	94	512	73	515	63	625	76
Tayside	161	31	144	39	142	22	143	17	199	21
Scotland	1,333	282	1,450	280	1,374	254	1,442	219	1,750	220

Notes:

[1] Persons with charge proved where the main offence was as stated. This includes persons who plead guilty or were found guilty.

[2] For crimes recorded by the police the year relates to the year when the crime was recorded. For persons with charge proved the year relates to the year when the accused was sentenced.

[3] Includes lewd and libidinous practices, defilement of girls aged under 16 and causing the seduction, prostitution etc. of girl.

Other crimes of indecency recorded and persons with charge proved where victim's age is unknown[1]

	1989		1990		1991		1992		1993	
Police force	Crimes recorded by the police	Persons with charge proved	Crimes recorded by the police	Persons with charge proved	Crimes recorded by the police	Persons with charge proved	Crimes recorded by the police	Persons with charge proved	Crimes recorded by the police	Persons with charge proved
Central	93	10	86	13	66	8	67	5	83	6
Dumfries and Galloway	45	11	27	0	44	2	52	3	30	3
Fife	85	10	88	19	96	18	94	14	94	17
Grampian	195	17	177	21	178	16	148	22	189	20
Lothian and Borders	340	50	320	33	352	35	358	35	359	52
Northern	76	15	105	22	79	10	89	6	85	6
Strathclyde	662	85	624	93	590	74	756	100	758	105
Tayside	104	17	116	15	113	8	132	13	134	16
Scotland	1,600	215	1,543	216	1,518	171	1,696	198	1,732	225

Notes:

[1] Includes incest, rape, assault with intent to ravish, indecent assault, carnal knowledge of—or householder permitting carnal knowledge of—mentally defective, lunatic person or girl, abduction of girl under 18 with the intent to have sexual intercourse and clandestine injury.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* teachers, *(b)* social workers, *(c)* nurses, *(d)* doctors, *(e)* community education workers and *(f)* other professionals working with children have been found guilty of crimes of indecency or of lewd and libidinous behaviour against persons under 21 years of age in each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available.

Lothian Health Board

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the revenue and capital allocation to Lothian health board during each of the last three years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Details of Lothian health board's revenue and capital allocations for 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95 are set out in the table.

£ million

Year	Revenue allocation	Capital allocation
1992–93	357.081	24.186
1993–94	363.716	11.879
1994–95	372.493	3.877

The basic revenue allocation shown is supplemented by funds to meet other services and costs, such as provision for AIDS, artificial limbs and appliance centres, breast cancer screening and, the additional cost of teaching.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the level of spending per head of population on family health service services in Scotland; and if his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, columns *278-79*, included such expenditure.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Family health services expenditure was included in my answer of 7 December to the hon. Gentleman. The information requested on family health services expenditure is set out in the table.

Health board area	*Family health services expenditure per head of population 1993–94* £
Argyll and Clyde	178.60
Ayrshire and Arran	176.31
Borders	168.11
Dumfries and Galloway	177.72
Fife	157.20
Forth Valley	173.36
Grampian	157.82
Greater Glasgow	182.71
Highland	182.26
Lanarkshire	164.89
Lothian	166.77
Orkney	180.97
Shetland	161.50
Tayside	181.89
Western Isles	196.91
Total Health Board	172.25

Truancy

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives his Department has taken since 1990 to tackle school truancy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A number of initiatives have been taken aimed at focusing the attention of education authorities, schools and parents on the problem of truancy. These are:

A consultation paper "Action on Truancy in Scotland" issued in April 1991.

Two surveys of truancy in schools in June and November 1991, commissioned from the Scottish Council for Research in Education and published in 1992.

A study on "Links Between Truancy and Delinquency" commissioned from the MVA Consultancy and published in 1992.

Regulations made in July 1993 requiring the collection and publication of information on attendance, authorised absence and unauthorised absence by stage for Scottish schools.

A report by the Audit Unit of HM Inspectorate "Attendance, Truancy & Performance" issued in October 1993.

In the new year an audit unit report containing school-based information on attendance, and authorised and unauthorised absence will be issued. The Scottish Council for Research in Education has also been commissioned to investigate and report on the links between truancy and performance in primary and secondary schools and it will report in 1995. To assist schools in dealing with truancy a support pack called "The Truancy File" will be sent free to all Scottish schools.

School Sizes

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research the Scottish Office Education Department has funded arising out of the Pack report's recommendation that the topic of best sizes of schools should be further studied.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None.

Housing List Applications

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applicants were waiting on the housing lists of each district council in each financial year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Reliable information is not held centrally.

Trans-European Road Network

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to enable access to European funding for the Skye bridge approach roads following his decision to include the route from Glasgow to Uig, Isle of Skye, in the trans-European road network; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A decision by the European Commission and the Council of Ministers on proposed additions to the trans-European road network—TERN—including the route from Glasgow to Uig, Isle of Skye is expected early in 1995. Although a draft financial regulation, detailing the funding of TERN schemes, has yet to be approved, it is not intended to cover the retrospective funding of schemes.

Rents

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average rent charged for *(a)* private sector tenancies, *(b)* district council tenancies, *(c)* development corporation tenancies and *(d)* Scottish Homes tenancies in each financial year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The following table shows the average weekly unrebated rents for local authorities, new town development corporations and Scottish Homes and its predecessor, the Scottish Special Housing Association, since 1979–80. Comparable information on private sector rents is not held centrally.

Average Weekly Rents

Year	*Local authority* £	*New town development corporations* £	*SSHA Scottish homes* £
1979–80	4.92	6.40	5.43
1980–81	5.88	7.89	7.21
1981–82	7.69	9.81	9.15
1982–83	9.02	11.90	11.26
1983–84	9.86	12.76	11.96
1984–85	10.46	14.36	13.06
1985–86	11.55	15.61	14.23
1986–87	12.99	16.81	15.79
1987–88	14.58	18.29	17.28
1988–89	16.29	19.79	19.02
1989–90	18.85	21.81	20.88

Average Weekly Rents

Year	*Local authority* £	*New town development corporations* £	*SSHA Scottish homes* £
1990–91	20.93	23.29	23.81
1991–92	23.12	25.62	26.73
1992–93	24.65	27.72	29.14
1993–94	26.39	29.87	31.76
1994–95	27.79	31.36	33.83

Housing Waiting Lists

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applicants were waiting on the housing lists of Scottish Homes in each financial year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is a matter for Scottish Homes. I have asked its chairman, Sir James Mellon, to write to the hon. Member.

Disabled People

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is now in a position to respond to the recommendations of the committee of inquiry into housing in Scotland for people with physical disabilities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have written to Lord Ewing of Kirkford, welcoming the Ewing committee's report as a valuable contribution to the debate on housing in Scotland for disabled people, and setting out the Scottish Office's formal response to the committee's recommendations. The response is being placed in the Commons and Lords Libraries, and will be sent to all MPs sitting for Scottish constituencies, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, housing authorities, Scottish Homes and interested voluntary bodies, and the media. The main points of the response are as follows:

The Scottish Office will consult over 300 organisations early in the new year on amendments to building regulations governing access to new dwellings, including costs. This consultation paper will build on the comments received earlier this year on the topics to be covered in the amendments. New regulations have already been made on access to non-domestic buildings.

Scottish Homes has been asked to review the Scottish housing handbooks on housing for disabled people, and for elderly people. These will take account of barrier-free housing, which Scottish Homes is already encouraging.

Over £2.8 billion will be made available for housing investment over the next three years and there have been substantial increases in provision of specialist housing for physically disabled people since 1979.

Community care, including provision for physically disabled people, is now one of only four national priorities which housing authorities have been asked to address in their housing plans and output targets. It is also a priority for Scottish Homes, including grants to the voluntary and private sectors, and the care and repair scheme which helps disabled and elderly people to carry out repairs and adaptations to enable them to remain in their own home.

More generally, the circular entitled "Community Care—The Housing Dimension", which was issued by the Scottish Office on 9 August, emphasised the importance of co-operation between housing, social work and health bodies in planning, assessment of need, and housing management for physically disabled people and other community care client groups. This guidance and the introduction of housing plans and housing management plans, encompass and go beyond the committee's recommendations on co-ordination of provision for disabled people by housing authorities. The circular also sets out the respective responsibilities of health, social work and housing for adaptations, aids and equipment.

It is not possible to give absolute housing rights to disabled people, since their needs have to be considered in the light of costs, available resources and the priorities given to other groups. However, we will take account of their needs and aspirations in our plans, and will continue to support important particular rights, such as the right to be consulted on individual community care assessments. Scottish Homes is preparing a policy statement on housing action for disabled people which we hope will serve as an example for other providers.

Finally, we recognise the importance of information and advice for disabled people on housing issues. Scottish Homes' Homepoint has made grants of about £17,000 for the disabled persons housing service and for a handbook on disabled persons' housing rights being produced by the Margaret Blackwood housing association.

Agricultural Wages Board

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is in a position to announce the Government's decision on the future of the Scottish agricultural wages board.

Sir Hector Monro: Following the Government's review of the Scottish agricultural wages board initiated last year, and taking account of the views expressed during the consultation period, we have concluded that the board should continue to operate within the existing statutory framework. A further review of the board will take place in 1998.

Recycled Liquid Fuel

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the use of recycled liquid fuel at the Blue Circle cement works at Dunbar; and what assessment he has made of *(a)* the safety of the transport and storage of this fuel and *(b)* the level and nature of any pollution arising from the use of this fuel.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* During the determination of the application for an authorisation under integrated pollution control in respect of the Blue Circle cement works at Dunbar, Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate gave careful consideration to the environmental implications of burning recycled liquid fuels in part replacement of the normal kiln fuels. In terms of emissions of sulphur dioxide the use was beneficial, but in order to ensure that the impact of burning chlorinated material was negligible, the authorisation included conditions that placed stringent limits on the content of chlorine, polychlorinated biphenyls and pentachlorophenol in all recovered fuels. A series of tests were undertaken by the company to a protocol agreed with HMIPI and emissions of dioxins and furans, the principal concern, were shown to be below the 1 ngm^{-3} limit set in the draft European Union directive on the incineration of hazardous waste.

Monitoring of incoming fuel has shown that all batches comply with the conditions of authorisation and relevant data have been placed on the public register. Current usage corresponds to no more than 3 per cent. of the total thermal input to the kiln.

HMIPI has work in hand to ensure that test protocols for the estimation of dioxins and furans in environmental media are optimised and Blue Circle is included in the inspectorate's audit programme for 1995–96.

As regards the safety of these materials during transport and storage, the responsibility for these issues lies with the Department of Transport and the Health and Safety Executive. I have asked both the Department and the Executive to write to the hon. Member in due course.

Respiratory Illnesses

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hospital admissions there were for each month in 1991, 1992 and 1993 for *(a)* acute respiratory complaints and *(b)* bronchitis by local health authority and trust.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on hospital discharges is set out in the tables.

Table 1: Discharges for acute respiratory complaints and bronchitis by month and year of admission, 1991 to 1993

	1991	*1992*	*1993*
Acute respiratory			
January	3,606	4,590	3,980
February	3,548	3,850	3,886
March	3,749	3,221	4,529
April	3,054	3,112	3,399
May	3,031	3,026	3,330
June	2,695	3,076	3,318
July	2,545	2,694	2,920
August	2,430	2,530	2,905
September	3,143	3,073	3,537
October	3,502	3,085	4,762
November	3,662	3,374	5,922
December	4,651	3,830	5,404
Total	39,616	39,461	47,892
Bronchitis			
January	366	799	655
February	465	552	614
March	599	316	501
April	338	279	306
May	222	217	270
June	193	200	247
July	163	177	220
August	149	150	177
September	158	161	206
October	226	196	367
November	336	267	639
December	814	474	940
Total	4,029	3,788	5,142

Table 1: Discharges for acute respiratory complaints and bronchitis by month and year of admission, 1991 to 1993

Notes:

1. Discharges include only emergency admissions.
2. The bronchitis discharges are also included in acute respiratory complaints.
3. Data are collected on a discharge basis.

Table 2: Discharges for acute respiratory complaints and bronchitis by year of admission and health board of residence, 1991 to 1993

	Acute Respiratory			*Bronchitis*		
Health board of residence	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Argyll and Clyde	3,101	3,069	3,670	271	202	325
Ayrshire and Arran	2,937	2,819	3,677	204	167	236
Borders	802	796	926	88	120	83
Dumfries and Galloway	1,071	1,029	1,339	105	61	113
Fife	2,278	2,306	2,640	215	250	336
Forth Valley	1,634	1,789	2,369	98	73	201
Grampian	3,721	3,782	4,453	231	241	332
Greater Glasgow	7,471	7,769	9,775	642	706	1,402
Highland	1,419	1,281	1,609	288	291	300
Larnarkshire	4,366	4,111	4,960	830	710	694
Lothian	6,361	6,271	7,224	801	692	776
Orkney	110	90	123	10	3	1
Shetland	69	95	116	8	15	7
Tayside	3,721	3,667	4,337	204	215	273
Western Isles	167	164	187	8	13	24
All Health Boards	39,228	39,038	47,405	4,003	3,759	5,103
Outside Scotland/NK/NFA	388	423	487	26	29	39
Scotland	39,616	39,461	47,892	4,029	3,788	5,142

Notes:

1. Discharges include only emergency admissions.
2. The bronchitis discharges are also included in acute respiratory complaints.
3. Data are collected on a discharge basis.

Table 3: Discharges for acute respiratory complaints and bronchitis by year of admission and NHS trust 1991 to 1993

	Acute respiratory			*Bronchitis*		
	1991	*1992*	*1993*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
South Ayrshire Hospitals NHS Trust	397	1,149	1,473	10	40	68
Northern Ayr and Arran NHS Trust	1,513	1,482	1,975	131	112	159
A and A Community Health Care NHS Trust	183	157	190	15	10	14

Table 3: Discharges for acute respiratory complaints and bronchitis by year of admission and NHS trust 1991 to 1993

	Acute respiratory			*Bronchitis*		
	1991	*1992*	*1993*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Borders General Hospital Acute	625	662	721	78	110	79
Borders Community Health Services	133	100	168	11	5	8
Dumbarton Unit	237	311	318	2	2	—
Argyll and Bute Unit	479	484	525	44	37	22
Royal Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust	1,264	1,303	1,682	97	96	122
Inverclyde Royal NHS Trust	924	786	854	85	40	69
Renfrewshire H-care NHS Trust	52	52	58	2	3	1
Queen Margaret Hospital NHS Trust	6	1	213	—	—	5
Fife Healthcare NHS Trust	1,211	1,216	1,171	96	115	152
Kirkcaldy Acute Hospital NHS Trust	870	835	959	116	121	161
Care for the Elderly Unit, GGHB	134	7	11	2	—	—
South General Hospital NHS Trust	825	893	1,061	61	194	337
Yorkhill NHS Trust	2,565	2,501	3,268	554	371	970
Victoria Infirmary NHS Trust	945	1,002	1,296	33	108	148
West Glasgow Hospital University NHS Trust	1,206	1,347	1,600	16	27	55
Glasgow Royal Infirmary University NHS Trust	1,035	1,284	1,591	17	25	12
Stobhill NHS Trust	1,268	1,261	1,746	45	39	69
Raigmore Hospital NHS Trust	1,286	1,135	1,449	304	303	329
Caithness/Sutherland NHS Trust	109	134	161	3	7	12
Highland Communities NHS Trust	155	136	168	7	8	4
Comm/Prior Services, Lanark HB	103	101	109	32	34	33
Monklands/Bellshill NHS Trust	1,729	1,545	1,784	369	321	421
Law Hospital NHS Trust	1,352	1,325	1,601	271	217	163
Hairmyres/Stonehouse NHS Trust	921	926	1,143	115	116	11
Aberdeen Royal Hospitals NHS Trust	2,505	2,438	2,798	152	149	226
Grampian Healthcare NHS Trust	978	1,078	1,342	42	52	59
Moray Health Service NHS Trust	188	223	220	17	20	16
Orkney Health Board Unit	103	82	110	8	3	1
West Lothian NHS Trust	1,113	971	1,192	238	188	131
Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh NHS Trust	2,229	2,458	2,588	182	251	325
Edinburgh Sick Children's NHS Trust	1,723	1,628	1,796	294	184	258
Western General Hospitals NHS Trust	616	795	1,028	48	34	35
East and Midlothian NHS Trust	458	599	801	21	57	34
Edinburgh Healthcare NHS Trust	315	—	—	26	—	—
St. Columbus Hospice	1	1	1	—	—	—
Dundee Teaching Hospital NHS Trust	2,621	2,532	2,876	112	145	193
Perth/Kinross H-care NHS Trust	872	959	1,189	78	71	89
Dundee Healthcare NHS Trust	62	57	48	—	2	3
Angus NHS Trust	422	406	557	23	12	6
Stirling Royal Infirmary NHS Trust	852	887	1,190	63	47	116
Falkirk and District Royal Infirmary NHS Trust	805	908	1,200	33	26	83
Western Isles Health Unit	145	148	179	9	12	22
Community Services Unit D and G HB	83	69	94	5	1	12
D & G Acute and Mat NHS Trust	1,013	995	1,274	101	60	102
Shetland Hospitals and Community Unit	69	83	114	7	12	7
Other	916	9	—	54	1	—
Total	39,616	39,461	47,892	4,029	3,788	5,142

Notes:

1. Discharges include only emergency admissions.
2. Trusts are defined to include those units and hospitals as at 1 April 1993.
3. The bronchitis discharges are also included in acute respiratory complaints.
4. Discharges which fall into the "other" category are the following:
    - Ayr County Hospital
    - Healthfield Hospital
    - Seafield Hospital
    - Kelso Cottage Hospital
    - Duntocher Hospital
    - Longmore Hospital
    - Bangour General Hospital
    - County Hospital, Stornoway
5. Data are collected on a discharge basis.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females were in full-time employment in the latest month for which figures are available and in the same month in each of the last 10 years; and if he will indicate in each case and for each year the proportion of this figure as a percentage of the total population.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* The information can be obtained from the NOMIS database which is accessible from the House of Commons Library. However, full-time and part-time breakdown for males should not be used prior to June 1991.

Black Isle

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the reasons for the announcement that he required more time to consider the revised Black Isle local plan, *(b)* the likely length of additional time involved and *(c)* the extent to which he will give full consideration both to Highland regional council's handling of the matter and the volume of objections from the Black Isle itself; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 15 December 1994]:* Legislation requires my right hon. Friend to consider a proposal by a planning authority for the adoption of a local plan within 28 days of it being received by him. He may extend this period if he considers it necessary. In the case of the revised Black Isle local plan, the period has been extended to allow more time to consider whether the plan's policies and proposals raise issues of more than local importance.

I cannot say, at this stage, when a final decision will be announced, but every effort will be made to do so at the earliest opportunity. I can also assure the hon. Member that full and careful consideration will be given to the manner in which this matter has been handled by Highland regional council, and the objections received, before a decision is reached.

Eye Tests

Mr Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many eye tests were carried out in *(a)* Lothian and *(b)* Scotland as a whole in each of the last seven years for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* The number of national health service sight tests paid for by health boards in each of the financial years since 1987 is shown in the table. No information is collected on private sight tests.

Number of NHS sight tests[1] in Scotland and Lothian Health Board

	1987–88	*1988–89*	*[2]1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Lothian	162,353	176,902	74,531	56,682	66,297	71,554	77,065
Scotland	1,098,145	1,168,610	475,479	432,885	496,598	538,683	579,671

[1] One person may have more than one sight test in the period.

[2] Since 1 April 1989 free NHS sight tests have been available only to children, full-time students under 19, those in receipt of income support or family credit, the registered blind or partially sighted, complex lens users, those who hold an AG2 exemption certificate from the health benefits division, diagnosed diabetic or glaucoma sufferers, and close relatives aged 40 or over of glaucoma sufferers.

Teacher Qualifications

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will ensure that teachers of higher national certificates courses in schools and further education colleges will be similarly qualified.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* Higher national certificate courses are not currently available in schools in Scotland.

Skillstart

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had on the proposal that Skillstart will be assessed only internally.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 17 December 1994]:* My right hon. Friend has had no such discussions.

Public Servants

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library copies of the compensation and redundancy terms for *(a)* Scottish Office civil servants and *(b)* staff for the Scottish councils.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* The compensation and redundancy terms applying to civil servants, including those of the Scottish Office, are set out in section 10 of the "Rules of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme," a copy of which is in the Library.

A copy of the Local Government (Compensation for Premature Retirement) (Scotland) Regulations 1979 and subsequent amending instruments are already in the Library. A copy of the Local Government (Compensation for Redundancy) (Scotland) Regulations 1994 and a draft of the Government's proposals for compensation for loss of employment arising from local government reorganisation were lodged with the Library on 5 December. The proposals, in the form of a draft of the Local Government (Compensation for Redundancy) (Scotland) Regulations 1995, have been issued for comment.

TREASURY

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many parliamentary questions tabled in the last Session of Parliament were answered on the grounds that the information sought was not held centrally by the Department.

Mr. Nelson: From the information available on POLIS, eight written questions were not answered because the information sought was not held centrally.

Money Laundering

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if he will list each of the 40 recommendations of the financial action task force to control money laundering together with the action taken by the United Kingdom on each one.

Mr. Nelson: The Government fully endorsed the 40 recommendations of the financial action task force on money laundering when they were published in 1990. I have arranged for a paper setting out the United Kingdom's response to each of the FATF recommendations to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Tobacco Duties

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the proportion of revenue raised through tobacco duties which is paid by different income groups.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Lady to table 3, appendix 1, of the Central Statistical Office article "The Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income, 1992" in "Economic Trends," January 1994.

VAT (Fuel)

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effect of VAT on fuel at 8 per cent. on the annual rate of inflation in the year to September 1995.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: VAT on fuel at 8 per cent. was introduced in April 1994, so any price increases as a result will have fed through to the retail prices index prior to the year to September 1995, meaning that VAT on fuel and power will have no effect on the annual rate of inflation over that period.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount of revenue forgone by exemption from value added tax of sums paid in advance to power-generating companies.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is estimated that the VAT cost of prepayment of electricity by domestic consumers is £55 million.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on VAT being charged on fuel standing charges.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Treasury Ministers have received a number of representations on this issue. Both the fixed standing charges and the variable consumption charges for domestic electricity and gas are payment for the one service—the supply of gas and electricity—and so liable to VAT at the 8 per cent. reduced rate, even though they are shown separately on the bill. VAT is normally chargeable on the whole price of any taxable goods or services, regardless of the way in which the supplier chooses to structure the price.

Income Tax

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the *(a)* upper and *(b)* decile income for tax purposes in 1963–64, 1973–74, 1978–79 and 1993–94 and forecast 1995–96; what was the percentage of the income in each case of the amount payable in (i) direct and (ii) indirect tax, including national insurance, health, public sector rents and all other charges less child benefit, by a (iii) two-person household with no dependants and (iv) a two-person household with two dependent children; and what are his estimates for 1994–95;

(2) what was the median income for tax purposes in 1963–64, 1973–74, 1978–79, 1993–94 and forecast 1995–96; what was the percentage of the income in each case of the amount payable in *(a)* direct and *(b)* indirect tax, including national insurance, health, public sector rents and all other charges less child benefit, by a (i) two-person household with no dependants and (ii) a two-person household with two dependent children; and what are his estimates for 1994–95.

Sir George Young: Information is not available in the form requested. A certain amount of information on taxes paid and benefits received by broad groups of households is published in an annual article in "Economic Trends" entitled "Effects of taxes and benefits upon household income". The latest article appeared in the January 1994 edition of "Economic Trends", a copy of which is available in the Library. The results of this analysis are not designed for comparison between years because of changes in definition over time, particularly pre and post-1987 when a major revision to the methodology was adopted.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what tax rate for income over £50,000 would have to be imposed in order to raise an additional £800 million of revenue.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* An income tax rate of 47p on taxable incomes over £50,000 would raise about £800 million in 1995–96 and £1.3 billion in a full year. These estimates do not allow for any behavioural changes that might result from the introduction of the new tax rate and do not include capital gains tax.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects on Britain of withdrawal from the exchange rate mechanism and what plans he has to restore the rate of exchange against the deutschmark to its August 1992 value.

Mr. Nelson: It is not possible to assess the precise effects of sterling's departure from the ERM. However, during sterling's membership of the ERM, inflation fell sharply and the economy began to recover from recession. The Government recognise the value of stable exchange rates but do not set target rates. Movements in exchange rates are considered as part of the Government's general assessments of monetary conditions in setting monetary policy.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will make a statement on the current rate of exchange of the sterling against the ecu;

(2) if he will make a statement on the role of the exchange rate in the economy.

Mr. Nelson: Movements in the exchange rate are considered as part of the general assessment of monetary conditions in setting monetary policy. The Government recognise the value of a stable exchange rate but do not set target rates. Sterling's exchange rate against the ECU reflects day-to-day market trading in all the EU currencies.

The exchange rate is only one factor among many affecting the economy, and it is difficult to isolate the effect of changes in the exchange rate from that of other factors.

Manufacturing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the forecast growth in the market for United Kingdom exports of manufactures divided between the EC and the rest of the world together with his forecast of the growth of United Kingdom exports of manufactures in each case.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury does not publish forecasts dividing the growth of the United Kingdom's export markets for manufactures or its growth of exports of manufactures between the EC and the rest of the world.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the effect on the volume of imports and exports of manufactures of an increase of 10 per cent. in relative export unit values for manufactures; what was the change in the nominal exchange rate against the ecu and the change in the price of manufactures exported to the EEC between February 1993 and January 1994; and what contribution that made to the change in the profitability of manufacturing compared to the average for 1989–90.

Mr. Nelson: Estimates of the effect of relative prices changes on manufacturing volumes can be made using the Treasury model. This is available in the House of Commons Library. It is standard practice not to provide the results of simulations in reply to parliamentary questions due to excessive cost involved and the difficulty in making the appropriate assumptions without knowing the context in which the figures will be used.

Figures for the ecu exchange rate and manufacturing export prices are available on the CSO database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library. Manufacturing profitability depends on both manufacturing prices and manufacturers' costs. Company profitability has been strong recently. This reflects tight control over unit costs, rising output and the expansion of margins, particularly for exports.

Earnings

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the average earnings of a full-time adult male worker in 1963–64, 1973–74, 1978–9, 1993–94 and forecast 1995–96; what was the percentage in each case of the amount payable in *(a)* direct and *(b)* indirect tax, including national insurance, health, public sector rents and all other charges; and if he will provide corresponding figures for those whose incomes were 10 times and 20 times greater than those earnings.

Sir George Young: Information on the earnings of full-time employees at April is published in the new earnings survey for 1973 and each year up to and including 1994. Prior to 1970, information on the earnings of manual employees was published in the "Ministry of Labour Gazette". Copies of these publications can be found in the Library. Information for 1995–96 is not available. For a given level of earnings, an individual's tax payments and other charges will depend on a variety of circumstances such as income, marital status, age and spending patterns.

European Parliament

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his written answer dated 5 December 1980, *Official Report,* column *205,* comparing the cost of maintaining a member of the European Assembly with the cost of maintaining a Member of the House of Commons, if he will update his answer expressing the figures in per capita terms.

Mr. Aitken: As we made clear in the reply dated 5 December 1980, no precise comparison is possible between the budgetary costs of the European Parliament and the House of Commons. However, the updated information is as follows:

£ millions

	[1]*European Parliament*	[2]*House of Commons*
Members of the Institution		
Salaries and pensions	[3]7.2	22.2
Travel and subsistence	43.8	9.9
Secretarial expenses	44.2	26.9
Other	6.8	12.5
Supporting staff		
Salaries, allowances pension, etc.	[4]207.5	[4]31.2
General expenses	25.9	18.0
Accommodation		
Rent	49.9	[5]9.9
Operating costs	20.7	25.6
Security	6.6	12.3
Other Administrative costs		
Stationery, office equipment etc.	40.6	1.8
Publications	10.8	8.6
Payments to Parliamentary bodies	16.1	2.8
Other expenditure	[6]22.7	—
Total	502.8	107.5
Number of Members	567	651

The per capita cost per member is therefore:
European Parliament: £886,772
House of Commons: £165,131

[1] The figures for the European budget have been taken from the 1994 Community budget and converted to sterling at the budget rate of £1 = 1.3243 ecu.

[2] The figures for the House of Commons have been taken from 1994–95 estimates.

[3] Salaries for the Members of the European Parliament are paid for by national Governments and are not included in the budget.

[4] The budget of the European Parliament covers the cost of 3,790 posts of which 679—17.9 per cent.—are employed in the language service. The House of Commons administration vote covers the costs of 1,317 staff.

[5] A nominal rent has been payable in respect of the Palace of Westminster since 1993–94.

[6] Includes £8.4 million in the reserve.

EU Membership

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date for each year since 1974 the figures in paragraph 43 of Cmnd 6003 "Membership of the European Community—Report on Renegotiation".

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The United Kingdom's gross and net contribution to the European Community for each year from 1973 to 1993 are set out in the table. The figures in the final column of this table represent the Government's last published estimate for each of these years.

United Kingdom's gross and net contribution to the EC budget

£ million

Year	*Gross contributions before abatements of refunds*	*Negotiated refunds*	*Abatement*	*Gross contributions after abatement and refunds*	*Public sector receipts*	*Net contribution after abatement refunds and public sector receipts*
1973–74	200	—	—	200	104	96
1974–75	197	—	—	197	232	-35
1975–76	370	—	—	370	354	16
1976–77	544	—	—	544	320	224
1977–78	941	—	—	941	382	559
1978–79	1,323	—	—	1,323	555	768
1979–80	1,665	—	—	1,665	781	884
1980–81	1,900	645	—	1,255	1,022	233
1981–82	2,330	959	—	1,371	1,146	225
1982–83	2,820	774	—	2,046	1,308	737
1983–84	3,097	239	—	2,858	1,897	961
1984–85	3,614	589	—	3,025	1,892	1,133
1985–86	3,745	—	323	2,922	1,930	992
1986–87	5,121	—	1,343	3,778	2,557	1,221
1087–88	4,906	—	1,137	3,769	1,958	1,811
1988–89	5,167	—	1,600	3,567	2,400	1,166
1989–90	5,804	—	1,317	4,487	2,035	2,452
1990–91	6,411	—	1,838	4,573	2,388	2,185
1991–92	6,129	—	2,428	3,701	2,757	943
1992–93	6,970	—	1,993	4,977	2,810	2,167
1993–94	8,407	—	2,350	6,057	3,864	2,192
1994–95	8,308	—	1,89	6,409	3,963	2,446

United Kingdom net contribution to EC budget

	1980–81	*1981–82*	*1982–83*	*1983–84*	*1984–85*	*1985–86*	*1986–87*	*1987–88*	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
Latest forecast announced by Chancellor on 23 November 1994	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,192	2,446
1994 Departmental Report	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,167	2,166	1,714
1993 Departmental Report	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	943	2,100	1,731	3,142
1992 Departmental Report	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,185	1,175	2,763	2,934	3,322
1991 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,452	2,079	1,280	3,060	2,540	—
1990 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,166	2,159	2,047	1,830	2,150	—	—
1989 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,811	1,110	2,113	2,100	1,730	—	—	—
1988 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,221	1,604	947	1,610	1,470	—	—	—	—
1987 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	—	—	—	992	1,259	1,063	600	1,230	—	—	—	—	—
1986 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	—	—	1,133	974	796	1,300	1,110	—	—	—	—	—	—
1985 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	—	961	831	898	774	973	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1984 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	737	622	485	665	725	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1983 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	225	711	502	584	685	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1982 Public Expenditure White Paper	233	160	630	710	730	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

	1973–74	*1974–75*	*1975–76*	*1976–77*	*1977–78*	*1978–79*	*1979–80*	*1980–81*	*1981–82*	*1982–83*	*1983–84*
1981 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	—	—	—	—	884	427	450	450	450
1980 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	—	—	—	768	957	1,061	1,200	1,350	1,550
1979 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	—	—	559	680	750	830	780	870	—
1978 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	—	224	435	690	785	855	820	—	—
1977 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	—	16	225	455	555	640	690	—	—	—
1976 Public Expenditure White Paper	—	-35	25	170	220	270	315	—	—	—	—

	1973–74	1974–75	1975–76	1976–77	1977–78	1978–79	1979–80	1980–81	1981–82	1982–83	1983–84
1975 Public Expenditure White Paper	96	35	130	180	230	275	—	—	—	—	—
1974 Public Expenditure White Paper	80	90	145	195	240	—	—	—	—	—	—
1973 Public Expenditure White Paper	80	125	155	195	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

In this table the final outturn figure is always the last published outturn and may therefore be taken from a later public expenditure White Paper or departmental report than indicated in the left hand column.

Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the Bank of England's contention that United Kingdom exporters have been increasing their profit margins at the expense of volume exports.

Mr. Nelson: Over the past year, exports have increased strongly—in the third quarter export volumes, excluding oil and erratics, were up 14 per cent. on a year earlier—and export profit margins have also risen, reflecting tight control over unit costs.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the increase in the price of finished manufactures exported *(a)* to the EEC and *(b)* to non-EEC countries between 30 December 1992 and 31 August 1994.

Mr. Nelson: Price indices for United Kingdom exports of finished manufactures to other EC countries and to non-EC countries are published on a monthly basis. The figures are available on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed through the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will publish his estimate of the current net rate of return as defined in CSO "First Release" (94)205 on exports of manufactures; and what were the figures for *(a)* 1972, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1988 and *(d)* 1990;

(2) what assessment he has made of the correlation between the net rate of return on exports of manufacturers in 1990 and 1993 and the rate of 7.4 per cent. and 5.8 per cent. for manufacturing as shown in CSO "First Release" (94)205; and if the rate being earned on exports in the third quarter of this year was higher than 7.4 per cent.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to him on 13 December, *Official Report*, column *587*.

Energy-saving Products (VAT)

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to reduce the level of VAT levied on energy-saving products to 8 per cent.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have no plans to apply the 8 per cent. reduced rate of VAT to anything other than domestic fuel and power.

EU Budget Rebate

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will state the initial sum calculated by the Commission of the European Communities for the United Kingdom budget rebate for the years 1991 and 1992 together with the sums named in the final corrections for those years and the dates on which they were determined.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The initial United Kingdom abatement figures for 1991 and 1992 were 2,921.2 mecu and 3,181 mecu respectively. The final corrections in respect of these years have yet to be determined by the European Commission. Details of the final correction for 1992 are unlikely to become available until 1996.

Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the weighted average increase since August 1992 in the retail prices of *(a)* goods other than food and revenue duty items and *(b)* services other than foreign holidays, mortgage interest and community charge or rates.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested is not available as there are no unique definitions of goods or services in the retail prices index and such aggregates can be produced only at disproportionate cost.

National Debt

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the change in the national debt since 1973; and how much of this is accounted for by the United Kingdom's contribution to the EEC.

Mr. Nelson: The change in the national debt since 1973 can be calculated from table 17.2 of part 1 of the "Bank of England Statistical Abstract 1994".

Figures for EC contributions since 1973 were provided in the answer which the Paymaster General gave to the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) on 29 November, *Official Report*, columns *608-10*.

Taxation

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) of 19 January 1994, *Official Report*, columns *632-40*, and provide the latest estimates of the burden of direct and indirect taxes for *(a)* 1993–94, *(b)* 1994–95 and *(c)* 1995–96, including figures for the council tax and its predecessors, both in cash terms and as a percentage of earnings for (i) a single person, (ii) a married couple with no children, (iii) a married couple with two children, (iv) a married couple, both working, with no children, earning 50, 75, 150, 200, 300, 400, 500, 700, 1,000 and 2,000 per cent. of average earnings.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) on 19 December 1994. *Official Report*, columns *944–50*.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of gross domestic product was taken by *(a)* income tax, *(b)* corporation tax, *(c)* capital gains tax, *(d)* inheritance tax, *(e)* value added tax, *(f)* national insurance contributions, *(g)* excise duties, *(h)* the council tax and its predecessors, *(i)* business rates and *(j)* other taxes, in each year between 1978–79 and 1994–95.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested is given in the table. Forecasts for 1994–95 are taken from the revised table 4A.1 of the 1995–96 "Financial Statement and Budget Report", issued with an HM Treasury press release on 8 December 1994.

General government receipts as a percentage of GDP[1]

Receipt/financial year	*1978–79*	*1979–80*	*1980–81*	*1981–82*	*1982–83*	*1983–84*	*1984–85*	*1985–86*	*1986–87*
(a) Income tax[3]	11.0	10.1	10.4	11.2	10.8	10.2	10.0	9.9	10.0
(b) Corporation tax[4]	2.3	2.3	2.0	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.6	3.0	3.5
(c) Capital gains tax	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
(d) Inheritance tax[5]	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3
(e) Value added tax	2.8	4.0	4.7	4.6	4.9	5.0	5.7	5.4	5.6
(f) National Insurance contributions[6]	7.1	7.2	7.5	7.7	7.7	7.5	7.1	6.8	6.9
(g) Excise duties[7]	4.3	3.9	3.9	4.4	4.2	4.4	4.3	4.2	4.3
(h) Community charge/council tax	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rates[8]	3.4	3.4	3.7	4.3	4.3	4.0	4.0	3.9	4.1
(i) Business rates[9]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
(j) Other GG receipts	7.5	7.6	8.1	9.2	9.3	9.3	9.4	8.7	6.7

Receipt/financial year	*1987–88*	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*[2]
(a) Income tax[3]	9.7	9.1	9.4	9.9	9.9	9.4	9.1	9.5
(b) Corporation tax[4]	3.7	3.9	4.2	3.9	3.1	2.6	2.3	3.0
(c) Capital gains tax	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1
(d) Inheritance tax[5]	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
(e) Value added tax	5.6	5.7	5.7	5.6	6.1	6.2	6.1	6.4
(f) National Insurance contributions[6]	6.8	6.8	6.4	6.4	6.3	6.2	6.0	6.3
(g) Excise duties[7]	3.9	3.8	3.5	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.9
(h) Community charge/council tax	—	—	0.1	1.9	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.3
Rates[8]	4.0	4.1	3.9	—	—	—	—	—
(i) Business rates[9]	—	—	—	2.2	2.4	2.3	2.0	1.8
(j) Other GG receipts	6.6	6.1	6.3	5.3	4.9	4.7	5.1	4.8

[1] Money GDP adjusted for the abolition of domestic rates.

[2] Forecasts published in the revised FSBR table 4A.1 in an HMT press release on 8 December 1994.

[3] Includes surtax.

[4] Includes advance corporation tax.

[5] Includes residual receipts from estate duty and capital transfer tax.

[6] Includes national insurance surcharge.

[7] Fuel, alcohol and tobacco duties.

[8] Includes Northern Ireland rates until 1990–91.

[9] National non-domestic rates. Includes district council rates in Northern Ireland from 1990–91.

Treasury Model

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost of maintaining the Treasury model in terms of *(a)* direct staff costs and *(b)* other costs.

Mr. Nelson: The equivalent of around five full-time posts are currently devoted to economic model building and development. This staff requirement translates to a cost—including basic pay, national insurance and superannuation costs—of around £200,000 per year. It is very difficult to estimate the indirect costs involved, but these could add a further £100,000 per year if the costs of accommodation, senior management time, training and other items are taken into account.

Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what forecast he has made of *(a)* the increase or decrease in the volume and value of imports of manufacturers in 1995 and the first half of 1996 and *(b)* the increase or decrease in United Kingdom output.

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury does not publish full forecasts of manufacturing trade flows. Forecasts of non-oil trade volumes and prices are shown in table 3.3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", and forecasts of the balance of trade in manufactures in table 3.4. Forecasts of United Kingdom output are shown in tables 3.8 and 3.9.

VAT (Steam Railways)

Mr. Allason: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to extend value added tax to steam railways.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have no plans to disturb the current VAT zero rating for public passenger transport, including steam railways, where the service is confined to that of public transport in its widely accepted sense. I can confirm that the proposed restrictions to the zero rating under the VAT (Transport) Order 1994 will not normally affect steam railways, and therefore most operators will be able to continue to apply the zero rate. The exception is when payment for admission to places such as theme or safari parks or working museums includes a steam engine ride. In these cases, where admission charges are apportioned or zero rated at present, they will become wholly liable to VAT at the standard rate.

Gilt-edged Securities

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much investment by overseas residents in gilt-edged securities has increased each year since 1990 and in the current year to date; and what assessment he has made of the effect of this investment on the rate of exchange.

Mr. Nelson: A sectoral breakdown of purchases of Government securities is given at table 10.2F of the Central Statistical Office's "Financial Statistics".

Other things being equal, foreign purchases of United Kingdom gilts increase the exchange rate if sterling is acquired to effect the transaction. However, any impact is extremely difficult to quantify since a large number of factors affect the exchange rate.

European Enlargement

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of the enlargement of the EEC to include countries in eastern Europe on the budget contributions of *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the Mediterranean countries.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The impact of accession to the EU by the countries of eastern Europe would depend on the circumstances under which that enlargement took place and on the extent to which Community policies were modified in advance of enlargement. The Government remain committed to further enlargement and to ensuring that it takes place on terms which are affordable to the Exchequer.

Current Account Deficits

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his assessment of the percentage overvaluation suggested by the current account deficits in 1989 and 1994.

Mr. Nelson: The size of the current account deficit is affected by a large number of factors, including world trade, growth in United Kingdom export markets, export profit margins, domestic demand and competitiveness. The United Kingdom is currently very competitive, as seen by our strong export performance; in the third quarter of 1994 export volumes, excluding oil and erratics, were up 14 per cent. on a year earlier.

EEC Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the under-recording of imports from the EEC in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1994.

Mr. Nelson: Prior to the introduction of the Intrastat system in January 1993, statistics on goods imported into the United Kingdom were based on customs documents. Various investigations had been carried out by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the Central Statistical Office into the quality of the statistics. These found that, although some errors were present in the information, they were small and the factors involved tended to offset each other, so that no correction to the data was thought necessary.

It was expected that such errors would also be present in the Intrastat system. As such, the system was designed to include a method of measuring the effect of these errors in recording. The data are gathered during audit visits to traders and the results are included in the article published in the August 1994 edition of "Economic Trends", containing the outcome of a review of the Intrastat system carried out by the Central Statistical Office and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise. These indicate that the value of imports from other European Union countries as reported in the overseas trade statistics publications is now under-estimated by 1.5 per cent.—around £85 million per month. The balance of payments statistics published by the Central Statistical Office include a correction to take this under-recording into account. This adjustment has been applied to data for 1993 and 1994 to date and will continue in the future, and as additional information becomes available it will be revised accordingly.

It should also be borne in mind that the review established that there were miss-allocations between countries in the old system of recording—known as the "Rotterdam" effect—which caused total imports from other European Union countries to be overstated by an estimated £2,175 million in 1992, and imports from non-member countries to be understated by the same amount. This error in attribution is corrected by Intrastat.

Pre-tax Incomes

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column 122, if he will give the numbers of persons in the United Kingdom in 1973 and 1983 with pre-tax incomes of *(a)* more than £400,000 and *(b)* between £200,000 and £400,000 at 1992–93 values, using the deflator for average earnings.

Sir George Young: The table provides estimates of numbers of individuals for 1992–93, 1983–84 and 1973–74

Pre-tax income range (adjusted for changes in average male earnings)

Thousands

	£200,000–£400,000	*£400,000+*
1992–93	16	4
1983–84	6	1
1973–74	11	2

The income ranges used for 1983–84 and 1973–74 have been adjusted to take account of changes in average adult male earnings up to 1992–93.

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a revised version of table 4.1 in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" 1995–96 following his announcement of 8 December.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is shown.

Revised FSBR Table 4.1—Public sector borrowing requirement[1]

	Outturn	*Forecast*		*Projection*[2]			
	1993–94	*1994–95*	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*
General government expenditure—£billion	277.5	288.9	301.8	312	323	332	341
General government receipts	230.8	252.6	278.7	297	315	332	349
General government borrowing requirement	46.7	36.3	23.1	15	7	0	–8
PCMOB[3]	–1.3	–2.0	–1.6	–2	–2	–1	–1

Revised FSBR Table 4.1—Public sector borrowing requirement[1]

	Outturn	*Forecast*		*Projection*[2]			
	1993–94	*1994–95*	*1995–96*	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999–2000*
PSBR	45.4	34.3	21.5	13	5	–1	–9
Per cent. of money GDP							
General government expenditure	43.5	42.5	42	41.25	40.5	39.75	39.125
General government receipts	36	37.25	38.75	39.5	39.75	39.75	40
General government borrowing requirement	7.25	5.25	3.25	2	1	0	–1
PCMOB[3]	–0.25	–0.25	–0.25	–0.25	–0.25	0	0
PSBR	7	5	3	1.75	0.75	0	–1
Money GDP—£billion	639	678	719	757	795	833	872

[1] Constituent items may not sum to totals because of rounding.

[2] Projections are rounded to the nearest £1 billion from 1996–97 onwards.

[3] Public corporations' market and overseas borrowing.

Radcliffe Committee

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the conclusions of the Radcliffe committee on the working of the monetary system.

Mr. Nelson: The Radcliffe committee on the working of the monetary system reported in 1959. Its recommendations led to publication of the Bank of England "Quarterly Bulletin", December 1960, the collection of monetary statistics, and the publication of CSO "Financial Statistics". Articles covering the Radcliffe committee report can be found in Bank of England "Quarterly Bulletin" December 1969, page 448, and "Quarterly Bulletin" September 1985, page 392.

Public Sector Debt

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what projections he has made of public sector debt.

Mr. Nelson: The information is set out in the table. This corrects an error in table 4.3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report". The new figures do not alter the broad picture for the public debt forecast. The debt-to-GDP ratio is still expected to peak at end March 1996, and to decline thereafter, on both the net public sector and gross general government measures. The projections for the rest of the public finances, including the fiscal deficit, PSBR and central Government debt interest are unaffected. The new figures therefore have no bearing on the Budget statement.

	1995–96	*1996–97*	*1997–98*	*1998–99*	*1999-2000*
Net public sector debt[1]					
£ billion[2]	308	321	327	327	319
per cent. of GDP[3]	41.5	41.5	40.25	38.25	35.75
Gross General government debt[1]					
£ billion[2]	362	377	386	387	381
per cent. of GDP[3]	49	48.5	47.25	45.25	42.75

[1] At end-March.

[2] Rounded to the nearest £1 billion.

[3] GDP centred on end-March. Ratios for excessive deficits procedure use GDP for year ending in March, which raises ratio by around 1.25 per cent.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department (i) hold open meetings, (ii) conduct public consultation exercises, (iii) conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, (iv) publish a register of members' interests (v) publish agendas for meetings and (vi) publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case *(a)* under a statutory requirement or *(b)* voluntary.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* Of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Treasury, the School Teachers Review Body, occasionally undertakes public consultation exercises on a voluntary basis.

Banking Ombudsman

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of whether the terms of reference of the banking ombudsman adequately deal with complaints by non-customer third parties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* The banking ombudsman is appointed by an independent council. His terms of reference are a matter for them, but I understand that the ombudsman does, from time to time, look at cases brought by non-customers.

Developing Countries (Debt)

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list by country the total stock of existing and estimated debt outstanding to the United Kingdom by developing countries for each year from 1990 to 2000.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 6 December 1994]:* The figures for ECGD are not readily available. To assemble them manually would incur disproportionate costs. Figures for outstanding debt stock as at 31 October 1994 are given. For the ODA figures, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to her by the hon. Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 8 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *344–46*.

£ million

ECGD	*Outstanding debt stock as at 31 October 1994*
Africa	
Algeria	71.12
Angola	56.97
Benin	3.83
Burkina Faso	1.94
Cameroon	62.81
CAR	0.25
Congo	106.96
Cote d'Ivoire	30.25
Egypt	368.64
Ethiopia	9.76
Gabon	121.93
Gambia	2.36
Ghana	9.04
Guinea Rep	5.00
Kenya	60.12
Liberia	6.64
Madagascar	18.14
Malawi	0.72
Mali	11.40
Mauritania	7.50
Morocco	121.79
Mozambique	76.49
Niger	10.06
Nigeria	2,304.30
Senegal	2.38
Sierra Leone	3.62
Somalia	16.22
Sudan	168.31
Tanzania	163.31
Togo	13.22
Uganda	25.33
Zaire	80.03
Zambia	256.71
Americas	
Argentina	142.29
Bolivia	41.47
Brazil	872.98
Chile	0.06
Costa Rica	1.73
Cuba	28.55
Ecuador	61.73
Guyana	116.97
Jamaica	4.30
Mexico	195.16
Nicaragua	0.91
Peru	124.61
Trinidad and Tobago	12.24
Asia and Middle East	
Indonesia	3.55
Philippines	62.69
Vietnam	10.39
Jordan	365.21

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list by country the total amounts of existing and estimated debt service being paid to the United Kingdom by developing countries for each year from 1990 to 2000.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 6 December 1994]:* Schedules of debt service payments by developing countries to the ODA and ECGD each year since 1990–91 are given. Estimates to the year 2000 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

ECGD debt service payments 1990–91—31 October 1994

£ million

Country	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–31 October 1994*
Africa					
Algeria	—	—	—	—	—
Angola	5.01	—	—	—	—
Benin	—	—	0.32	0.13	0.23
Burkina Faso	—	—	0.37	0.09	0.20
Cameroon	—	0.17	0.38	—	0.5
CAR	—	—	—	—	—
Congo	1.43	—	—	—	0.47
Cote d'Ivoire	—	—	0.12	0.01	—
Egypt	11.84	0.29	34.86	17.52	6.80
Ethiopia	—	—	—	0.07	0.12
Gabon	—	7.50	6.04	—	—
Gambia	1.00	1.73	2.15	1.47	1.56
Ghana	1.75	1.71	1.68	1.64	0.81
Guinea Republic	0.65	2.98	0.33	0.21	0.12
Kenya	—	—	—	—	2.56
Liberia	—	—	—	—	—
Madagascar	1.70	0.64	—	—	—
Malawi	0.69	0.52	0.23	0.05	—
Mali	0.92	0.45	0.94	—	2.23
Mauritania	0.64	0.15	—	0.61	0.08
Morocco	4.71	11.14	18.15	19.07	14.46
Mozambique	1.74	2.98	2.18	0.23	0.13
Niger	—	—	—	—	—
Nigeria	252.01	236.98	86.25	16.75	—

ECGD debt service payments 1990–91—31 October 1994

£ million

Country	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–31 October 1994*
Senegal	0.15	0.32	—	—	—
Sierra Leone	—	—	—	0.46	0.04
Somalia	—	—	—	—	—
Sudan	—	—	—	—	—
Tanzania	2.53	1.27	5.13	4.29	1.58
Togo	1.07	0.43	—	—	—
Uganda	0.28	0.07	—	0.34	0.21
Zaire	1.27	—	—	—	—
Zambia	—	5.41	—	7.61	—
Americas					
Argentina	38.23	5.91	7.56	6.14	3.32
Bolivia	0.19	0.63	0.08	0.64	0.49
Brazil	—	—	120.99	120.63	49.95
Chile	0.19	—	0.23	0.12	0.06
Costa Rica	0.36	0.12	0.11	0.59	—
Cuba	—	—	—	—	—
Ecuador	4.09	3.15	5.41	—	1.55
Guyana	—	—	2.18	0.73	0.37
Jamaica	0.96	—	0.89	0.20	0.13
Mexico	2.21	—	18.77	13.60	10.39
Nicaragua	—	—	—	0.13	0.04
Peru	—	—	0.91	—	0.25
Trinidad and Tobago	0.80	0.89	0.79	0.95	0.47
Asia and Middle East					
Indonesia	0.42	—	0.52	0.51	—
Philippines	4.57	1.54	0.83	8.54	7.57
Vietnam	—	—	—	—	—
Jordan	—	—	26.75	5.17	0.10

ODA debt service payments 1990–91—31 October 1994

£ thousand

Country	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–31 October 1994*
Antigua and Barbuda	103	0	0	0	0
Barbados	67	65	63	60	32
Belize	629	957	936	928	1,123
Bolivia	22	0	0	0	0
Brazil	0	0	213	0	0
British Virgin Islands	6	6	6	6	0
Cayman Islands	95	95	65	65	34
Colombia	325	318	310	303	149
Costa Rica	240	192	295	1,040	0
Cyprus	23	20	20	20	10
Dominica	139	139	278	132	270
Ecuador	0	0	316	0	395
Falkland Islands	22	22	22	22	19
Fiji	316	304	292	280	268
Gibraltar	141	133	129	107	39
Grenada	320	285	0	628	341
Guyana	3,068	3,068	24	58	0
India	26,794	35,255	22,994	21,212	11,440
Ivory Coast	0	0	0	0	255
Jamaica	2,716	3,453	1,909	1,539	1,099
Jordan	0	1,029	391	0	0
Malaysia	1,667	1,204	1,629	2,055	798
Malta	122	75	11	0	0
Mauritius	1,274	1,168	1,105	1,00	462
Nigeria	132	7	0	0	0
Paraguay	0	235	586	235	117
Philippines	0	0	0	416	538
Seychelles	296	1,248	760	747	367
Singapore	1,042	1,042	1,042	1,042	1,042
Solomon Islands	7	7	3	10	142
St. Kitts-Nevis	94	94	94	94	47
St. Lucia	0	333	167	333	333

ODA debt service payments 1990-91—31 October 1994

£ thousand

Country	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*	*1994-31 October 1994*
St. Vincent	0	0	263	263	132
Swaziland	1,079	858	1,211	1,002	507
Thailand	78	230	150	147	70
Tonga	153	148	146	143	71
Tunisia	46	44	45	45	22
Trinidad and Tobago	31	0	0	0	0
Turkey	10,218	8,396	7,718	6,905	3,145
Vanuatu	19	18	18	9	17
Zimbabwe	1,686	1,748	1,730	1,710	847

Special Advisers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which of the special advisers serving in his Departments during the last five years were subject to positive security vetting.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* All the special advisers in the Treasury during the past five years have been subject to positive vetting.

Clubs and Public Houses

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the legislation which differentiates between private licensed clubs and public houses in respect of licences issued for the use of pool tables, juke boxes and one-armed bandits; and if he will list the licence fee applicable in each case, and the legal pay-out applicable for one-armed bandits in *(a)* registered private clubs and *(b)* public premises.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* The legislation which covers the licensing of gaming machines on any premises is the Betting and Gaming Duties Act 1981. Gaming machine licence duty is to be replaced on 1 November 1995 with amusement machine licence duty, which will include machines which did not previously require a licence. These will include certain prize machines, video games and quiz machines.

The licence fee for non-prize machines will be £250 for a full year.

Pool tables and juke boxes do not require a licence under the current duty, and will not require one when amusement machine licence duty comes into force. The current licence fee payable on one-armed bandits gaming machines depends upon the cost to play the machine once and the amount of the prize that can be won.

Gaming machines—small prize machines—*where the payout cannot exceed £6* in money or money's worth and which cost *5p or less* to play once do not require a licence.

Gaming machines—small prize machines—*where the payout cannot exceed £6* in money or money's work and which cost *more than 5p* to play once require a licence costing £535 for a full year.

Gaming machines—jackpot machines—which *pay out more than £6* in money or money's worth and which cost *5p* to play once require a licence costing £535 for a full year.

Gaming machines—jackpot machines—which *pay out more than £6* in money or money's worth and which cost *more than 5p* to play once require a licence costing £1,375 for a full year.

Customs and Excise is not responsible for the legislation on the siting of gaming machines. This is governed by the social law and is a matter for the Home Secretary.

TRANSPORT

MV Derbyshire

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport with whom he has had meetings in relation to the MV Derbyshire since the International Transport Workers Federation expedition which located the wreckage of the MV Derbyshire.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend is currently considering the chief inspector of marine accident's assessment of the sonar and video material provided by the ITF and whether further action needs to be taken. He has discussed the issue with officials in the Department.

A69

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what current *(a)* building and *(b)* planning activities are being carried out by him in respect of (i) improvements to the A1 between the Low Fell interchange and the Scottish border and (ii) improvements to the A69 between the A1 west road interchange and the M6; how many of his staff and in which locations are working on such improvements; and when each project is scheduled for conclusion.

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 20 December 1994:

The Minister for Railways and Roads, John Watts has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question on what current (a) building and (b) planning activities are being carried out by him in respect of (i) improvements to the A1 between the Low Fell Interchange and the Scottish Border and (ii) improvements to the A69 between the A1 West Road Interchange and the M6; how many of his staff and in which locations are working on such improvements; and when each project is scheduled for conclusion.

(a) The schemes under construction are:

A1 North Shotton slip road for completion in April 1995.

A69 Route action road safety strategy for completion by March 1995.

(b) The schemes where planning activities are being carried out in respect of the following:-

(i) Improvements to the A1 between Low Fell Interchange and the Scottish Border.

A1—
Hitchcroft to Cawledge
Stannington Grade Separation
Low Lyn Marginal Strips
Gateshead Western Bypass (Sign Gantries)
Gateshead Western Bypass Improvement
Morpeth to Lanehead Improvement
Willowburn to Denwick Improvement
(ii) Improvements to the A69 between the A1 West Road Interchange and the M6.
A69—
Cleugh Head to Scarrow Hill Improvement
Haltwhistle Bypass DBFO
Warwick Bridge Bypass

A number of other route enhancement schemes are programmed and implemented annually.

It is not possible to give completion dates for schemes in preparation as this depends upon the availability of resources, national priorities and satisfactory completion of statutory procedures.

There are 7 members of staff dedicated full time to national programme construction schemes.

A further 8 staff work on the management of the network which in part includes work on other route enhancement and improvement schemes implemented annually. There are also a number of staff providing administrative support. All staff are in Newcastle.

Maritime Safety Procedures

Mr. Charles Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the current operations of emergency radio procedures following the circumstances of the Heather Bloan fishing boat being lost at sea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: A review of emergency radio procedures has been under way for some time and my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping is considering a proposal that the Coastguard agency should assume responsibility for the medium frequency radio telephony distress, safety and urgency watch on 2182 kHz. This service is currently provided under contract by British Telecommunications International.

Marchioness

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many fatalities occurred on the Marchioness; and of these how many were non-United Kingdom citizens.

Mr. Norris: Fifty-one people died, 16 of whom were non-UK citizens.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all those who submitted evidence to the marine accident investigation branch report into the Marchioness disaster.

Mr. Norris: The MAIB inquiry obtained evidence, either orally or in the form of written statements, from well over 100 people. In the case of most of the survivors, the statements were those made to the police. It is not normal practice to provide a list of witnesses.

Remembrance Day

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what funding his Department provided in respect of Merchant Navy veterans attending *(a)* the remembrance day ceremony in London and *(b)* other remembrance day activities throughout the country in 1993–94 and 1994–95.

Mr. Norris: The Department's expenditure under this heading was £1,576.75 in 1993–94 and £1,159.06 in 1994–95. It was incurred in respect of ceremonies in London. No expenditure was incurred in respect of Merchant Navy representation at such ceremonies outside London.

Passenger Service Ships

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he has suggested or promoted to amend or repeal hours of work regulations concerning maximum permitted hours of *(a)* officers and *(b)* others on ships registered in the United Kingdom or ships in regular passenger services to or from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: In 1993, the Department sent out for consultation draft regulations and a draft merchant shipping notice on hours of work and rest on United Kingdom-registered ships. The drafts are being reviewed in the light of the responses to the consultation documents and of discussions with both sides of industry. We hope to lay the regulations before Parliament early in 1995.

Driving Standards Agency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many personal files of Driving Standards Agency employees contain trade union literature or circulars; and what is the purpose of maintaining such records.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Driving Standards Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from S. J. Ford to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 19 December 1994:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of personal files on DSA employees containing trade union literature or circulars and the purpose of maintaining such records.

No personal files of staff in this Agency contain trade union literature or circulars.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many occasions since the establishment of the agency a Driving Standards Agency employee has had trade union literature or circulars removed from his or her file, following complaints by that employee.

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Driving Standards Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from S. J. Ford to Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, dated 19 December 1994:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your question about the number of occasions since the Driving Standards Agency was established when Agency employees have had trade union literature or circulars removed from their personal file, following complaints by that employee.

There has been only one such occasion, in 1992. After that incident all personal files were checked to ensure that no other such mistakes happened. No other cases were found.

Rail Privatisation

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff employed by his Department are currently engaged on work associated with the reorganisation and privatisation of the British Railways Board and Railtrack.

Mr. Watts: Eighty-four full-time equivalents.

Rail Projects (EC Funding)

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 5 December, *Official Report*, columns *35-36*, if he will provide details of European regional development fund funding given over the last 10 years to finance public sector rail projects.

Mr. Watts *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* I have placed the information in the Library.

Rolling Stock

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average age of rolling stock used on the Hayes, Kent to London rail line at peak times.

Mr. Watts: Approximately eight years and falling. It is expected that all services on this line will be operated by Networkers by April 1995.

Aviation Facilities

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what is his policy on general aviation facilities.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government recognise that general aviation, and in particular business aviation, can bring economic and wider benefits to national competitiveness as well as to local and regional economies. The existence of aviation facilities can be a factor in business location, especially for international companies. The Government wish these benefits to be fully recognised in the planning system, alongside the environmental impacts.

As demand for commercial air transport grows, general aviation is likely to find access to larger airports increasingly restricted. The Government consider that strategic and local planning guidance will need to recognise the role that smaller airfields and landing strips play, and the difficulty of reopening or providing substitute facilities for airfields that have closed. The Government believe that, where there are proposals to develop an existing airfield, a flying option should be retained where demand clearly exists, or is expected in the longer term. But the Government are not willing to subsidise use of general aviation facilities.

There are particular pressures on business aviation in the south-east, especially in the sector to the west and south of London. Business aviation can expect to find it increasingly difficult to operate from Heathrow and Gatwick. Farnborough has the runway length to accommodate larger business aircraft, but its future as an airfield has been uncertain for some time, because it is surplus to MOD requirements. Disposal options are being studied and the Government wish these to take full account of the benefits of continued aviation activity. In the longer term, there is likely to be considerable demand for business aviation of the right type and in the right location in the London area.

The Government therefore believe it important to retain capacity for business aviation at Farnborough. The Government expect this view to be fully reflected in the local planning system.

I expect shortly to be making a statement about civil use at RAF Northolt.

Red Route, London

Mr. Forman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the London red route network to be operational.

Mr. Norris: I have revised the objectives of the Traffic Director for London to require him to implement the priority—red—route network so that it will become operational in the year 2000.

Traffic Area Network

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide details of the proposed review of the traffic area network.

Mr. Norris: The review of the traffic area network will include an efficiency scrutiny. It will be undertaken by Mr. Stephen Curtis, currently chief executive of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, and will begin early in the new year. The review is expected to last some four to five months. It will look at the organisation and work of the traffic area offices and will examine the scope for improving effectiveness and efficiency. A copy of the full terms of reference have been placed in the Library of the House.

Trust Ports

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in the first sale of the trust ports, for which port authority the benchmark figure was leaked; and to whom.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 14 December 1994]:* Although the Department understands there was a leak, it has no documentary evidence. In these circumstances, it is not appropriate to identify the parties involved.

Channel Tunnel

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the numbers and grades of civil servants in his Department concerned with channel tunnel rail safety *(a)* in 1994 and *(b)* 1995.

Mr. Watts: The numbers and grades of officials in the Department's channel tunnel safety unit are:

At 1 April 1994:
  G5: 1
  G7: 4
  HEO: 4
  EO: 2
  AO: 1
  AA: 3
  PS: 1
TOTAL: 16

At 1 April 1995:
  G5: 1
  G7: 2
  HEO: 4
  EO: 2
  AO: 1
  AA: 3
TOTAL: 14

From time to time other officials in the Department contribute in varying measure to consideration of tunnel rail safety.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to give authorisation for special vehicle and coach shuttle services through the channel tunnel.

Mr. Watts: The Anglo-French Channel Tunnel Intergovernmental Commission authorises Eurotunnel to operate services in the channel tunnel. No application to carry special vehicles and coaches on the shuttles has yet been received, but an application from Eurotunnel is expected early next year.

EMPLOYMENT

Working Hours

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the total number of hours worked per week by the working population in October this year and in October 1989, October 1979 and October 1973.

Mr. Oppenheim: Latest estimates from the labour force survey show that in Great Britain in summer 1994 employees and self-employed worked an average of 813 million hours per week, seasonally adjusted. The available figures for earlier years refer to the spring each year: 885 million hours per week in 1989 and 867 million hours per week in 1979, not seasonally adjusted. No comparable information is available for 1973.

New Earnings Survey

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers were excluded for the 1994 new earnings survey; what were the main reasons for such exclusion; and how many were excluded for each reason.

Mr. Oppenheim: The new earnings survey sampling fraction is nominally 1 per cent. of employees in employment. The following table presents the actual sampling fractions of the 1994 NES, based on employees in employment at March 1994.

	Number of employees		
	Employees in employment (a)	*NES (b)*	*Sampling fraction (per cent.) (b)/(a)*
Full-time	14,961,000	120,219	.80
Part-time	5,876,000	35,159	.60
All employees	20,837,000	155,378	.75

The main reasons for the exclusion of full-time workers are: they were no longer working for the employer recorded on the Inland Revenue file of names and addresses used to distribute the questionnaires, in some cases, because the employer had gone out of business; because the worker was in a category—for example, occupational pensioner, non-salaried director, working for spouse, working outside the United Kingdom—not covered by the survey; and because there were unresolved inconsistencies in the data provided by employers.

In addition to these reasons, part-time workers are excluded if they are not on the Inland Revenue file. This will happen if their gross weekly earnings are below the threshold for PAYE.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the percentage change between April 1979 to April 1994 in real earnings of blue collar workers in manufacturing relative to white collar workers in the private sector together with his estimate of the corresponding increase in output per head.

Mr. Oppenheim: Information from the new earnings survey at April, shows that the earnings of full-time manual employees in manufacturing increased by 17.6 per cent. between 1979 and 1994 when adjusted for the increase in the retail prices index at April.

The corresponding increase for private sector full-time non-manual employees was 56.3 per cent.

The information requested for output per head is not available.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the proportions of *(a)* part-time female manual workers, *(b)* part-time female non-manual workers and *(c)* all female part-time workers with earnings excluding overtime less than £5.53 per hour in (i) Great Britain, (ii) west midlands region, (iii) West Midlands metropolitan county, (iv) Hereford and Worcester, (v) Shropshire, (vi) Staffordshire and (vii) Warwickshire for 1994.

Mr. Oppenheim: Information available from the new earnings survey, showing the proportions of employees with earnings below the amount requested at April 1994, is given in the following tables:

Hourly earnings excluding overtime of part-time women on adult rates—pay unaffected by absence
Proportion earning below £5.53: April 1994

	Per cent.
Manual women	
West Midlands Region	92.5
West Midlands MC	90.5
Hereford and Worcester	97.7
Shropshire	90.7
Staffordshire	97.9
Warwickshire	[1]—
Great Britain	90.7
Non-manual women	
West Midlands Region	66.6
West Midlands MC	62.0
Hereford and Worcester	71.9
Shropshire	[1]—
Staffordshire	69.5
Warwickshire	70.5
Great Britain	64.6
All women	
West Midlands Region	76.4
West Midlands MC	73.5
Hereford and Worcester	80.3
Shropshire	78.0
Staffordshire	81.7
Warwickshire	74.3
Great Britain	73.6

Source:

New earnings survey.

Note:

[1] Denotes sample too small and/or standard error too large for reliable estimate.

Demolitions

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when guidelines for demolitions and explosions in the course of demolition were last revised; and what further revisions are under consideration.

Mr. Oppenheim: The Health and Safety Executive published its guidance on demolition and on the use of explosives in demolition in 1984–85. An information sheet is being prepared to clarify factors to be taken into consideration when determining exclusion zones during demolition by explosives. HSE is also involved with the development of two British standard codes of practice, BS 6187 and BS 5607, which give guidance on best practice.

Journalists

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what has been the change in the real average earnings of journalists working on newspapers in the Greater London area, together with the median, quartile and decile since 1979;

(2) what has been the change in the real average earnings since 1979 of journalists working on broadcasting; and what were the median, quartile and decile.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information requested on the earnings of journalists in the Greater London area is not available.

The new earnings survey shows that average gross weekly earnings of "authors, writers and journalists" as a group increased by 60.6 per cent. between April 1979 and April 1994 when adjusted for the increase in the retail prices index at April.

Anglo-Great Lakes Corporation

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the costs of investigations carried out by the Health and Safety Executive at the site of the Anglo-Great Lakes Corporation in Newcastle.

Mr. Oppenheim: Health and Safety Executive staff have paid a number of visits to the site formerly occupied by the Anglo-Great Lakes Corporation.

At present, HSE records the time spent at individual sites only in a format needed to produce aggregated totals of different activities. The total time spent, and hence the costs, at any particular site over a period of time could be extracted only at disproportionate cost.

Training

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total expenditure on *(a)* employment training and *(b)* youth training in 1993–94 by districts within the Yorkshire and Humberside region; and how many (i) males and (ii) females were on such schemes.

Mr. Paice: The information is not available in the format requested.

Employment training, which was one of the Government's measures for helping the long-term unemployed, was incorporated into training for work from April 1993. Figures are only available by the areas covered by the training and enterprise councils in Yorkshire and Humberside.

The table shows provisional expenditure, by TEC, for 1993–94 for youth training, including youth credits and training for work.

Training and enterprise councils	*Youth training (£ million)*	*Training for work (£ million)*
Barnsley/Doncaster	11.911	8.506
Bradford	10.548	3.904
Calderdale/Kirklees	10.149	5.601
Humberside	15.871	8.529
Leeds	6.856	5.452
North Yorkshire	7.081	2.921
Rotherham	5.236	2.923
Sheffield	8.332	6.393
Wakefield	4.126	3.247
Total	80.111	47.476

The training for work figures do not include allowance payments paid to unemployed participants by the Employment Service at a rate equivalent to the participants former benefit entitlement plus £10 per week.

During 1993–94 the number of males who entered training on these programmes was 18,216—YT and YC—and 30,583—TfW—and the number of females who entered training was 13,440—YT and YC—and 11,695—TfW.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the programmes for which his Department is responsible for directly or via agents for training employed people or provide on–the–job training; and what funding is available for each scheme.

Mr. Paice *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* The primary responsibility for training employed people rests with their employers. However, the Government are encouraging them to invest in the training and development of their work forces through:

Employer investment in people provision—in 1994–95 up to £63 million is available through training and enterprise councils;

Small firms training loans—in 1994–95 up to £2.03 million is expected to be made available through the participating banks;

Career development loans—in 1994–95 up to £61 million is expected to be made available through the participating banks.

In addition, from 1 April 1995 the Government will be making available some £63 million over three years for skills for small businesses.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made on the appointment of independent inspectors for NVQ and other qualifications obtained in the course of youth training scheme and training for work funded training programmes.

Mr. Paice *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* The plans of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications are well advanced. We look to recruitment of field staff to be under way by April 1995. Inspectors will monitor the performance of national vocational qualification centres only, across all centres including those active in youth training and training for work.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was *(a)* the cost of the Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council and *(b)* the average cost of other training and enterprise councils for 1993–94.

Mr. Paice: Information on the amount of money the Department paid to training and enterprise councils in 1993–94 is still provisional. The total payment to the 75 English training and enterprise councils to cover programmes and running cost was £1,451 million; the average cost was £19.3 million. Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council was paid £26.4 million.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total budget of the Berkshire training and enterprise council for the financial year 1994–95.

Mr. Paice: The training and enterprise council covering Berkshire, south Buckinghamshire and the Oxfordshire travel-to-work areas of Henley and Aylesbury is Thames Valley Enterprise Ltd. The budget made available by the Employment Department, Department for the Environment and the Department of Trade and Industry to Thames Valley Enterprise Ltd. during 1994–95 is £36,466,659. The budget includes funding, via the training and enterprise councils, for business links. Budget information below training and enterprise councils level is not available.

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total budget of the Dorset training and enterprise council for the year 1994–95.

Mr. Paice: The total budget made available by the Department to Dorset training and enterprise council for the year 1994–95 is £19.7 million.

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress Calderdale and Kirklees training and enterprise council is making in meeting the criteria for the award of a three-year licence.

Mr. Paice: I am pleased to announce that Calderdale and Kirklees training and enterprise council has now completed the process of meeting the rigorous standard we set for the award of the new three–year licences. Its licence will be effective from April 1995.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the funding of the salary and office expenses and overheads of the office of the national training and enterprise council director.

Mr. Paice *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* We understand that the Training and Enterprise Council National Council is funded by contributions from individual TECs. The TEC national council is responsible for decisions about salaries of its staff and office costs.

Construction Industry (Safety)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library a list of construction companies that have been successfully prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive in the last five years together with the judgments obtained.

Mr. Oppenheim: Information is not held centrally in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The numbers of information laid by the Health and Safety Executive and the resulting convictions in the construction sector in each of the last five years for which figures are available are shown in the table:

Year of hearing[1]	*Information laid*	*Convictions*	*Average fine per conviction (£)*
1989–90	781	658	762
1990–91	746	600	857
1991–92	746	604	1,035
1992–93	701	572	1,279
1993–94[2]	523	410	3,412

[1] Years commencing 1 April

[2] Provisional

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to introduce legislation on construction design and safety regulations.

Mr. Oppenheim: I hope to make an announcement shortly.

Employment Subsidies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs he expects to create with the aid of a subsidy for the employment of those out of work for at least two years; if he expects the level of unemployment to be reduced as a result; and what assessment he has made of the policies of the French Government to reduce the number of long-term unemployed.

Miss Widdecombe: The workstart employer subsidy aims to encourage employers to take on long-term unemployed people. In addition, it may have some beneficial effect on the number of new jobs and the level of unemployment. However, job subsidies are not cost free, and the control of public spending is essential to reduce non-wage labour costs and create more jobs.

France has several measures in common with the United Kingdom, including measures similar to restart and jobclubs. As in the UK, it has also implemented cuts in national insurance contributions for the lower paid. However, France also has other policies—a national minimum wage, high non-wage labour costs and support for the social chapter—which would in our view damage job creation if introduced in the UK. The UK has a lower rate of unemployment than France.

Career Development Loans

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action his Department has taken to ensure that public awareness of career development loans has increased throughout the year 1993–94.

Mr. Paice: The career development loan advertising campaign in 1993–94 comprised loose and classified insertions in the national press running throughout the year, and two short periods of predominantly local radio advertising.

Direct mailing undertaken during the year to university, college and careers office principals was also carried out. In addition, the Department continued to issue its quarterly career development loan newsletter. In 1993–94, more than 65,000 newsletters were distributed to training and education providers, training enterprise councils in England and Wales and local enterprise companies in Scotland, Employment Service offices, careers offices, citizens advice bureaux, libraries and participating banks.

An updated version of the CDL promotional video was distributed to all TECs, LECs and Employment Service offices.

Careers Service

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received alleging occasions of neglect of duty by the careers service inspectorate; and if he will make a statement on the course of action to be followed when such allegations are received.

Mr. Paice: There has been only one such occurrence. The allegations were pursued extensively and we are satisfied there was no neglect of duty. We have every confidence in the integrity of the chief inspector and his staff.

The Department will investigate swiftly and rigorously any allegations against officials in the careers service inspectorate or elsewhere. Those making the allegations will be informed as quickly as possible of the outcome of these investigations. The precise course of action would vary according to the nature of allegations received.

Vocational Counselling

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received advocating the regulation of the activities of those charging for private vocational counselling sessions, who are not currently members of any professional association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Paice: No representations have been received.

Unemployment

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women that are currently unemployed for each year between the ages of 50 and 60 years.

Mr. Oppenheim: The information is provided in the following tables:

ILO unemployment rates: by age and sex Great Britain summer 1994 percentages

Age	*All persons*	*Males*	*Females*
50	6.1	8.4	[1]—
51	6.8	8.5	[1]—
52	8.1	10.5	5.2
53	7.4	9.3	5.3
54	7.7	9.7	5.3
55	7.7	9.9	4.9
56	10.0	12.4	6.7
57	7.7	10.6	[1]—
58	9.2	10.7	7.1
59	10.7	14.1	[1]—
60	6.9	9.7	[1]—

[1] Estimates based on figures below 10,000—after grossing up—are not used, as they are subject to unacceptably large sampling errors.

Claimant unemployment rates (UK): by age and sex October 1994 percentage

Age	*All persons*	*Male*	*Female*
50–59	8.4	11.3	4.7

Source:
Labour force survey.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the obstacles which reduce the likelihood of young people aged 16 and 17 years who are currently classified as *(a)* International Labour Organisation unemployed or *(b)* economically inactive and not currently in full-time education taking up one of the opportunities available to them under Government programmes (i) in general and (ii) in respect of each category of opportunity and each category for young people in the United Kingdom and in each part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Paice: The Government guarantee that all 16 and 17-year-olds not in education, training or employment and who are seeking training are offered suitable training places. It is necessary for young people to register with the careers service and I am not aware of any obstacles which prevent them from doing so. Furthermore, the Government have committed additional resources in 1995–96 to strengthen careers guidance from age 13. We are also looking on a cross-Governmental basis at the position of 16 and 17-year-olds who are not in education, training or employment.

Part-time Workers

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the Government's policy on the employment rights of part-time workers and indicate his response to the House of Lords judgment in the judicial review case R *v.* Secretary of State for Employment ex parte Equal Opportunities Commission and another.

Mr. Portillo: The Government welcome the growth of part-time work, which is one of the range of flexible working practices which can be of benefit both to employers and to employees in reconciling work and other commitments.

A comprehensive framework of employment protection rights exists to safeguard employees against unreasonable treatment by their employers, and many of those rights—including those relating to sex and race discrimination, to unlawful deductions from wages and to time off for antenatal care—have long applied to part-timers on exactly the same basis as full-timers. The statutory entitlement of part-timer and full-timers alike were further extended and enhanced by the Government in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Acts 1993.

The Government are, however, committed to the principle that the legislation should strike an appropriate balance between the rights of employees and the burdens on business. They have sought to achieve that through the deregulation of the labour market, where appropriate, and believe that this has helped to stimulate the growth for new job opportunities. They therefore oppose the imposition of new restrictions which would inhibit employers and employees from exercising the freedom to reach agreements on the basis of their own priorities, needs and circumstances. The Government rejected on 6 December 1994 the draft EC directive on part-time work as this would have imposed unacceptable constraints on Government action to promote part-time work, and would in any case have extended EC regulation into an area in which the principle of subsidiarity should apply. Such matters are best determined by individual member states, according to their own law and practice.

In the judicial review case R *v.* Secretary of State for Employment ex parte Equal Opportunities Commission and another, the Equal Opportunities Commission alleged that the application of different qualifying conditions for part-timers compared with full-timers in the unfair dismissal and redundancy payments legislation discriminated against women contrary to European equal pay and equal treatment law. The Government conceded that, because there are more women than men working part time, the hours threshold had a disproportionate adverse impact on women, but argued that the thresholds were justified on objective grounds, to reduce burdens on business and promote part-time work opportunities. The High Court and the Court of Appeal rejected the EOC's case, but the House of Lords found in its favour.

The Government have studied the House of Lord's judgment and given very careful consideration to all the legal implications and policy options arising from it. It clearly gives the relevant European legislation a much wider interpretation than was envisaged when it was originally adopted, and reinforces the Government's view that the priority for Europe should not be tackling unemployment rather than adopting further costly social legislation which increases burdens on business and destroy jobs.

The Government always honour their legal obligations, however, and accept that the judgment must be acted upon. The House of Lords is the supreme court of the United Kingdom and there is no possibility of further appeal or of reopening the case. Only the courts themselves can refer questions to be determined by the European Court of Justice, and the House of Lords considered it unnecessary to do so in this case.

Having taken very careful account of the policy options and their legal implications, the Government have been advised that the judgment requires the removal from employment protection legislation of all existing distinctions based on the number of hours worked per week. We will shortly be laying before the House appropriate regulations under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972.

Although the Government were unable to satisfy the House of Lords that the hours thresholds were objectively justified, they continue to believe that their removal will make employers more reluctant to create new part-time jobs, and may indeed threaten some existing jobs. The effects of the change will therefore be carefully monitored, to assess their impact on business and on employment opportunities. The Government will reconsider the position in due course if objective evidence of adverse effects emerges.

ENVIRONMENT

Toxic Materials

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *134*, if he will publish the results of the monitoring of particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and oxygen, and of the samples and analysis of heavy metals and dioxins, being produced in the trials of substitute fuels at Redland Aggregates plant at Thrislington, County Durham.

Mr. Atkins: The results of the monitoring of particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, oxygen and dioxins produced in the trials up to 9 November 1994, with substitute fuels at the Redland Aggregates plant at Thrislington, County Durham, are already available on the public registers held by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution at Leeds, and at the offices of Sedgefield district council in Spennymoor and the National Rivers Authority in Gosforth.

Samples for heavy metal analysis have been taken, and when the results are available, they will also be placed on the public registers.

Carbon monoxide monitors are already installed on the plant as part of the standard operational control. Results obtained prior to IPC authorisation from these monitors can be made available to the public under the Environmental Information Regulations, SI 1992 No. 3240.

Burlington House

Mr. Bryan Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect on the work of the learned societies of requiring a charge equivalent to a full commercial rental value to be paid on their tenancy of Burlington house.

Sir Paul Beresford: I will write to the hon. Member.

Advisory Committees

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of the meetings held, the secretarial and advisory arrangements, the budgeted and actual expenditure and the subjects of any reports and submissions produced by *(a)* the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment, *(b)* the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council, *(c)* the Property Advisory Group, *(d)* the Assessment Panel for Construction Research and *(e)* the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment; and if he will list the functions and objectives of each body.

Sir Paul Beresford: The information requested is set out for each body in turn:

Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment

The Committee was established to provide a forum for strategic level dialogue between Government and business on environmental issues; to mobilise the business community in demonstrating good environmental practice; and to provide a link with, and focus attention on, international business initiatives on the environment.

The committee was reconstituted in November 1993 and five new working groups established. Since then the main committee has met five times and 26 working group meetings have taken place.

The secretarial work of the main committee is shared between the DOE and DTI while the DOE provides secretarial support for four working groups and the DTI the other.

The DOE's expenditure on secretarial support, reports and publicity in 1993–94 was approximately £150,000. There was no separately allocated budget for this work. DTI related costs are not available.

Reports published include:

ACBE's Fourth Progress Report (Oct 94)

Financial Section Working Group Report (Nov 93)

A Guide to Environmental Best practice for Company Transport (Nov 93)

The Environment—a business guide (1993)

Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council

The council's function is to provide longer-term strategic advice to British Waterways and the Minister on amenity and recreational aspects.

The council meets about six times each year.

The secretarial services are provided by British Waterways and costs are shown in British Waterways annual report and accounts. The Department's expenditure in 1993–94 for the chairman's remuneration was £13,900 against a budget of £18,500.

No reports were issued in 1993–94.

Property Advisory Group

The group's function is to keep under review changes in the land and property market, advise on matters concerning the development process, and advise the Department generally on property issues.

The group held 10 main meetings and six sub-group meetings during 1993–94.

The secretariat is provided by the DOE. The Department's expenditure in 1993–94 was approximately £23,000. There was no separately allocated budget.

No reports or submissions were published during 1993–94.

Assessment Panel for Construction Research

The panel provides independent expert advice on the evaluation of the Department's construction research programme and on development of its future strategy.

The panel, in its present form came into being in May 1994 and has met three times.

Secretarial services are provided by the Department at an estimated cost for 1994–95 of £8,700.

No reports have been issued yet.

Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment

The committee provides advice to Ministers and others on the exercise of specified powers under the Environmental Protection Act 1990; on releases to the environment of animals, plants and genetically modified organisms; on human health aspects of releases to the environment; and on research needs.

The committee met six times in 1993–94.

The secretarial services are provided by the Department. The budgeted expenditure for 1993–94 was £21,700 and actual expenditure £15,600.

Reports are published jointly by the Department and the committee and include:

Note 1—The Regulation and control of the Deliberate Release of Genetically Modified Organisms.

Note 2—Fast Track Procedures for Certain GMO Releases

Note 3—Reduced information Requirements for releases of Plants under the GMO Regulations

Note 4—Guidance for experimental releases of genetically modified plants

Note 5—Guidance for experimental releases of genetically modified micro-organisms (excluding viruses and similar agents)

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Waste Disposal

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will outline the process and timetable for Her Majesty's inspector of pollution's investigation of the Drigg low-level waste disposal site.

Mr. Atkins: I will write to the hon. Member.

Special Advisers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *877*, if he will make a statement regarding his Department's expenditure on special advisers in each of the last three financial years and for the financial year 1979–80.

Sir Paul Beresford: I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on 19 December, *Official Report*, column *937*.

Departmental Telephones

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by his Department for each of the last five years.

Sir Paul Beresford: I will write to the hon. Member.

Drax Power Station

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will instruct National Power to use the desulphurisation-equipped generators at Drax power station to their full capacity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: As I indicated in answer to the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms Ruddock) on 22 November—*Official Report*, columns *66-67*— Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution currently in discussion with the generators both about the operation of their FGD-equipped plant in the context of each company's overall generating operations and more generally about improvement programmes for all of the companies' stations. Decision on these questions will be taken in the light of an assessment of what constitutes BATNEEC—best available techniques not entailing excessive costs.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what guidelines have been set by the International Atomic Energy Agency for site selection of a deep repository for radioactive waste;

(2) if he will list the guidelines set by the Institute of Geologists, now the British Geological Survey, for site selection of a deep repository for radioactive waste.

Mr. Atkins: This information should be obtained from the organisation concerned.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce the outcome of the radioactive waste review.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) on 6 December, *Official Report*, column *132*.

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those Liberal Democrat hon. Members who wrote to him *(a)* in support of and *(b)* to seek a meeting with him concerning bids from (i) their own local authority and (ii) other local authorities for moneys from the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Curry: I will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities in Lancashire that sought a meeting with the north-west regional office prior to submitting their bids under the single regeneration budget.

Mr. Curry: The details are as follows:

Blackburn
Burnley
Hyndburn
Lancaster
Blackpool
Pendle
Preston
Ribble Valley

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the bids made by bodies other than local authorities in the single regeneration budget process in the north-west.

Mr. Curry: The details are as follows:

Manchester Foyer (St. Vincent's Housing Association)
Manufacturing Partnership (Lancashire)
Cumbria Business Futures
West Coast Project
Blackstone Edge
Bridge Hall Area Consolidation Regeneration
Community Arts and Sports Centre, Halliwell, Bolton
Gorton Community Forum
Industrial Society (North West-wide)
Inner City Creative Initiative Teaching Unit, Moss Side
Longford Hall
Oldham TELECITE
Visions Initiative, Castlefield, Manchester
Access to Primary Teaching for Asian and Black People (East Lancashire
Chorley Open Learning Centre
Midstream (West Lancashire)
PATH (Preston and Blackburn)
Ribble Link Navigation
Silicon Fylde

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the six successful west midlands bids for the single regeneration budget which contain projects which would previously have been eligible to be considered for estate action funding and the details of the housing projects involved.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 19 December 1994]*: The six bids are listed, with details of the housing projects involved.

The Cannock Gateway Project

Benion Road, Bevan Lee and Hampton Street.

Coventry and Warwickshire Partnerships

Camp Hill Estate, Nuneaton. Stoke Aldermoor Regeneration Project, Coventry. Henley Green Regeneration Project, Coventry.

Dudley, Foundation for the Future

Pensnett and a joint Brierley Hill, Hawbush, Pensnett and Chapel Street project.

Regenerating Wolverhampton

Stowlawn, Oxford Street/Temple Street and The Lunt.

Sandwell Regeneration Partnerships

Hateley Heath

Stoke-on-Trent, Corbridge Community Renewal

Grange Estate and Bucknall Road.

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those local authorities that were successful in more than one single regeneration budget bid.

Mr. Curry: The following authorities were partners in more than one successful single regeneration budget bid:

London Borough of Barking
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Bedfordshire County Council
London Borough of Bexley
Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council
London Borough of Brent
London Borough of Bromley
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Cambridgeshire County Council
Cleveland County Council
Craven District Council
London Borough of Croydon
Derbyshire County Council
Devon County Council
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Durham County Council
London Borough of Ealing
East Sussex County Council
Essex County Council
Fenland District council
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
Gillingham District Council
Gloucester City Council
London Borough of Greenwich
Hampshire County Council
London Borough of Harrow
Hartlepool District Council
London Borough of Havering
London Borough of Hillingdon
London Borough of Hounslow
Hull City Council
Kent County Council
London Borough of Kingston
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
London Borough of Lambeth
Langbaurgh-on-Tees District Council
Leominster District Council
London Borough of Lewisham
Lincolnshire County Council
Liverpool Metropolitan Borough Council
City of London
Manchester Metropolitan Borough Council
London Borough of Merton
Middlesbrough District Council
City of Newcastle
London Borough of Newham
North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
Northumberland County Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Oxfordshire County Council
London Borough of Richmond
Richmondshire District Council
Rochester-upon-Medway City Council
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Ryedale District Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Selby District Council
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
Sheffield Metropolitan Borough Council
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
London Borough of Southwark
Stockton-on-Tees District Council
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council
City of Sunderland
London Borough of Sutton
Thurrock District Council
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
London Borough of Waltham Forest
London Borough of Wandsworth
Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council
Wrekin District Council

Cleveland

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the timetable for proposed reorganisation of Cleveland is affected by the county council's application for a judicial review.

Mr. Curry: We have laid before Parliament, for its approval, a draft order to give effect to reorganisation in Cleveland on 1 April 1996. If that approval is given, we shall consider the position in relation to the county council's outstanding application for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal before the order is made.

National Environmental Technology Centre

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the sites for monitoring air pollution operated by the National Environmental Technology Centre are sited at a road; and if he will list the sites.

Mr. Atkins: The National Environmental Technology Centre currently operates the automatic monitoring station at the Cromwell road kerbside site on behalf of the Department of the Environment. The National Environmental Technology Centre is also contracted by the Department to co-ordinate the on-going national survey of nitrogen dioxide using passive diffusion tube samplers. Measurements are being made at nearly 1,300 locations across the United Kingdom. One in four of the diffusion tubes sites have been specifically chosen to be at roadside locations. The locations of these sites can be obtained from the National Environmental Technology Centre.

Palm House, Liverpool

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in restoring Palm house, Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford: As the hon. Member is aware, essential repair work to the fabric of the building was completed with urban programme funding of £0.254 million in 1993. Liverpool city council has now submitted to the Government office for Merseyside an objective 1 funding application for future phases of the work in 1995 and beyond. I expect the outcome of the objective 1 bidding round to be announced in May 1995.

Nirex

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to make a decision on the planning application by Nirex to build a rock characterisation facility;

(2) how many representations he has received in opposition to the proposed Nirex rock characterisation facility; and how many of these favoured on-site, above-ground storage of nuclear waste;

(3) what plans he has for a public inquiry into the application by Nirex to build a rock characterisation facility.

Sir Paul Beresford: I will write to the hon. Member.

Air Pollution

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of the sites for recording air pollution in the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Mr. Atkins: The following automatic monitoring stations funded by the Department of the Environment are located in the Yorkshire and Humberside region:

Barnsley, Leeds, Kingston-upon-Hull, Sheffield and High Muffles in North Yorkshire.

The Department in collaboration with local authorities is supporting on-going national surveys of nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide using passive diffusion tube samplers. Measurements of smoke are also made at the same sites as those used for the sulphur dioxide measurements. The local authorities listed are involved in these surveys.

(a) Nitrogen Dioxide:
Humberside
—Boothferry, Glanford, Grimsby and Kingston-upon-Hull.
Yorkshire
—Bradford, Calderdale, Doncaster, Hambleton, Harrogate, Kirklees, Leeds, Richmondshire, Rotherham, Ryedale, Scarborough, Selby and Wakefield.

[There are four diffusion tube sites in each area.]

(b) Smoke/Sulphur Dioxide:
Humberside
—Cleethorpes (2), Glanford (1), Grimsby (1), Kingston-upon-Hull (1) and Scunthorpe (1).
Yorkshire
—Barnsley (11), Bradford (2), Calderdale (2), Doncaster (4), Kirklees (3), Leeds (3), Rotherham (4), Scarborough (1), Selby (1), Sheffield (1), Wakefield (9 including Normanton) and York (2).

[The number in brackets gives the number of sites in each area.]

There are also acid deposition monitoring stations situated at High Muffles and Thorganby. The levels of lead and nine other inorganic elements are measured in Leeds.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what pollutants are included in the collection of air samples at his Department's fund monitoring stations.

Mr. Atkins: The Department of the Environment monitors the levels of ozone, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, fine particulates as PM10 and 26 volatile organic compounds, including benzene and 1,3-butadiene across the United Kingdom using a number of different automatic analysers.

The Department in collaboration with local authorities is supporting on-going national surveys of nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide using passive diffusion tube samplers. Measurements of smoke are also made at the same sites as those used for the sulphur dioxide measurements.

Further networks monitor the levels of *(a)* lead and nine other inorganic elements, and *(b)* toxic organic micropollutants such as dioxins and polyaromatic hydrocarbons.

Housing Corporation

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to separating the funding and the monitoring roles of the Housing Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: In the Government's response to the Environment Select Committee's second report 1993, Cm 2363, we said that we believed the link between the monitoring and funding roles of the Housing Corporation was a natural and positive one and that the former role had a vital part to play in informing decisions on the latter. However, we undertook to keep this under review in further reviews of the Housing Corporation.

The Government announced a prior options review of the Housing Corporation on 14 December, *Official Report,* column *663.* This will provide an opportunity to consider this again.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total planned expenditure in Berkshire by the Housing Corporation in the financial year 1994–95.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Housing Corporation currently estimates that some £13 million of its capital budget for 1994–95 will be spent in Berkshire.

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total planned expenditure in Dorset by the Housing Corporation in the financial year 1994–95.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Housing Corporation currently estimates that some £14 million of its capital budget for 1994–95 will be spent in Dorset.

Waste Management

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the proposed national waste strategy will continue to emphasise the hierarchy of waste management options including reduction, re-use and recycling, including materials recycling, composting and energy recovery contained in the Department of Environment's recent response both to the 17th report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution and to the second report of Session 1994–94 from the House of Commons Environment Select Committee, HC63.

Mr. Atkins: Yes, I can confirm that the waste hierarchy will be a key policy for the waste strategy that is shortly due to be issued for consultation.

Housing Associations

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what support his Department gives to housing societies and smaller housing associations.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The Housing Corporation provides capital funding to registered housing associations through its approved development programme which amounts to some £1.5 billion in 1994–95. Smaller associations, defined as those with fewer than 500 dwellings, received around 11 per cent. of allocations for new scheme approvals in 1994–95.

In addition, the Housing Corporation's total revenue grant support for registered housing associations, including smaller associations, is expected to amount to some £195 million in 1994–95.

Micro-organisms

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of *(a)* the agreement made at the UN environment programme conference in 1993 that a state has sovereignty over its flora and fauna and *(b)* whether this sovereignty extends to micro-organisms; and what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to ensure the categorisation and identification of micro-organisms.

Mr. Atkins: The United Kingdom has ratified the convention on biological diversity, which covers inter alia flora, fauna and micro-organisms. Article 3 of the convention recognises that states have, in accordance with the charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies.

In order to improve our knowledge of micro-organisms, research is in progress in subjects such as soil microbiology. The Office of Science and Technology commissioned an independent review of publicly funded microbial culture collections in the United Kingdom. The Government are currently considering its findings, which were published in November.

Homelessness

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures his Department is taking in combating the problem of homelessness in Merseyside, with particular reference to Liverpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The responsibility for dealing with homelessness in Merseyside rests with the local authorities there. In Liverpool, for example, the city council has made extensive provision to meet the demands of the homeless and has good partnership arrangements with voluntary agencies and housing associations. There are no homeless households currently in bed and breakfast in Liverpool and I am pleased with that clear indication of the success of that approach.

Merseyside

Mr Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has in the near future to meet the Mersey Partnership to discuss the promotion of Merseyside's development opportunities, business development, land reclamation and environmental improvements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I have no immediate plans to visit the Mersey Partnership, but I am in regular contact with many of the members.

The Mersey Partnership, with its drive and energy, is developing and putting across a clear and positive image of Merseyside; its wide membership across the public and private sectors has an important part to play.

Smoke Detectors

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's inspector of pollution will establish the number of ionising smoke detectors disposed of in household rubbish and the safety implications of the accumulation of radioactive material in waste tips from such disposals.

Mr. Atkins: Disposal of smoke detectors containing very small radioactive sources is controlled under the terms of the Radioactive Substances (Smoke Detectors) Exemption Order 1980, as amended, made under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993. The order provides exemption from regulation under the full requirements of the Act but imposes limits and conditions on the accumulation and disposal of these articles. These requirements are designed to ensure that public and environmental safety is fully maintained and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is satisfied that this is the case. Because these sources are of very low radiological significance, it is not necessary to record the numbers disposed of in refuse.

Regional Planning

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to release the draft regional planning guidance for Yorkshire and Humberside.

Sir Paul Beresford: Next month.

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is currently the average time between his Department receiving the draft regional planning conference advice and his Department issuing draft regional guidance.

Sir Paul Beresford: The average time for the completion of draft regional planning guidance after receipt of the conference advice is approximately 14.5 months.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total budget of the west and south-east areas of the Thames region of the National Rivers Authority for the financial year 1994–95.

Mr. Atkins: I am informed by the National Rivers Authority that in the west and south-east areas of its Thames region the total budget for 1994–95 was as follows:

Thames West—£10.6 million

Thames South-East—£20.7 million

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total budget of the area of the south-western region of the National Rivers Authority which covers Dorset for the financial year 1994–95.

Mr. Atkins: I am informed by the National Rivers Authority that in the south Wessex area of their south western region, which covers Dorset, the total budget for 1994–95 was £7.6 million.

Hares

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on 14 December, *Official Report*, column *661*, what was the estimated population of hares in Great Britain in *(a)* 1974, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1984, *(d)* 1989, *(e)* 1990 and *(f)* 1991.

Sir Paul Beresford: For 1991, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on 14 December, *Official Report*, column *661*. No Government estimate of the hare population exists for the years in question up to and including 1990.

Cemfuel

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the current test burn of Cemfuel at the Castle Cement works, Ribblesdale, is due to end.

Mr. Atkins: The extra monitoring work at Ribblesdale is now complete and the operator is preparing an assessment of the results and the effect of emissions on the environment.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information has so far appeared on the public register in respect of Castle Cement's burning of Cemfuel at its Ribblesdale plant; what further information he expects to appear between the present time and the conclusion of the test burn of Cemfuel; and what assessment Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has made of the quality and quantity of such information.

Mr. Atkins: All information prior to the protocol of June 1994 is on the public registers. Monitoring trials conducted under the protocol were supervised by HMIP and the final report of these, along with the assessment of environmental effects, is expected at the end of 1994. HMIP is assessing these results.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measurements of total organic carbon have been taken in the emissions from Castle Cement's kilns when they are burning Cemfuel.

Mr. Atkins: Measurement of total organic carbon has been part of all tests carried out.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measurements of total organic carbon in the emissions from Castle Cement's kilns when they are burning Cemfuel have been made during electrostatic precipitator trips caused by high levels of carbon monoxide.

Mr. Atkins: Electrostatic trips are few and far between and last only for a matter of minutes. No total organic carbon measurements have been taken in these periods.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has drawn from the information placed on the public register in relation to the burning of hazardous waste at Ribblesdale.

Mr Atkins: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's preliminary assessment of the results available so far indicates that, compared with coal, the burning of Cemfuel does not have a net adverse environmental effect.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many deliveries of Cemfuel have been made to Castle Cement's works at Ribblesdale; how many inspections have been made of them by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; and how many have been rejected as a result of failing to meet the specification.

Mr. Atkins: There have been approximately 1,500 tanker deliveries of Cemfuel to the Ribblesdale site in the last 12 months. The HMIP site inspector has been present and witnessed the unloading operation on numerous occasions. Three loads were rejected in the last 12 months—one load, because the seals on the tanker were not intact, and two, because the paperwork showed fuel of unaccceptable quality.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has been informed by Castle Cement that Cemfuel has proved inferior to its specifications and had therefore been rejected for use; and what action Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution took on each occasion.

Mr. Atkins: Three loads were rejected in the last 12 months—one load, because the seals on the tanker were not intact, and two, because the paperwork showed fuel of unacceptable quality.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution proposes to take as a result of the amount of particulate matter in the emissions from Castle Cement's works at Ribblesdale exceeding the authorised limit.

Mr. Atkins: The particulate emissions from all kilns comply with the authorised limits.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether *(a)* his officials in the directorate of pollution control and wastes and *(b)* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution have seen the British Cement Association's code of practice on the use of recycled liquid fuels in the manufacture of cement; and whether they were consulted on its contents before publication.

Mr. Atkins: The British Cement Association's code of practice was issued by the association on its own initiative and it did not consult officials in the Department or in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution before publishing it. Officials have seen the code.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what analysis Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution had made of the contents of the uncombusted waste materials among emissions from cement kilns where hazardous wastes are being burnt.

Mr. Atkins: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has made no measurements of the uncombusted waste materials from the cement kilns, but tests carried out by the company have confirmed a thermal destruction efficiency of almost 100 per cent.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the conditions for the trial burning of hazardous wastes apply equally to all cement kilns at which such waste is being burnt.

Mr. Atkins: All trials authorised after the protocol of June 1994 have to comply with the same requirements.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has reached on whether there is a risk to public health or the environment associated with the emission of uncombusted waste materials as a result of a trip on the operation of a cement kiln when it is burning hazardous waste; and what mechanism exists for measuring the products of incomplete combustion on such occasions.

Mr. Atkins: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is satisfied that there is no risk to public health or the environment associated with uncombusted waste materials as a result of any process trips. Whenever a trip occurs, the supply of Cemfuel to the kiln is automatically stopped and not restarted until normal operating conditions have resumed. The cement materials in the kiln remain hot for several hours, and this ensures the destruction of any remaining waste.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions the plume from any kiln at Ribblesdale has grounded in the last 12 months; how many times operations have been suspended as a result of inadequate emission velocity; and how many occasions members of the public have complained to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution about plume grounding.

Mr. Atkins: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has no records of the number of times the plumes from the chimneys at Ribblesdale works have grounded in the last 12 months. Operations have never been suspended as a result of inadequate emission velocity. There have been around 50 complaints about plume grounding by members of the public in the last 12 months, although not all these have been confirmed.

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many site visits have been made to Castle Cement's works at Ribblesdale which have been *(a)* announced and *(b)* unannounced.

Mr. Atkins: There have been more than 30 visits to the Castle Cement Ribblesdale site in the last 12 months. Of these, four were unannounced.

Repossessions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many repossessions there have been in each year since 1989; and what assessment he has made of the proportion of those repossessed by the United Kingdom subsidiaries of United States companies.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The number of properties taken into possession by mortgage lenders in the United Kingdom in each year since 1989 is as follows:

Year	*Number*	*Per cent of total mortgages*
1989	15,810	0.17
1990	43,890	0.47
1991	75,540	0.77
1992	68,540	0.70
1993	58,540	0.58
1994 (first half)	25,020	0.24

The Department does not have access to information that shows the number of properties taken into possession by individual lenders.

Housing Revenue Account

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue the housing revenue account subsidy determinations for 1995–96.

Mr. Curry: I have decided to confirm the proposals for guideline rents and management and maintenance allowances, which were set out in my answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) on 24 November, *Official Report*, columns *250-51*. I have also decided to confirm the other proposals, subject to some revisions in the light of the responses received. The determinations will be issued later this week. Copies will be placed in the Library.

Local Authorities (Companies)

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his proposals for local authority participation in companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: It is our intention that where authorities participate in companies led by the private sector, there should be few controls other than those applicable generally under the Companies Act. In other cases, our intention is that local authorities' interests in companies should be subject to special capital finance and propriety controls.

We have today issued for consultation to the local authority associations and to local authorities a draft of an order which my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales propose to make under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and which would give effect to these intentions from the financial year 1995–96. We have asked for all comments on the draft order to be submitted by 31 January 1995.

I have arranged for copies of the draft order, together with an explanatory guide, to be placed in the Library of the House.

Environment Agency Advisory Committee

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if, following his announcement of 18 November, *Official Report*, column *309*, he will announce the member of the Environment Agency Advisory Committee who has been nominated by the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Gummer: I have invited Professor Ron Edwards, currently a member of the board of the National Rivers Authority, to become a member of the Environment Agency Advisory Committee. Professor Edwards was recommended to me by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Wildlife

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made in implementing the changes to controls on wildlife following his announcement of 20 July.

Sir Paul Beresford: Good progress is being made in implementing the changes my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside announced on 20 July, *Official Report*, columns *319–21*.

We have today issued eight general licences to allow the sale of specimens of certain cockatoos, macaws, tortoises, owls and wildfowl, and the competitive showing of certain captive-bred birds, subject to conditions, without the need for an individual licence from the Department; and a general licence allowing the sale of the common toad, common frog, smooth newt and palmate newt, subject to certain conditions.

These licences will take effect from 1 January.

We are now imposing tighter conditions on a greater number of individual import permits to ensure that the specimens concerned are not used for any other purpose than that for which they were imported. The Department's wildlife inspectorate will be stepping up inspections to ensure that importers comply with these conditions. We have also increased the scrutiny of advertisements offering endangered species for sale to ensure that the transactions comply with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and national legislation.

We have consulted a wide range of interested individuals and organisations about the proposal to abolish the registered sellers of dead birds scheme. Having taken into account all the responses received, we have decided to proceed to abolish the scheme and to introduce general licences.

We have established a working group to review the enforcement of wildlife controls. Its terms of reference are:

> "To consider the scope for improvements in the enforcement of wildlife species controls in Great Britain with particular reference to the roles of the Police, HM Customs and Excise, the DOE Wildlife Inspectorate and the NGOs, and to report to the Department of the Environment by the end of July 1995".

The first meeting was held on 21 October and was attended by the police, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food investigations branch, HM Custom and Excise, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage, TRAFFIC, RSPB, RSPCA and the National Council for Aviculture.

I intend to make a further announcement early next year about the increased use of DNA tests to enforce wildlife controls.

Countryside Stewardship Scheme

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will set out the criteria used in each year since 1991 in deciding which areas of land were suitable to receive additional access payments under the countryside stewardship scheme;

(2) how much was paid to landowners and occupiers as the flat-rate payment for providing new public access under the countryside stewardship scheme in each year since 1991;

(3) how much was spent on capital payments for providing public access on or to countryside stewardship scheme access sites in each year since 1991; and what was the number of sites for which such capital payments were made in each year.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 16 December 1994]*: I will write to the hon. Member.

Lettsom Gardens, Camberwell

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to ensure that Lettsom gardens, Camberwell, remains a green area free from development and run by local residents; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 19 December 1994]*: I shall write to the hon. and learned Member.

Homelessness

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the monthly cost of the provision of a single homeless persons unit mortgaged over 25 years at current mortgage interest rates; and what is the current average monthly mortgage payment.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* As capital funding has been available from the Housing Corporation for the full cost of developing single homeless persons units, most units will have been developed without the need for borrowing. The corporation does not therefore have information available on mortgage costs.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cumulative total of running cost provisions over the previous five years on single homeless units; and what is the average annual expenditure per unit.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* The cumulative total provision by the Housing Corporation for the cost of housing management in single homeless units over the last five years has been £174 million at current prices. The average annual expenditure by housing associations on grant-aided schemes, taking account of income from all sources, is £6,240 per bedspace.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the cumulative total of capital expenditure over the previous five years on the provision of single homeless persons units; and what is the average cost of providing a unit.

Mr. Robert B. Jones *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* At current prices, the cumulative total capital expenditure by the Housing Corporation on the provision of single homeless persons units over the five years to 1993–94 amounts to £139.5 million. The average capital cost of providing a bedspace in a shared unit over that period was £31,000.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by type, the number of birds of prey reported stolen in *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* each month of 1994.

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* As thefts of birds of prey are not reportable offences, comprehensive official statistics are not kept. However, the information available to my Department indicates that the minimum figures for thefts of birds of prey from the wild in Great Britain were as follows:

1992: 47

1993: 72

Figures for 1994 are not yet available.

My Department does not keep records of birds in captivity which are subsequently stolen.

EDUCATION

Assisted Places Scheme

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children who have received assistance through the assisted places scheme are from households in the bottom 10th disposable income levels, according to Department of Social Security statistics.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is not available in the form requested. Parental income for the purposes of the assisted places scheme is assessed on total family income from all sources, gross of all allowances. Non-taxable social security benefits are excluded and no adjustments for the inputed value of free school meals are made as is the case with the DSS statistics.

For the school year 1993–94, the latest for which information is available, more than 11,800—40 per cent.—assisted pupils were entitled to a completely free place because their families' income fell below the threshold of £9,225 per annum. Over 80 per cent. of parents in the scheme have earnings below the equivalent national average household income.

Funding Agency for Schools

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the number of visits each regional representative of the Funding Agency for Schools has made to local education authorities within their designated areas.

Mr. Robin Squire: This matter is the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the funding agency to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will instruct the Funding Agency for Schools to open its meetings to the public.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. It is for the funding agency to regulate its own proceedings. I have asked the chairman of the funding agency to write to the hon. Member.

Feeder Primary Schools

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the inclusion by secondary schools of named feeder primary schools within their admissions criteria.

Mr. Robin Squire: Circular 6/93 "Admissions to Maintained Schools" advises that priority may be given to children attending certain named primary schools, but that the choice of schools should be determined on objective grounds.

Public Appointments

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information is sought at interview with candidates for appointment to paid or unpaid posts for which she is responsible as indicated in the answer to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) by the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on 28 March 1994, *Official Report*, columns *519–20*.

Mr. Boswell: Ministers interview candidates to gain a fuller picture of their aptitude and experience in order to ascertain their suitability for the post and their ability to make an effective contribution to the work of the relevant public body.

Grant-maintained Schools

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools' governing bodies were placed under a duty to consider during the school year 1993–94 whether to conduct a parental ballot on grant-maintained status and, in each case, how many ballots were held during 1993–94; and how many resulted in majorities in favour of grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: The governing bodies of some 18,300 primary and 2,950 secondary schools in England were required during the 1993–94 school year to consider whether to hold a parental ballot on grant-maintained status.

During that year, 167 primary and 104 secondary schools held ballots. Of these, 107 ballots at primary schools and 52 at secondary schools resulted in a vote in favour of grant-maintained status.

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which grant-maintained schools have had their admissions policies reviewed by her Department as a result of applying for *(a)* a change of character and *(b)* a change of admissions policy not amounting to a change of character; and what action has been taken.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend does not have a general power to require an admissions authority—a governing body of grant-maintained or voluntary-aided school, or a local education authority—to change its arrangements. When considering requests from grant-maintained schools for approval to vary their admission arrangements, officials may sometimes draw attention to aspects of the existing arrangements which appear to fall short of the guidance of best practice contained in circular 6/93. The Department does not keep a detailed record of such exchanges.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total cost for the central administration of grant-maintained schools for each year since the GMS system was implemented; and what is the central administrative cost per pupil being educated within a grant-maintained school for each year since the GMS system was implemented.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is held by the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the funding agency to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total budget for grant-maintained schools within Berkshire for 1994–95.

Mr. Robin Squire: The determination of grant for GM schools is now a matter for the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the funding agency to write to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total budget for grant-maintained schools within Dorset for 1994–95.

Mr. Robin Squire: The determination of grant for GM schools is now a matter for the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the funding agency to write to the hon. Member.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on capital allocations for local education authority maintained schools for 1995–96.

Mr. Robin Squire: Local education authorities have today been informed of their annual capital guidelines—ACGs—for schools which, together with supplementary credit approvals, will total £426 million in 1995–96. They have also been informed of their allocations for spending by the governors of voluntary-aided and special agreement schools in their areas—the overall grant to be made available in 1995–96 will be £96 million.

Annual capital guidelines do not represent the full total of funds available to local education authorities for capital expenditure. Authorities are also able to spend additional sums from capital receipts and from their revenue budgets if they so choose.

Local authorities have received considerable resources in the last few years for building work at schools. The substantial sum available in 1995–96 is a 5.7 per cent. increase on the £403 million available in the current year and should enable local authorities to continue to make significant progress in improving the building stock.

In distributing annual capital guidelines, we have again given priority to the second and third year expenditure on work covered by ACGs in previous years; projects to provide new school places in areas of population growth—"Basic Need"; and projects to remove surplus places. For 1995–96, we are providing historically high amounts to support Basic Need. Of the total of £96 million grant for voluntary-aided schools, £38 million has been set aside for repairs. The remainder is to be provided for capital work with a small element for debt repayment; £15 million of this will support new work to provide for new school places, removal of surplus capacity and a range of improvement and replacement projects. Thirty-seven major projects have been authorised to start and a further 29 to proceed to initial design work. My right hon. Friend and I look to local education authorities and school governors to ensure that the grant is fully effectively utilised.

A total of £45 million of the ACGs total will be allocated in the form of supplementary credit approvals—SCAs—to LEAs during the course of the year.

Details of individual LEAs' ACGs and grant allocations have been placed in the Library.

Further Education Funding Council

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of the Further Education Funding Council's budget for 1994–95 supports institutions in Dorset.

Mr. Boswell: The total amount of recurrent funding allocated by the Further Education Funding Council for the academic year 1994–95 is £2,610.8 million, of which £26.2 million was allocated to institutions in Dorset.

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of the Further Education Funding Council's budget for 1994–95 supports institutions in Berkshire.

Mr. Boswell: The total amount of recurrent funding allocated by the Further Education Funding Council for the academic year 1994–95 is £2,610.8 million, of which £33.1 million was allocated to institutions in Berkshire.

Education (Schools) Act 1992

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she expects to lay before Parliament the 1993–94 annual report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools under section 4(a) of the Education (Schools) Act 1992.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend expects to be able to lay HMCI's annual report before Parliament after the Christmas recess.

Higher Education Funding Council

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what adjustment is proposed to the total standard spending to take account of the transfer of funding for fee income discretionary awards from local authorities to the Higher Education Funding Council in the 1995–96 financial year, and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: We propose to transfer £2.7 million from local authority finance to the Higher Education Funding Council for England—HEFCE—in 1995–96. This reflects the 45 per cent. reduction in the maximum tuition fee reimbursed through mandatory awards announced a year ago. This will lead to a reduction in local authorities' discretionary awards expenditure; there will be a matching increase in the funds distributed to universities and colleges through HEFCE grant.

Special Educational Provision

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many appeals for special educational provision under the Education Act 1981 are pending; what is the average time for determining these appeals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The Department is currently dealing with some 500 appeals under sections 5(6) and 8(6) of the Education Act 1981 and related complaints under sections 68 and 99 of the Education Act 1944.

Those resolved over the last year have taken on average about 10 months to conclude. Appeals under section 8(6) tend to take the longest to process, as the courts have made it clear that we must copy correspondence from one party to the other, and allow time for comment in the interests of natural justice, until no new issues arise. In such cases, much of the time taken is beyond the Department's control.

Appeals against decisions taken by LEAs after 1 September under the Education Act 1993 are now referred to the Special Education Needs Tribunal, which is subject to different legal procedures and has a target of five months for deciding appeals.

Teacher Training Agency

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what adjustment is proposed to the total standard spending to take account of any transfer of functions from local authorities to the Teacher Training Agency for the 1995–96 financial year with respect to *(a)* the training of licensed and overseas trained teachers and *(b)* management training for head teachers; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The transfers from local authority finance to the Teacher Training Agency in 1995–96 were £2.26 million in respect of the licensed and overseas trained teachers schemes, and £2.774 million in respect of management training for heads. These transfers reflect the transfer of responsibilities from local authorities to the Teacher Training Agency.

School Statistics

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what was the number and percentage of pupils in primary schools in *(a)* January 1991, *(b)* January 1992, *(c)* January 1993 and *(d)* January 1994 being taught in classes of (i) between 31 and 35 and (ii) more than 36 in maintained schools in each local education authority and in total;

(2) what was the number and percentage of pupils in secondary schools in *(a)* January 1991, *(b)* January 1992, *(c)* January 1993 and *(d)* January 1994 being taught in classes of between (i) 26 to 30, (ii) 31 to 35 and (iii) more than 36 in maintained schools in each local education authority and in total.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is given in the tables.

Numbers and percentages of pupils in single teacher classes by size in maintained primary and secondary schools in each local education authority in England, 1991–1994 (provisional)
Position in January each year

1. Primary schools (classes of size)

LEA	*1991*				*1992*			
	numbers		*percentages*		*numbers*		*percentages*	
	31–35	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*
Corporation of London	0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Camden	220	0	2.8	0.0	541	0	6.5	0.0
Greenwich	1,178	38	7.0	0.2	1,305	0	7.8	0.0
Hackney	257	84	2.2	0.7	219	0	1.9	0.0
Hammersmith and Fulham	314	40	4.6	0.6	565	84	8.1	1.2
Islington	315	0	2.8	0.0	756	0	6.6	0.0
Kensington and Chelsea	187	0	4.0	0.0	130	0	2.7	0.0
Lambeth	284	84	1.9	0.6	630	0	4.0	0.0
Lewisham	661	37	4.0	0.2	1,943	74	11.0	0.4
Southwark	1,352	37	8.5	0.2	1,326	77	7.9	0.5

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LEA	*1991*				*1992*			
	numbers		*percentages*		*numbers*		*percentages*	
	31–35	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*
Tower Hamlets	448	39	3.8	0.3	475	121	3.9	1.0
Wandsworth	323	50	2.5	0.4	697	121	5.2	0.9
Westminster	218	0	3.5	0.0	252	40	3.7	0.6
Barking and Dagenham	983	153	7.3	1.1	1,297	234	9.4	1.7
Barnet	1,583	128	8.3	0.7	1,806	180	9.2	0.9
Bexley	4,243	118	25.7	0.7	4,913	108	29.1	0.6
Brent	1,430	114	8.2	0.7	1,375	75	7.9	0.4
Bromley	6,097	36	32.1	0.2	6,381	36	33.0	0.2
Croydon	2,763	112	12.8	0.5	3,264	289	15.0	1.3
Ealing	3,277	0	15.3	0.0	3,219	151	14.6	0.7
Enfield	4,616	36	25.7	0.2	5,147	38	27.3	0.2
Haringey	435	93	2.7	0.6	441	40	2.7	0.2
Harrow	4,175	145	27.7	1.0	4,140	0	27.2	0.0
Havering	3,351	72	18.7	0.4	2,585	0	14.5	0.0
Hillingdon	3,646	426	21.7	2.5	4,306	439	25.3	2.6
Hounslow	4,615	409	30.8	2.7	4,894	540	31.8	3.5
Kingston upon Thames	3,403	36	42.0	0.4	4,486	219	51.6	2.5
Merton	1,420	120	13.6	1.1	1,726	156	14.9	1.4
Newham	2,049	214	10.3	1.1	1,000	294	4.9	1.4
Redbridge	8,224	109	55.7	0.7	8,331	145	55.6	1.0
Richmond upon Thames	1,758	40	19.8	0.5	1,316	37	14.4	0.4
Sutton	3,474	257	32.8	2.4	3,359	181	31.6	1.7
Waltham Forest	3,161	122	19.6	0.8	2,763	195	16.8	1.2
Birmingham	25,625	1,129	27.0	1.2	22,873	868	24.0	0.9
Coventry	5,052	402	19.8	1.6	5,253	505	20.3	2.0
Dudley	6,112	620	27.1	2.7	3,852	595	18.3	2.8
Sandwell	7,934	866	31.0	3.4	7,549	1,022	29.3	4.0
Solihull	4,730	268	27.7	1.6	4,637	440	27.2	2.6
Walsall	3,338	375	16.4	1.8	3,606	707	17.3	3.4
Wolverhampton	3,226	339	16.2	1.7	2,491	274	12.5	1.4
Knowsley	3,320	273	21.1	1.7	3,568	539	22.7	3.4
Liverpool	7,785	686	17.0	1.5	9,939	666	21.5	1.4
St. Helens	4,133	703	27.7	4.7	4,467	633	30.1	4.3
Sefton	7,410	421	31.3	1.8	7,586	441	31.1	1.8
Wirral	2,243	52	8.6	0.2	3,170	144	11.7	0.5
Bolton	7,018	1,576	32.9	7.4	6,879	1,390	31.8	6.4
Bury	4,537	404	31.8	2.8	4,792	521	32.1	3.5
Manchester	7,753	1,731	19.3	4.3	6,933	1,428	17.4	3.6
Oldham	6,788	1,399	34.2	7.0	7,136	802	36.5	4.1
Rochdale	6,376	513	36.1	2.9	5,969	402	34.7	2.3
Salford	3,534	676	16.8	3.2	4,470	468	21.1	2.2
Stockport	5,878	695	25.6	3.0	5,722	1,013	24.3	4.3
Tameside	7,689	439	39.7	2.3	7,702	365	38.2	1.8
Trafford	6,323	1,107	37.0	6.5	6,661	1,668	38.0	9.5
Wigan	7,522	2,544	30.2	10.2	6,905	1,779	27.8	7.1
Barnsley	2,962	304	15.3	1.6	3,099	383	15.8	2.0
Doncaster	3,925	584	15.5	2.3	5,611	846	21.6	3.3
Rotherham	1,905	429	8.5	1.9	2,362	608	10.6	2.7
Sheffield	5,450	1,197	14.2	3.1	4,412	1,497	11.3	3.8
Bradford	3,307	76	11.1	0.3	3,506	73	12.1	0.3
Calderdale	4,663	440	28.3	2.7	3,763	151	22.4	0.9
Kirklees	6,865	1,032	23.1	3.5	6,648	785	22.5	2.7
Leeds	8,230	2,017	19.4	4.7	8,962	2,655	20.7	6.1
Wakefield	6,707	1,351	27.4	5.5	7,130	1,192	28.6	4.8
Gateshead	1,174	137	7.2	0.8	963	131	6.0	0.8
Newcastle upon Tyne	4,477	563	24.1	3.0	4,593	647	23.4	3.3
North Tyneside	1,416	111	10.0	0.8	2,478	450	17.1	3.1
South Tyneside	1,757	149	12.7	1.1	1,940	199	13.7	1.4
Sunderland	4,561	155	17.3	0.6	4,260	116	16.4	0.4
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0.0	0.0	31	0	18.8	0.0
Avon	19,859	1,353	28.1	1.9	19,247	1,050	26.9	1.5
Bedfordshire	7,952	1,454	23.6	4.3	5,993	1,474	17.5	4.3

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LEA	1991				1992			
	numbers		*percentages*		*numbers*		*percentages*	
	31–35	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*
Berkshire	15,695	1,235	29.9	2.4	13,063	1,028	24.5	1.9
Buckinghamshire	15,170	2,081	28.0	3.8	15,128	2,176	27.0	3.9
Cambridgeshire	13,111	485	25.4	0.9	13,118	775	24.9	1.5
Cheshire	30,860	4,587	38.0	5.6	27,427	3,859	33.7	4.7
Cleveland	10,496	2,401	19.2	4.4	10,344	2,890	18.3	5.1
Cornwall	11,067	917	29.9	2.5	12,138	1,364	32.5	3.7
Cumbria	6,018	877	16.3	2.4	7,164	730	19.5	2.0
Derbyshire	18,032	2,293	25.1	3.2	22,117	2,462	30.6	3.4
Devon	16,997	2,512	23.6	3.5	18,191	2,039	24.9	2.8
Dorset	12,787	1,172	34.6	3.2	13,384	1,169	35.2	3.1
Durham	12,603	392	25.5	0.8	11,146	821	22.3	1.6
East Sussex	14,618	326	32.8	0.7	16,200	182	36.1	0.4
Essex	28,763	456	25.0	0.4	27,344	330	23.6	0.3
Gloucestershire	8,205	219	21.3	0.6	8,696	187	22.0	0.5
Hampshire	36,781	2,842	31.1	2.4	33,788	1,355	28.4	1.1
Hereford and Worcester	9,072	916	20.4	2.1	7,886	551	17.5	1.2
Hertfordshire	16,216	806	23.0	1.1	18,080	437	25.1	0.6
Humberside	14,054	2,474	19.4	3.4	13,976	2,628	19.2	3.6
Isle of Wight	1,524	113	23.3	1.7	1,251	226	18.5	3.3
Kent	41,200	665	35.6	0.6	35,834	1,114	30.6	1.0
Lancashire	39,617	6,205	35.2	5.5	38,211	6,500	34.0	5.8
Leicestershire	15,813	1,177	22.5	1.7	12,631	1,425	17.9	2.0
Lincolnshire	12,122	1,395	26.6	3.1	10,067	932	22.0	2.0
Norfolk	10,423	658	18.4	1.2	9,968	303	17.5	0.5
North Yorkshire	11,002	973	21.1	1.9	10,693	553	20.3	1.0
Northamptonshire	8,887	521	20.4	1.2	8,354	294	18.8	0.7
Northumberland	6,672	928	36.2	5.0	5,565	1,145	29.8	6.1
Nottinghamshire	10,345	2,868	13.3	3.7	12,826	2,830	16.3	3.6
Oxfordshire	5,758	675	16.1	1.9	4,828	474	13.4	1.3
Shropshire	6,033	597	19.3	1.9	5,256	553	16.5	1.7
Somerset	9,479	334	30.0	1.1	9,290	365	28.9	1.1
Staffordshire	16,389	2,259	20.3	2.8	18,441	2,384	22.4	2.9
Suffolk	4,970	275	12.9	0.7	4,712	166	12.2	0.4
Surrey	12,037	568	18.1	0.9	12,387	721	18.4	1.1
Warwickshire	10,351	450	27.2	1.2	11,817	1,005	30.2	2.6
West Sussex	9,570	518	20.4	1.1	11,250	313	23.0	0.6
Wiltshire	8,488	108	21.1	0.3	7,993	405	19.5	1.0
England	831,221	79,997	23.2	2.2	823,310	79,492	22.7	2.2

LEA	1993				1994			
	numbers		*percentages*		*numbers*		*percentages*	
	31–35	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*
Corporation of London	0	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0.0	0.0
Camden	452	0	5.4	0.0	542	0	6.1	0.0
Greenwich	1,719	118	10.1	0.7	2,301	0	13.3	0.0
Hackney	656	0	5.0	0.0	499	0	3.7	0.0
Hammersmith and Fulham	719	0	10.0	0.0	795	0	11.1	0.0
Islington	635	38	5.2	0.3	892	0	6.9	0.0
Kensington and Chelsea	159	0	3.3	0.0	418	36	8.3	0.7
Lambeth	762	0	4.8	0.0	816	0	5.2	0.0
Lewisham	1,486	220	8.5	1.3	1,318	0	7.2	0.0
Southwark	1,818	76	10.4	0.4	2,331	0	12.3	0.0
Tower Hamlets	511	108	3.8	0.8	601	37	4.6	0.3
Wandsworth	1,271	301	9.0	2.1	1,471	195	10.5	1.4
Westminster	355	36	5.5	0.6	352	76	4.9	1.1
Barking and Dagenham	828	193	5.9	1.4	1,183	232	8.3	1.6
Barnet	1,857	171	9.3	0.9	2,319	115	11.1	0.6

LEA	*1993*				*1994*			
	numbers		*percentages*		*numbers*		*percentages*	
	31–35	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*
Bexley	5,215	235	29.6	1.3	5,838	72	31.6	0.4
Brent	1,865	280	10.2	1.5	1,819	338	9.6	1.8
Bromley	7,461	0	37.8	0.0	10,239	146	46.8	0.7
Croydon	4,022	0	17.4	0.0	4,667	229	19.6	1.0
Ealing	4,149	112	18.7	0.5	4,001	145	19.6	0.7
Enfield	6,045	36	31.4	0.2	7,201	36	35.2	0.2
Haringey	631	0	3.8	0.0	657	75	3.9	0.4
Harrow	3,740	0	24.2	0.0	3,472	72	22.2	0.5
Havering	3,805	76	20.7	0.4	4,030	146	21.3	0.8
Hillingdon	4,308	634	25.0	3.7	4,422	474	24.9	2.7
Hounslow	4,082	446	26.5	2.9	4,570	749	28.7	4.7
Kingston upon Thames	5,164	39	55.4	0.4	5,299	185	56.0	2.0
Merton	2,159	340	18.2	2.9	2,783	331	22.6	2.7
Newham	1,313	559	6.2	2.6	1,201	116	5.4	0.5
Redbridge	8,500	254	53.5	1.6	8,054	402	50.3	2.5
Richmond upon Thames	1,580	37	16.3	0.4	869	265	8.8	2.7
Sutton	4,350	216	38.6	1.9	4,552	144	38.8	1.2
Waltham Forest	3,614	152	21.4	0.9	3,088	112	17.8	0.6
Birmingham	25,683	1,302	26.6	1.4	25,730	1,434	26.9	1.5
Coventry	4,945	501	20.0	2.0	4,940	601	19.5	2.4
Dudley	3,832	919	17.2	4.1	6,524	973	27.1	4.0
Sandwell	8,064	1,179	30.4	4.4	8,863	1,312	32.7	4.8
Solihull	4,734	665	27.3	3.8	6,200	511	34.1	2.8
Walsall	5,293	704	24.3	3.2	5,066	511	22.8	2.3
Wolverhampton	4,351	380	20.4	1.8	4,774	381	22.3	1.8
Knowsley	4,333	680	26.6	4.2	5,271	644	31.0	3.8
Liverpool	10,047	1,057	21.5	2.3	11,660	960	24.5	2.0
St. Helens	3,778	527	25.6	3.6	4,586	851	31.6	5.9
Sefton	7,470	514	31.1	2.1	7,742	516	31.6	2.1
Wirral	4,506	220	16.1	0.8	5,410	518	18.6	1.8
Bolton	7,047	1,637	32.5	7.5	7,010	2,036	31.8	9.2
Bury	4,430	1,028	30.1	7.0	5,087	1,152	32.6	7.4
Manchester	7,879	2,228	19.1	5.4	8,446	1,173	20.5	2.9
Oldham	7,657	1,016	36.7	4.9	7,746	871	36.9	4.2
Rochdale	8,014	637	43.7	3.5	7,300	720	39.8	3.9
Salford	4,856	767	22.1	3.5	5,603	1,214	25.2	5.5
Stockport	6,443	1,181	26.8	4.9	6,813	1,366	28.2	5.6
Tameside	8,966	773	43.6	3.8	10,943	1,136	51.1	5.3
Trafford	7,398	1,220	42.2	7.0	7,729	1,422	41.9	7.7
Wigan	7,066	1,952	28.3	7.8	7,572	2,425	29.0	9.3
Barnsley	3,660	434	18.5	2.2	5,185	471	26.0	2.4
Doncaster	5,076	930	19.3	3.5	6,296	1,252	23.7	4.7
Rotherham	1,927	271	8.8	1.2	2,334	235	10.4	1.1
Sheffield	6,375	1,480	17.1	4.0	6,821	1,460	18.1	3.9
Bradford	5,436	507	17.6	1.6	8,214	567	25.6	1.8
Calderdale	4,564	108	26.1	0.6	4,942	326	28.3	1.9
Kirklees	6,706	1,098	22.8	3.7	8,391	981	26.8	3.1
Leeds	12,263	3,046	22.6	5.6	16,686	2,719	28.2	4.6
Wakefield	7,328	1,208	28.8	4.8	8,738	1,258	32.3	4.7
Gateshead	1,851	135	11.5	0.8	1,786	76	10.8	0.5
Newcastle upon Tyne	5,100	827	25.5	4.1	5,083	760	24.8	3.7
North Tyneside	2,514	448	17.2	3.1	3,408	497	22.7	3.3
South Tyneside	2,684	339	18.7	2.4	2,915	541	20.1	3.7
Sunderland	3,703	175	14.3	0.7	4,022	222	15.4	0.8
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0.0	0.0	31	0	18.5	0.0
Avon	21,699	1,185	29.4	1.6	25,695	1,058	34.1	1.4
Bedfordshire	6,880	1,661	19.4	4.7	7,314	1,750	19.7	4.7
Berkshire	13,413	1,258	24.6	2.3	15,220	1,070	27.0	1.9
Buckinghamshire	14,903	2,380	26.4	4.2	16,670	2,402	29.1	4.2
Cambridgeshire	13,361	551	25.1	1.0	13,979	1,100	25.2	2.0
Cheshire	26,668	3,629	32.5	4.4	27,187	3,006	32.6	3.6
Cleveland	11,107	2,542	19.3	4.4	10,863	2,523	18.8	4.4
Cornwall	12,193	1,299	32.3	3.4	12,409	1,032	32.4	2.7
Cumbria	8,439	793	22.1	2.1	8,568	817	22.1	2.1
Derbyshire	24,368	3,017	32.8	4.1	25,613	4,369	34.1	5.8
Devon	18,990	1,814	25.1	2.4	19,328	1,847	24.9	2.4
Dorset	15,596	926	39.2	2.3	17,562	580	42.6	1.4
Durham	13,024	1,014	25.8	2.0	13,729	1,283	26.5	2.5

LEA	*1993*				*1994*			
	numbers		*percentages*		*numbers*		*percentages*	
	31–35	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*	*31–35*	*36+*
East Sussex	16,575	364	36.5	0.8	18,862	435	39.8	0.9
Essex	28,347	228	24.3	0.2	29,961	768	25.2	0.6
Gloucestershire	8,821	451	21.5	1.1	10,644	479	25.4	1.1
Hampshire	34,607	1,295	28.5	1.1	40,820	3,484	31.5	2.7
Hereford and Worcester	8,354	533	18.5	1.2	9,402	478	20.1	1.0
Hertfordshire	18,153	514	24.5	0.7	20,658	686	26.8	0.9
Humberside	17,365	3,154	23.2	4.2	21,804	4,110	28.1	5.3
Isle of Wight	1,598	258	23.2	3.7	1,672	190	23.9	2.7
Kent	37,731	974	31.2	0.8	40,873	697	33.0	0.6
Lancashire	38,724	5,094	33.8	4.4	39,400	6,008	33.6	5.1
Leicestershire	14,646	1,317	20.5	1.8	13,760	673	19.2	0.9
Lincolnshire	10,721	928	23.1	2.0	11,975	667	25.2	1.4
Norfolk	10,376	707	17.9	1.2	10,584	591	18.5	1.0
North Yorkshire	11,333	785	20.9	1.5	12,653	1,049	22.9	1.9
Northamptonshire	8,233	186	18.3	0.4	9,402	188	20.2	0.4
Northumberland	5,411	1,050	28.6	5.6	6,301	1,600	33.0	8.4
Nottinghamshire	15,625	3,253	19.5	4.1	17,125	2,822	20.8	3.4
Oxfordshire	5,107	387	14.0	1.1	5,242	608	13.7	1.6
Shropshire	6,635	529	20.3	1.6	8,530	555	25.5	1.7
Somerset	9,752	584	29.6	1.8	10,074	402	28.9	1.2
Staffordshire	25,402	5,392	29.4	6.2	24,238	6,500	27.8	7.5
Suffolk	4,911	135	12.3	0.3	5,386	222	13.2	0.5
Surrey	14,689	749	20.9	1.1	13,064	677	19.2	1.0
Warwickshire	11,973	1,029	29.3	2.5	11,984	756	28.8	1.8
West Sussex	8,630	478	17.6	1.0	10,459	475	20.6	0.9
Wiltshire	10,854	297	24.3	0.7	11,784	401	25.7	0.9
England	896,424	89,510	24.1	2.4	979,291	97,178	25.7	2.5

2. Secondary schools (classes of size)

LEA	*1991*						*1992*					
	numbers			*percentages*			*numbers*			*percentages*		
	26–30	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*
Corporation of London	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Camden	2,885	534	0	33.4	6.2	0.0	2,897	442	0	33.5	5.1	0.0
Greenwich	4,645	126	0	38.7	1.0	0.0	4,682	192	0	39.1	1.6	0.0
Hackney	2,593	279	0	45.0	4.8	0.0	2,657	157	0	41.9	2.5	0.0
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,980	287	0	36.7	5.3	0.0	1,743	731	0	33.4	14.0	0.0
Islington	2,743	93	0	53.0	1.8	0.0	3,068	124	0	52.7	2.1	0.0
Kensington and Chelsea	424	96	0	18.6	4.2	0.0	484	62	0	20.4	2.6	0.0
Lambeth	1,631	319	0	30.8	6.0	0.0	1,830	93	0	31.9	1.6	0.0
Lewisham	4,034	191	108	41.8	2.0	1.1	4,533	288	0	49.2	3.1	0.0
Southwark	3,504	218	0	43.8	2.7	0.0	3,964	562	0	48.7	6.9	0.0
Tower Hamlets	2,538	158	51	33.9	2.1	0.7	3,086	95	0	38.7	1.2	0.0
Wandsworth	2,730	257	56	35.2	3.3	0.7	2,769	188	0	37.0	2.5	0.0
Westminster	988	313	0	15.9	5.0	0.0	2,225	159	0	35.0	2.5	0.0
Barking and Dagenham	2,871	93	37	41.3	1.3	0.5	3,879	311	0	45.7	3.7	0.0
Barnet	4,636	1,403	0	29.8	9.0	0.0	4,193	1,109	0	25.8	6.8	0.0
Bexley	4,604	1,011	37	37.8	8.3	0.3	5,236	1,002	0	42.6	8.2	0.0
Brent	2,802	285	0	31.7	3.2	0.0	3,073	408	41	32.3	4.3	0.4
Bromley	4,568	1,510	0	32.6	10.8	0.0	4,430	1,662	0	30.4	11.4	0.0
Croydon	4,676	826	0	35.5	6.3	0.0	3,897	759	0	30.3	5.9	0.0
Ealing	2,746	256	40	28.8	2.7	0.4	3,137	538	87	32.7	5.6	0.9
Enfield	4,263	1,660	109	30.9	12.0	0.8	4,389	1,715	37	29.8	11.6	0.3
Haringey	2,357	0	0	31.1	0.0	0.0	3,187	93	0	40.4	1.2	0.0
Harrow	2,083	507	0	31.0	7.5	0.0	2,419	412	36	33.4	5.7	0.5
Havering	3,525	1,328	36	25.3	9.5	0.3	4,271	1,294	0	31.1	9.4	0.0
Hillingdon	3,355	796	0	29.3	6.9	0.0	3,473	793	0	29.2	6.7	0.0
Hounslow	4,041	827	36	36.9	7.5	0.3	4,467	977	128	38.5	8.4	1.1
Kingston upon Thames	1,708	421	0	26.6	6.6	0.0	1,452	828	0	21.2	12.1	0.0
Merton	2,236	62	0	39.5	1.1	0.0	2,656	128	0	41.5	2.0	0.0
Newham	5,431	62	0	49.0	0.6	0.0	5,322	221	50	46.0	1.9	0.4
Redbridge	4,915	916	37	41.4	7.7	0.3	4,618	1,202	73	36.9	9.6	0.6
Richmond upon Thames	2,103	313	0	34.9	5.2	0.0	2,281	279	0	37.6	4.6	0.0
Sutton	2,697	894	0	29.3	9.7	0.0	3,166	766	0	33.4	8.1	0.0
Waltham Forest	2,938	253	37	31.8	2.7	0.4	3,265	344	0	34.3	3.6	0.0
Birmingham	18,467	6,271	36	34.4	11.7	0.1	19,678	5,764	36	35.4	10.4	0.1
Coventry	5,338	1,041	0	35.1	6.9	0.0	5,460	1,507	44	34.1	9.4	0.3
Dudley	3,139	566	0	23.4	4.2	0.0	4,609	409	40	29.8	2.6	0.3
Sandwell	4,992	509	0	30.4	3.1	0.0	4,196	442	0	26.7	2.8	0.0
Solihull	4,078	1,023	37	34.8	8.7	0.3	3,879	1,204	0	31.6	9.8	0.0

2. *Secondary schools (classes of size)*

LEA	*1991*						*1992*					
	numbers			*percentages*			*numbers*			*percentages*		
	26–30	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*
Walsall	4,830	946	0	30.5	6.0	0.0	5,140	993	37	30.6	5.9	0.2
Wolverhampton	3,555	506	0	27.2	3.9	0.0	3,240	665	36	24.6	5.0	0.3
Knowsley	2,672	190	0	33.5	2.4	0.0	2,998	255	42	37.7	3.2	0.5
Liverpool	8,726	1,252	0	35.6	5.1	0.0	8,694	1,374	37	35.6	5.6	0.2
St. Helens	3,318	607	75	32.7	6.0	0.7	3,437	926	39	31.5	8.5	0.4
Sefton	5,469	1,286	0	35.2	8.3	0.0	5,357	1,398	0	34.2	8.9	0.0
Wirral	6,216	632	0	33.3	3.4	0.0	5,676	916	36	30.7	5.0	0.2
Bolton	3,718	942	0	24.7	6.3	0.0	4,911	1,383	0	31.8	9.0	0.0
Bury	2,905	600	0	34.2	7.1	0.0	3,443	1,138	36	37.6	12.4	0.4
Manchester	6,545	539	0	34.5	2.8	0.0	6,197	472	0	33.5	2.5	0.0
Oldham	5,070	1,268	0	38.3	9.6	0.0	5,505	800	73	39.8	5.8	0.5
Rochdale	2,971	351	74	26.1	3.1	0.7	3,899	317	0	35.0	2.8	0.0
Salford	1.917	155	0	18.6	1.5	0.0	2,172	156	0	20.6	1.5	0.0
Stockport	4,476	663	36	32.8	4.9	0.3	4,693	565	0	33.8	4.1	0.0
Tameside	3,927	439	0	34.2	3.8	0.0	3,826	726	0	32.5	6.2	0.0
Trafford	3,347	125	0	33.4	1.2	0.0	3,423	537	0	32.5	5.1	0.0
Wigan	4,578	568	36	27.1	3.4	0.2	4,728	830	0	28.3	5.0	0.0
Barnsley	4,305	350	0	39.1	3.2	0.0	4,356	445	0	40.2	4.1	0.0
Doncaster	4,767	631	0	26.7	3.5	0.0	5,092	1,052	0	28.4	5.9	0.0
Rotherham	5,004	732	36	34.5	5.1	0.2	4,834	601	0	32.6	4.1	0.0
Sheffield	5,803	506	36	28.3	2.5	0.2	7,017	415	123	33.1	2.0	0.6
Bradford	11,233	3,238	36	30.7	8.8	0.1	11,713	3,525	0	31.5	9.5	0.0
Calderdale	4,158	765	0	38.4	7.1	0.0	4,121	1,037	0	36.1	9.1	0.0
Kirklees	7,097	529	36	32.0	2.4	0.2	7,612	753	0	35.5	3.5	0.0
Leeds	13,063	3,600	385	28.7	7.9	0.8	14,426	3,363	152	31.9	7.4	0.3
Wakefield	5,473	1,212	77	29.2	6.5	0.4	6,385	1,087	36	33.9	5.8	0.2
Gateshead	3,139	821	0	31.4	8.2	0.0	3,522	789	0	34.6	7.7	0.0
Newcastle upon Tyne	4,489	767	0	30.3	5.2	0.0	4,362	1,209	46	29.4	8.2	0.3
North Tyneside	4,181	594	0	34.6	4.9	0.0	4,464	533	0	36.1	4.3	0.0
South Tyneside	1,932	189	0	27.0	2.6	0.0	2,776	312	0	35.5	4.0	0.0
Sunderland	5,313	1,325	0	32.7	8.2	0.0	5,439	984	37	33.7	6.1	0.2
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	26	0	0	35.6	0.0	0.0
Avon	16,072	3,348	36	34.2	7.1	0.1	17,490	2,827	79	36.9	6.0	0.2
Bedfordshire	13,737	2,449	156	38.2	6.8	0.4	14,134	1,651	0	38.2	4.5	0.0
Berkshire	12,463	3,189	76	30.1	7.7	0.2	12,416	3,905	0	29.7	9.3	0.0
Buckinghamshire	9,404	1,493	134	33.0	5.2	0.5	10,844	1,882	42	36.7	6.4	0.1
Cambridgeshire	11,733	2,590	0	35.8	7.9	0.0	14,012	2,275	174	39.8	6.5	0.5
Cheshire	18,250	5,946	72	32.7	10.6	0.1	18,503	6,822	229	32.4	11.9	0.4
Cleveland	9,172	796	39	29.1	2.5	0.1	9,425	913	0	29.0	2.8	0.0
Cornwall	10,108	2,252	110	39.7	8.8	0.4	10,462	1,974	37	40.8	7.7	0.1
Cumbria	8,212	1,047	73	31.4	4.0	0.3	7,958	1,718	38	29.2	6.3	0.1
Derbyshire	13,089	1,919	109	28.0	4.1	0.2	14,530	2,849	122	30.3	5.9	0.3
Devon	16,995	3,415	335	34.2	6.9	0.7	17,808	4,152	282	35.9	8.4	0.6
Dorset	11,191	2,501	72	32.8	7.3	0.2	13,019	3,114	0	37.2	8.9	0.0
Durham	11,632	2,410	38	37.7	7.8	0.1	12,003	2,419	0	38.9	7.8	0.0
East Sussex	10,377	1,395	0	38.9	5.2	0.0	10,803	1,529	75	39.2	5.6	0.3
Essex	31,156	7,387	170	37.4	8.9	0.2	32,324	7,537	110	38.4	9.0	0.1
Gloucestershire	9,836	1,935	73	34.8	6.8	0.3	9,295	2,386	0	32.8	8.4	0.0
Hampshire	23,720	3,594	36	34.8	5.3	0.1	26,383	4,186	94	38.2	6.1	0.1
Hereford and Worcester	14,942	4,561	72	35.1	10.7	0.2	15,818	4,540	79	36.8	10.6	0.2
Hertfordshire	18,534	5,038	0	32.7	8.9	0.0	19,467	4,560	36	33.3	7.8	0.1
Humberside	17,521	2,826	0	34.9	5.6	0.0	18,207	2,795	112	35.9	5.5	0.2
Isle of Wight	3,073	376	0	35.2	4.3	0.0	2,976	504	0	33.6	5.7	0.0
Kent	27,956	5,946	62	32.3	6.9	0.1	30,081	7,081	56	34.0	8.0	0.0
Lancashire	22,397	6,417	186	30.3	8.7	0.3	23,661	6,325	403	31.3	8.4	0.5
Leicestershire	15,372	1,582	248	31.4	3.2	0.5	15,101	2,400	41	30.4	4.8	0.1
Lincolnshire	10,637	1,840	36	32.9	5.7	0.1	10,421	1,682	76	32.4	5.2	0.2
Norfolk	10,897	732	0	30.9	2.1	0.0	11,021	1,054	38	31.1	3.0	0.1
North Yorkshire	11,147	1,875	0	30.3	5.1	0.0	12,654	1,932	0	33.2	5.1	0.0
Northamptonshire	11,478	2,166	131	30.8	5.8	0.4	12,649	1,712	219	33.5	4.5	0.6
Northumberland	8,753	1,760	115	35.8	7.2	0.5	8,708	2,342	109	35.2	9.5	0.4
Nottinghamshire	14,850	1,929	41	27.5	3.6	0.1	16,070	1,998	75	29.5	3.7	0.2
Oxfordshire	11,737	1,648	38	40.0	5.6	0.1	11,258	1,879	54	38.3	6.4	0.1
Shropshire	6,191	928	121	28.7	4.3	0.6	6,213	1,431	36	30.0	6.9	0.2
Somerset	9,042	1,725	0	36.1	6.9	0.0	8,595	2,152	36	34.5	8.6	0.1
Staffordshire	19,595	5,625	299	33.0	9.5	0.5	19,729	6,299	145	33.1	10.6	0.2
Suffolk	13,155	1,170	36	32.6	2.9	0.1	13,159	1,252	0	33.1	3.2	0.0
Surrey	10,936	1,466	0	32.4	4.3	0.0	11,774	2,019	0	34.0	5.8	0.0
Warwickshire	5,853	1,138	74	27.3	5.3	0.3	6,694	1,188	0	31.8	5.7	0.0
West Sussex	13,171	2,540	72	38.4	7.4	0.2	13,930	2,550	153	40.1	7.3	0.4
Wiltshire	9,458	917	0	32.4	3.1	0.0	9,445	1,400	36	32.9	4.9	0.1
England	813,303	153,903	4,544	33.0	6.2	0.2	857,095	168,050	4,288	34.2	6.7	0.2

LEA	*1993*						*1994 (provisional)*					
	numbers			*percentages*			*numbers*			*percentages*		
	26–30	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*
Corporation of London	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Camden	3,270	253	0	37.6	2.9	0.0	3,160	316	107	36.7	3.7	1.2
Greenwich	5,621	159	0	46.0	1.3	0.0	5,355	157	36	43.7	1.3	0.3
Hackney	2,761	188	0	45.7	3.1	0.0	2,411	317	39	38.1	5.0	0.6
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,200	886	0	22.1	16.3	0.0	1,569	668	0	30.8	13.1	0.0
Islington	2,802	31	0	47.1	0.5	0.0	2,887	219	0	48.7	3.7	0.0
Kensington and Chelsea	696	160	0	26.9	6.2	0.0	382	126	0	16.1	5.3	0.0
Lambeth	1,490	63	0	26.5	1.1	0.0	1,600	31	0	28.3	0.5	0.0
Lewisham	4,177	347	0	43.1	3.6	0.0	3,947	32	0	38.5	0.3	0.0
Southwark	2,998	1,038	0	35.5	12.3	0.0	3,678	817	0	42.0	9.3	0.0
Tower Hamlets	3,744	126	0	44.9	1.5	0.0	4,045	93	0	43.6	1.0	0.0
Wandsworth	2,734	474	165	35.1	6.1	2.1	3,349	316	0	41.7	3.9	0.0
Westminster	2,160	125	0	36.5	2.1	0.0	2,138	224	0	32.9	3.4	0.0
Barking and Dagenham	4,223	409	0	47.6	4.6	0.0	3,493	435	81	40.8	5.1	0.9
Barnet	4,564	1,327	0	27.0	7.8	0.0	4,991	1,015	0	29.9	6.1	0.0
Bexley	5,431	1,266	39	43.6	10.2	0.3	5,806	1,428	0	44.5	11.0	0.0
Brent	3,222	478	0	29.6	4.4	0.0	4,512	411	0	40.9	3.7	0.0
Bromley	5,630	1,236	0	37.1	8.1	0.0	6,378	1,470	42	40.2	9.3	0.3
Croydon	3,792	609	38	28.6	4.6	0.3	4,518	1,072	0	33.5	8.0	0.0
Ealing	2,797	479	51	29.3	5.0	0.5	4,342	1,028	0	37.4	8.9	0.0
Enfield	4,597	1,853	144	29.4	11.9	0.9	5,200	2,103	72	32.9	13.3	0.5
Haringey	2,716	95	0	35.9	1.3	0.0	2,283	0	0	29.6	0.0	0.0
Harrow	2,566	511	36	34.8	6.9	0.5	3,038	316	41	39.4	4.1	0.5
Havering	4,556	1,197	54	33.4	8.8	0.4	5,342	1,382	0	38.2	9.9	0.0
Hillingdon	3,913	1,137	36	31.9	9.3	0.3	4,922	1,039	0	38.7	8.2	0.0
Hounslow	4,737	1,419	110	39.2	11.8	0.9	4,632	1,361	38	36.8	10.8	0.3
Kingston upon Thames	1,863	873	0	26.8	12.6	0.0	2,000	571	0	29.2	8.3	0.0
Merton	2,756	410	0	41.7	6.2	0.0	1,949	350	36	30.2	5.4	0.6
Newham	6,020	252	0	51.5	2.2	0.0	7,572	501	0	59.7	3.9	0.0
Redbridge	4,652	1,165	0	36.8	9.2	0.0	4,711	1,298	0	34.1	9.4	0.0
Richmond upon Thames	2,773	284	0	43.0	4.4	0.0	2,235	727	0	32.5	10.6	0.0
Sutton	3,589	933	0	37.4	9.7	0.0	4,149	1,124	0	39.8	10.8	0.0
Waltham Forest	3,312	448	0	33.6	4.5	0.0	4,328	563	0	42.9	5.6	0.0
Birmingham	19,629	7,828	190	34.0	13.6	0.3	21,409	7,849	36	36.3	13.3	0.1
Coventry	6,668	1,045	0	42.1	6.6	0.0	7,751	1,321	0	47.2	8.0	0.0
Dudley	5,594	500	78	35.7	3.2	0.5	6,514	728	0	39.0	4.4	0.0
Sandwell	4,832	765	0	28.8	4.6	0.0	5,633	1,077	0	33.1	6.3	0.0
Solihull	3,980	1,199	0	32.5	9.8	0.0	4,088	1,369	0	32.7	11.0	0.0
Walsall	4,560	1,103	38	27.6	6.7	0.2	5,108	1,657	38	29.4	9.5	0.2
Wolverhampton	3,399	799	74	26.8	6.3	0.6	4,071	635	88	30.7	4.8	0.7
Knowsley	3,082	762	36	36.4	9.0	0.4	2,702	1,154	0	32.1	13.7	0.0
Liverpool	9,003	1,917	0	34.0	7.2	0.0	9,438	1,632	0	34.4	5.9	0.0
St. Helens	3,410	819	36	32.8	7.9	0.3	3,303	759	37	30.4	7.0	0.3
Sefton	5,722	1,232	302	36.1	7.8	1.9	5,754	1,399	0	34.2	8.3	0.0
Wirral	5,117	1,422	39	27.1	7.5	0.2	6,111	1,652	0	31.4	8.5	0.0
Bolton	4,123	1,523	91	26.9	9.9	0.6	5,547	1,330	0	34.6	8.3	0.0
Bury	3,349	1,243	147	36.3	13.5	1.6	3,792	1,368	38	38.3	13.8	0.4
Manchester	7,104	1,196	72	36.2	6.1	0.4	7,643	1,504	0	37.6	7.4	0.0
Oldham	5,886	854	176	41.8	6.1	1.2	5,947	1,258	0	40.6	8.6	0.0
Rochdale	4,986	643	0	43.3	5.6	0.0	4,717	1,146	0	40.5	9.8	0.0
Salford	2,983	221	0	28.4	2.1	0.0	3,487	412	0	31.0	3.7	0.0
Stockport	4,530	1,011	40	34.0	7.6	0.3	5,489	980	36	36.2	6.5	0.2
Tameside	5,201	641	0	43.6	5.4	0.0	5,444	1,360	0	42.2	10.5	0.0
Trafford	3,921	753	0	36.2	7.0	0.0	4,573	784	0	39.6	6.8	0.0
Wigan	5,274	1,031	74	30.2	5.9	0.4	5,592	727	74	32.3	4.2	0.4
Barnsley	4,574	657	41	41.3	5.9	0.4	4,997	414	0	42.5	3.5	0.0
Doncaster	5,864	885	0	30.3	4.6	0.0	7,345	924	0	36.2	4.6	0.0
Rotherham	4,986	416	0	33.5	2.8	0.0	6,111	358	0	38.0	2.2	0.0
Sheffield	8,947	1,055	72	38.0	4.5	0.3	10,955	1,465	36	43.8	5.9	0.1
Bradford	14,152	4,033	130	36.6	10.4	0.3	15,283	3,711	38	38.3	9.3	0.1
Calderdale	3,941	1,293	0	34.6	11.3	0.0	4,227	720	0	35.2	6.0	0.0
Kirklees	8,648	761	41	38.8	3.4	0.2	9,065	801	0	40.7	3.6	0.0
Leeds	13,376	2,529	36	33.6	6.3	0.1	12,455	3,481	255	31.8	8.9	0.7
Wakefield	6,025	955	0	32.1	5.1	0.0	6,039	2,099	0	33.2	11.5	0.0
Gateshead	3,429	695	0	32.9	6.7	0.0	3,612	880	0	35.3	8.6	0.0
Newcastle upon Tyne	4,628	982	37	30.6	6.5	0.2	5,091	1,214	0	33.3	7.9	0.0
North Tyneside	5,317	660	190	44.9	5.6	1.6	5,711	932	0	43.7	7.1	0.0
South Tyneside	3,234	949	0	37.8	11.1	0.0	2,991	280	0	35.9	3.4	0.0
Sunderland	6,140	1,054	37	35.8	6.1	0.2	6,482	1,081	0	35.2	5.9	0.0
Isles of Scilly	27	0	0	41.5	0.0	0.0	26	0	0	54.2	0.0	0.0
Avon	18,763	2,947	292	38.7	6.1	0.6	20,999	3,108	119	41.5	6.1	0.2
Bedfordshire	15,658	1,349	110	41.0	3.5	0.3	16,343	1,867	138	41.5	4.7	0.4
Berkshire	12,710	4,344	124	30.2	10.3	0.3	13,718	3,780	0	31.8	8.8	0.0
Buckinghamshire	11,051	2,493	36	36.7	8.3	0.1	12,334	2,724	89	38.4	8.5	0.3
Cambridgeshire	14,096	3,275	37	40.6	9.4	0.1	14,819	3,403	73	41.3	9.5	0.2
Cheshire	20,875	6,916	220	35.6	11.8	0.4	19,581	7,743	110	33.2	13.1	0.2

LEA	*1993*						*1994 (provisional)*					
	numbers			*percentages*			*numbers*			*percentages*		
	26–30	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*	*26–30*	*31–35*	*36+*
Cleveland	9,561	821	0	28.8	2.5	0.0	12,717	1,152	0	36.4	3.3	0.0
Cornwall	10,676	2,232	216	39.8	8.3	0.8	10,867	3,183	0	40.1	11.7	0.0
Cumbria	8,577	1,943	0	30.9	7.0	0.0	9,991	2,356	0	34.8	8.2	0.0
Derbyshire	15,206	2,521	109	31.1	5.1	0.2	18,218	3,557	36	35.8	7.0	0.1
Devon	18,919	4,441	333	36.7	8.6	0.6	19,071	4,226	88	35.7	7.9	0.2
Dorset	13,268	3,156	75	36.8	8.7	0.2	14,204	3,730	117	37.2	9.8	0.3
Durham	13,310	2,896	37	40.4	8.8	0.1	13,450	2,621	0	40.4	7.9	0.0
East Sussex	11,000	1,504	99	38.0	5.2	0.3	12,367	1,497	0	39.6	4.8	0.0
Essex	33,681	6,797	327	39.2	7.9	0.4	34,679	8,337	44	38.9	9.3	0.0
Gloucestershire	10,948	2,839	0	37.2	9.7	0.0	11,715	4,145	38	38.1	13.5	0.1
Hampshire	26,849	3,988	78	37.7	5.6	0.1	28,501	4,630	125	37.5	6.1	0.2
Hereford and Worcester	15,990	4,501	193	36.7	10.3	0.4	16,571	4,741	37	37.1	10.6	0.1
Hertfordshire	19,846	5,867	43	33.2	9.8	0.1	20,384	5,803	0	33.4	9.5	0.0
Humberside	19,411	2,705	73	37.7	5.3	0.1	21,398	5,179	125	40.2	9.7	0.2
Isle of Wight	3,628	345	0	39.9	3.8	0.0	3,390	1,044	0	38.3	11.8	0.0
Kent	32,475	6,473	252	35.8	7.1	0.3	32,388	6,787	109	34.5	7.2	0.1
Lancashire	23,750	7,384	579	31.0	9.6	0.8	25,208	8,550	151	31.7	10.8	0.2
Leicestershire	18,840	1,744	73	36.5	3.4	0.1	19,152	2,809	0	36.2	5.3	0.0
Lincolnshire	10,592	2,225	0	31.5	6.6	0.0	11,854	1,684	0	33.9	4.8	0.0
Norfolk	11,316	1,172	0	31.3	3.2	0.0	11,725	910	0	31.6	2.5	0.0
North Yorkshire	12,488	2,487	76	31.9	6.4	0.2	14,655	2,779	113	36.5	6.9	0.3
Northamptonshire	13,526	1,366	41	35.0	3.5	0.1	12,985	1,173	37	32.9	3.0	0.1
Northumberland	10,319	2,931	100	39.0	11.1	0.4	10,199	2,588	0	38.6	9.8	0.0
Nottinghamshire	19,140	1,934	149	34.3	3.5	0.3	19,520	2,081	0	34.1	3.6	0.0
Oxfordshire	12,364	1,993	205	40.6	6.5	0.7	11,850	1,762	37	36.6	5.4	0.1
Shropshire	7,227	1,267	40	33.8	5.9	0.2	7,876	1,466	36	34.6	6.4	0.2
Somerset	9,960	1,759	37	39.4	7.0	0.1	10,586	2,194	36	40.0	8.3	0.1
Staffordshire	22,977	7,901	252	36.8	12.6	0.4	24,458	10,235	180	37.6	15.8	0.3
Suffolk	13,962	1,133	115	34.5	2.8	0.3	12,400	699	0	29.9	1.7	0.0
Surrey	13,401	2,403	0	37.5	6.7	0.0	15,892	3,392	0	38.4	8.2	0.0
Warwickshire	7,031	1,133	90	31.6	5.1	0.4	6,452	724	0	28.7	3.2	0.0
West Sussex	15,197	2,842	109	42.3	7.9	0.3	14,336	2,481	0	38.7	6.7	0.0
Wiltshire	10,871	1,715	37	35.7	5.6	0.1	11,026	2,590	0	35.5	8.3	0.0
England	916,462	183,404	7,207	35.6	7.1	0.3	973,304	205,701	3,006	36.5	7.7	0.1

Single Regeneration Budget

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what adjustment is proposed to the total standard spending to take account of any transfer of funding for education functions from local authorities to the single regeneration budget in the 1995–96 financial year; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: A total of £47.326 million was transferred from education's share of total standard spending to the single regeneration budget in 1995–96. The single regeneration budget is designed, through education and other services, to encourage local regeneration and foster partnerships between local groups.

General National Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what adjustment is proposed to the total spending to take account of the transfer of funding of GNVQs from local authorities to central Government in the 1995–96 financial year; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: We propose to transfer £0.25 million from local authority finance in 1995–96 for the funding of GNVQs. This transfer will be reflected in the cost to schools of candidates registered for GNVQs in 1995–96. The Government have announced that they will be providing £23 million new money over three years to support vocational education. Details of the package will be announced shortly.

Expenditure Plans

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the relationship between the planned provision for Ofsted for 1995–96 as set out in her answer of 29 November, *Official Report,* column *680,* and in table 1 of the Department for Education and Office of Standards in Education departmental report for 1994–95 to 1996–97; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Planned provision for Ofsted of £98 million in 1995–96, reflects the latest estimate of the volume of primary and special school inspections next year.

The plans continue to allow for sufficient funding for a full programme of inspections to be carried out as required by legislation. Her Majesty's chief inspector announced on 8 December a range of measures designed to stimulate the market for inspections.

School Inspections

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of schools inspection in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1994 in constant prices.

Mr. Forth: In 1992–93 the DFE's provision for HMI and Ofsted was £30.5 million. It is not possible to disaggregate overall school inspection costs within this total. Local authorities spent some £149 million on their school inspection and advisory services.

In 1994–95, Ofsted's planned expenditure is £67 million; of this, some 55 per cent. is for the purchase of school inspections. Details of the estimated outturn expenditure by local authorities on school inspections and advisory services for 1994–95 are not yet available.

Oliver Wiley

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she expects the appeal on behalf of Oliver Wiley under section 8(6) of the Education Act 1981 for special educational provision, lodged in February, to be determined.

Mr. Forth: I expect that a decision will be made early in the new year. I shall, of course, inform my hon. Friend of the outcome.

Debt Charge Reimbursement Scheme

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what adjustment is proposed to the total standard spending to take account of the transfer of funding, due to the recalculation of the debt charge reimbursement scheme from local authorities to the Further Education Funding Council for the 1995–96 financial year; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: We propose to transfer £1.084 million into local authority finance in 1995–96 in respect of the debt charge reimbursement scheme. This reflects the fact that the amount of money paid by the Further Education Funding Council—FEFC—under the scheme is lower than had been assumed when the original transfer of funds from local authorities to the FEFC was calculated.

Ofsted

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what adjustments were made to the total standard spending to take account of the transfer of functions from local authorities to the Office for Standards in Education in each financial year since 1992–93;

(2) what adjustment is proposed to the total standard spending to take account of any transfer functions for local authorities to the Office for Standards in Education in the 1995–96 financial year; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The amounts transferred from local authority finance to Ofsted were £19 million in 1993–94 and a further £37 million in 1994–95. There are no proposals for further transfers in 1995–96. The phased transfer reflects the gradual transfer of functions from local authorities to Ofsted.

Cash Limits

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what changes she plans to cash limits on votes within her responsibility for 1994–95.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The cash limit for class X, vote 1, schools, research and miscellaneous services will be reduced by £3.5 million from £803,796,000 to £800,296,000. The reduction will be used to offset an increase in the non-voted cash limit DFE-LACAP for local authority capital for school building projects. The local authority capital cash limit DFE-LACAP will therefore be increased by £3.5 million from £39,398,000 to £42,898,000.

Postgraduate Students

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what changes she intends to make to her Department's scheme of support for postgraduate students for the academic year 1995–96.

Mr. Boswell: Under the Department's postgraduate bursary support scheme, more than 750 students received support in 1994–95. My right hon. Friend has decided, in the light of other demands and priorities, to reduce the funding available for the scheme by 10 per cent. from 1995–96. The funding reduction will not affect students already on course.

The maximum level of fees payable through the scheme will be £2,430 for 1995–96. This will preserve the value of the postgraduate fee in real terms.

HEALTH

Health Authority Staff

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff have been employed, by category, by each family health services authority in each of the last five years.

Mr. Malone: The available information will be placed in the Library. Family health services authorities were created in September 1990. Since 1990 it has not been possible to identify the numbers and categories of staff employed by individual authorities.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff have been employed, by category, by each regional health authority in each of the last five years.

Mr. Malone: The information available will be placed in the Library. It is not possible to identify the numbers of medical and dental staff employed by individual authorities nor has it been possible since 1990 to identify the numbers and categories of non-medical staff by individual authority.

Treatment Costs

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost of *(a)* treating a patient on the hospital waiting list, *(b)* providing an out-patient appointment, *(c)* treating a patient in an emergency in casualty, *(d)* treating an NHS patient in a private hospital under the last waiting list initiative, *(e)* a modern health centre suitable for general practitioners and their staff, *(f)* a heart bypass operation, *(g)* a hip replacement operation, *(h)* a cataract removal operation and *(i)* treating an asthma attack sufferer.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the treatment costs of elective hospital admissions is not separately available. The average cost for all acute in-patient and day case episodes in 1992–93—the latest year for which information is available—was about £1,004, and for an out-patient attendance £59.

The available expenditure information does not distinguish patients treated in an emergency in accident and emergency departments from those returning for routine follow-up appointments.

Five hundred and twelve waiting list patients were treated in private facilities as part of the additional activity purchased in February and March 1994 under the last stage of the central waiting times fund, at an average cost of £1,552 each. For the details I refer the right hon. Member to the reply the then Minister for Health, my right hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney), gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr Blunkett) on 14 June at columns *387-88*. The treatments purchased included complex and costly procedures resulting in a relatively high average cost per case.

The provision of premises is a matter for general practitioners and the costs of providing them are not available centrally.

The information requested for the average cost of heart bypass, hip replacement and cataract removal operations, and of treating asthma attack sufferers, is not available centrally.

Alcoholism

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effect of the implementation of proposals in the recent Green Paper "Tackling Drugs Together", on the levels of alcoholism.

Mr. Bowis: "Tackling Drugs Together" sets out the Government's strategy for combating illegal drug use, not alcoholism.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to what use the funds made available to the Health Education Authority for its alcohol programme have been put; and what is to become of the various projects funded by this money following the Health Education Authority's announcement that it intends to discontinue the programme.

Mr. Bowis: The Health Education Authority has not discontinued its alcohol work. Its budget for 1994–95 includes £1,159,000 for this work. This has financed the Drinkwise campaign, workplace activities, dissemination of the sensible drinking message, support for health authorities' purchasing functions and other work.

Obesity

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of *(a)* men and *(b)* women in each regional health authority were obese in 1986–87 and in each year since then for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The data are not available centrally in the form requested.

However, information at national level has been published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Figures derived from:

(i) the "Dietary and Nutritional Survey of British Adults", published in "Health of the Nation: One Year On", show that in England in 1986–87, 7 per cent. of men and 12 per cent. of women aged between 16 and 64 were obese;

(ii) the "Health Survey for England for 1992", using data for 1991 and 1992 combined, show that in England, 13 per cent. of men and 15 per cent. of women aged between 16 and 64 were obese.

Information at below national level, in the format requested, will be available when data are published in 1995 in the "Health Survey for England for 1993".

Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Hepatitis C Virus

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many HCV tests are given annually by the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: The number of tests for hepatitis C virus conducted by the national health service for diagnostic purposes is not available centrally.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional costs will be incurred on HCV testing following the High Court decision on HCV ownership.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost to the national health service of being unable to buy hepatitis C virus testing kits from Murex Diagnostics.

Mr. Sackville: The cost effects on HCV testing should be minimal, as the costs of the kits remaining on the market are comparable to those which are now withdrawn.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to the High Court decision that the hepatitis C virus is owned by an American company.

Mr. Sackville: The High Court decision related to patent rights for hepatitis C virus test kits. All current manufacturers of such test kits are in overseas ownership. We are satisfied that there will continue to be an adequate supply of test kits to the United Kingdom, and that continuing competition will ensure that these kits are supplied on a value-for-money basis.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new arrangements will be needed for HCV testing following the High Court decision on HCV ownership.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements have been made to obtain hepatitis C virus kits since Murex Diagnostics has been prevented from doing so.

Mr. Sackville: In some cases centres will need to establish a different source of supply for HCV test kits following the High Court decision on patent rights for such kits. Two existing kits will no longer be available, but there will continue to be an adequate supply of good quality HCV test kits from three manufacturers which will still be competing for the United Kingdom market.

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the names of the companies which supplied hepatitis C virus testing kits before Murex Diagnostics was prevented from doing so; and what are the names of those which have supplied them since.

Mr. Sackville: Ortho Diagnostic Systems Ltd., Abbot Laboratories Ltd., Organon Teknika Ltd., and Murex Diagnostics previously supplied such test kits to the United Kingdom market until the recent High Court decision relating to patent rights. Ortho and Abbott continue to supply, and Sanofi Diagnostics Pasteur Ltd. has recently entered the market, also under licence.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which health regions advertise community health council posts externally only after internal advertising among existing health region staff has failed to result in an appointment; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: It is a matter for the regional health authorities how they deal with community health council vacancies as they arise. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of the regional health authorities for further information.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she has issued to health regions about the practice of advertising posts in community health councils externally only after internal advertisement among regional health authority staff has failed to result in an appointment.

Mr. Malone: No guidance of this nature has been issued to regions.

Social Services

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each local authority in Greater Manchester and Lancashire, their use of independent organisations to carry out social services work, in order of the proportion of work placed outside the local authority's own social services department.

Mr. Bowis: Information is not collected centrally about the use of independent organisations by social services authorities.

Health Guidance

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she consulted the Audit Commission before health guidance TEL (94) (2) was issued.

Mr. Malone: No. The Audit Commission has responsibility for the external audit of the national health service, and it is not its role to set policy or manage the NHS.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, column *395*, how many individuals received termination payments from each of the NHS trusts listed.

Mr. Malone: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 19 December. *Official Report*, columns *985–86*.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the salary plus bonus payments for the chief executive of each NHS trust.

Mr. Malone: Remuneration details of chief executives are published locally in trusts' annual accounts.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 9 December, *Official Report*, columns *394–95*, what reasons were given by each NHS trust for the termination of employment in each case.

Mr. Malone: These are matters for individual trusts which have always been and remain free to determine the terms of their staffs' employment contracts.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the policy of her Department as to cancelled operations in NHS trust run hospitals.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service undertakes over 3.5 million operations every year, the vast majority on time. Our aim is to continue to reduce the number of occasions where operations have to be cancelled. We have set a national patients charter standard so that where an operation is unavoidably cancelled on the day it is due to take place, the patient will be offered a new date within one month of the cancellation.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the limitations on NHS trust chairmen and non-executive directors seeking posts or contracts with health authorities or trusts.

Mr. Malone: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 30 November at column *787*.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) of 9 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *395*, how many termination payments have been made by NHS trusts to employees below the rank of general and senior managers; and what is the total amount for each trust to date.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many employees of NHS trusts have been *(a)* dismissed, *(b)* made redundant, *(c)* given early retirement and *(d)* had their contracts revoked with compensation in excess of (i) the NHS redundancy provisions, (ii) £100,000 gross and (iii) £250,000 gross; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

Pharmacists (Prescription Fraud)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pharmacists have been discovered by her Department to have engaged in the practice of fraudulently collecting a prescription fee from a customer and ticking the exempt box on the prescription form during the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

Nursing Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many *(a)* home helps and *(b)* district nurses per 1,000 people over the age of 65 years there are in the United Kingdom; and if she will publish comparative data for other European countries;

(2) how many *(a)* home helps *(b)* district nurses per 1,000 people over the age of 65 there are; and what are the equivalent figures for other European countries.

Mr. Bowis: For England, the latest available information is for 30 September 1993 and is shown in the table:

	Number per 1,000 people aged 65 or over
Home helps[1]	6.6
District nurses	1.2

Note:

[1] Whole-time equivalent numbers of home helps directly employed by social services departments.

Source:

The home help figures are derived from the annual Department of Health census of local authority social services staff.

The district nurses figures are derived from the Department's non-medical work force census.

The Population data used are the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys mid-year 1993 England figures.

Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland respectively. The Department does not hold comparable information about other European countries.

Prescriptions

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many items on NHS prescriptions were dispensed in 1993;

(2) how many and what percentage of NHS patients had to pay the full cost of their prescriptions in the latest year for which figures are available;

(3) how many items on NHS prescriptions dispensed in 1993 cost less than the charge for the prescription.

Mr. Malone: In 1993, some 445.43 million prescription items were dispensed by community pharmacists, appliance contractors and dispensing doctors or personally administered to patients by prescribing doctors in England, of which an estimated 222.825 million had a total cost of less than the prescription charge. Figures for the number of patients who paid prescription charges are not available.

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the criteria that enable NHS patients to get their prescriptions free of charge.

Mr. Malone: The categories of patient exempt from, or entitled to remission of charges for prescribed drugs and appliances dispensed by community pharmacists, appliance contractors and dispensing doctors are shown in the table. Drugs and appliances personally administered or applied to patients by general medical practitioners and prescribing nurses, supplied to hospital in-patients and prescribed for contraceptive purposes or for the treatment of venereal disease are free.

Patients exempt from, or entitled to remission of, charges for prescribed drugs and appliances dispensed by community pharmacists, appliance contractors and dispensing doctors:

EXEMPT

Children under 16;

Young people under 19 in full-time education;

Men aged 65 and over

Women aged 60 and over

Pregnant women and women who have had a baby in the last 12 months;

Recipients of war service disablement pensions whose treatment is for their pensionable disability;

- People with one of the following medical conditions;
- Permanent fistula (including caecostomy, colostomy, laryngostomy, ileostomy or urostomy) requiring continuous surgical dressings or an appliance;
- Forms of hypoadrenalism (including Addison's disease) for which specific substitution therapy is essential;
- Diabetes insipidus and other forms of hypopituitarism;
- Diabetes Mellitus except where treatment is by diet alone;
- Hypoparathyroidism;
- Myasthenia gravis;
- Myxoedema, or other conditions where supplemental thyroid hormone is necessary;
- Epilepsy requiring continuous anti-convulsive therapy;
- A continuing physical disability which prevents the patient from leaving home except with the help of another person.

CHARGE REMISSION

Recipients of income support and their partners;

Recipients of family credit and their partners;

Holders of AG2 certificates for full help under the NHS low income scheme and their partners

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans there are to reconsider the present level of prescription charges; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Malone: Judgments are made each year about how finite health resources can be best targeted for maximum health gain. Perscription charges are one aspect of these considerations. An announcement will be made at the appropriate time.

Burnley Healthcare NHS Trust

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the former chairman of Burnley Healthcare NHS Trust is disqualified from serving as the chairman or non-executive director of an NHS trust.

Mr. Malone: No.

Wheelchairs

Mr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that people who need indoor or outdoor wheelchairs can obtain then through the national health service.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 24 November at column *321*.

Mr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all health authority wheelchair centres.

Mr. Bowis: A list of addresses of national health service wheelchair services will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the statutory basis for the wheelchair service.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 24 November at column *321*.

Birth Statistics

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many births took place in England and Wales in 1993; and how many took place in *(a)* NHS hospitals with consultation obstetric units, *(b)* other NHS hospitals, *(c)* other hospitals, *(d)* at home and *(e)* elsewhere.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table.

Live and still births in England and Wales 1993

	Live births	*Stillbirths*	*All births*
Total	673,497	3,855	677,322
Institutions	662,423	3,781	666,204
At Home	10,528	60	10,588
Elsewhere	516	14	530

Note:

The "Institutions" total includes national health service hospitals—those with obstetrics and those without—other hospitals and other institutions. Information for 1993 is not available separately for types of institution.

Parental Accommodation

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general hospitals *(a)* provide and *(b)* do not provide overnight accommodation for parents visiting their sick children.

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list by district health authority all children's hospitals giving *(a)* the total number of beds, *(b)* the total number and percentage of beds available for overnight parental accommodation and *(c)* the average annual number of overnight stays by parents;

(2) if she will list by district health authority all hospitals with children's wards giving *(a)* the total number of beds, *(b)* the total number and percentage of beds available for overnight parental accommodation and *(c)* the average annual number of overnight stays by parents.

Mr. Sackville: Information on parental overnight accommodation is not collected centrally. However, the Audit Commission report "Children First, A Study of Hospital Services" published in 1993, noted that most hospitals provide facilities for parents to stay overnight and indicated that in recent years there has been a considerable increase in the number of parents staying overnight.

Information on numbers of children's hospital beds is available in "Bed Availability for England, Financial Year 1993–94", copies of which are available in the Library.

NHS Centre for Information Technology

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what legislation was invoked to establish the NHS Centre for Information Technology in 1985; to whom the NHS Centre for Information Technology is directly accountable; and what was the employment status of the staff at its establishment.

Mr. Sackville: In 1985, Ministers agreed to set up the National Health Service Centre for Information Technology through an agency agreement with the West Midlands regional health authority. It ceased to operate in March 1988. The centre was directly accountable for its work programme to the then NHS management board's director for information and planning. The staff were NHS employees and their contracts of employment were held by the regional health authority.

Ambulance Services

Sir Irvine Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the total number of ambulances which contain trained paramedics operated by Trent regional health authority and the total number serving *(a)* the city of Sheffield, *(b)* south Yorkshire, *(c)* Greater Manchester and *(d)* the west midlands; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what is the total number of ambulances per head of population of the city of Sheffield operated by Trent regional health authority and the total number serving *(a)* the city of Sheffield, *(b)* south Yorkshire, *(c)* Greater Manchester and *(d)* the west midlands; and if she will make a statement;

(3) what is the total number of ambulances per head of population of the city of Sheffield which contain trained paramedics operated by Trent regional health authority; what is the total number serving *(a)* the city of Sheffield, *(b)* south Yorkshire, *(c)* Greater Manchester and *(d)* the west midlands; and if she will make a statement;

(4) if she will list the total number of ambulances operated by Trent regional health authority and the total number serving *(a)* the city of Sheffield, *(b)* south Yorkshire, *(c)* Greater Manchester and *(d)* the west midlands; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Information on numbers of ambulances is available from national health service trusts. The information available on paramedics listed shows the unconfirmed results of an informal survey of numbers of paramedics and other front-line staff in each ambulance service in England at the end of 1993.

Ambulance service	*Total front-line staff (including paramedics)*	*Paramedics*
Cumbria Ambulance NHS Trust	180	96
Durham County Ambulance Service NHS Trust	159	54
Northumbria Ambulance Service NHS Trust	357	188
Humberside Ambulance Service NHS Trust	285	85
North Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	183	61
Derbyshire Ambulance Service	232	73
Leicestershire Ambulance and Paramedic Service	214	60
Lincolnshire Ambulance and Health Transport NHS Trust	200	80
Nottinghamshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	250	84
Cambridge Ambulance Service	166	62
Norfolk Ambulance NHS Trust	246	89
Suffolk Ambulances Service	145	36
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust	278	133
Essex Ambulance Service NHS Trust	377	174
East Sussex Ambulance Service	235	90
Kent Ambulance Service	375	138
West Sussex Ambulance Service	175	68
Dorset Ambulance Service NHS Trust	178	134
Hampshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	321	134
Wiltshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	156	77
Isle of Wight Ambulance Service	48	31
Royal Berkshire Ambulance NHS Trust	168	61
Two Shires Ambulance NHS Trust	290	101
Oxfordshire Ambulance Service	134	62
West Country Ambulance Services NHS Trust	752	206
Gloucestershire Ambulance Service NHS Trust	165	84
Hereford and Worcester Ambulance Service	182	108
Shropshire Ambulance Service	125	45
Staffordshire Service NHS Trust	276	98
Warwickshire Ambulance Service	113	63
Lancashire Ambulance Service	368	142
Cleveland Ambulance Service NHS Trust	134	69
West Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance Service NHS Trust	450	122
South Yorkshire Metropolitan Ambulance and Paramedic Service NHS Trust	250	101

Ambulance service	*Total front-line staff (including paramedics)*	*Paramedics*
Surrey Ambulance Service	288	124
London Ambulance Service	1,485	394
Avon Ambulance Service NHS Trust	190	84
West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust	523	181
Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS Trust	552	183
Greater Manchester Ambulance Service	585	204

Care Costs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost to the national health service of providing long-term care for the chronically sick and terminally ill for each of the last five years.

Mr. Bowis: Information on the cost of different services provided for the chronically sick and terminally ill is not aggregated centrally. People with long-term health care needs are supported by a wide range of professionals and services within the national health service including in-patient hospital care, general practitioner and primary care support, continuing care in hospital or an alternative facility and NHS contributions towards social services led packages of care.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), gave the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 5 December at columns *89–90*, for information on palliative care.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the projected cost to the national health service of providing long-term care for the chronically sick and terminally ill in *(a)* 1995–96 and *(b)* 1996–97.

Mr. Bowis: Financial allocations are made to district health authorities and general practitioner fundholders. They will determine the specific levels of service required to meet local priorities and the needs of their local population.

Home Births

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the births which took place at home in 1993 were actually planned as home births.

Mr. Sackville: There were 10,588 home births in England and Wales in 1993, of which 10,528 were live births and 60 stillbirths.

Information on how many of these births were planned as home births is not available.

Health Statistics

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now provide the tabulations corresponding to those mentioned in her answer of 27 October, *Official Report*, column *820*, from the maternity hospital episode system for 1992–93; and what plans her Department has to publish these tables in a statistical bulletin.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested will be placed in the Library. Future publication plans for information from the maternity hospital episode statistics system are currently under consideration.

Dementia

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people with dementia there are in *(a)* each district health authority area and *(b)* each regional health authority area in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Bowis: We do not collect this information centrally but it is estimated that some 5 per cent. of the population aged 65 and over suffer from dementia. Information relating to Wales and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland respectively.

Health Care International

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which health authorities have contracted with the Health Care International hospital at Clydebank to treat patients from their area; how many patients were treated from each health board area; and what was the cost of the contract to the health authority concerned.

Mr. Sackville: North West regional health authority placed individual contracts with Health Care International for the treatment of some 57 patients at a total cost of £260,000.

Psychiatry and Human Rights

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she proposes to take in response to recommendation 1235 of 1994 of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe relating to psychiatry and human rights; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The recommendation of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe on psychiatry and human rights has yet to be formally adopted by the Council.

NHS Estate

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total value of the NHS estate in the current year; and what it was in 1979 in constant prices.

Mr. Sackville: The total value of the estate in the national health service, as at 1 April 1992, the last year in which it was valued, was £21,447,463,000. No valuation figures are available centrally for 1979.

Blood Transfusion Centres

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make available copies of the representations received by the National Blood Authority about the closure of the five blood transfusion centres; and what has been the total number of letters, for and against.

Mr. Sackville: These are matters for the National Blood Authority, which has undertaken a thorough and widespread consultation. The results will be carefully considered before decisions are made.

Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths due to hypertrophic cardiomyopathy were recorded over the past 10 years; and if she will break down the figures by age group.

Mr. Sackville: A table showing the number of deaths for which hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy—CD*425.1—was stated as the cause will be placed in the Library, as will a table showing the number of deaths for which other primary cardiomyopathies—ICD*425.4—were stated as the cause. Some of the latter include cases of hypertrophic non-obstructive cardiomyopathy, but it is not possible to make a count of such cases without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been done, and what findings have been made, about the causes of the fatal hypertrophic cardiomyopathy condition and which groups are vulnerable; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: It is believed that the majority of patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy have an inherited disorder. Therefore the families of those with the disorder are at risk of having the disease.

Ambulatory Care

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what experience has been gained elsewhere on the successful operation of an ambulatory care centre of the size of which is proposed for Guy's hospital which is separated from an in-patient service on another site; and what is her assessment of the practicability of the scheme.

Mr. Sackville: Patient care throughout the national health service is increasingly being delivered on a day case and out-patient basis and the proposals for an ambulatory care centre at Guy's would put it at the forefront of such developments.

Guy's and St. Thomas' NHS Trust has carried out considerable and detailed work on the proposals which are currently the subject of public consultation. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Lord Hayhoe, the chairman of the Guy's and St. Thomas's Hospital Trust, for further details of the proposals.

A copy of the consultation document "Looking to the Future" is available in the Library.

Chest Diseases

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will initiate a study into the level of chest diseases of those who live close to opencast coal mining operations; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The expert Advisory Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants has considered the results of a study in 1992 and concluded that there was no clear evidence that it is injurious to health to live in an area where opencast coal mining is carried out.

In October the Departments of the Environment and of Health, together with the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, announced a £5 million research programme into the effects of air pollution on health, and invited research proposals. The closing date for proposals to be received is 30 December. Proposals for research into the health effect of opencast coal mining fall within the scope of this programme and, if submitted, will be considered for commissioning as part of the programme.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects the recently appointed committee to investigate sudden infant deaths to report.

Mr. Sackville: The recently appointed expert group to investigate sudden infant death syndrome has been asked to report as soon as possible.

Mr. Tom Pinders

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps were taken to ascertain the political views of Mr. Tom Pinders before his appointment.

Mr. Malone: None.

Private Health Care

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health is she will state the total payments made in respect of private health care provisions for the treatment of NHS patients in each of the last three years.

Mr. Sackville: The level of expenditure by the national health service on health care services from non-NHS providers over the last three years is as follows:

1991–92: £208.5 million
1992–93: £267.3 million
1993–94: £357.4 million (provisional)

Source:
Annual accounts of FHSAs, regional and district health authorities.
Financial returns of NHS trusts.

These figures include other non-NHS providers such as charitable and religious hospitals, hospices, MENCAP and, MOD hospitals. No figure is held for the level of expenditure with the private sector alone.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr. Deva: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what previous experience there is of closing an accident and emergency department the size of that at Guy's hospital.

Mr. Sackville: There have been a number of accident and emergency departments which have been replaced successfully with minor injuries units. In developing these plans, careful account has been taken to ensure that adequate alternatives would be available for those patients requiring full accident and emergency services.

The Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham health commission is currently consulting widely on proposals for future services at Guy's hospital.

National Blood Authority

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she intends to take to make public a summary of the comments received by the National Blood Authority on its consultation document "The Future of the National Blood Service";

(2) if she will give a detailed timetable for the remaining stages of the consultation process on the

National Blood Authority's document "The Future of the National Blood Service".

Mr. Sackville: These are matters for the National Blood Authority. The authority has undertaken a thorough and widespread consultation on its proposals. The results will be carefully considered before decisions are made.

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she intends to take to bring the recommendations of the National Blood Authority before Parliament.

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Authority has undertaken a thorough and widespread consultation. the results will be carefully considered before decisions are made.

Ms Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the appointment of zonal directors by the National Blood Authority, prior to the conclusion of the consultation process on the authority's document "The Future of the National Blood Service".

Mr. Sackville: When the National Blood Authority took over management control of the regional transfusion centres on 1 April 1994, the regional transfusion directors became directly accountable to the chief executive of the authority. The National Blood Authority decided that this change gave rise to the need for a new management structure based on three zones, notwithstanding the authority's proposals for reorganising the blood service.

Autism

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment has been made of the auditory integration training for the treatment of autism; if she will make it available on the national health service; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Practitioners are free, within available resources, to offer desensitisation techniques such as auditory integration therapy if they consider it to be in the best interests of their patients.

Drugs (Poisoning)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what new proposals she has to improve the danger warning on labels of products on those medicinal drugs that have been involved in the fatal poisoning of more than five people in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: None at present. All medicines are labelled to show the recommended dose and any appropriate warnings. Consideration has been given to putting explicit warnings on the labels of medicines known to be implicated in accidental or deliberate poisonings but it is felt that such warnings may actually encourage misuse and overdose. The European Commission is currently considering the whole question of warnings on medicines labels and we will participate in finalising guidance as soon as proposals are available.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what methods are now being considered for the disposal of clinical waste by the Royal Liverpool University hospital; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Royal Liverpool University Hospital National Health Service Trust, which has a duty to comply with all relevant statutory requirements.

Weighted Capitation

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will supplement the information which she provided to the Health Select Committee, which was published as table 8.3 to the Committee's first special report in the 1993–94 Session, by specifying *(a)* the cash allocation and *(b)* the weighted capitation target figure in cash terms for each district health authority in 1994–95; and if she will also specify a notional weighted capitation target figure for 1994–95 for each English district health authority calculated on the basis of the modified formula described in annex 1 to the NHS executive's recent publication "HCHS Revenue Resource Allocation: Weighted Capitation Formula".

Mr. Sackville: Some figures have changed from those provided in table 8.3 following the receipt of amended data from regional health authorities. A revised table including the information requested will be placed in the Library.

There are no operational reasons for calculating notional 1994–95 capitation targets for district health authorities on the basis sought.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will specify the HCHS weighted capitation target figure in cash terms for each English district health authority in 1995–96 on the basis of the capitation formula described as *(a)* current and *(b)* modified in annex 1 to NHS executive booklet "HCHS Revenue Resource Allocation: Weighted Capitation Formula", published this autumn;

(2) what cash allocation would be made to each English district health authority, including allocations to general practitioners fundholding practices in its area, in 1995–96 on the assumption that regional health authorities disburse their 1995–96 HCHS revenue allocations on the basis of the same percentage increase for each district health authority.

Mr. Sackville: For 1995–96 it is for regional health authorities to determine weighted capitation targets, including the formula used, and allocations for each of their districts. Similarly, the hypothetical figures sought on cash allocations can be calculated only by regional health authorities.

When the regional health authorities have determined hospital and community health services revenue allocations and capitation targets for their districts in 1995–96, we will undertake an exercise to collect this information in a comparable format.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will specify in cash terms the 1995–96 HCHS weighted capitation targets for each health region calculated on the capitation formula described as *(a)* current and *(b)* modified in annex 1 to the NHS executive's recent publication "HCHS Revenue Resource Allocation: Weighted Capitation Formula", in a form that is compatible with the 1995–96 HCHS revenue allocations to regions announced on 6 December.

Mr. Sackville: The modified targets referred to are shown in the table.

Capitation targets on the basis of the current formula are not available as there are no operational reasons for these to be calculated.

Regional health authority	1995–96 Weighted capitation target £000s
Northern and Yorkshire	3,150,160
Trent	2,191,435
Anglia and Oxford	2,236,531
North Thames	3,499,064
South Thames	3,383,899
South and West	2,946,094
West Midlands	2,399,624
North West	3,217,091
England	23,023,897

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a paper explaining the data and calculations used to determine the weightings for each zone mentioned in table 5 of the NHS executive's recent publication "HCHS Revenue Resource Allocation Weighted Capitation Formula".

Mr. Sackville: Yes.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage increase or abatement *(a)* the three Thames adjustments, London weighting, Thames market forces factor and the Thames 3 per cent. and 1 per cent. supplements, and *(b)* the new all-embracing market forces factor described in the NHS executive's recent publication "HCHS Revenue Resource Allocation Weighted Capitation Formula" have on the HCHS revenue allocation to each (i) regional health authority and (ii) district health authority in England.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows:

(i) the affect in percentage terms of the Thames adjustments, London weighting and the Thames supplements used to calculate revenue capitation shares in 1994–95 and

(ii) the effect of the market forces factor used to calculate integrated—revenue and capital charges—weighted capitation shares in 1995–96.

It is for regional health authorities to make allocations to district health authorities and information on market factors to inform DHA targets is not available centrally.

RHA	Percentage
1995–96	
Northern and Yorkshire	-4.43
Trent	-4.63
Anglian and Oxford	-0.40
North Thames	10.95
South Thames	7.43
South and West	-2.52
West Midlands	-4.27
North West	-4.03
1994—95	
Nothern	-3.32
Yorkshire	-3.32
Trent	-3.32
East Anglian	-3.32
N W Thames	9.65
N E Thames	11.91
S E Thames	6.15
S W Thames	6.44
Wessex	-3.32
Oxford	-3.16
South Western	-3.32
West Midlands	-3.32
Mersey	-3.32
North Western	-3.32

Beta-interferon

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will ensure that there will be no delay in approving the drug beta-interferon as a treatment of multiple sclerosis if the current trials suggest that this drug could be useful; and when she expects trials to be completed.

Mr. Sackville: The licensing authority has always sought to ensure that there is no delay in approving any drug application. The Medicines Control Agency is now arguably the fastest assessing authority for new drugs in the world. In addition, the MCA has a fast-track procedure for considering new drugs which might offer significant public health benefits. However, in the consideration of any drug application, the licensing authority has to be satisfied as to the efficacy, safety and quality of the product before marketing.

Beta-inteferons, to be used in the treatment of multiple sclerosis, fall into a category of products which, as from 1 January 1995, will be considered through the new European licensing procedures. Such products will be granted European approvals through the so-called "centralised procedure". The Council regulation 2309/93 defines the time frame within which applications must be considered through the procedure. Applicants are required to provide data to support the safety, quality and efficacy of the product. If the clinical trials and the other data presented by the company are satisfactory and meet European requirements, then a marketing authorisation will be granted.

Because of commercial confidentiality, information on the progress of clinical trials cannot be provided.

Socio-economic Factors

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the inter-departmental working group to examine the links between socio-economic factors and health; and if she will report progress.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice her Department's variations sub-group has given *(a)* on the allocation of national health service resources and *(b)* on the need to promote interventions which reduce health inequity.

Mr. Sackville: We have not established such an inter-departmental working group. A sub-group of the Chief Medical Officer's "Health of the Nation Working Group" was set up earlier this year to consider how the Department and the national health service can effectively tackle ethnic, geographical, socio-economic and gender variations in health in the five "Health of the Nation" key areas. The sub-group is due to report to the Chief Medical Officer by spring 1995.

Dorset Health Commission

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total budget of the Dorset health commission for the year 1994–95.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the South and West regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman, Rennie Fritchie, for details.

Primary Care

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress her Department is making in developing a new needs-based formula for allocating resources for primary health care.

Mr. Malone: Work is now in hand to consider an appropriate approach to resource allocation in 1996–97 and beyond when, legislation permitting, there will be new health authorities embracing the functions of family health services authorities and district health authorities. That work will include primary care expenditure.

Hammersmith Hospital NHS Trust

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) of 9 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *395*, how many chief executives, general and senior managers received payments from the £122,689 quoted for Hammersmith Hospital NHS Trust; and what was the total amount of termination payments made to employees below the rank of chief executive and general and senior managers in the Hammersmith Hospital NHS Trust.

Mr. Malone: Two payments were made by Hammersmith Hospital National Health Service Trust on the termination of chief executive and general and senior managers contracts, totalling £122,689. Details of payments made to other employees are not available centrally.

Revenue Allocations

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who carried out the research for her Department which resulted in the approval of a new market forces factor for hospital and community health services revenue allocations.

Mr. Sackville: The research into the market forces was carried out by Department of Health officials.

Budget, Berkshire

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funds were allocated to projects within the Berkshire health authority for 1994–95, excluding the actual budgets for Berkshire health authority and family health services authority.

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Anglia and Oxford regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Sir Stuart Burgess, the chairman, for details.

Cornwall Healthcare Trust

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she sought from the former employers of Mrs. Abigail Kirby-Harris prior to her appointment as chair of the Cornwall Healthcare Trust.

Mr. Bowis: The names and personal references of candidates for the post of chairman of Cornwall Healthcare National Health Service Trust were submitted to Ministers by the chairman of South Western regional health authority. Ministers appointed Mrs. Abigail Kirby-Harris on the strength of that information.

Measles-Rubella Immunisation

Mr. Coe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in the measles-rubella immunisation campaign.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Nearly 7 million school children between the ages of five and 16 were offered immunisation against disease. Early indications are that around 90 per cent. uptake was reached in the first phase of the campaign in many areas, with some as high as 95 per cent.

It is now clear from reports which we have received from district health authorities that high levels of coverage have been achieved. Some authorities have reached 95 per cent. We also have early indications that the rise in measles notifications has been halted. This is a superb effort in the face of the forecast measles epidemic.

I congratulate all those involved in the campaign-school immunisation teams, school staff, doctors, nurses, pharmacists and health authority administrative staff. I would also like to congratulate Rotary International on its practical help with the campaign.

NHS Financing

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what increase in financial resources in real terms was awarded to the national health service in 1979, 1986, 1990 and 1993.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 13 December 1994]:* The table shows the increase in Government spending on the national health service represented by the original plans for each of the relevant financial years. The further rise in Government spending on the NHS in England announced in the Budget will bring the overall increase since 1978–79 to 69 per cent. in real terms.

Financial year	*Percentage real terms[1] growth over forecast outturn for previous year[2]*
1979–80	2.1
1986–87	2.0
1990–91	4.9
1993–94	1.2

[1] Measured by the GDP deflator.

[2] Figures are not necessarily compatible owing to changes in definitions.

Sources:

Public expenditure White Papers and Department of Health departmental reports.

Burnley NHS Trust

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was paid by Burnley NHS Trust to Mrs. Maggie Aikman when she resigned; how it was made up;

and what would have been her entitlement if employed directly by the NHS.

Mr. Malone: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on 30 November, at column *786*.

The sum paid to Mrs. Aikman was in accordance with the terms of her contract of employment with Burnley Health Care National Health Service Trust.

NHS Funding

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total amount of funding allocated to the NHS for the financial year 1995–96; what was the figure in 1994–95; how much of this total sum is allocated for 1995–96 to the Yorkshire and Northern region; and what the figure was for 1994–95.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 13 December 1994]*: The sum available for revenue allocations for hospital and community health services in 1995–96 is £24,579 million. The equivalent figure for 1994–95 was £23,457 million. Most family health service funding is demand led and not allocated.

In 1995–96 the initial cash limit for Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority is £3,186,650,000. In 1994–95, initial cash limits were given to the then 14 regional health authorities. Northern regional health authority received £1,459,489,000 and Yorkshire regional health authority received £1,661,110,000.

The initial cash limit figures for Northern Yorkshire regional health authority are not strictly comparable due to a boundary change between the two allocation years.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nigeria

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy on future military sales to Nigeria.

Mr. Goodlad: The measures announced by the European Union on 2 December 1993 remain in force. They will be reviewed only in the light of progress towards a return to civilian democratic rule in Nigeria.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes were made to United Kingdom policy on arms sales to Nigeria following the military coup of November 1993.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Lady to the written reply I gave the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 2 December 1993, at column *680*.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's diplomatic relations with the Nigerian Government.

Mr. Goodlad: We are urging the Nigerian Government to take all possible steps towards an early return to democratic civilian rule and to improve their performance on human rights.

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what initiatives are being taken by the European Union to assist humanitarian efforts in Liberia and to bring a peaceful solution to the strife.

Mr. Goodlad: We have given our strong support to the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States and the United Nations to sustain the Liberian peace process, and have urged our European partners to do so.

The European Community humanitarian office in Monrovia manages a wide range of essential humanitarian relief projects. The latest of these, a UNICEF water and sanitation project for Monrovia, is being finalised.

Kenya

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Kenya of the withdrawal by the Kenyan Government of citizenship from Sheikh Khalid Balala; and what plans he has to raise the matter in bilateral and multilateral meetings with the Kenyan Government.

Mr. Goodlad: This is a matter for the Kenyan Government.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Kenyan Government about the number of applications in the current year for asylum in the United Kingdom from Kenyan passport holders.

Mr. Goodlad: I have made no representations to the Kenyan Government concerning the number of asylum applications this year by Kenyan nationals. The high commissioner in Nairobi has discussed with the Kenyan Government the problems caused by asylum claims from both Somali nationals travelling on Kenyan passports and Kenyan nationals who are ethnic Somalis subsequently claiming to be Somali citizens travelling on false Kenyan passports.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *170*, what assessment he has made of the nuclear facilities, storage areas and equipment at the Murmansk naval base as a threat to the air, ocean, water or fisheries of the United Kingdom and its NATO alies.

Mr. Goodlad: These visits, to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office referred in his answer of 6 December, were not for the purpose of an assessment of that kind. The purpose of such visits is to improve co-operation and understanding between our armed forces.

Special Advisers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *819*, if he will make a statement regarding his Department's expenditure on special advisers in each of the last three financial years and for the financial year 1979–80.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer to the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on 19 December *Official Report*, column *937*.

Intergovernmental Conference

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has had consultations with the United Kingdom's partners in the European Community about the start date of the intergovernmental conference in 1996.

Mr. Goodlad: To date has been discussed formally, but most of my colleagues expect the conference to be convened in the first half of 1996.

Gulf War

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many safe areas were created by the United Nations for the protection of civilians in the Gulf war; and how many of these were not held by Muslim armed forces.

Mr. Goodlad: There were no safe areas created by the United Nations during the Gulf war. But in April 1991 a safe haven was created in northern Iraq to protect the civilian population, the vast majority of whom were Muslims of Kurdish origin.

Mediterranean Basin

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions he proposes to take in response to recommendation 1249 of 1994, of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe relating to co-operation in the Mediterranean basin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We are considering recommendation 1249 in the context of policies towards the Mediterranean which are already being pursued by other forums such as the European Union.

Gibraltar

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assurances he gave the Chief Minister of Gibraltar during his telephone conversation on 14 December about the administration and stewardship of the colony by the local administration.

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office made clear to the Chief Minister our concern at the contents of a report in *The Independent* that day.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what considerations led him to telephone the Chief Minister of Gibraltar on 14 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office made clear to the Chief Minister our concern at the contents of a report in *The Independent* that day.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what plans Her Majesty's Government have to ensure that the spirit and letter of the European Union treaties are applied to Gibraltar and its people; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations Her Majesty Government have made, and when, to the European Commission or other European Union agency, about the interpretation of the European treaties by Spain in respect of Gibraltar and its people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We expect Gibraltar to be accorded those rights to which it is entitled by virtue of its status within the European Union. We have made this clear to other member states whenever necessary, for example over the application of the draft external frontiers convention to Gibraltar.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with Government of Gibraltar regarding the future of the constitution of Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Chief Minister told us in 1992 that he would like to see a new constitution. We have listened to his concerns.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with whom responsibility lies for the control of the police in Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Governor of Gibraltar.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the differences between the rights of European citizenship of the people of Gibraltar and of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The people of Gibraltar enjoy rights commensurate with the special status negotiated for Gibraltar within the European Community at the time of United Kingdom accession and in subsequent legislation.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his time scale for resolving the problem of delays at the Spanish-Gibraltar frontier imposed by the Spanish authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The secondary checks at the Spanish-Gibraltarian frontier which were the cause of recent unprecedented delays have been lifted. We wish to see all disproportionate checks at this frontier ended permanently.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) with whom responsibility lies for detecting and combating the illegal importation of drugs in Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the standards of conduct and stewardship needed by authorities or agencies subordinate to the Gibraltar Government to combat the illegal importation of drugs; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make a statement on the conduct and stewardship of customs control carried out by the Gibraltar Government.

Mr. Goodlad: Responsibility rests with the Gibraltar police and customs authorities. We have assisted them through the provision of equipment, including two fast patrol launches. Over the past year, just under 2 tonnes of drugs have been seized and over 490 drugs-related arrests made.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what are Her Majesty's Government's responsibilities for money laundering in Gibraltar; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the standards of conduct and stewardship of the Government of Gibraltar in respect of their fulfilment of their responsibilities in respect of combating money laundering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have responsibility for good government in Gibraltar and for Gibraltar's implementation of relevant EC law on money laundering. Money laundering is a criminal offence in Gibraltar. We have furthermore received assurances from the Government of Gibraltar that Gibraltar is in the process of implementing the EC money laundering directive.

North Korea

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to restore economic and political relations with North Korea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have never maintained formal relations with North Korea. North Korea has, however, entered into a number of commitments in its recent agreement with the United States, an agreement which we have welcomed. Any moves by us to establish contacts with North Korea will depend on the progress it makes in fulfilling these commitments.

East Timor

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he received on 7 December from Timorese people in Lisbon to the British embassy about the relationship between Britain and Indonesia; and what was his response.

Mr. Goodlad: A letter signed by two individuals describing themselves as members of the Timorese resistance was handed into Her Majesty's embassy in Lisbon on 7 December. It gave no address to which to reply.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on sovereignty in respect of East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom has not recognised Indonesia's annexation of East Timor. We believe that the continuing dialogue between Indonesia and Portugal, under the UN Secretary-General's auspices, offers the best prospect for reaching agreement on a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement on the territory's future.

Somalia

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total number of applications outstanding concerning Somalis who have applied for entry certificates for family reunification; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: It is not possible to collate this information without disproportionate cost on a worldwide basis. However, there are approximately 850 such applicants awaiting interview in Addis Ababa and Djibouti, and 1,700 such applications pending by the Home Office after being referred by out post in Addis Ababa.

Intergovernmental Conference

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in the run-up to the intergovernmental conference, he will be issuing a White Paper or other public document setting out the Government's view of the key issues and the IGC outcome it will be seeking.

Mr. Goodlad: We have no such plans at the moment. It is not yet possible to say what the agenda of the 1996 IGC will be. But we will keep Parliament informed, and answer questions, in the course of normal parliamentary business.

Boat People

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he proposes to take in respect of those boat people formally detained in Hong Kong whom the Vietnamese refuse to accept as Vietnamese, the Chinese as Chinese and the Hong Kong authorities have had to release as unlawfully detained; what steps he intends to take so that they can settle somewhere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We are continuing our discussions with the Vietnamese and Chinese Governments. Our firm intention is that the problem of Vietnamese migrants and ex-China Vietnamese illegal immigrants—ECVIIs—in Hong Kong will be resolved well before China takes over in 1997. Solid progress has been made; 45,000 Vietnamese migrants have been repatriated since 1989 and 2,000 ECVIIs have been returned to China since September last year.

EU Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the voting record of each member state on items agreed at the meeting of the European Community's Foreign Affairs Council held on 3 to 4 October.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's statement to the House of 27 October 1994 *Official Report,* columns *765–66.* No votes were taken at this Council: those items agreed are also set out in the press release published by the Council secretariat and deposited in the House of Commons Library.

Economic Summit

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) of 12 December, *Official Report,* columns *463-64,* if he will make a statement on how his Department arrived at the figure for the total cost for his spouse to accompany him to the economic summit in Naples between 8 and 10 July 1994.

Mr. Goodlad: The total cost for Mrs. Hurd to accompany my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the economic summit in Naples, referred to in my answer of 12 December, reflects minimal expenses only. Mrs. Hurd travelled on an official aircraft and stayed as a guest of the Italian Government.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Departmental Telephones

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by his Department for each of the last five years.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department of National Heritage was set up in April 1992 and figures can be provided only from 1993–94, when the Department moved into its present offices and took over telephony.

Departmental charges for telephony for the year 1993–94 were £168,000.

Details of the numbers of calls made per year are not held centrally.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost his Department.

Mr. Dorrell: Neither this Department nor its executive agencies have used executive search agencies to fill any vacancies during the last year.

National Lottery

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) whether he will issue a direction to the Director General of the National Lottery with the aim of forbidding the withholding of prize money in the national lottery from one week's competition to add artificially to jackpots in one or more subsequent competitions, other than as part of an authorised roll-over arrangement;

(2) what advice he has received from the Director General of the National Lottery about the withholding of national lottery prize money by Camelot in order to boost jackpots in subsequent competitions other than as part of an authorised roll-over arrangement;

(3) whether it his Department's policy to encourage the Office of the National Lottery to permit the withholding of national lottery prize money by Camelot in order to boost jackpots in subsequent competitions other than as part of an authorised roll-over arrangement.

Mr. Dorrell: Prize money in the national lottery cannot be manipulated from week to week. I have asked Peter Davis, the Director General of the National Lottery, to write to the hon. Member about this matter, placing copies of his letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will bring forward proposals to prohibit the BBC from promoting and advertising the national lottery.

Mr. Dorrell: No. Such proposals are not necessary. Under the terms of its licence and agreement, the BBC may not without my approval receive payment for broadcasting advertising or promotional material, and no such approval has been sought or given.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what advice he has received about the legality of BBC television programmes promoting the national lottery.

Mr. Dorrell: I have been advised that the legality of the BBC's operations is primarily a matter for the BBC's governors.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage under what section of the BBC's charter the corporation is permitted to promote the national lottery.

Mr. Dorrell: Under clause 3 of its charter, the BBC can make and broadcast programmes, including programmes covering events such as the national lottery draw. Detailed rules on the content and presentation of such programmes are set out in the BBC's producers' guidelines.

Mr. Kilfoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that the content, style and promotion of the national lottery programme shown on BBC television on Saturday night conforms with the BBC's charter.

Mr. Dorrell: None. The primary responsibility for ensuring that individual programmes conform with the BBC's royal charter rests with the BBC's governors.

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage whether Ministers of the Crown will support individual project applications for grants from the national lottery; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Distribution of the net proceeds of the national lottery is the responsibility of the distributing bodies named under section 23 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993, as amended by statutory instrument 1994 No. 1342. The decisions that these bodies take will be independent of Government. The Government's main function in the distribution process is to issue directions under section 26 of the Act, covering the financial management of lottery funds and matters which distributors must take into account when making funding decisions.

Lottery applications, except those made to the National Lottery Charities Board, are expected to attract a significant element of partnership funding from the voluntary or private sector, from local authorities or, exceptionally, from grant in aid. Within their normal departmental responsibilities, Ministers and their Departments may be involved in the process of approving aspects of a project, or in agreeing the contribution which a body receiving grant in aid might wish to make to a fully worked-up project. In cases where the costs of a project exceed a public body's delegated limits, the entire project will need ministerial approval. Ministers and their Departments may also encourage a wide range of projects to be put forward to the distributing bodies. However, they will not endorse any individual application to any national lottery distributing body, nor will they explicitly state that any applications should be given priority by the distributing body over other applications. Where there is any grant in aid partnership funding, that will not in itself result in that project receiving special priority when it is considered by a distributing body for lottery funds.

Ministers may. of course, support local projects from within their constituencies in their capacity as Members of this House.

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. Dorrell: Whenever it is appropriate, I travel by train to official engagements. Information on individual journeys and the times taken could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Sports Council

Mr. Pendry: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has made to Her Majesty's Treasury, with regard to reviewing the Sports Council's financial memoranda as part of the current restructuring exercise.

Mr. Sproat: As I announced on 8 July, *Official Report*, columns *584–92*, the Sports Council will be replaced during 1995–96 by new United Kingdom and English Sports Councils. The framework of financial control for these bodies is currently under consideration.

Rugby Football Union

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make urgent representations to the Rugby Football Union regarding its imposition of a 12-month ban on Mr. Adrian Spencer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* I have no plans to make specific representations to the Rugby Union Football about this matter. However, the rugby authorities are well aware of my views on the need for more constructive dialogue between the two codes.

English Heritage

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what local government representation there is on the governing body of English Heritage.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* English Heritage's governing body is its commission. Sir Hugh Cubitt, who has been a member of the commission for six years, is a former member and leader of Westminster city council and a former chairman of the council's planning committee. His appointment ends on 31 December 1994. When making future appointments to the commission, due regard will be given to the National Heritage Act 1983 and the desirability of at least one member having knowledge of local government.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Staff

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many staff are employed by hon. Members; and how many are female.

Mr. Newton: As at 30 November 1994, a total of 1,637 separate salary payments were made on behalf of hon. Members. Of these, 1,318 were payments to females.

Christmas Expenditure

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many official Christmas cards he and his Ministers intend to send in 1994; how much these cards will cost *(a)* to buy, *(b)* to post and *(c)* in staff time to sign, address and place in envelopes; and if he will place in the Library a sample copy of the official Christmas card he intends to send this year.

Mr. Newton: This year I expect to send about 200 Christmas cards. The cost of purchasing and posting these cards will be £150, inclusive of VAT, and £38 respectively. It is not possible to estimate accurately the cost in staff time; but it would be minimal. I will arrange for an example of the Christmas card to be placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Consultants

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the private consultants employed by his Department in each of the last five years; what projects they were involved with; and what was the total cost in each year.

Mr. Freeman: The Department's central contracts branch has placed in excess of 500 contracts with consultants in each of the last few years. In addition to this figure, consultancy contracts are placed as part of specific projects and as low value orders of under £10,000. Under the Department's arrangements for the delegation of contractual authority, such contracts are placed without reference to the central contracts branch and so cannot be identified separately.

In view of this and the large number of centrally placed contracts involved over the last 15 years, an answer to this question could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will *(a)* list those consultancy contracts awarded by his Department's central contracts branch in each year since 1989 and *(b)* list the purpose of each individual contract.

Mr. Freeman: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Quangos

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those quangos for which his Department is responsible and indentify the membership of each and the remuneration they receive.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to "Public Bodies 1993", issued by the Cabinet Office, Office of Public Service and Science, pages 7 and 8 of which detail MOD non-departmental public bodies.

Indonesia

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, who services the British Hawk aircraft sold to Indonesia.

Mr. Freeman: The Indonesians service the Hawk aircraft themselves.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates between 1984 and the present memoranda of understanding relating to defence contracts were agreed with the Government of Indonesia; and what was the subject matter and their value.

Mr. Freeman: A general co-operation MOU was signed between the United Kingdom and Indonesia in 1983. This MOU has been extended and supplemented but remains in place. It is not the practice to give details of the contents of MOUs between Governments.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance towards military training is being given to Indonesia during the current financial year.

Mr. Soames: The United Kingdom has provided training, including developmental and technical courses, for Indonesian students during the current financial year. Details of such training are not normally disclosed, however, as they are regarded as confidential between Governments.

Debt Collection

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of debt collection visits, and the countries visited, made by the Defence Accounts Agency since its formation.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for the chief executive of the Defence Accounts Agency. I have therefore asked him to reply.

Letter from M.J. Dymond to Mr. Jim Cousins, dated 19 December 1994:

You asked the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will list the number of debt collection visits, and the countries visited, made by the Defence Accounts Agency since its formation. As Chief Executive of the Defence Accounts Agency I have asked to reply.

Debt collection visits (4 in number) have been made to the following countries:

a. United Arab Emirates 19 February—27 February 1993

b. USA 16 April–23 April 1994

c. United Arab Emirates 2 September—7 September 1994

d. Germany 5 December—9 December 1994.

Cooks

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many serving officers broken down by service are entitled to the provision of cooks at public expense; and if he will identify the posts and locations and the estimated cost of this provision for the financial year 1994–95.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

Serial	*Post Holder*
Royal Navy	
1	1st Sea Lord
2	Vice Chief of Defence Staff
3	Commander-in-Chief Fleet
4	Chief Naval Home Command/2nd Sea Lord
5	Flag Officer Plymouth
6	Flag Officer Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland
7	Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic
8	United Kingdom Allied Forces South
9	Flag Officer Surface Flotilla
10	Deputy Commander-in-Chief Fleet
11	Commandant Joint Service Defence College
12	Assistant Chief Naval Staff/Admiral President
13	Commander British Forces Gibraltar
14	Flag Officer Portsmouth
15	Flag Officer Sea Training
16	Flag Officer Naval Aviation
17	Director General Naval Personnel Strategy and Plans
18	Commander United Kingdom Task Group
19	Flag Officer Submarines
20	Naval Secretary
21	Flag Officer Training and Recruiting
22	Commandant General Royal Marines
23	Medical Director General (Naval)
24	Chief of Staff Flag Officer Surface Flotilla
25	Commodore Minor War Vessels
26	Naval Base Commander/Commodore Drake
27	Commandant Royal Naval Staff College
28	Commodore Clyde
29	Naval Base Commander/Captain Nelson
30	Brigadier Commander Commando Forces
31	Chief of Staff Flag Officer Naval Aviation
32	Commodore Amphibious Warfare
33	Chief of Staff Flag Officer Plymouth
34	Captain Royal Naval Engineering College
35	Captain Admiralty Interview Board
36	Captain Britannia Royal Naval College
37	Captain HMS Daedalus
38	Director Maritime Tactical School
39	Captain HMS Dryad
40	Captain HMS Sultan
41	Captain HMS Collingwood
42	Captain HMS Dolphin
43	Captain Fleet Maintenance
44	Captain HMS Neptune
45	Captain HMS Raleigh
46	Naval Base Commander Rosyth
47	Captain HMS Heron
48	Captain HMS Osprey
49	Captain HMS Seahawk
50	Chief of Staff Flag Officer Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland
51	Captain of the Port (Portsmouth)
52	Medical Officer-in-Chief RNH Haslar
53	Medical Officer-in-Chief INM Alverstoke
54	Captain Second Submarine Squadron
55	Chief of Staff Commodore Minor War Vessels/Captain Fishery Protection
56	Joint Maritime Operational Training Staff
57	Commandant Training Centre Royal Marines
58	Naval Base Commander Portland
59	Director of Naval Recruiting
60	Commanding Officer RM Deal
61	Commanding Officer RM Poole
62	Commanding Officer 45 Commando Royal Marines
63	Commanding Officer Comacchio Group
64	Commanding Officer RMB Stonehouse
65	Naval Party 1002 (Diego Garcia)
Army	
66	Chief of Defence Staff
67	Chief General Staff
68	Inspector General Doctrine and Training
69	Quartermaster General
70	Commander-in-Chief United Kingdom Land Forces
71	Commander United Kingdom Field Army
72	Chief of Staff United Kingdom Land Forces
73	Commander ACE Rapid Reaction Corp
74	Commander British Forces Cyprus
75	Commander British Forces Hong Kong
76	General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland
77	General Officer Commanding Southern District
78	General Officer Commanding Eastern District
79	General Officer Commanding Scotland
80	General Officer Commanding London District
81	General Officer Commanding Wales and Western District
82	General Officer Commanding 3rd Division
83	Commander 2nd Infantry Brigade
84	Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe
85	United Kingdom Military Representative
86	Commandant Army Staff College

Serial	*Post Holder*
87	Commandant Royal Military College of Science
88	Commandant Royal Military Academy Sandhurst
Royal Air Force	
89	Chief of the Air Staff
90	Commander in Chief Strike Command
91	Air Offfcer Commanding-in-Chief Personnel and Training
92	Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Logistics
93	Deputy Commander-in-Chief Central Europe
94	Chief of Staff HQ Strike Command
95	Air Officer Commanding 18 Group
96	Chief of Staff Logistics
97	Royal College of Defence Studies
98	Air Officer Commanding 1 Group
99	Air Officer Commanding 2 Group
100	Air Officer Commanding 11 Group
101	Chief of Staff HQ Personnel and Training
102	Air Officer Training
103	Air Officer Commanding and Commandant Bracknell
104	Air Officer Commanding and Commandant Cranwell
105	Air Officer Directly Administered Units
106	Air Officer Maintenance
107	Deputy Commander British Forces Cyprus
108	Maritime Headquarters Pitreavie
109	Air Officer Administration
110	Officer Commanding Akrotiri
111	Officer Commanding Benson
112	Officer Commanding Marham
113	Officer Commanding Sek Kong
114	Officer Commanding St. Mawgen

The total estimated cost of these posts for 1994–95 is approximately £2,400,000. For security reasons, it is not our practice to reveal the location of individual residences for senior officers. The subject of domestic assistance, including cooks and chefs, is being studied by Sir Peter Cazalet as part of his review of representational entertainment in the armed forces.

RAF Llandwrog (Buried Bombs)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he now expects to be in a position to respond to the request made by the hon. Member for Caernarfon for a briefing from his Department on the danger posed by second world war bombs buried at RAF Llandwrog near Dinas Dinlle, Gwynedd; and if he will make a statement concerning his investigations into this matter.

Mr. Soames: The issues raised in the hon. Member's letters of 25 November and 14 December concerning the role of RAF Llandwrog after the second world war are being investigated. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State will reply as soon as these investigations are complete.

Gulf War

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when chemical weapons detectors were triggered during the Gulf war; and what is his Department's assessment of this situation.

Mr. Soames: Chemical weapons detectors were triggered during the Gulf war on a number of occasions but records of individual incidents are not held centrally. We are also aware that there were times when detectors alarmed as a result of operator error; on these occasions, in particular, it is likely that no report would have been made to higher formation. In consequence, and given that detectors were widely deployed both on the ground and at sea, it is impossible to answer a general question of this nature with any degree of accuracy.

Apart from those occasions attributed to obvious operator error, each chemical alarm would have been followed up by NBC reconnaissance to confirm the presence of chemical agent or otherwise. Since at no time was chemical agent detected during such follow-up operations it is assessed that chemical agent was not used for Operation Granby against United Kingdom forces.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many patients have been seen by his Department's appointed doctor concerning problems related to Operation Granby.

Mr. Soames: To date, 67 individual personnel have been examined by an armed forces consultant under the Gulf medical assessment programme, some on more than one occasion. All have been found to be suffering from identifiable complaints, none of which is peculiar to service in the Gulf. From January 1995, the rate of new examinations will be increased and efforts made to reduce the high proportion of patients not attending for pre-booked appointments.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether non-medical personnel were permitted to order members of the British armed forces in the Gulf war to take vaccinations.

Mr. Soames: All vaccinations were offered to service personnel deployed to the Gulf on the basis of voluntary informed consent.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what grounds his Department considered it necessary to vaccinate members of the armed forces in the Gulf war against plague and not botulism toxoid.

Mr. Soames: Details of specific medical countermeasures employed by British forces against potential biological warfare threat during Operation Granby remain classified.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what monitoring was used by his Department in, and during, the Gulf war for troops who had been vaccinated.

Mr. Soames: All aspects of the health of service personnel are monitored, in peace and war, as a matter of routine. As all the vaccines which were offered to Gulf war personnel are routinely used in the civilian world, and were administered in accordance with normal clinical practice, there were no grounds for special additional monitoring of those troops who had been vaccinated.

Market Testing

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report*, column *457*, on market testing, what is the total value of the contracts awarded.

Mr. Freeman: The total annual value of contracts placed following the examination of defence support activities up to September 1994 was approximately £350 million. This figure represents a considerable saving on the original annual operating costs of the 46 activities involved.

Pregnancy Dismissals

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will instigate an inquiry into the publication by a tribunal deciding the issue of compensation in a pregnancy dismissal case, and of a woman's medical records produced by counsel acting for his Department without the woman's consent.

Mr. Soames: Such documents may properly be disclosed to a court or tribunal in the course of legal proceedings to which they are relevant. Industrial tribunals are judicial bodies which are wholly independent of my Department.

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the sums of financial compensation paid to former members of the armed services who were judged by industrial tribunals to have been dismissed unfairly because of their pregnancies; and what was the commissioned or non-commissioned status of those women who were compensated.

Mr. Soames: Up to 13 December, industrial tribunal decisions on the amount of compensation due for dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy have resulted in 151 payments totalling £4,397,095 to 10 officers, average £58,018, and 141 other ranks, average £27,070. However, these payments include some made recently but relating to cases heard by tribunals before the employment appeal tribunal issued its helpful guidance in July, since when the level of new awards has fallen. Furthermore, tribunal awards represent only a small proportion of the 3,428 pregnancy claims—75 per cent. of the claims received—which have now been settled for an overall average of about £10,000 for all ranks.

Medical Records (Confidentiality)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library the notes of the discussions which took place during 1987 and 1988 between his Department and the General Medical Council which refers to the issue of forces medical records and confidentiality.

Mr. Soames: Although my Department and the General Medical Council corresponded and held informal meetings during 1987 and 1988 to discuss matters relating to medical confidentiality, there is no evidence that these meetings were formally minuted. The correspondence and discussions however resulted in the publication of new, jointly agreed, notes of guidance on medical confidentiality for medical officers employed by the armed forces, and the issue of a new medical form to protect the confidentiality of personal medical records during the administrative processing of service medical boards. I am placing copies of these documents in the Library of the House.

Service Personnel (Exhumation)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action his Department intends to take to protect the bodies of service personnel who are buried in public land from being exhumed without permission by war relic hunters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Authority to protect sites where it is believed there are military remains is given to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986. Licences to unearth or move any wreckage are not granted if there is any suspicion that human remains may lie at the site. Action against alleged offenders is a matter for the police and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Recruitment and Redundancies

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what considerations led to the simultaneous recruitment and making redundant of regular military personnel in 1993–94.

Mr. Soames: The manpower reductions under "Options for Change" could not be achieved through natural wastage alone and it was therefore necessary for each of the services to implement a redundancy programme. Over 90 per cent. of those being made redundant have volunteered for selection.

Recruiting has continued throughout the redundancy programme, albeit at reduced levels, in order to maintain a balanced age and rank structure and to meet shortages in certain branches and trades.

Nerve Agents

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which defence establishment in Australia the G agent intermediate Di-Di and the CR gas was transported in each case referred to in his answer of 24 June 1994, *Official Report,* column *381*.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr Harry Cohen, dated 19 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking to which defence establishment in Australia the G agent intermediate di-di and the CR gas was transported in each case referred to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out work to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical and biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measures evaluated.

3. Our records do not indicate to which defence establishment in Australia the G agent intermediate di-di and the V agent intermediate referred to in my answer of 24 June 1994 were transported. As I mentioned the materials, suitably packaged, were transported to London for onward transportation to Australia. It is probable that the materials went to the Materials Research Laboratory in Melbourne.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence from which source the CR gas was obtained for the tests with service volunteers in the specified years referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Leyton on 24 June 1994, *Official Report,* column *383.*

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr Harry Cohen, dated 19 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking from which source the CR gas was obtained for the tests with Service volunteers in the specified years referred to in his Answer to the honourable Member for Leyton on 24th June 1994, Official Report, column 383 has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out work to ensure that the UK Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical and biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measures evaluated.

3. The CR gas referred to in my answer of 14 June 1994, Official Report, column 383 would have been synthesised either at this Establishment or at the Chemical Defence Establishment at Nancekuke.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in which years the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down, tested CN gas on service personnel in the human volunteer programme; what was the purpose of these tests; how the gas was administered to the volunteers; how many service volunteers were tested with this gas; and where the results of these tests were published in open literature.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 19 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking in which years the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down, tested CN gas on Service personnel in the human volunteer programme; what was the purpose of these tests; how the gas was administered to the volunteers; how many Service volunteers were tested with this gas; and where the results of these tests were published in open literature has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces have effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. In order to carry out this work, it is necessary to use Service volunteers to:

a. assess the ability of Service personnel to function with new equipment and procedures,

b. develop medical countermeasures to protect Service personnel and

c. evaluate the effects of very low and medically safe concentrations of CW agents on the ability of unprotected personnel to operate normally.

No studies involving volunteers are carried out unless there is a clear military need and a detailed protocol has been reviewed and approved by an independent Ethics Committee in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Royal College of Physicians.

3. CN gas, otherwise known as chloracetophenone, was used in the early part of this century as a military tear gas, a riot control agent, a training aid, and as the standard agent for respirator testing in the Armed Services and civil defence. Although it has now been abandoned by the UK for all these purposes, our records indicate that it was extensively studied at Porton Down least 1924. It is probable that there were some studies at that time involving Service volunteers. However, our records in the inter-war years are not in a format from which we could extract details about the number of service volunteers tested and the years in which they were tested.

4. During the period that CN gas was studied at Porton Down it would have been disseminated using the following techniques:

a. pyrotechnic formulations

b. a spray from an alcoholic solution

c. bursting munitions (bombs), grenades, largely, and

d. small glass capsules containing solid CN heated to bursting and release the compound.

5. Our records do not indicate which of these techniques would have been used in any of the human volunteer studies. There are three publications which provide some information on CN:

a. The comparative opthalmictoxicology of chloracetophenone (CN) and dibenoxazepine (CR). B Ballantyne, M F Gazzard, D W Swanston and P Williams. Arch. Toxicol. 1975, *34* 183–201.

b. Chemical agents used in control and warfare. F W Beswick. Human Toxicol. 1983, *2* 247–256.

c. Riot control agents. Bryan Ballantyne. Medical Annual 1977, John Wright, Bristol.

There appear to be few, if any, publications on CN from the inter-war years.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what grounds *(a)* the policy on female service volunteers, referred to in his answer of 24 June 1994, *Official Report,* column *380,* was changed in 1972 and *(b)* female service personnel had not been invited to participate in the human volunteer programme before this year.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Harry Cohen dated 19 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking on what grounds *(a)* the policy on female Service volunteers, referred to in his Answer of 24 June 1994, Official Report, column 380, was changed in this year and *(b)* female personnel had not been invited to participate in the human volunteer programme before this year has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces have effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. In order to carry out this work, it is necessary to use Service volunteers to:

(a) assess the ability of Service personnel to function with new equipment and procedures,

(b) develop medical countermeasures to protect Service personnel and

(c) evaluate the effects of very low and medically safe concentrations of CW agents on the ability of unprotected personnel to operate normally.

No studies involving volunteers are carried out unless there is a clear military need and a detailed protocol has been reviewed and approved by an independent Ethics Committee in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Royal College of Physicians.

3. It is not possible from our records to determine whether there was a policy change in 1972 with regard to the participation of female Service volunteers. We believe that there was a change in perception of the importance of female Service personnel. However,

female Service personnel will only be accepted for participation in studies at CBDE where the CBDE Ethics Committee has approved the relevant protocol and agreed that female volunteers may participate.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the assessment drawn from the research into the stabilisation of the nerve agent GD referred to in his answer of 24 June 1994, *Official Report*, columns *378-79;* and from which source the nerve agent was obtained.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Harry Cohen dated 19 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what was the assessment drawn from the research into the stabilisation of the nerve agent GD referred to in his Answer of 24 June 1994, Official Report, columns 378–9, and from which source the nerve agent was obtained has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out work to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical and biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measures evaluated.

3. In my earlier answer to you of 24 June (Official Report, columns 378-9), I said that CBDE had carried out work on the nerve agent GD and in particular its stability in order to evaluate the feasibility and hazard of the use of such an agent against the United Kingdom Armed Forces. The assessment was that with an appropriate stabiliser there was little decomposition of GD stored at 71°C for three years. It was shown that GD stored with the stabiliser in mild steel vessels was virtually unchanged after three years. The GD was produced at Nancekuke.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the conclusions of the studies referred to in his answer of 24 June 1994, *Official Report*, column *383*, on CR gas on service volunteers in relation to the skin and eye sensitivity tests; with which other countries the results of these studies were shared; when the results were shared; and under which defence agreement the results were exchanged.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr Harry Cohen, dated 19 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what were the conclusions of the studies referred to in his Answer of 24 June 1994, *Official Report* column *383*, on CR gas on Service volunteers in relation to the skin and eye sensitivity tests; with which other countries the results of these studies were shared; when the results were shared; and under which defence agreement the results were exchanged has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces have effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. In order to carry out this work, it is necessary to use Service volunteers to:

a. assess the ability of Service personnel to function with new equipment and procedures.

b. develop medical countermeasures to protect Service personnel and

c. evaluate the effects of very low and medically safe concentrations of CW agents on the ability of unprotected personnel to operate normally.

No studies involving volunteers are carried out unless there is a clear military need and a detailed protocol has been reviewed and approved by an independent Ethics Committee in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Royal College of Physicians.

3. The studies on CR gas in relation to the skin and eye sensitivity tests referred to in my answer of 24 June 1994, (*Official Report*, column *383*) concluded that CR was found to have certain advantages over CS in specific situations. Its potency was found to be approximately ten times greater than that of CS and its toxicity is low in comparison with the other irritants. It is capable of use in both aerosol and solution form.

4. The results of this work have formed part of the chemical and biological defence programme and is part of the technical database drawn upon in collaboration with the United States, Australia and Canada under the Technical Cooperation Programme and its predecessors and with the United States and Canada under the Memorandum of Understanding on Chemical and Biological Defence.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in what years the studies with service volunteers were undertaken at the Cambridge military hospital, referred to in his answer of 24 June 1994, *Official Report*, column *375;* what was the purpose and conclusion of these studies; how many studies were carried out at this hospital; and how many service volunteers were involved in these tests.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Ken Livingstone, dated 19 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of state for Defence asking in what years the studies with Service volunteers were undertaken at the Cambridge Military Hospital, referred to in his Answer of 24th June 1994, *Official Report*, column *375*, were undertaken; what was the purpose and conclusions of these studies; how many studies were carried out at this hospital; and how many Service volunteers were involved in these tests has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces have effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. In order to carry out this work, it is necessary to use Service volunteers to:

a. assess the ability of Service personnel to function with new equipment and procedures,

b. develop medical countermeasures to protect Service personnel and

c. evaluate the effects of very low and medically safe concentrations of CW agents on the ability of unprotected personnel to operate normally.

No studies involving volunteers are carried out unless there is a clear military need and a detailed protocol has been reviewed and approved by an independent Ethics Committee in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Royal College of Physicians.

3. The Nerve Agent Pretreatment Set (NAPS) was developed in response to a requirement which called for a pretreatment effective against poisoning by all known nerve agents. A number of studies were conducted by the Chemical and Biological Defence Establish to identify the effective oral dose regime which used in conjunction

with therapy would provide protection against nerve agent poisoning whilst producing minimal or nil side effects.

4. One of these studies took place at the Cambridge Military Hospital in 1993. Thirty two of the military staff of the hospital volunteered to take part and the conclusions of the study agreed with earlier findings that the side effects from the taking of NAPS were minimal and did not interfere with military efficiency.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the nature of the study referred to in his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *378*, which prompted the service volunteer to withdraw following the detailed explanation of the protocol.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Ken Livingstone, dated 19 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what was the nature of the study referred to in his Answer of 24th June, *Official Report*, column *378*, which prompted the Service volunteer to withdraw following the detailed explanation of the protocol has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces have effective protective measures against the threat that chemical or biological weapons may be used against them. In order to carry out this work, it is necessary to use Service volunteers to

a. assess the ability of Service personnel to function with new equipment and procedures,

b. develop medical countermeasures to protect Service personnel and

c. evaluate the effects of very low and medically safe concentrations of CW agents on the ability of unprotected personnel to operate normally.

No studies involving volunteers are carried out unless there is a clear military need and a detailed protocol has been reviewed and approved by an independent Ethics Committee in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Royal College of Physicians.

3. The volunteer who withdrew from the study referred to in my answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, Column *378*, was taking part in a climatic study whilst wearing Individual Protective Equipment. The protocol for the study required some blood samples to be taken but the volunteer was uneasy about this and exercised his right to withdraw from the study.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the conclusion drawn from the studies on VX referred to in his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *371*, to determine whether or not this agent was producible in quantity and was stable when stored.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down, under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive, CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Ken Livingstone dated 19 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what was the conclusion drawn from the studies on VX referred to in his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *371*, to determine whether or not this agent was producible in quantity and was stable when stored has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out work to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat the chemical and biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measure evaluated.

3. The conclusion drawn from the stability studies referred to in my answer of 24 June 1994, *Official Report*, column *372*, was that VX could be produced on a large-scale and that the product could be stabilised. The studies showed that using a suitable stabiliser VX could be stored under nitrogen in mild steel containers; storage could not be achieved in containers of other materials. These conclusions taken together with others supported the assessment that VX would present a significant battlefield hazard.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the purpose of the research on the nerve agent GB between 1979 and 1993 at Nancekuke as described in his answer of 11 January 1994, *Official Report*, columns *163-64*; what quantities of nerve agent were used in this research; if the results of this research were shared with any other countries; and under which defence agreement this occurred.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive, CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Ken Livingstone, dated 19 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what was the purpose of the research on the nerve agent GB between 1979 and 1993 at Nancekuke as described in his answer of 11th January 1994, *Official Report*, column *163-4*; what quantities of nerve agent were used in this research; if the results of this research were shared with any other countries; and under which defence agreement this occurred has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out work to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical and biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measure evaluated.

3. In my earlier answer to you of 11th January 1994 (*Official Report*, column *163-164*), I advised you that the approximate periods during which research was carried out at Nancekuke was from 1951 to 1976. The Chemical Defence Establishment at Nancekuke was closed in 1980 and was handed back to the RAF. By 1979 the closure process was well advanced and few personnel remained on site. There was, therefore, no research carried out at Nancekuke on the nerve agent, GB, after 1979.

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the conclusion drawn from the work carried out on the substituted analogues of VX at Nancekuke, referred to in his answer of 24 June, *Official Report*, column *371*.

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, Porton Down under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive, CBDE to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Graham Pearson to Mr. Ken Livingstone dated 19 December 1994:

1. Your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Defence asking what was the conclusion drawn from the work carried out on the substituted analogues of VX at Nancekuke, referred to in his Answer of 24th June, Official Report, column 371 has been passed to me to answer as Chief Executive of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment.

2. The role of the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment is to carry out work to ensure that the United Kingdom Armed Forces are provided with effective protective measures against the threat that chemical and biological weapons may be used against them. As part of this work the potential hazard of possible chemical

and biological warfare agents is assessed and the effectiveness of British protective measure evaluated.

3. The conclusion drawn from the work with VX analogues showed that these compounds were unlikely to provide any advantage over VX as a chemical warfare agent to a potential aggressor.

Housing

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel have applied for housing from local authorities in *(a)* England, *(b)* Wales and *(c)* Scotland on leaving the forces in each of the past five years; and what is his estimate of the numbers expected to make such applications in the current year and in each of the next three years.

Mr. Soames: The information is not available in the form requested. Recent surveys have indicated, however, that of all personnel leaving the services on redundancy 43 per cent. were already home owners and a further 40 per cent. intended to buy a home.

The numbers of personnel leaving the armed forces in the last five years are as follows:

	Numbers
1989–90	42,761
1990–91	39,942
1991–92	34,501
1992–93	34,002
1993–94	32,865
1994–95[1]	33,465

[1] to date.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement concerning the transfer of service housing stock.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) on 8 December, *Official Report*, column *303*.

International Payments

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if international payments cleared through defence export sales organisations or Government-to-Government defence contracts are cleared through the Defence Accounts Agency or its systems.

Mr. Freeman: Yes.

Exports

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library an analysis of how the figures in "Defence Statistics 1994", table 1.10, for employment dependence on defence exports were derived; and if he will estimate for the years stated dependence on military aerospace exports.

Equivalent figures for the earlier years are not available.

Mr. Freeman: Defence statistics bulletin No. 3 explains the methodology used to prepare the employment estimates published in table 1.10 of "UK Defence Statistics 1994". Copies of the bulletin were placed in the Library at the time.

Figures for UK employment dependent on defence aerospace equipment exports for the years 1987–88 to 1992–93 are as follows:

	Value of exports £ million	*Direct employment*	*Indirect employment*	*Total employment*
1987–88	2,000	44,000	38,500	82,500
1988–89	2,000	42,500	37,500	80,000
1989–90	3,000	50,000	44,000	94,000
1990–91	2,500	37,500	33,000	70,000
1991–92	3,000	42,000	37,000	79,000
1992–93	2,000	28,000	24,500	52,500

Note:

As with table 1.10 of "UK Defence Statistics 1994", all figures are rounded to the nearest 500—total figures may not therefore correspond to the sum of the components.

Satellite Intelligence Data

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether intelligence data gathered from satellites of the United Kingdom and its allies is fully available to United Kingdom forces serving with UNPROFOR; and what limitations on such exchanges of data exist.

Mr. Soames: All necessary information, derived from a variety of sources, is provided to UK forces serving with UNPROFOR.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to ask for contracts for a conventionally armed stand-off missile system and to acquire cruise missile systems for United Kingdom forces.

Mr. Freeman: I refer to the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Milton Keynes, North-East (Mr. Butler) on 29 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *621*.

Feasibility studies are now under way into the possibility of fitting our submarines with conventionally armed Tomahawk land missiles; results from these studies are expected in the spring and a decision on procurement will be taken in the light of those findings.

Global Monitoring System

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what rights of access to the global monitoring system the United Kingdom possesses; and if he will list the agreements that govern them.

Mr. Soames: I am not aware of any such system.

Bombing (Bihac)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official*

Report, columns *913-14*, concerning the dropping of napalm bombs, whether the United Nations military observers identified the maker of the unexploded bomb.

Mr. Soames: From markings found on the unexploded bomb, the weapon has been identified as having been manufactured in the former Yugoslav Republic.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, columns *913-14*, concerning the dropping of napalm bombs, what was the nationality of the UN military observer who reported the incident and that of the UNMOs who collected evidence at the impact points; and what was the evidence which they collected.

Mr. Soames: It is not UN policy to release information on the nationalities of individual UN military observers involved in incidents. A cluster bomb casing, an unexploded bomb, unexploded and exploded bomblets and unburnt weapon material were found at the site.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many cluster bombs were dropped on Bihac; what was the estimated weight of explosive used in all bombs falling on Bihac; and what assessment he has made of their country of manufacture.

Mr. Soames: Two cluster bombs were dropped in Bihac on 18 November. Each bomb had an estimated weight of explosive of 32 kg. It is assessed that the cluster bombs were British manufactured BL755 munitions, which were purchased by the former Yugoslavia prior to the outbreak of the present conflict.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, columns *945-46*, what assessment he has made of the factors underlying the absence of photographic evidence in relation to the bombing in Bihac; and what assessment he has made of casualties or damage to buildings in the Bihac area.

Mr. Soames: The decision as to whether or not to gather photographic evidence in relation to the bombing in Bihac rested with the UN. We have no information as to the casualties caused by the air attacks on 18 November. We are only aware of some minor damage to an old warehouse and to a football field.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 December, *Official Report*, column *913*, whether the loss of one of the two aircraft observed in the vicinity of Bihac was reported at the time; if the aircraft was totally destroyed with its pilot; and why the United Nations military observers did not photograph the wreckage for identification purposes.

Mr. Soames: The loss of one of the aircraft observed in the vicinity of Bihac was reported at the time the aircraft was destroyed and the pilot killed. The decision not to photograph the wreckage rested with the UN.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 2 December, *Official Report*, columns *945-46*, what were the initial reports of the damage inflicted by the bombing of Bihac; and if these were consistent with the dropping of an unexploded napalm bomb and an unspecified number of cluster bombs.

Mr. Soames: Initial reports of the bombing of Bihac on 18 November indicate that the munitions used in the attack caused only minor damage to an old warehouse and to a football field. Although some sub-munitions of the cluster bombs exploded, available evidence suggests that neither of the two weapon types operated as designed.

Absenteeism

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the absenteeism rate for the Defence Analytical Services Agency in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(2) what was the absenteeism rate for the Naval Aircraft Repair Organisation in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(3) what was the absenteeism rate for his Department in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(4) what was the absenteeism rate for the Defence Research Agency in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(5) what was the absenteeism rate for the Defence Operational Analysis Centre in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(6) what was the absenteeism rate for the RAF Training Group Defence Agency in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(7) what was the absenteeism rate for the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(8) what was the absenteeism rate for the Meteorological Office in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(9) what was the absenteeism rate for the defence animal centre in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(10) what was the absenteeism, rate for the RAF Support Command's Maintenance Group Defence Agency in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(11) what was the absenteeism rate for the Army Base Repair Organisation in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(12) what was the absenteeism rate for the Hydrographic Office in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(13) what was the absenteeism rate for the defence postal and courier services in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(14) what was the absenteeism rate for the Defence Accounts Agency in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

(15) what was the absenteeism rate for the Military Survey in 1991, 1992 and 1993;

Mr. Freeman: Neither my Department nor its agencies could provide the information requested without disproportionate cost and effort.

Special Advisers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 1 December, *Official Report*, columns *903–94*, if he will make a statement regarding his Department's expenditure on special advisers in each of the last three financial years and for the financial year 1979–80.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on 19 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *937*.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what responsibilities have been vested in *(a)* Devonport Management Ltd. and *(b)* Babcock Thorn for the longer-term management of laid-up nuclear powered submarines; for how long it is intended that laid-up nuclear submarine boats will be stored afloat; what has been the cost to date for the preparation of each boat in an environmentally fit state for storage afloat; and which body is responsible for submitting and maintaining the nuclear safety case for such nuclear submarines withdrawn from operational service;

(2) whether environmental and safety cases for the storage afloat of nuclear submarines withdrawn from operational service have been submitted for approval to the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Mr. Freeman: Responsibility for decommissioned nuclear-powered submarines rests with my Department; contracts are placed with the dockyard contractors when necessary in relation to the maintenance of the submarines. Storage afloat of decommissioned nuclear submarines is an interim policy pending national decisions on a final disposal route, the timing of which is still under consideration. The approximate costs of undertaking the defuelling, de-equipping and lay-up preparation process for those nuclear-powered submarines which have been taken out of service to date are as follows:

Submarine	*DDLP £ million*
HMS Swiftsure	11.5
HMS Warspite	11.3
HMS Churchill	11.2
HMS Conqueror	10.6
HMS Courageous	10.8
HMS Revenge (SSBN)	18.7

HMS Valiant and HMS Resolution have not started their DDLP process yet.

Those costs do not include the costs of final disposal, the policy for which is still under consideration. It is also not possible to provide costs on the decommissioning of HMS Dreadnought, which was the first nuclear submarine to be withdrawn from service in 1982 and the information requested, insofar as it may be available, could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

Since section 1 (1) (a) of the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 specifically excludes nuclear reactors comprised in a means of transport from the provisions of the Act, there is no requirement to prepare environmental or safety cases to the NII. However, hazard analysis has been conducted at each dockyard, and the MOD and the relevant local authorities carry out regular surveys alongside, which confirm that the storage afloat of the decommissioned submarines presents no external radiological hazard.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the number of vessels from the Royal Navy's surface fleet that spent a substantial part of their operational time in guarding nuclear submarines.

Mr. Soames: It is not my Department's policy to comment on operational matters.

Departmental Telephones

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by his Department for each of the last five years.

Mr. Freeman: For telephone costs I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 13 December, *Official Report*, column 576, to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark).

The number of telephone calls made by my Department is not recorded, and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff have been employed in the office of the Defence Export Services Organisation in Jakarta in each year since its establishment; and what is the breakdown of their posts.

Mr. Freeman: Three staff have been employed in the Jakarta office each year since its establishment. The breakdown is as follows: one grade 7, one personal secretary—shared with the British defence attaché Jakarta—and one driver.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on which date the decision to establish an office of the Defence Export Services Organisation in Jakarta was taken.

Mr. Freeman: The decision to establish an office of the Defence Export Services Organisation in Jakarta was taken in September 1990.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on which date in 1991 an office of the Defence Export Services Organisation was formally established in Jakarta.

Mr. Freeman: The office for the Defence Export Services Organisation was formally established in Jakarta in April 1991.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the annual cost of running the office of the Defence Export Services Organisation in Jakarta in each year since its establishment both in full and net of any offsetting administrative arrangements.

Mr. Freeman: The estimated annual cost of running the DESO office in Jakarta in each year since its establishment has been:

1991–92 £K	*1992–93 £K*	*1993–94 £K*	*1994–95 £K*
126[1]	67	78	[1]167

[1] including three years advance rent.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the country-based project groups were set up within the defence export services teams; when each country-based project group was functioning; and how many such country-based project groups exist at the present time.

Mr. Freeman: Within the Defence Export Services Organisation there are three country-based project teams: for Saudi Arabia, Malaysia and Kuwait. They were established in September 1985, November 1989 and January 1993 respectively.

Hercules

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contribution he proposes to make towards the tendering costs of the proposals for refurbishment or replacement of the Hercules aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations were made to him following the placement of an advertisement for the sale of Hercules C130K by his Department in the September 1994 edition of *Flight International.*

Mr. Freeman: Following placement of the advertisement, 20 organisations expressed a possible interest in Hercules C130K aircraft. Contact will be made with these organisations should aircraft become available for sale.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will now withdraw the offer to put up for sale a number of Hercules C130K aircraft which were advertised in the September 1994 edition of *Flight International;* and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 28 November, *Official Report,* column *550.*

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what conclusions he has reached about the Hercules replacement programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence gave on 16 December, *Official Report* column *823.*

Biological Warfare (Vaccines)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 November to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), *Official Report,* column *59,* if he will list the countries, other than the United Kingdom, in which licences for civilian use had been obtained for vaccines for biological warfare protection.

Mr. Soames: Of the vaccines administered to British service personnel during Operation Granby, against the potential biological warfare threat, two were not licensed in the UK for civilian use. One was licensed in United States of America and Canada, while the other was licensed in France, Ivory Coast, Senegal and Venezuela. Both vaccines are, however, tested by the UK National Institute for Biological Standards and Control, and cleared for use by the institute and the Department of Health.

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has made two train journeys of one hour's duration or more in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Low Flying

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the pilots of the two Harrier jets that flew at a low altitude over the Royal Welsh agricultural show 1994 filed and submitted flight plans indicating their intentions; if flight plans were authorised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: There were no breaches of the avoidance afforded to the Royal Welsh agricultural show in 1994. The incidents to which the hon. Member refers occurred, in fact, in 1993. At one of the units concerned, a flaw occurred in the system for presenting details of temporary avoidances to aircrew; as a result, the avoidance was not taken into account in planning the sortie. In the second case, the sortie was planned to avoid the area of the show, but adverse weather conditions necessitated a diversion for flight safety reasons from the planned route, in the course of which the breach occurred.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many breached of low flying regulations there were over Wales in 1992, 1993 and so far in 1994; how many of these breaches resulted in formal disciplinary procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: There were eight confirmed breaches in 1992 and four in 1993. Investigations to date in 1994 have confirmed that 11 breaches have occurred. None of these has to date resulted in court martial or summary disposal proceedings under the service discipline Acts. However, copies of the RAF police reports into the incidents have been sent to the commanding officers of the aircrew concerned for consideration as what further action is necessary and what can be learned from the incident.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy while low flying training is still necessary to offer low-level flights in conventional aircraft, as distinct from high-speed jets, to educate the public in the necessity of such manoeuvres.

Mr. Soames: No. We believe the provision of such flights would be of no practical benefit and the cost could not be justified. My Department does, however, recognise the importance of explaining the need for low flying and how it is controlled and monitored. Accordingly, public presentations are given regularly by RAF representatives and officials around the UK. Furthermore, informative leaflets are freely available. We believe this better meets this requirement.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent representations he has received concerning infringements of low flying regulations.

Mr. Soames: My Department has recently received a number of representations from hon. Members and the general public about alleged infringements of low flying regulations.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the recent alteration of the boundaries of the Glasgow-Prestwick low-flying avoidance area took effect; what is now the minimum permitted altitude for military low flying over and in the vicinity of *(a)* the Heads of Ayr holiday camp, *(b)* Maybole, *(c)* Dalrymple, *(d)* Patna, *(e)* Drongan, *(f)* Ochiltree, *(g)* Cumnock, *(h)* Auchinleck, *(i)* Catrine, *(j)* Mauchline and *(k)* Ballochmyle hospital; and what consultations took place prior to the reduction of the size of the Glasgow-Prestwick avoidance area.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 16 December]:* The alteration took effect on 7 November 1994 to coincide with the issue of revised military flying charts. The locations listed, with the exception of Mauchline which straddles the boundary, are outside the revised avoidance area and therefore open to low flying by fixed-wing aircraft to a minimum altitude of 250 ft minimum separation distance. The guidance provided to aircrews does, however, state that they should avoid flying over populated areas wherever possible. The UK low flying system alters whenever there is a reduction or increase of controlled airspace of this kind, whether civil or military, and it is not our practice to conduct consultations when these changes are made.

Porton Down

Mr. Livingstone: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if service volunteers who take part in tests at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down are bound by the Official Secrets Acts in respect of the tests.

Mr. Soames: Although service volunteers are bound by the Official Secrets Acts in the same way as all other Government employees, their medical records are provided on request to their general practitioner, as is information on the studies in which they participated.

Nuclear Liabilities

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to the answer of the President of the Board of Trade of 9 December, *Official Report*, column *389*, if he will estimate the total liabilities to British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. and the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority in respect of pre-1971 programmes; what have been the total payments made so far as a result of these liabilities; and what further payments are planned within the next public expenditure plan period.

Mr. Freeman: Since 1988 to the end of the financial year 1993–94 the Department has paid £365 million in respect of these payments. An estimate of the payment for this financial year is some £50 million. The payments estimated for the next public plan period amount to about £250 million over the next three years.

The estimated total value of pre-1971 waste management and decommissioning liabilities to BNFL and AEA extending well into the next century is in the order of £2 billion.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the name of the officer commanding British forces in Cyprus; when he was appointed to this position; and when his appointment is expected to end.

Mr. Soames: The officer commanding British Forces in Cyprus is Major General A. G. H. Harley, CB OBE. He was appointed to this position on 25 March 1993 and his appointment is expected to end in February–March 1995.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Commander in Chief of British forces in Cyprus on the need to make clear to service personnel the serious nature of drink-related driving offences; what assessment he has made of the prevalence of the offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Goose Bay

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the planned number of low-level sorties to be flown by Royal Air Force aircraft from Canadian forces Goose Bay in each of the years *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 and *(c)* 1994; and what were the reasons for any divergence between the planned number of sorties and the actual numbers of sorties flown in each year.

Mr. Soames: In 1994, it was planned to fly 1,212 sorties, the vast majority of which would have involved an element of low flying. In the event, 1,299 sorties were actually flown. Records of the number of sorties planned to be flown in 1992 and 1993 are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Any divergence between the number of sorties planned and those readily actually flown could be the result of a variety of factors including; aircraft availability and weather but chiefly the effect of unforeseen operational deployments.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many weapons, and of what types, were dropped or fired by Royal Air Force aircraft during training from Canadian forces base Goose Bay in the 1994 flying season.

Mr. Soames: Some 290 inert 1,000 lb bombs and 297 inert 28 lb practice bombs were dropped by RAF aircraft during training from Canadian forces base Goose Bay in the 1994 flying season. No weapons were "fired" by RAF aircraft.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if payments to the Canadian authorities for Royal Air Force use of facilities at Goose Bay were withheld or postponed following introduction of the new cost recovery methodology by the Canadian Department of National Defence in the financial year 1990–91.

Mr. Soames: Part of the payment to the Canadian authorities for financial year 1990–91 was postponed while the introduction of the revised cost recovery methodology was the subject of correspondence between United Kingdom and Canadian officials.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what commitments to, or agreements on, future costs to the United Kingdom Government were contained in the agreements signed with the Canadian authorities in 1986 concerning Royal Air Force access to training at Goose Bay.

Mr. Soames: The United Kingdom agreed to pay for those costs attributable to the Royal Air Force's use of Goose Bay.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the presentation made by the head of the Royal Air Force delegation to the meeting of the Goose Bay military users committee in June 1994.

Mr. Soames: The head of the Royal Air Force delegation did not make a presentation to the Goose Bay military users committee in June 1994.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the pooling of Royal Air Force and German air force maintenance and operations facilities for Tornado aircraft deployed for training at Canadian forces base Goose Bay.

Mr. Soames: Consideration of potential cost savings measures between all military users is a constant process.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what agreements have been reached with other NATO air forces concerning the sharing of air-to-air refuelling assets for transatlantic deployment of fighter aircraft to Canadian forces base Goose Bay;

(2) what agreements have been reached with other NATO air forces concerning the sharing of air transport assets for transatlantic deployment of air and ground crew from Europe to Canadian forces base Goose Bay.

Mr. Soames: No agreements have been reached, although a degree of informal pooling of resources already takes place between the allied detachments at Goose Bay.

Service Discipline

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many British service personnel have been disciplined in each of the last five years for alcohol-related offences while stationed in *(a)* Germany, *(b)* Britain and *(c)* Cyprus;

(2) how many British service personnel have been disciplined in each of the last five years for drug-related offences whilst stationed in *(a)* Germany, *(b)* Britain and *(c)* Cyprus.

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Brian Patchett

Mr. Allason: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what efforts have been made to trace Corporal Brian Patchett of the Intelligence Corps, formerly based at RAF Gatow.

Mr. Soames: My Department has no record of any Brian Patchett in the Army. If the hon. Member wishes to write to my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence with more details, he will be happy to look into the matter further.

International Military Service Ltd.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the disposal of the assets and good will of International Military Services Ltd. is now complete; and to whom those assets and good will were passed.

Mr. Freeman: Although International Military Services Ltd. ceased trading on 31 July 1991, not all its residual obligations have yet been met. Disposal of its assets will not be dealt with until the company is finally wound up.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether reinforced bunkers built to designs supplied by International Military Services Ltd. are still in service in Iraq.

Mr. Freeman: No operational bunkers were supplied or designed by International Military Services Ltd. for Iraq.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the arrangements for supervision of International Military Services in 1987; what considerations had led to them; and how they were subsequently revised.

Mr. Freeman: When ownership of IMS was assumed by the Ministry of Defence in 1979, the Department laid down rigorous policy guidelines for the company, setting out the nature of the business it could undertake and the degree of MOD supervision required. The company was obliged to seek the Department's approval before initiating business in new markets, or which involved novel features or was significantly different from previous business. In 1989, IMS was required to cease trading by 1991.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 29 November 1993, *Official Report*, column *365*, to which agencies or departments of Government the employees of IMS Ltd. were transferred in the years 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991.

Mr. Freeman: There have been no staff transfer arrangements for the years quoted between IMS Ltd. and my Department or its agencies.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the IMS Ltd. branch in Tehran was closed; and to which agency or agencies of Government its responsibilities were transferred.

Mr. Freeman: The Tehran office remains a registered office of IMS Ltd. None of its responsibilities has been transferred to my Department or its agencies.

Royal Ordnance

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what total orders by value were placed with Royal Ordnance under the terms of explosives and propellants and related end products agreement; what proportion of his Department's ammunition purchases that represented; and when the EPREP agreement was terminated.

Mr. Freeman: Orders to an approximate total value of £560 million were placed with Royal Ordnance under the EPREP agreement, representing 80 per cent. of the Department's ammunition purchases over the agreement's five-year life. The EPREP agreement expired on 31 March 1993.

Aircraft Reconnaissance Systems

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what electronic combat reconnaissance systems for aircraft are available from United Kingdom manufacturers; and what is the cost of each such system.

Mr. Freeman: Comprehensive information on systems available from industry is only held when we are considering specific proposals to purchase such equipment.

The cost of any such system is commercially sensitive.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many British strike aircraft are fitted with electronic combat reconnaissance systems; and what programme is currently in hand to fit more such systems to strike aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: Some Tornado GRI aircraft are equipped with the air-launched anti-radiation missile which is designed to attack and suppress enemy radar systems. The number of aircraft so equipped is classified and cannot be publicly disclosed. Following the Tornado mid-life update programme, all Tornado GR4 aircraft will be ALARM capable.

Brunei

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent purchases have been made *(a)* under and *(b)* outside the 1989 defence protocol agreement between the United Kingdom and Brunei; and what efforts have been made to bring the defence protocol into effect.

Mr. Freeman: It is not the policy of this Government to reveal details of defence exports.

The hon. Member will be interested to know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei Darussalam signed a memorandum of understanding on defence equipment, infrastructure and training on 15 December.

The memorandum, which enters into force immediately, will continue the close relations between the British defence industry and the Royal Brunei armed forces.

Saudi Armed Forces Project Group

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of his Saudi armed forces project group were seconded from industry; and from which enterprises they were so seconded.

Mr. Freeman: Two members of staff of the Saudi armed forces project office within my Department are on secondment, one from British Aerospace and one from Hunting Engineering.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many previous officials of the Saudi armed forces project group are now working in commercial enterprises that do, or may, have an interest in contacts placed, or likely to be placed, through the group.

Mr. Freeman: My Department does not hold comprehensive records of the subsequent employment of former staff of the Saudi armed forces project office. Such employment would, however, be governed by the normal rules on acceptance of business appointments by former Crown servants.

Peace Dividend

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the total net and gross savings from the peace dividend in each of the past three years.

Mr. Soames: Details of defence spending between 1992–93 and 1994–95 at constant 1993–94 prices, are set out:

Year	*Total £ million*	*Underlying £ million*
1992–93	23,611	23,243
1993–94	22,757	22,181
1994–95	22,071	21,556—forecast of outturn

The "underlying" figures exclude expenditure on redundancies arising from the transition to the new force structure and costs resulting from recovery from the Gulf conflict.

Future Large Aircraft

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to place an order for the future large aircraft.

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 16 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *823*.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the need by his Department to order the European future large aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Representations were made by British Aerospace in support of the European future large aircraft. A number of letters were raised from hon. Members and from British Aerospace employees, as well as an early-day motion and some questions in the House.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the impact on the United Kingdom aerospace industry should the Government choose not to proceed with the FLA.

Mr. Freeman: I can assure the hon. Member that the wider industrial issues of the Hercules rolling replacement programme were given full and careful consideration.

Army Costs (Northern Ireland)

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of potential savings from the reduction in Army security activities as a consequence of the ceasefire in Northern Ireland for each of the next five years.

Mr. Soames: No such estimate has been made.

Military Regalia

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent on items of military regalia during the last five years, indicating the costs of each type of item.

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Territorial Army

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to provide for the Territorial Army vehicles built in the former East Germany.

Mr. Freeman: None.

Second World War

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list *(a)* the events planned to commemorate the end of the second world war, *(b)* the total cost to his Department and *(c)* the charges which will be made to second world war veterans and widows for participating in the events.

Mr. Soames: The Government plan to commemorate the end of the second world war with a programme of events to mark the 50th anniversary of both VE day and VJ day. The former will be commemorated over the 6 to 8 May bank holiday, and the latter over the weekend of 19 and 20 August. The provisional programme of major events will include:

Dates	*Events*
6–8 May	Public event activities in Hyde park.
6 May	Reception and banquet at Guildhall, City of London.
7 May	Service at St. Paul's cathedral.
7 or 8 May	Services in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh.
8 May	VE night concert in Hyde park.
19 August	Open air service in central London.
19 August	Tribute and promise parade in central London.
19 August	Evening firework display along the Thames.
20 August	A tribute throughout the nation, including services in Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh, and culminating with a Beating the Retreat and sunset ceremony in these cities and in London.

The cost of organising the commemorative events will fall to a number of Government Departments, as appropriate. The total cost to the Ministry of Defence cannot be projected accurately at present, as the details of plans have yet to be finalised.

It is not envisaged that any charges will be made to veterans for admission to any of the Government-sponsored events.

Bosnia

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men and women on active service in *(a)* Bosnia and *(b)* elsewhere are working 60 hours per week or more.

Mr. Soames: We do not maintain detailed records of the hours worked by service personnel on operational duty in Bosnia. The information that is available, however, indicates that last year some 20 per cent. of other ranks worked in excess of 60 hours per week.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on current policy over British armed forces serving in Bosnia.

Mr. Soames: British troops continue to make a major contribution to the United Nations operation in the former Yugoslavia which has helped to save hundreds of thousands of lives. We intend to maintain this contribution so long as our forces can continue to carry out the UN mandate at an acceptable level of risk.

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what commitment the United States has given to deploy ground troops in Bosnia.

Mr. Soames: The President of the United States has recently indicated his willingness, in principle, to contribute ground forces to any NATO-led operation to support a withdrawal of UNPROFOR, should that become necessary.

Defence Employees

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are employed in British defence industries.

Mr. Freeman: Defence expenditure in this country, by my Department and by overseas purchasers, sustained some 425,000 jobs in industry in 1992–93, the last year for which estimates are available.

Western European Union

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he intends to meet his Swedish, Finnish and Austrian counterparts to discuss the development of the Western European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence looks forward to discussing a range of defence matters with his counterparts in these countries, both in the course of bilateral meetings and in the WEU, should they decide to seek a formal association with that organisation.

Arms Trade

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about his Department's involvement in the international arms trade.

Mr. Freeman: The United Kingdom involvement in the international arms trade is strictly controlled by Government policy which takes account of our defence and international obligations. The Defence Export Services Organisation within my Department exists to help UK defence industry market and sell its products and services overseas. 1993 was a record year for British defence equipment manufacturers—winning orders worth some £7 billion. It is still too early to say how successful 1994 has been.

Royal Naval College, Greenwich

Mr. Wilkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of the royal naval college, Greenwich.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Sir M. Grylls) on 8 December, *Official Report*, column *303*.

Married Quarters

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how his Department's budget has been affected by the failure to sell the married quarters housing stock.

Mr. Soames: The defence budget for 1995–96 continues to assume a substantial receipt from the sale of married quarters in Great Britain during that year. Although the original plans for a housing trust have been dropped, other options are being pursued.

Equipment

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with the United Kingdom's European Union partners on future defence equipment needs.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence regularly discusses future defence equipment needs with our European Union partners in the western European armaments group, most recently on 14 November in Noordwijk.

Arms (Value)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what he estimates to be the value of arms currently held by British forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Records are not maintained which would enable my Department to provide such information. Details of major equipment procured for the UK armed forces have, however, been published in successive Statements on the Defence Estimates.

Contractors

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assistance his Department is providing to defence contractors as a result of reductions in the procurement budget.

Mr. Freeman: My Department is assisting defence contractors to adjust to possible changes in the market for their products by providing as much information as we can about our future requirements, to help them in their commercial planning.

Defence Establishments, Herefordshire

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the closures of defence establishments in Herefordshire.

Mr. Soames: In the past 12 months, seven representations have been made to Ministers in my Department concerning defence establishments in the county of Hereford and Worcester where closure or part closure has been announced or proposed.

Attack Helicopters

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what evaluations have taken place regarding the provision of attack helicopters.

Mr. Freeman: The evaluation of fixed price bids received at the end of September in response to the attack helicopter competition is in progress. This evaluation is being conducted on the basis of operational and cost-effectiveness, with proposals for UK industrial participation and risk being key considerations. As part of this process, test flights of the contender aircraft have been conducted.

Konver

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions his Department has had with European Union representatives concerning the Konver project.

Mr. Freeman: None. The EEC Konver programme is a matter for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Diversification

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on defence diversification.

Mr. Freeman: The Government's policy is that decisions on how to adapt to changing market circumstances, and what products to make, are for the commercial judgment of companies.

Franco-British Summit

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the implications for United Kingdom defence policy of the recent Franco-British summit.

Mr. Soames: The UK-French summit formed part of the framework of bilateral relations which the UK has developed with close allies and demonstrated a commonality of views on a wide range of defence issues.

Reserve Forces Bill

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will publish the Reserve Forces Bill.

Mr. Soames: As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 17 November, *Official Report*, columns *222-23*, we intend to publish draft reserve forces legislation early in the new year.

Christmas Holiday

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has made to ensure operational readiness over the Christmas holiday.

Mr. Soames: The operational readiness of the armed forces is maintained throughout the year at levels appropriate to the prevailing circumstances.

Eurofighter

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the latest position vis-a-vis completion of the Eurofighter project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Reorientation of the project is continuing. No decision on production is required until next year, but current planning assumes that the production investment phase will begin in early 1996 with a production contract for the first batch following about a year later.

Lockerbie

Mr. Tam Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the film "Maltese Double Cross", by Alan Francovites, in relation to those areas of the Pan Am 103 crash over Lockerbie which are the responsibility of his Department.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 15 December, *Official Report*, column *766*. My Department has co-operated fully with the Crown Office and Dumfries and Galloway police throughout the investigation and will continue to do so.

UN Military Capability

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what ideas his Department has submitted to the appropriate authorities for the reform of the United Nations military capability.

Mr. Soames: The 1993 British reply to the United Nations Secretary-General's report "An Agenda for Peace" put forward a range of proposals on command and control, planning, doctrine and other aspects of peacekeeping, several of which have been adopted. The United Kingdom has also responded constructively to the United Nations standby force planning initiative. In addition, we have taken an active part in general discussions on ways of enhancing the capacity of the United Nations to mount peacekeeping operations. My Department has been fully involved in all these responses.

Army

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about possible defence agency status for the Army's technical branches and authorities.

Mr. Soames: I have decided that Army technical support should be considered as a candidate for agency status, under the next steps procedures. A "prior options" study is under way to establish whether agency status or other options would be appropriate and an entry to this effect appeared in the December 1994 market-testing bulletin. I would welcome comments from interested parties; these should be sent by 26 January 1995 to: Major General P.J.G. Corp, Director General Equipment Support

(Army), HQ QMG, Monxton road, Andover, Hants, SP11 8HT.

Disposals Sales Agency

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the establishment of the Disposals Sales Agency responsible for the disposal by sale of stores and equipment surplus to the requirements of his Department.

Mr. Freeman: The Disposal Sales Agency was established as an agency within the Defence Export Services Organisation of the Ministry of Defence on 1 October 1994. The role of the agency is to provide a disposal sales service for surplus equipment, stores, spares and other material to the Ministry of Defence and the Department's agencies.

In the past, there have been major sales to other Governments of equipment in operational condition, in particular ex-Royal Navy ships; and other ranges of surplus equipment and stores provide considerable revenue to the Department each year. The skills of the disposal sales agency in identifying the best marketing opportunities and increased private sector involvement are the key to the future success of the agency.

The previous organisation was headed by a grade 6 civil servant, who has been appointed the agency's first chief executive. The agency has 100 employees.

The chief executive has been set the following key targets for the financial year 1994–95:

1. to achieve disposal sales revenue of £60.8 million
2. to introduce three new storage and marketing agreements—joint ventures—with industry.
3. to implement the first stage of a three-year programme of withdrawal of the agency from direct selling, other than Government-to-Government sales.
4. to improve efficiency by reducing the overhead of the agency's stores activity in Germany.
5. to establish an agency resource data base and interim output budget, incorporating full cost accruals accounting.
6. to develop performance indicators.

Copies of the agency's framework document are available in the Library of the House.

Cash Limits

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes he has to announce to the class I cash limits and running costs limit for 1994–95.

Mr. Rifkind: The class I cash limits will be amended as follows:

Class I cash limits

Vote	*Current cash limit*	*Change*	*Revised cash limit £ 000s*
1	11,554,200	– 4,549	11,549,651
3	6,404,169	–11,230	6,392,939

These changes reduce the block defence cash limit by £15,779,000 from £22,777,039,000 to £22,761,260,000. They reflect decreases to compensate for an overspend on class I, vote 3 in financial year 1993–94.

The Ministry of Defence's running cost regime has been replaced by a much broader defence operating costs limit covering all front-line and support budgetary expenditure. The new limit will be £17,399,500,000 in 1994–95. This is an administrative change only, with no effect on the defence block cash limit or on the vote structure. Controls analogous to those of the running costs regime will continue to apply to defence operating costs.

Battle of Britain Memorial Flight

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether it is his intention to make provision for the re-sparring of the one remaining Lancaster bomber of the battle of Britain memorial flight in time to avoid its grounding from May 1996 onwards; and if he will make a statement about the future size of the flight.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 16 December]:* The future of the battle of Britain memorial flight is not in doubt. Current plans assume that the Lancaster will be re-sparred during the winter of 1995–96. Decisions on the future size of the flight will follow the outcome of a routine review, now under way, into its composition, activities and cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Special Advisers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 1 December, *Official Report,* column *843,* if he will make a statement regarding his Department's expenditure on special advisers in each of the last three financial years and for the financial year 1979–80.

Mr. Howard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on 19 December, *Official Report,* column *937.*

Ministerial Travel

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the duration of the trips, undertaken by Ministers in his Department on which they were accompanied by their spouses and paid for at public expense, which were referred to in his answer of 26 October, *Official Report,* column *644.*

Mr. Howard: The duration of the visits were from 1 January to 7 January 1994 and from 20 August to 2 September 1994.

North Wales Police Authority

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning the establishment level of the North Wales police authority.

Mr. Maclean: The approved establishment of the North Wales police is 1,369. This represents an increase of 90 posts since 1979. The increase is in line with those received by other police forces. As from 1 April next year, formal approval of establishments will end, and complement levels will be entirely for local decision.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what revenues he has made available to the North Wales police authority to enable it to develop its school liaison and community-based projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No specific funding has been made available for these purposes. The police service undertakes a range of work in schools and the community, in order to foster good relations between the police and young people. It is for the chief constable to determine the deployment of resources to meet the various responsibilities of the North Wales police.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will increase the allocation of funds to the North Wales police authority so that it may recruit officers, special constables and civilians.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question by him on 8 December at columns *567–68*.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what percentage the North Wales police authority's spending has been increased in the coming year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: It is the responsibility of the North Wales police authority to set the force budget for 1995–96.

Prison Security

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if funding is always available to prisons in England and Wales when a prison governor requests improvements to alarm systems, or security cameras; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the availability of funding for improvements to alarm systems or security cameras in prisons in England and Wales.

Governors have discretion to spend up to £50,000 from their local budget on capital projects, including installation of alarms or security cameras. If they have inadequate budget available, they can apply for central funding and this would normally be granted if it was an essential security expenditure.

Departmental Telephone Calls

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much has been spent on telephone charges and how many telephone calls have been made by his Department for each of the last five years.

Mr. Howard: I regret that this information is not available.

Police Resources (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the principle underlying the decision he took concerning the sharing of resources among the police authorities of Wales.

Mr. Maclean: The draft report "The Police Grant Report (England and Wales) 1995–96" sets out the principles on which proposed allocations of resources to police forces have been made for 1995–96. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what percentage Welsh police spending has increased in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Between 1992–93 and 1993–94 total capital and current expenditure by Welsh police authorities increased by 4.2 per cent. Final expenditure figures for 1994–95 are not yet available. The Government's proposals for allocations of police grant for current expenditure and police standard spending assessments in Wales in 1995–96 were announced on 1 December 1994, *Official Report,* column *815*.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has with the chief constables of Dyfed and North Wales before the apportioning of resources to police authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Association of Chief Police Officers was represented on the Home Office working group which oversaw the development of the funding formula. The draft "Police Grant Report (England and Wales) 1995–96" was sent to chief officers on 1 December. This offers to them the opportunity to comment upon my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals for the allocation of police funding in 1995–96.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will grant extra funds to the North Wales police authority to enable it to proceed with its capital project on the communications network; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Projects of this kind are funded from the block allocations of capital resources which are made to each police authority. It is for the Police Authority and chief constable to decide what their priorities are and on what they spend their allocation. There are no additional funds available for individual communications projects.

Executive Search Agencies

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what use his Department has made of executive search agencies in filling vacancies within his Department and executive agencies administered by his Department during the last year; and how much these services have cost his Department.

Mr. Howard: Executive search consultants are used in making appointments to public bodies where it is thought that they will be able to supplement usefully the field of applicants.

Since January 1994 consultants have been used in a scheme to fill the post of prisons ombudsman and are currently being used to assist in recruiting a director of personnel for the Prison Service.

For reasons of commercial confidentiality it is not our practice to disclose individual contract values. However, the combined value of the two contracts is £44,000 excluding VAT.

Asylum Seekers

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the average period of detention of those asylum seekers who are detained;

(2) what is the longest time for which an asylum seeker has been detained;

(3) pursuant to his answer of 12 December, *Official Report*, columns *483-84*, for how long each of *(a)* the 103 asylum seekers who have been detained for more than six months and *(b)* the asylum seekers who have been detained for longer than 12 months have been in detention.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information on the length of detention of those people who had sought asylum and have been in detention longer than 12 months at 15 December 1994 is given in the table. Similar information for those detained longer than six months could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The longest currently detained person who had sought asylum has been held in detention since 14 August 1990. The individual concerned has been detained for this exceptional length of time because he represents a substantial threat to national security.

Information on the average period of detention for persons currently detained, who had sought asylum is not available.

Persons detained longer than 12 months as at 15 December 1994, who had sought asylum, by the date on which each person entered detention

Port cases	*Deportation cases*	*Illegal entrant cases*
10 September 1993	17 March 1993	27 May 1993
11 November 1993	8 June 1993	3 June 1993
2 December 1993	12 October 1993	15 September 1993
2 December 1993	13 November 1993	9 October 1993
	4 December 1993	6 November 1993
	15 December 1993	23 November 1993
		25 November 1993

Ministerial Train Journeys

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many train journeys of one hour's duration or more he has made in Britain in 1994 in the course of his official duties.

Mr. Howard: I have made 24 train journeys of one hour's duration or more this year.

Fire Safety

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for a cost-benefit analysis on the recommendations of the interdepartmental review on fire safety legislation and enforcement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government have not yet taken any decisions in response to those recommendations. Before we do so, we will give careful consideration to all the relevant issues including the costs and benefits of the propositions before us.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evidence he has that self-compliance in matters of fire safety in houses of multi-occupation will improve standards of safety.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Self-compliance under the Fire Precautions Act 1971 for which the Home Office has responsibility is at present only provided for under section 9A. This does not affect houses in multiple occupation. Policy in respect of houses in multiple occupation rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Ex-prisoners (Housing)

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the rate of reoffending by prisoners who have no secure residence to return to on their release; and what assessment he has made of the probable impact upon this rate of reoffending if housing benefit is restricted for single prisoners to a maximum of 13 weeks.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: There is no statistical information routinely available on the relationship between reoffending by prisoners and the type of accommodation to which they are released. It is therefore not possible to assess any effect on reoffending of changes to the rules on eligibility for housing benefit for single prisoners.

Income Support

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females in receipt of income support have been imprisoned in the last year for non-payment of fines.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Lynne Jones, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females in receipt of income support have been imprisoned in the last year for non-payment of fines.

The information requested is not available centrally.

National Lottery

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to announce the date of the appointment of the chief executive of the National Lottery Charities Board.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: This is a matter for the National Lottery Charities Board.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when charities will be allowed to apply for funds from the National Lottery Charities Board; and what process or criteria will be used to determine distribution.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: These are matters for the National Lottery Charities Board.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a definitive date will be given for the appointment of a chief executive to the National Lottery Charities Board.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: This is a matter for the National Lottery Charities Board, but I understood that it expects to make an announcement very shortly.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when charities will be given the opportunity to apply for funds from the National Lottery Charities Board; and what process will be used to decide on distribution.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: This is a matter for the charities board.

Prison Populations (European Union)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the prison population in each of the 12 member states of the European Union.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The countries of the European Union are covered by the statistics collated by the Council of Europe. The latest available information is given in the table. An article on "International Comparisons of Prison Populations" by Collier and Tarling—Home Office research bulletin No. 23, pages 48 to 54—showed that the figures for different countries are unlikely to be strictly comparable because the definitions of prisons and prisoners vary from one country to another, reflecting different legal and administrative systems. Examples of differences in the definitions are the inclusion or exclusion in a country's figures of juvenile offenders and mentally disordered offenders.

Prison population in each of the countries of the European Union as at 1 September 1993[1]

Nationality	*Prison population*
Belgium	7,200
Denmark	3,700
France	51,100
Germany[2]	65,800
Greece[3]	6,500
Ireland	2,100
Italy	50,800
Luxembourg	400
Netherlands	7,800
Portugal	10,900
Spain	45,700
United Kingdom	53,400

[1] Provisional figures.

[2] Data refer to 30 September 1993, and as opposed to previous surveys includes data for the five new "Lander".

[3] Data refer to 1 January 1993.

Life Sentences

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women over the age of 60 years are at present serving a life prison sentence in prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women over the age of sixty years are at present serving a life prison sentence in prisons in England and Wales.

The latest available information is for 31 October 1994. On that date there were 155 life sentence prisoners (149 males and six females) aged over sixty years in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are at present serving a life sentence in the United Kingdom; and what is the total annual cost to the Exchequer.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many prisoners are at present serving a life sentence in the United Kingdom; and what is the total annual cost to the exchequer.

The latest available information is for 31 October 1994. On that date there were 3,200 life sentence prisoners (3,095 males and 105 females) in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. Information for Scotland and Northern Ireland is available from the Scottish and Northern Ireland offices respectively. The average net operating cost per prisoner per week is published in the "Prison Service Annual Report and Accounts, April 1992—March 1993" (Table D, Volume 2, Cm 2385) and was £494 at 1992–93 prices.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are serving a life prison sentence in each of the 12 European Union states.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I regret that the information requested, is not available for states in membership of the Council of Europe other than the United Kingdom.

Doncaster Prison

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many companies bid to manage the Doncaster prison when Premier Prison Services succeeded in winning the contract.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Doncaster prison.

Five bids to manage Doncaster prison were received in response to the invitation to tender.

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what performance criteria are specified in the contract for managing Doncaster prison.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. John Gunnell, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the performance criteria specified in the contract for managing Doncaster prison.

The contract, a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library, specifies a wide range of performance criteria, covering all aspects of the prison's activities. As with both publicly and privately managed prisons, the performance at Doncaster is measured against key performance indicators, which are specified as follows:

> *Escapes from the prison:* no more than two by the end of the first year of operation thereafter no more than one in each year of operation.

Escapes from court: no more than eight each year for the first three years. No more than six in the fourth year and then subject to review.

Time out of cell: a minimum of twelve hours a day for prisoners on normal location.

A positive regime: a minimum of at least twelve hours a day of regime activities including education for prisoners on normal location. Adult prisoners to have access to a minimum of six hours a week, and young prisoners under 17 provision of fifteen hours a week, of education and training.

Visits: The statutory minimum as set out in Prison Rules.

Grievances: Ninety per cent. of grievances, capable of resolution at prison level, resolved within seven days.

Assaults on prisoners: no more than 148 by the end of the first year of operation, to be reviewed at the end of the first year.

Assaults on staff: no more than 77 by the end of the first year of operation, to be reviewed at the end of the first year.

Prison Escapes

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those prisoners serving sentences who have spent time unlawfully at large during the past five years were at large for *(a)* 24 hours, *(b)* seven days, *(c)* 30 days and *(d)* more than 30 days.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. A. J. Beith, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many of those prisoners serving sentences who have spent time unlawfully at large during the past five years were at large for *(a)* 24 hours *(b)* seven days *(c)* thirty days and *(d)* more than thirty days.

I am afraid that this information is not collected centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those prisoners serving sentences who have spent time unlawfully at large during the last five years *(a)* returned to custody voluntarily, *(b)* were reapprehended by the police and other agencies of the law and *(c)* are still at large.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. A. J. Beith, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many of those prisoners serving sentences who have spent time unlawfully at large during the last five years *(a)* returned to custody voluntarily *(b)* were reapprehended by the police and other agencies of the law and *(c)* are still at large.

I regret that this information is not collected centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Capsicum Pepper Sprays

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the draft report of the joint Home Office and metropolitan police review of deportation procedures contained reference to the use of capsicum pepper sprays.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: It is not the practice to comment on the contents of draft or incomplete reports. As I said in my reply on 6 December at column *150*, the conclusions of the review were placed in the Library on 12 January 1994.

Firefighters

Sir Irvine Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of firefighters serving *(a)* the city of Sheffield, *(b)* South Yorkshire, *(c)* Greater Manchester and *(d)* the west midlands; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on the number of firefighters in each fire authority is published annually in the reports of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services for England and Wales. The latest report, for 1993–94, column *2679*, contains on page 14 a table giving brigade establishments and strengths as at 1 January 1994. I understand from South Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority that on that date there were 471 regular firefighters and 62 retained firefighters based at fire stations in the city of Sheffield.

Prison Escorts

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners serving sentences have been guarded, escorted or otherwise supervised by private security firms, and how many by the Prison Service, since the first escort of prisoners by private security firms; and how many have escaped from the supervision of each.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. A. J. Beith, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the escapes of prisoners serving sentences from escorts by the Prison Service and from escorts by contractors.

I am afraid that the information requested is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Cheshire Police Headquarters

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cause of the major power fault cut on 29 November affecting Cheshire police force headquarters; how long they were without power; what emergency systems they used; what action is being taken to prevent this happening again; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that the power failure at Cheshire constabulary headquarters was caused by an internal failure of both normal and backup electricity supplies. Power was restored to the building after two hours. The 999 emergency system remained operative throughout. Measures have already been taken to prevent such a thing happening again.

Detention Pending Trial

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take in response to recommendation 1245 of 1994 of the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe relating to detention pending trial; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The decision to detain a person pending trial is taken primarily to protect the public and ensure the pursuance of justice.

The majority of the guidelines contained in this recommendation reflect existing law and procedure in the United Kingdom.

Police Authorities

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the guidelines governing the claiming and levels of attendance allowances for members of police authorities.

Mr. Maclean: This information is contained in a Home Office circular letter dated 5 August 1994. A copy is available in the Library.

Police Strength

Sir Irvine Patnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of police officers serving *(a)* the city of Sheffield, *(b)* south Yorkshire, *(c)* Greater Manchester and *(d)* west midlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The information is set out in the table:

Police strength at September 1994

City of Sheffield	995
South Yorkshire	3,029
Greater Manchester	6,949
West Midlands	6,981

Firearms

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has made to the Association of Chief Police Officers report on firearms licensing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Association of Chief Police Officers produced a report on firearms administration in 1990. This was considered by a working group set up in 1991, consisting of Home Office officials, Her majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and representatives of several police forces, which was set up to promote efficiency and consistency amongst forces; to identify models of best practice for forces in administering the firearms licensing system; and to identify a reliable basis on which to set fees. The report of that group was circulated to police forces, strongly recommending that, where they had not already done so, they adopt the procedures which is set out.

Market Testing

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of his Department's posts lost or contracted out as a result of market testing since 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A total of 705 Home Office posts have been contracted out as a result of the "Competing for Quality" programme, which includes strategic contracting out as well as market testing with in-house bids. There has also been a reduction of 209 posts as a result of efficiency improvements made by in-house bid teams during the market-testing process.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many external contractors have been awarded functions of his department following a market test; and what were the contract prices.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) at column *487*.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which outside consultants were used during the course of any market test conducted or completed since 1991;

(2) what was the total amount paid to each consultant used on his Department's market testing in each year since 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Up to 30 September 1994 the Home Office market-testing division and the Prison Service contracts and competition group engaged the following consultants to advise on market tests where there was an in-house bid:

Brian Farrington Ltd.
P. Chapman
Clayton Forde Associates
D. Croin
ER Consultants
Ernst and Young
Handley-Walker plc
Ken Worthing Associates
KPMG Peat Marwick
Lamb Associates
G. Lister
L. Massey
PA Consulting Group
Theodore Goddard
Touche Ross Management Consultants

Information on the costs of contracts with individual consultants is commercially confidential.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the outcome of each market-testing exercise in his Department which has been completed since 1991;

(2) which of his Department's functions have been market tested since 1991.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The outcome for each market test with an in-house bid since 1991 is as follows:

Market testing exercise	
Non-Prisons Programme	
Statistics Data Collection	In-house bid win
Central Training Services	In-house bid win
Central Typing Services	In-house bid win
Reprographic and Design and Illustration Services	Contract to be awarded to HMSO
Departmental Computer Services	Contracted out
Immigration and Nationality Department Security Guards	In-house bid win
Internal Audit	In-house bid win
Record Storage and Retrieval	In-house bid win
Immigration and Nationality Department Typing Services	In-house bid win
Immigration and Nationality Department Messengerial and Reprographic Services	Tenders being evaluated
Immigration and Nationality Department File Storage and Retrieval Services	
Prisons Programme	
HMP Manchester	In-house bid win
Warehousing Prisons	In-house bid win

Market testing exercise	
Facilities Management	In-house bid win
Management of Buckley Hall Prison	Contracted-out

Private Security Patrols

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the guards employed by private security patrols in Southwark have criminal convictions.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not available.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what meetings he has had with the police in Southwark to discuss the issue of private security patrols;

(2) if he will make a statement on mobile private security patrols operating in Southwark.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend has not discussed private security patrols with the police in Southwark. We are not aware of an significant local problems with patrols operating in the area.

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to license private security patrols.

Mr. Maclean: We have no such plans.

Drivers (Insurance Fines)

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those convicted of driving without insurance received fines of greater than *(a)* £1,000 and *(b)* £5,000 in 1993.

Mr. Maclean: Information available to me indicates that 6,538 convictions for driving without insurance in 1993 in England and Wales resulted in fines of over £1,000 being imposed, none of which was over £5,000.

Prisoner Transfers

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have been transferred from Great Britain prisons to Northern Ireland prisons in the last six months, in the categories of republican, loyalist or non-terrorist offenders.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since July, 11 prisoners have been transferred from prisons in England and Wales to prisons in Northern Ireland on a temporary basis. Eight of these prisoners have been convicted of terrorist offences. Requests for such transfers are not considered or recorded on the basis of the prisoner's political beliefs.

Stop and Search

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances a police officer who stops a person and bodily searches that person is required to make an official report of the incident in his log book and also in the police station to which he is assigned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: These matters are regulated by section 3 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and by the code of practice for the exercise by police officers of statutory powers of stop and search—code A—made under section 66(a) of the Act.

A written record must be made of all stops and searches by police officers. The record must be made on the form provided for this purpose as soon as practicable after the search. The search record is to be retained at a police station in the area where the search takes place. A copy of the record may be obtained by the person searched if he asks for it within one year of the date of the search.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in what circumstances the Metropolitan police maintain computer records relating to individual stop-and-search incidents; and what is the purpose of so doing in respect of those searches which do not give rise to an arrest.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* I understand from the Commissioner that computer records of all stop-and-search incidents are maintained at local divisional level throughout the Metropolitan police district. This is in compliance with section 3(7) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which requires that the police record all occasions when a person is searched. Anyone who is stopped and searched by the police is entitled to request a copy of the record of the search for up to 12 months after the search took place; computer records are therefore maintained to allow for such requests. They are destroyed after 12 months.

Mr. Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 1 December. *Official Report*, column *843*, which five police authorities estimated the numbers of ethnic minorities stopped and searched in the fiscal year 1993–94; what is the basis of their estimates; for what reasons these authorities could not collect actual figures; and what action he will take to ensure that all police forces comply with the request to supply accurate figures for the numbers of ethnic minorities stopped and searched in the forthcoming year.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* Statistics of the number of stops and searches conducted in 1993–94 were collected from forces by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. Estimated figures were provided in respect of five forces: Essex, Humberside, Lancashire, Sussex and West Midlands.

In Essex, the form containing the ethnic split was not introduced until 1 October 1993, and in Humberside not until 1 September 1993. HMIC received returns only for the portions of the fiscal year after those dates, and multiplied the figures appropriately.

In the case of Lancashire, the relevant form was not introduced until 1 January 1994. The force estimated the ethnic breakdown of the total years' result based on the split disclosed during the months for which these figures were available. In Sussex, the form was not introduced until 1 July 1993; the force estimated the annual total by grossing up from the available figures.

West Midlands was unable to provide actual data because the force did not receive forms from every subdivision for every month. It furnished HMIC with an estimate on the basis of approximately 94 per cent. of potential returns.

These were difficulties associated with the introduction of this new monitoring procedure and it is not expected that there will be such difficulties in subsequent years.

European Youth Campaign

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the United Kingdom's financial contribution to the European youth campaign against racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and intolerance; and what is the figure for each of the European countries.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The campaign was agreed on the basis that it would be met from existing Council of Europe resources, supplemented by voluntary additional contributions and private sector funding. At the national level the United Kingdom contribution to the European youth campaign is being co-ordinated by the Commission for Racial Equality as part of its statutory function to promote good race relations. This will be funded from its existing Government grant of £15.5 million—1994–95. Information is not available on the position of other member states, most of which have no equivalent of the CRE and will have to allocate specific funding, but we understand that very few have offered additional contributions.

Prison Staff Violence

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on the Prison Service project to reduce violence against staff; and when a report will be published.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. George Howarth, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the Prison Service project to reduce violence against staff.

The preliminary work of the project has been completed and the results will shortly be considered by the Prison Board. Further work is likely to be undertaken. There are no plans to publish the preliminary results.

Dorset Police Authority

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total budget for the Dorset police authority for 1994–95.

Mr. Maclean: The latest estimate by the Dorset police authority of total current and capital expenditure in 1994–95 is £65.2 million.

Child Abduction

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he will take to ensure that there are uniform and satisfactory instructions on dealing with child abduction cases available in all police stations.

Mr. Maclean: Discussions are planned between the Association of Chief Police Officers and Reunite—the National Council for Abducted Children—on a range of issues, including guidance materials available to police officers.

Thames Valley Police Authority

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total budget for the Thames Valley police authority for 1994–95; and what proportion was allocated to Berkshire.

Mr. Maclean: The latest estimate by the Thames Valley police authority of total current and capital expenditure in 1994–95 is £188.7 million. The proportion of expenditure applicable to Berkshire cannot be separately identified.

Secure Training Units

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the locations selected for secure training units and give for each *(a)* the date on which detailed planning permission was applied for, *(b)* the progress to date on each application *(c)* the projected dates on each site for letting a contract, for commencement on site and for completion, *(d)* the number of young people to be accommodated in each case, *(e)* the target date for first admissions in each case, *(f)* the target date for first admissions in each case and *(g)* the target date for full operation.

Mr. Maclean: I announced on 21 April 1994 at columns *636–37*, that it was proposed to site secure training centres at Campsfield house, Gringley, Medomsley and Onley. The location of the fifth site, at Cookham Wood, was announced on 29 June 1994 at column *622*. Each secure training centre will accommodate up to 40 persistent juvenile offenders sentenced to a secure training order.

Applications for outline planning permission in respect of four of the sites and for a certificate of lawfulness of proposed use in respect of the Gringley site have been lodged with the relevant planning authorities. To date, permission has been granted on one site—Cookham Wood—and planning consultants have been engaged to advise on progressing matters on the other four sites.

Following enactment of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, it is our intention to issue invitations to tender for the design, construction and refurbishment, management and finance of each secure training centre. Invitations to tender will be issued on the basis of named sites with the benefit of outline planning permission for the development of a secure training centre. Contracts will then be let as soon as practicable following receipt of the tenders.

It will be the responsibility of the contractor to obtain detailed planning permission and issues such as projected start and completion dates on site, target dates for first admission and for full operation are contractual matters to be proposed by tenderers. Those proposals will then form part of the tender evaluation exercise.

Unitary Authorities, Wales

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the electoral areas to be used for the first elections to the councils of the new unitary authorities in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I am pleased to announce that my right hon. and noble Friend Lady Blatch has today signed electoral arrangements orders establishing the electoral areas to be used for the first elections for the 22 new unitary authorities in Wales.

The orders confirm the proposals submitted to the Home Secretary by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales in July this year. The first elections to the new authorities will be held on 4 May 1995. Copies of the orders may be obtained from the Vote Office.

Justice and Home Affairs Council

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Justice and Home Affairs Council held on 30 November and 1 December.

Mr. Howard: The main matters dealt with by the Council were as follows:

The Council discussed the serious problems presented by fraud against the Community budget. It adopted a resolution on the criminal law protection of Community financial interests, and agreed that further work should be done on this during the first half of 1995 with a view to concluding a binding legal instrument. The United Kingdom proposed a legally binding joint action in March this year.

The Council considered the draft Europol convention but was unable to resolve all the outstanding issues. The presidency reported on progress in developing the convention to the European Council at Essen on 9 to 10 December.

The Council decided on senior staff appointments in the EUROPOL drugs unit. The United Kingdom candidate has now been confirmed as a member of the senior management team.

The Council adopted the following measures in the field of immigration:

> Resolution on the admission of third-country nationals to the territory of member states for study purposes.
>
> Resolution on admission for self-employment.
>
> Joint action on travel facilities for third country nationals school pupils.

The Council adopted conclusions setting out the framework for organising co-operation and contacts with third countries on third pillar matters. The Council agreed that the French presidency should organise a meeting with Cyprus and Malta in the first half of 1995.

The Council considered an interim report on racism and xenophobia. It expressed general agreement on the importance of the issue and on the need for further work on all aspects of the problem.

It considered an interim report on judicial co-operation against international organised crime and asked officials to develop a range of proposals for further action.

The Council agreed proposals from the presidency for increased police and customs co-operation in implementation of the declaration adopted at the Berlin conference with central and eastern European states on 8 September.

The Council agreed that officials should proceed with the development of a convention covering all aspects of extradition concurrently with the preparation of a more limited, separate instrument creating simplified procedures for persons consenting to extradition. The aim should be to finalise this latter document in the first half of 1995.

The Council considered a progress report on the drafting of an extension to the Brussels convention, covering jurisdiction and enforcement of judgments in matrimonial cases. It agreed that the working group should continue its work and should examine in particular the possibility of extending the convention to procedures relating to the custody of children.

Passports

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has reached a decision on the recommendations arising from the Passport Agency's review of the British visitors passport, the British excursion document and the collective passport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Passport Agency's review of the British visitor's passport, the British excursion document and the collective passport has now been completed. The need for the review arose from 1988 Home Affairs Select Committee report which recommended that because of doubts about its security and value as an identity document, the BVP should be withdrawn as soon as the computerisation programme for issuing standard passports had been successfully completed, and effective arrangements were in place for the issue of the standard 10-year passport, especially for people requiring a travel document quickly.

In conducting the review, the agency has consulted widely and received contributions from the Home Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Security Service, from leading organisations in the travel industry, the Post Office and from national youth associations.

The review evidence has established that the BVP is a poor quality travel document which does not provide definite evidence of national status or of identity, and its security is poor. It is used in the evasion of immigration controls, and its use by criminals, terrorists and football hooligans has been of considerable concern to police and immigration authorities in this country, and in the EC for a long time. Because of these factors, Spain has decided to withdraw acceptance of the BVP from 1 October 1995, and it is clear that many other EC Governments, facing immigration pressures from outside the EC are very concerned about the BVP's security weaknesses.

The BVP remains popular, but its poor reputation creates problems for bona-fide holders, and it is of no value for non-travel purposes. In comparison to the standard 10-year passport, it represents poor value for money.

As for the BED which can be used for short excursions to France, and the no-passport excursion arrangements with Belgium and the Netherlands, the review has established that these arrangements are also vulnerable to abuse, and are not compatible with the requirement for tight immigration controls.

The review has concluded that there is strong support for the continuation of the collective passport which is well regarded in Europe.

In the light of these findings the Passport Agency has recommended that the BED and the arrangements for no-passport excursions should be withdrawn from 1 March 1995; that the BVP should be withdrawn from 1 January 1996; and that the collective passport should be retained.

The Passport Agency is satisfied that the standard passport which costs £18 will provide a convenient and effective replacement for the BVP and BED, and that it will be able to provide a flexible and responsive service which fully meets the needs of the travelling public throughout the year. To improve customer service the agency is planning to form partnerships with high street outlets such as travel agents and the Post Office so that they will issue and receive completed applications, and fees from the public. The agency intends to have these arrangements in place by the autumn of next year.

I have carefully considered the Passport Agency's report on its review, and its recommendations, and after consultations with colleagues, I have approved them.

The Green Paper on identity cards, which I plan to publish in the spring of 1995, will take account of the Government's decision to withdraw the British visitor's passport and the no-passport arrangements. It will invite views on the available options for a national identity card scheme, including the possible use of a United Kingdom identity card as a travel document within Europe.

Public Bodies

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department *(a)* hold open meetings, *(b)* conduct public consultation exercises, *(c)* conduct consultation exercises with outside commercial interests, *(d)* publish a register of members' interests, *(e)* publish agendas for meetings and *(f)* publish the minutes of meetings; and whether this is in each case (i) under a statutory requirement of (ii) voluntary.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 16 December 1994]:* Details of appointments for which I am responsible are given in "Public Bodies 1993", a copy of which is in the Library.

The answers in relation to the advisory non-departmental public bodies listed in "Public Bodies 1993" and sponsored by the Home Department are as follows:

(a) none

(b) Boundary Commission for England—statutory requirement—Boundary Commission for Wales—statutory requirement

(c) Advisory council on the Misuse of Drugs—voluntary—Animal Procedures Committee—voluntary

(d) none

(e) none

(f) none

Maidstone Gaol

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes have been made to home leave arrangements at Maidstone gaol since 1 November.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 21 November 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. George Howarth, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about changes that have been made to home leave arrangements at Maidstone prison since 1 November 1994.

The more stringent risk assessment for temporary release (which includes home leave) for prisoners, announced on 18 November by the Home Secretary, has already been implemented at Maidstone. The new procedures, which include consideration of the victims' views if known, will provide for a more rigorous assessment to be made in considering all applications for home leave and temporary release.

Police Funding

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish, by police force area, figures for total police funding in *(a)* 1995–96 and *(b)* 1994–95.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 12 December 1994]:* In respect of 1995–96 I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 1 December 1994 at column *844*.

It is not possible to provide directly comparable figures for police funding in 1994–95. The elements of standard spending assessments relevant to police are, in the case of county forces, part of the counties' overall SSAs for the provision of local services. Police grant for 1994–95 is now being paid in respect of actual expenditure by police authorities. The nearest approximation to police funding in 1994–95 is therefore obtained by adding an estimate of that part of a county's SSA relevant to the police to estimated police grant. These figures are given and provide a rough basis for comparison with 1995–96 funding. They are not, however, directly comparable because:

(a) the 1994–95 financial year is not yet over and the expenditure figures are therefore still estimates; and,

(b) grant elements of the 1994–95 figures include forces' share of funding for common police services, whereas the 1995–96 grant element of the figures are shown after forces' share of funding for common police services have been taken into account. Section 31 of the Police Act 1964 as substituted by section 17 of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994 does not provide for deductions from grant to fund common police services.

The table shows the totals of the estimated SSAs relevant and to police and police grants by English police force area in 1994–95. For 1994–95 and earlier years there were no SSAs for police authorities in Wales.

Police force area	*£ million 1994–95 estimated funding*
English Forces	
Avon and Somerset	139.82
Bedfordshire	53.16
Cambridgeshire	58.07
Cheshire	85.83
Cleveland	67.53
Cumbria	53.98
Derbyshire	83.56
Devon and Cornwall	136.75
Dorset	61.16
Durham	61.80
Essex	143.99
Gloucestershire	53.85
Hampshire	155.67
Hertfordshire	82.05
Humberside	91.65
Kent	152.38
Lancashire	147.20
Leicestershire	81.83
Lincolnshire	56.67
Norfolk	65.16
North Yorkshire	63.07
Northamptonshire	55.46
Nottinghamshire	105.02
Staffordshire	97.17
Suffolk	55.83
Surrey	84.75
Sussex	131.58
Thames Valley	191.25

Police force area	*£ million 1994–95 estimated funding*
Warwickshire	46.48
West Mercia	95.24
Wiltshire	58.45
English Shires Total	2,816.40
English Metropolitan Forces	
Greater Manchester	314.56
Merseyside	213.26
Northumbria	163.10
South Yorkshire	136.84
West Midlands	314.92
West Yorkshire	240.90
English Metropolitan Total	1,383.58
Metropolitan Police	1,616.89
City of London	56.18
Total	5,873.05

Corporate Plan

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be publishing the next corporate plan; and what consultations with the trade unions will precede it.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. George Howarth, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about when the next Corporate Plan will be published; and what consultations with the trade unions will precede it.

We expect to publish the Corporate Plan for 1995–98 not later than 1 April 1995. We are happy to take account of any comments from the trade unions in preparing the draft Corporate Plan, which will then be submitted to the Home Secretary for approval. A meeting has already been arranged with the Prison Service Trade Union Side to discuss the next Corporate Plan on 20 December, and we will be happy to arrange further meetings with the unions if they so wish.

Prisoner Release (Victims)

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether victims in individual cases will have the right to challenge a governor's decision to release a prisoner on home leave or temporary release;

(2) how victims will be made aware of any prisoner's applications for either home leave, temporary leave or parole.

(3) what legal advice he took prior to announcing the fact that he is to allow victims to influence decisions on prisoners' home leave in England and Wales;

(4) what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that the victims' helpline view is communicated to the governor in each case.

(5) where the victims' home leave helpline will be located; and how many staff will be allocated to it;

(6) what plans he has to make the victims' home leave hotline a freephone;

(7) which individuals and organisations were consulted prior to his announcement of the victims' home leave helpline on 14 November;

(8) what was the total number of home leave and temporary leave applications in England and Wales during 1993; and how many were granted.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. George Howarth, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the consultation with victims before decisions being taken about release on home leave and temporary licence and statistics on the number of applications made for such leave in 1993 and the number granted.

The new helpline is located in Birmingham as a discrete part of the Prisoner Location Service and will be initially staffed by four members of staff. Details of the victim concerns will be conveyed to the Governor of the prison concerned using a standard form and the victim notified in writing that this has taken place. There are no plans to make the Helpline free of charge but the calls made using the main number are charged only at local rate.

The introduction of the Victims' Helpline does not confer any new rights upon victims. The Helpline has been set up to enable victims to make their concerns known to the Prison Service by a more simple and direct means. There was therefore no need to seek fresh legal advice on the setting-up of the Victims' Helpline.

The introduction of a Helpline evolved from discussions within the Home Office Standing Victim Steering Group which includes representatives from all the criminal justice agencies and voluntarily organisations who considered that there should be a facility for stopping unwanted communications from prisoners to victims of crime. Consultation on the operation of the Helpline will continue with the relevant agencies concerned.

Current instructions on the consideration of home leave and temporary release applications already require governors to consider, where appropriate, consulting known victims or the police and probation services in order to establish known victim's concerns. It is already the case that the wishes of a victim who does not wish a prisoner to come back to the family home, where the offence was committed against a family member, must be respected and in these circumstances the application would be refused. In all other circumstances, the views of the victim will be taken fully into account, but it is for the governor in the light of all the known circumstances about the offender and the circumstances of the offence to decide whether home leave should be granted.

Statistics on the number of applications made by prisoners for home leave and temporary release are not currently recorded. The number of prisoners who were granted unescorted absences in 1993 was 29,000.

Reconviction Rates

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the reconviction rate following discharge from *(a)* approved schools, *(b)* community homes with in-house education facilities and *(c)* borstals for each year since 1974.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* After 1970 sentencing to an approved school order ceased to be a sentencing option available to the courts.

After 1983 borstal training ceased to be a sentencing option available to the courts. Information on reconvictions after discharge from borstal training is contained in chapter eight of "Prison Statistics, England and Wales, 1987", Cm 547. The relevant figures are contained in tables 8.7 and 8.10. Reconviction rates, after a two-year follow-up period, are quoted for males and females discharged from borstal training for each year from 1974 to 1983.

The information requested on reconviction rates for community homes with in-house educational facilities is not centrally available.

Suicides (Prison Staff)

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many suicides involving prison service staff have occurred in each of the past three years; and what steps have been put in place to support vulnerable staff.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. George Howarth, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about suicides involving Prison Service staff.

There were five staff suicides in 1992 and four in 1993. There have been ten this year, and the Prison Service is most concerned about this increase, as it is about each individual case. In all cases, the principal causes appear to have been related to their private lives rather than work.

The Prison Service has a staff care and welfare service whose role is to assist staff to give of their best by providing for them and their families a confidential service to enable them to deal with personal and work related problems.

A specific part off that role is to provide care support and counselling to staff who have been involved in incidents at work, to help prevent or relieve the symptoms of post traumatic stress which may result.

A workshop was held in November to examine issues related to staff suicide. A number of ideas emerged from this - relating, for example, to the provision of training in stress management, the operation of care teams and links with outside agencies, which will be examined further. We shall continue to keep this matter under very careful review to see whether there are additional steps which could helpfully be taken.

Marchioness

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what money he has allocated to meet the costs of legal representation for the police at the inquest into the Marchioness disaster scheduled for March 1995.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* Provision for costs of this kind is made in the estimates for the Metropolitan police and the cost falls on the Metropolitan police fund.

Prison Service Initiatives

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a list of initiatives currently being undertaken by the Prison Service.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. George Howarth, dated 20 December 1994:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the initiatives currently being undertaken by the Prison Service.

The Service's current programme of work is set out in our Corporate Plan for 1994–97 and Business Plan for 1994–95, copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Young People (Detention)

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young persons were sentenced to a period of detention under section 53 of the Children Act 1933 for each year since 1974;

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 19 December 1994]:* The information is given in the table.

Persons sentenced under Section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, 1974–1993

England and Wales *Year*	*Section 53 (1)*	*Section 53 (2)*
1974	7	20
1975	6	14
1976	7	43
1977	10	45
1978	9	56
1979	26	53
1980	20	65
1981	15	73
1982	30	84
1983	16	69
1984	22	99
1985	18	154
1986	16	156
1987	19	154
1988	22	177
1989[1]	15	114
1990[1]	10	125
1991	12	102
1992[2]	11	93
1993[2]	24	315

[1] Comparisons with prison receptions suggest there may have been under-recordings during 1989 and 1990, although this is less likely in 1990.

[2] Under the Criminal Justice Act 1991, the arrangements for imposing longer sentences under section 53(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 also applied to 17-year-olds from 1 October 1992.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES

SESSION 1994–95

VOLUME 251

5th December—20th December 1994

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instruments etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speaker's rulings and statements'.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates, etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions.*

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Comm = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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